THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY
BY GLENN W. GOHR

Having just observed Pentecost Sunday, it is fitting to remember the Pentecostal testimony of Ernest S. Williams (1885-1981) — the only participant in the Azusa Street revival who became a general superintendent of the Assemblies of God (1929-1949).

Williams led the Fellowship during a period of significant growth. During his watch, the AG opened several new Bible schools and developed programs such as the Sunday School Department, Education Department, U.S. Missions, Chaplaincy, Youth Ministries, and Speed the Light. He wrote several books on theology, taught theology courses at Central Bible Institute, and authored a "Question and Answer" column for the Pentecostal Evangel.

Throughout his ministry, Williams pointed back to his baptism in the Holy Spirit as being a defining moment in his life. In an article from 60 years ago titled, "Baptized With the Holy Spirit," E. S. Williams explained the doctrine of being baptized in the Holy Spirit from a scriptural viewpoint.

Williams wrote, "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience."

He further declared, "It was definite in the time of the early Church; it ought to be definite today."

Read “Baptized With the Holy Spirit” on page 20 of the June 9, 1957, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel online at s2.ag.org/june91957.

Read the full versions of these stories on PENews.org

SERVING GOD, SERVING PEOPLE

FROM PRISON TO PULPIT

LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION MEAL DRAWS HUNDREDS

ALASKA VISIT LASTS 43 YEARS

VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE

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The message Eric J. Earhart has preached since he started Upper Room Assembly in Gatesville, North Carolina, 15 years ago has remained constant. "I want to see people set free the way I was set free," says Earhart, who spent 42 months in prison after being convicted of cocaine trafficking.

The former shrimp boat fisherman didn’t feel capable or equipped when only two years after his release from prison he started Upper Room Assembly with half a dozen attendees. And at 49 he still doesn’t. But people are responding. Gatesville has only 300 residents, yet 120 regularly show up at the church on Sunday morning.

Upper Room is located three miles down the road from where Earhart spent his final months as an inmate.

Earhart says that two months before his release he received an epiphany from the Lord that he needed to start a church in Gates County. "I thought it was the stupidest thing I ever heard," Earhart recalls. He figured he didn’t have the right personality to be a pastor. At 6-foot-4 and possessing a booming voice and a forceful personality, Earhart sees himself as more of an evangelist who can bluntly rebuke sinners.

Nevertheless, in obedience, Earhart surrendered to the pastoral call, believing no one is more forgiven than he is. A dozen years ago Earhart married Shari Albertson, and the couple have six children, ages 10 to 3: Mitch, Mandy, Michael, Melissa, Miles, and Matthew. Shari, a former kindergarten teacher, home-schools the offspring.

Upper Room Assembly is the only mixed-race church in sparsely populated Gates County, which is 64 percent white and 33 percent black. Earhart is white, but half the volunteer leadership team, including associate pastor Arthur M. Mitchell, is African-American.

Mitchell, 42, spent time in the same regional correctional facility Earhart did earlier. Mitchell says he sensed an instant rapport when Earhart came to preach at the penitentiary. Mitchell began attending Upper Room on

**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."

**URBAN TRIBES: REACHING AFRICA’S METROPOLITAN MILLIONS**

AGWM COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR ANDY RAATZ SHARES INSIGHTS TO A DIVERSE AND RAPIDLY CHANGING AFRICA.

The richness of Africa lies in its people, belonging to hundreds of tribes and speaking a symphony of languages across the continent. In fact, the cultures and tribes of Africa — Maasai, Zulu, Xhosa, Oromo, and so many others — have historically been the true boundaries within the continent.

However, the 21st century has brought a new reality in Africa: tribes or ethnic groups no longer remain isolated in a particular geographical location. Mass movement is taking place, particularly to the urban centers.

Africa is urbanizing faster than anywhere else. The major African cities have blended cultures and tribes, mixing them across a variety of economic scales. They are no longer defined by their historic tribal identity, but instead are forming new “urban tribes,” mosaic groups that are beginning to shape Africa’s cities and the continent at large. They are educated and globally aware, and they are creating their own set of values and cultural identities.

Africa’s people are changing and God is leading a wave of missional change so that all may hear the gospel.

AGWM’s church planting initiative in Africa has been titled Urban Tribes. The pre-launch process involved conversations with uprooted people, eye-opening meetings that unveiled the growing need, divine encounters, and the nudging of the Holy Spirit. It culminated in a vision to reach a new segment of Africa, a new “tribe” of unchurched people.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Africa’s urban centers are of the new tribe — the urban tribe. For the most part, they haven’t found a church that speaks their language, speaks to their culture, speaks the gospel in a way they understand. They haven’t found a church where they can have community, be discipled, and have their worldview reshaped by God.

But the need has been seen, and the Lord is calling people to respond!
Way of Life Church (Iglesia Camino de Vida) looks beyond traditions to reach a younger generation in Phoenix. When Pastor Burke Montoya arrived in 2006, the church had about 100 people attending. Way of Life now hosts more than 350 people each weekend, and has grown by altering traditional views about volunteer service.

Seven years ago, Way of Life Church began an outreach to provide food and clothing to those in need. Organizers hoped that recipients whose physical need had been met on Saturday would respond to an invitation to have their spiritual concerns addressed at a Sunday church service. Two years ago, the church shifted its paradigm.

“We changed our mentality from focusing on trying to get them to come to service on Sunday,” says Montoya. “We brought Sunday to them.”

The Saturday outreach is now a worship service. Individuals receive free clothing prior to the meeting; participate in worship, teaching, and time at the altar; and leave with food. On a typical Saturday, around 125 individuals attend.

Church leaders also switched their views on the qualifications of who can serve.

Burke, concerned by statistics on young adults leaving the church, recognized they needed to see an opportunity to make a difference.

“Unless young adults are living out their faith through service and making some kind of impact on the life of someone else, the Sunday church experience will not be enough, no matter how dynamic it is,” Burke says.

Formerly only those who had obtained a certain level of respect and status in the church by demonstrating an exemplary lifestyle could be in positions of service.

“You can’t force change, but if they are hearing the Word and being convicted, not condemned, people realize they can’t serve effectively without putting Christ first in their lives,” Burke says.

A new national study suggests the overwhelming majority of church contributors overestimate the amount they give to their local congregation.

The analysis by Grey Matter Research and Opinions 4 Good found 88 percent of 1,000 charitable donors across the U.S. believe they are giving a higher percentage of income than they really are contributing. The average donor quoted a figure 331 percent higher than actuality.

The Donor Mindset Study tracked offerings to congregations over a 12-month period. While the typical American gives 3.2 percent of household income to charitable causes (including 1.9 percent of that to church), the average contributor estimated his or her individual payments at 8.4 percent. Although just 4 percent of households tithe in reality, 38 percent claim they give one-tenth of income.

The donor study also noted a disconnect from reality in that 60 percent of donors thought they gave more than the average contributor.

“I think there is some unintentional lying going on,” Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research, told PE News. “There is a lot of cluelessness, a lack of awareness, about what is actually given.”

The study reveals that while 60 percent actually gave less than 1 percent of their income to charities, the proportion who believe they gave that little is just 7 percent.

Driving up the rugged Alaska Highway from his home in Washington state in 1974, David Arestad looked forward to a short-term mission near Fairbanks. As a Bible school student, he signed up for the summer months only.

“I guess the Lord had other intentions,” Arestad says.

Now, 43 years later, Arestad still resides in Alaska, but as the head chaplain at the maximum-security Spring Creek Correctional Center (SCCC) in Seward.

“What drew me to prison ministry was seeing men basically warehoused behind bars and forgotten,” he says. “They need Jesus.”

Arestad joined Spring Creek as its first full-time paid chaplain in 2012. He is one of only three professional chaplains employed in Alaska’s entire correctional system. The majority of the 500 inmates at SCCC are hardcore felons convicted of violent crimes and serving lengthy terms.

As head chaplain, Arestad oversees counseling, chapel services, crisis intervention, music events, Bible studies, and managing volunteers from the community. He also monitors a separate multifaith dorm housing 53 inmates, most of whom are Christians.

“Jesus tells us to go into the prisons to reach the down and out,” he says.
Sunday morning release passes. He now is director of Upper Room’s prison ministry. Mitchell says he admires Earhart for persevering in assisting others to find their God-given purpose. “Others have invested in me, but Eric is the one who stayed in the trenches with me when I seemed like a lost cause,” Mitchell says.

Joshua E. Smith likewise appreciates Earhart for mentoring him. Smith, 26, has been living in an apartment above Earhart’s garage since October 2015, the last time he used heroin. Smith first attended Upper Room Assembly in 2014 while on probation.

“They have helped me by constantly encouraging me, teaching me more about the Word and how to live as a Christian, and giving me a place to stay,” Smith says. “The people at Upper Room Assembly have been a big part of turning my life around.”

Initially, Earhart let Smith work as a janitor at the church. Three months later, in January 2016, Smith found a job at a McDonald’s restaurant in Ahoskie, and it’s his longest employment stretch ever. He also is near to finishing an associate’s degree in business administration at Roanoke-Chowan Community College.

“Very Important People”

BY CHRIS MAXWELL

Nathaniel Kuck only lived four years on earth. During his brief life, various health issues limited his abilities. But, 15 years after his death, Nathaniel still brings hope to many.

The boy’s parents — Tim, chief operating officer of Regal Marine, and Marie, an ordained AG minister started Nathaniel’s Hope in 2002 after Nathaniel’s death. Through their personal experiences, Tim and Marie saw how demanding raising a child with special needs can be. Now, Nathaniel’s Hope provides free practical assistance for families with children who have special needs: those with any physical, cognitive, or medical disabilities, as well as those with chronic or life-threatening illnesses.

“We call kids with special needs VIP — Very Important People — because we hate the word disabled and handicapped to be used,” Marie says. “These are God’s kids who are uniquely created with value and purpose.”

Nathaniel’s Hope has trained people in over 150 churches in 23 states.

Last Christmas, Nathaniel’s Toy Shop helped over 5,000 VIP kids and their siblings receive presents. Nathaniel’s Hope National VIP Birthday Club hosts 12,000 VIP kids from 48 states and seven countries.

The organization’s Buddy Break trains church volunteers to provide respite care and ongoing support.

“One of the greatest needs that special needs families have is to get a break,” Marie says.

The Kucks train volunteers to be equipped to welcome VIP kids on Sunday mornings.

“A practical thing you can do when you encounter a child or person with a disability is just say hello,” Marie says. “Churches must decide to be intentional to welcome kids with special needs.”

LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION MEAL DRAWS HUNDREDS

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Hundreds of law enforcement officers were recently treated to an all-you-can-eat steak and pulled pork appreciation meal courtesy of the Assemblies of God Chaplaincy Department, U.S. Missions, Central Assembly of God (Springfield, Missouri) and the Southern Missouri District.

The invitation for the Law Enforcement Appreciation “Steak Out” was sent to all Springfield-area law enforcement officers, including Springfield Police Department, Greene County Sheriff’s Department, U.S. Marshals, FBI, DEA, and Secret Service.

The event was held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 25, with a steady stream of officers entering the facility throughout the afternoon.

Chaplain Manuel Cordero, senior director of Chaplaincy Ministries, said more than 200 officers from at least six agencies participated.

“We wanted to show the love of Christ to these public servants,” Cordero said.

“The vast majority in Springfield support law enforcement,” said Jonna Welch, 24, a Springfield police officer, “but we’re typically dealing with that 2 percent that don’t, over and over again . . . this really helps remind me and other officers that we have support.”

Cordero hopes that news of this effort will inspire other churches and districts to do something similar for their law enforcement personnel.