



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

It was July of 1941, months before the entrance of the United States into the Second World War. Conflict was raging across Europe and Asia, and competing messages of nationalism flooded the airwaves and the consciousness of Americans.

How should Assemblies of God young people in the United States view their nation in relation to both their faith and other countries?

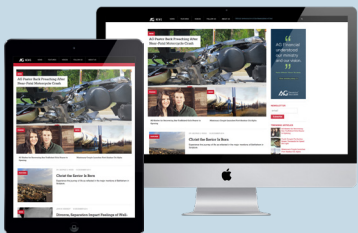
National Youth Director Wesley Steelberg, speaking at the National Young People's Conference on July 4, 1941, addressed this pressing issue. In a message titled "The Stars and Stripes of Calvary," Steelberg encouraged young people to place their primary allegiance in Christ.

Steelberg acknowledged that Americans are proud of their flag: "We salute it, and we pledge allegiance to it. We raise it as an ensign of liberty, and we rejoice in what it represents." In the face of the march of totalitarianism, Steelberg stated, "we hold more precious and valuable our liberty and freedom."

However, he warned, "we have a responsibility to be more than Americans. We are called to be Christian Americans."


Read Wesley Steelberg's sermon, "The Stars and Stripes of Calvary," on pages 1, 4 and 5 in the July 4, 1942, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/july41942.

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SUNDAY, JULY 8, 2018

AG | NEWS

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A CHURCH OUTGROWS ITS TOWN

BY KEN WALKER

If it's Sunday morning in Zebulon, Georgia, odds are good that people passing by Christ Chapel Community Church will hear cowbells clanging and shouts of excitement. The hubbub signals joy over another conversion, which over the past decade has averaged about two per week.

That's how a church of 80 at its launch service in 2003 has ballooned to a weekly attendance of 1,400. While such church growth may not seem extraordinary, it really is considering the town's population: 1,160.

"We wanted to reach people many churches thought were unreachable," says Pastor Billy T. Smith, 43.

That includes the first person Smith led to Jesus after planting Christ Chapel. Bo L. Hatchett, now 77, had attended church as a child, but the onetime craftsman never had made a decision to follow the Lord. That all changed after a heart attack landed him in a specialized care unit.

"Pastor Billy prayed with us before I went to surgery," Hatchett says. "After

that, in the recovery room, I thought I was going to die. I prayed for the Lord to spare me. He came into the room and a stillness came over me like I've never known. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here."

Hatchett accepted Christ as Savior that day and never looked back.

"Bo started attending and bringing people with him," Smith says. "Those kinds of people who have been away from church hang out with people who aren't Christians either. They're the kind of people who want to learn and grow."

Not all those who come through the doors are foreign to church. Corissa D. Betts is a 27-year-old medical assistant who grew up in a Baptist congregation with 40 members. She decided to look for a church offering more to young adults. She sensed an instantaneous connection at Christ Chapel when Smith preached a sermon called "Toxic Thoughts."

"I had been having all these toxic thoughts and when I heard that I knew

SAMOANS FOCUSING ON PLANTING

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

A dozen AG Samoan pastors recently went to a Church Multiplication Network Launch training event in Springfield, Missouri, to ramp up efforts to reach more ethnic minorities in the U.S.

"We want to be trained to take something back that will help us navigate planting healthy churches within our Samoan community," says Teiano S. Mua, Northwest Samoan section presbyter in Seattle. The Samoan contingent consisted of six presbyters and six potential church planters.

"These Samoan presbyters want to fully understand and support the work of church planters," says Scott Temple, director of the AG Office of Ethnic Relations. "The Samoan district has made an intentional determination to be more missions-minded than ever before."

The AG Samoan District, first recognized as an official body by the U.S. AG in 2014, is concentrated along the West Coast, as well as in Hawaii and Alaska. The language district has



grown to 67 churches in the U.S., up from 46 in 2015.

"Our culture doesn't try to just reach our own people," says Mua, who also pastors Samoan Community Church of Seattle. "Churches that are healthy are reaching all lost souls for Christ."

Alexander F. Ledoux, a Northern California section presbyter, agrees.

"Our churches are changing," says Ledoux, who pastors Samoan Christian Fellowship in Fairfield. "It's no longer just Samoans, but people especially from Fiji and Tonga, and Guam and Palau as well."

Ledoux is encouraging Samoan churches to add English-language songs and sermons to complement those in the native tongue.

"If we don't incorporate English into our services we're going to lose our children," says Ledoux.

THE ABCs OF SALVATION

ACCEPT that you are a sinner, and God's punishment for your sin is death and separation from God forever.

BELIEVE that Jesus paid God's price for your sin when He died on the cross.

CONFESS "Jesus, I believe You are who the Bible and history declares You are – the Son of God. I humble myself and surrender to You. Forgive me. Make me spiritually whole. Change my life. Amen."

PROF'S SON IMPACTS HOLLYWOOD

BY DEANN ALFORD

Filmmaker Brent McCorkle co-wrote, co-edited, composed the original score, and directed the second unit for the surprise hit film *I Can Only Imagine*, which earned more than \$83 million in domestic box office this spring.

The film about the best-selling Christian song of the same title stars Broadway performer J. Michael Finley and actor Dennis Quaid.

McCorkle co-edited and co-composed the music for the 2015 film *Woodlawn*. In 2012, McCorkle wrote, directed, and edited *Unconditional*, for which he also co-composed the original score.

He is the elder son of Jim McCorkle, an AG pastor who once headed the AG national youth department, and Rhonda Jo, a drama teacher. Brent McCorkle attended an AG-affiliated high school in Dallas that stressed the arts and took part in Fine Arts in drama. His aim now is to entertain mainstream audiences with excellent productions that carry positive morals.

"I think there's a cultural responsibility to heal and entertain," McCorkle says.

The best way to succeed as a filmmaker, McCorkle decided, was to learn all departments. He taught himself directing, editing, scriptwriting, and music. In "On the Lot," a 2007 reality television competition produced by Steven Spielberg and Mark Burnett, McCorkle finished 20th out of a field of 12,000 submitted films.



"Things are possible if you have a big dream," McCorkle says. "You have to dream big and have faith."

The same year McCorkle took part in "On the Lot," he worked on freelance film projects for Southwestern Assemblies of God University's marketing department, where his dad still worked as a professor. That's where he caught the attention of Rob Price, SAGU's director of Communication Arts and Digital Media Arts.

"He's getting attention from Hollywood producers, but he is one of our own — raised-in-the-pew AG rubbing shoulders with Hollywood filmmakers," Price says.

A month before the release of *I Can Only Imagine*, McCorkle showed the movie for SAGU film students in the department's screening room. He held question-and-answer sessions after a pair of viewings.

AG RESPONDS TO VOLCANO IN GUATEMALA

BY DAVID AMSLER

This is a report by David Amsler, AGWM missionary to Guatemala, concerning relief efforts following the deadly volcanic eruptions in June.

On June 3, Guatemala's Volcano Fuego erupted, spewing lahars, pyroclastic flows, lava, and ash that killed at least 114 people and left more than 192 missing.

The AG of Guatemala's National Emergency Committee (NEC) immediately leapt into action, receiving and distributing supplies directly to some of the areas affected. In the weeks since the eruption, they are focusing on areas mostly overlooked by government efforts.

Convoy of Hope brought water filters, solar powered lights, masks and, to date, have distributed over 52,000 meals to 1,356 families in nine communities.

Individuals, businesses, and churches in Guatemala have responded with an outpouring of support and donations. One Way Guatemala — our ministry focused on outreach and ministry efforts to children ages 4 through 14 — is meeting with NEC's directors to consider longer term compassion ministries to those affected when donations stop.

The Guatemalan church needs prayer regarding how best to serve hundreds of displaced and hurting people who have lost family, livelihood, property, and hope.

SMALL TOWN'S SWEET DREAMS

BY REBECCA BURTRAM

Pastor Frank A. Silverii of Hope Church in Albany, Oregon, has a vision to multiply by adding campuses where the local church can thrive. Subsequently, forming a parent-affiliated church relationship with a congregation pastored by a friend 30 miles away came naturally.

Larry Tombleson, former lead pastor of Sweet Home AG, initiated the change as he prepared to retire. After the congregation and board approved, that church became the Hope Church Sweet Home campus last fall.

Around 150 people came to each of the serve days designated to help restore the building at Sweet Home, a contractor donated the \$15,000 exterior paint job, and the campus has doubled in attendance to 65. Young families are beginning to attend.

"We are one church, two locations, four gatherings," says Mark Opperman, Sweet Home campus pastor.

Hope Church plans to officially launch at Sweet Home in October. Lead Executive Pastor Mark B. Robinson is working alongside Opperman to create a ministry plan. The leaders of both churches are working with the Church Multiplication Network and the Oregon Ministry Network.

"The church has done great things in its history, but we have the sense that bigger things are yet to come," Silverii says.

RETHINKING THE DISTRICT'S ROLE

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

For most of its 99 years of existence, the Nebraska District has functioned much like other AG geographic districts, as a top-down organization.

But Nebraska Superintendent Bob A. Wine believes such a structure can be detrimental, because it causes local congregations to be too dependent on the district offices and programs — without working with other AG pastors across the state for solutions to common problems.

"District departments have been basically operating in silos, all working on their own without engaging others," says Wine. "After nearly a century, it's time to recalibrate and to serve together."

A couple of years ago, Wine initiated steps for restructuring the district, so that local churches wouldn't be as reliant upon the district to function. In a sprawling and largely rural state — with part in the Central Time Zone and part in the Mountain Time Zone — it's already challenging for the 95 churches — one-third of them district-affiliated.

"To stop churches from dying, we needed a different way of thinking," Wine says. He wants to see local pastors be empowered to equip others in ministry, a role traditionally carried out by the district.

"For some of our churches this is a matter of survival," says Toby Schneckloth, Nebraska District youth



director. "Some churches are on life support."

Schneckloth says it's not the healthiest model for a troubled local congregation to expect the district to bail it out financially. Instead, he says other pastors across the districts should be serving as resources to one another.

"We need to develop a culture where people collaborate more with each other in relationship and best practices support," Schneckloth says. That might include video conferencing or some other type of online meeting.

Schneckloth says such a rethinking isn't designed to lessen district responsibility; rather it's about sharing responsibility.

"Our ultimate goal is that everyone will have a seat at the table and be empowered," Schneckloth says.

God was speaking to me," says Betts, who joined the church a year ago.

Since then, she has become a youth leader and regular attendee, despite a 30-minute drive. Though she admires Smith for the way he relates the Bible to everyday life, there's more that attracts her.

"The people are so loving," Betts says. "You walk in the door and leave better. They're so vulnerable and open about their life they make you feel like it doesn't matter what you've done in the past."

The son of an AG pastor, Smith grew

up about 20 miles south of Zebulon. He served as a youth pastor at two churches before he felt God calling him to return to his native area to start a church.

Christ Chapel has planted a second site in Cochran. Although it's 90 miles south, adherents periodically make the trip to Zebulon for various activities.

Although the Zebulon sanctuary only holds 625 — making three Sunday services necessary — Christ Chapel has started site preparation for a 45,000-square-foot building with a sanctuary seating 1,100.

HISPANIC UMBRELLA GROUPS UNITE

BY DEANN ALFORD

Two fraternal Latino AG organizations have merged and expanded beyond the Americas, welcoming virtually everyone in the diverse ethnicity, including those in the global diaspora, wherever they live.

Formed in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and named to reflect the global span of the organization, the Worldwide Hispanic AG Brotherhood FRAHMAD (Fraternidad Hispana Mundial Asamblea de Dios) is the union of former umbrella groups CELAD (Consejo Ejecutivo de las Asambleas de Dios), which represented AG adherents and churches in Central America and the Caribbean, and (CADSA Confraternidad Asambleas de Dios de South America), which made up those in just that continent.

The resulting organization is

stronger than its smaller predecessors, according to FRAHMAD Vice President Sergio Navarrete, superintendent of the Southern Pacific District, based in La Puente, California.

"The main purpose is to share fellowship and resources, not only locally and nationally, but now globally," Navarrete says. "By joining forces, we are planting Spanish-speaking churches worldwide and we are developing more leaders."

Among concrete ways FRAHMAD has aided this cooperation is through congresses and leadership training and development events, he says.

Navarrete points out that over 33 million adherents in the Assemblies of God — nearly half the 69 million-strong worldwide fellowship — are Hispanic.