THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY
BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

D. W. Kerr, an Assemblies of God executive presbyter who served as the primary drafter of the AG’s “Statement of Fundamental Truths,” wrote an article challenging early Pentecostals. According to Kerr, spirituality should not be divorced from work. Pentecostal spirituality should be so all-encompassing that it makes a positive impact upon the labors of the faithful. Kerr disagreed with the notion that religion should be separate from “social, domestic, or business affairs.”

Drawing from Scripture, Kerr identified qualities that should describe Pentecostals: “prompt and punctual, courteous and obliging, tender and affectionate, affable and sober, devoted and self-sacrificing.”

He added, Pentecostal engaged in business should also be full of “vision, action, and determination,” demonstrating humility and dependence upon God.

Kerr wrote, “whether in the home, or society; or on the busy thoroughfares, and commercial centers; whether at the accountant’s desk, or on the board of exchange; or in the places of barter, buying and selling and getting gain; that in all these places . . . a Pentecostal businessman can adorn himself and his calling.”

Read Kerr’s article, “A Pentecostal Businessman,” on pages 8 and 11 of the June 11, 1921, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel online at s2.ag.org/june111921.
Jim Heugal, provost at Northwest University (AG) in Kirkland, Washington, offers insights to the benefits students enjoy when they attend a Christian college or university (more info at colleges.ag.org).

For many Christian students who want an education that prepares them to make a difference for God’s kingdom, a private Christian university should be considered the most prestigious and best.

The faith-based community
A college education doesn’t happen in isolation. It is a group process involving students, faculty, campus ministries, and student development personnel. Indeed, a large part of the learning happens outside the classroom. So the community one chooses to be part of during this process is critical to the quality of both the experience and the outcome. When this community is made up of fellow believers, something supernatural and utterly joyful takes place.

Relating academics to faith
The faculty at faith-based universities devote much of their thought and effort to giving students the intellectual and theological tools to pull together every aspect of life — personal and public, worship and scholarship, family and work — into a unified whole. It is only in the Christian university that every aspect of every subject, including faith, can be fully explored.

Being your authentic self
In secular schools, Christian students often feel like outsiders when their faith leads them to take an approach to identity development that is at odds with their professors or peers. At faith-based universities, students are free to fully live out God’s calling and to bring their whole person to every aspect of their education.

Sarah Lawton’s life took an irreversible turn as she drove down a back road in Cobleskill, New York, on Dec. 29, 2010.

While en route to visit friends, she lost control of her car and crashed into a building on the side of the road. Daughter Kaylee, then 3, sustained only a bruised lip. Younger daughter Kiera, 10 months, miraculously escaped unscathed.

However, the impact of the wreck caused major head trauma to Sarah. Doctors told her husband, Sean, then serving as the family life pastor at Calvary Assembly of God in Cobleskill, New York, that his wife might not survive the operation.

Sarah survived, and spent 10 days in a medically induced coma at the medical center’s intensive care unit. Sarah spent five weeks beginning to learn how to walk, talk, and live again.

Returning home, Sarah continued outpatient rehabilitation at a nearby facility. Meanwhile, the family adjusted to the new reality of a wife and mother who was much different than the one last in the house 10 weeks earlier.

The family moved in with Lawton’s parents, who took care of the children throughout the week, as Sarah continued her recovery.

“Who my wife was died in that accident,” Sean says. “Everything is different.”

Sarah had good and bad days, and often forgot how to perform simple functions she had learned the day before. She struggled with making decisions and controlling her emotions.

A year after the crash, Sean joined the staff of Bethel Full Gospel AG in Schenectady. He spent three years there, preparing to plant a church in Scotia, New York.

“You can’t wait for a perfect situation to do what God calls you to do,” he says. “When God says go, you’ve got to go.”

Sarah gave birth to the couple’s third daughter, Katherine. A friend paid the mortgage on their home for a year when the Lawtons couldn’t make ends meet.

T H E A B C s O F S A L V A T I O N

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 humbly myself and surrender to You. Forgive me. Make me spiritually whole. Change my life. Amen.”
The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), of which the Assemblies of God is a member, is urging churches to commit to a time of prayer for “our hearts and the nation” during their worship services on July 10.

Called Pray Together Sunday, the NAE call to prayer kicks off the week leading up to Together 2016—a national campaign, endorsed by the Assemblies of God, to bring 1 million people to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for a day of worship and prayer on Saturday, July 16.

In order to highlight Pray Together Sunday, the NAE has created a free bulletin insert that features six specific points of prayer, along with other resources and Together 2016 information online at nae.net/praytogether.

“Bringing together one million people at the National Mall for prayer makes a statement,” observes AG General Superintendent George O. Wood. “But imagine the exponential impact if millions more paved the way by lifting this event up to the Lord in prayer, that He would do the miraculous at and through Together 2016! I encourage every church to set aside time to seek God on behalf of ‘our hearts and the nation’ on July 10.”

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DEAF CHURCH SEES GOD SPEAK
BY PATTI TOWNLEY-COVERT

Little Tom Jackson didn’t know why the Holy Spirit began impressing the need to learn sign language upon him. Out of obedience, Jackson bought some books and learned as many words as possible. Then, he says the Holy Spirit nudged him to go back to college, and he enrolled in an American Sign Language (ASL) English interpretation program.

After he became the pastor of Oak Brook Community Deaf Church in Illinois in 2011, Jackson says he realized why God wanted him to learn about deaf culture.

An attendee of Oak Brook Community Deaf Church since 2009, Marlene Clemens says she appreciates Jackson’s ability to communicate using ASL. Her husband, Kyle, agrees, saying having a pastor who knows sign language helps them stay focused on God’s Word. The small congregation of about 30 also benefits from PowerPoint presentations.

A deaf person at church taught Jackson’s wife, Jenna, to sign. As a communications coach and administrator, Jenna usually works behind the scenes responding to God’s call “to help people see themselves as God sees them.”

For many of the deaf, finding a job that reinforces this positive self-image isn’t easy.

“The majority of the deaf community only have a fifth-grade education,” Jackson says. Hearing parents tend to shelter deaf children and may not teach them important life concepts, he says.

Using Scriptures, Jackson coaches church members on their responsibilities, encouraging them to become leaders.

Those raised in institutions are often taught to be suspicious of hearing people. Before they can receive the Holy Spirit, they may need to break free from that prejudice, according to Jackson. In addition, Jackson says the deaf often are taught that if they sign ASL, they shouldn’t speak out loud.

Jenna has been delighted to hear the deaf use their voices while speaking in tongues.

“We’re all so much alike,” she says.

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FINDING SHEEP IN THE METROPLEX
BY DEANN ALFORD

Victorville (California) First Assembly of God, a six-campus church with a presence in five surrounding communities and attendance of 3,100, helps meet the needs and break the cycle of poverty and misery by serving the metroplex population of 400,000.

Twice a month, residents can receive protein, produce, and bread through the food pantry Victorville AG founded nine years ago called Feed My Sheep.

Feed My Sheep is a U.S. Department of Agriculture-approved food bank, the largest in the high desert of Southern California. Three times each week in rotation at its Victorville, Hesperia, and Apple Valley campuses, Feed My Sheep distributes pallets of commodities it receives from the government food program and the nonprofit organization Second Harvest, plus national chain stores and restaurants.

Around three-dozen church volunteers keep the operation running by distributing the goods, praying with people in line, and inviting them to church Bible studies, events, and ministries. The outreach feeds more than 700 families per week.

“The biggest word is hope,” says Wayne Boyd, outreach pastor and director of Feed My Sheep. “This is a helping hand, coming alongside what they’re doing in their own lives, helping them make their ends meet.”

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NAE URGES CHURCHES TO “PRAY TOGETHER”
BY DAN VAN VEEN

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“Grandparent” isn’t a word that first comes to most people’s minds when describing a children’s pastor, but for Gilbert and Maritza Ceballos, children’s ministers at Sheffield Family Life Center (SFLC) in Kansas City, Missouri, it works just fine. These 50-somethings will likely be great-grandparents (and then some) before they step away from children’s ministry.

The Ceballoses have led children’s ministries programs in Assemblies of God churches across the country for three decades, driven to share with kids what they didn’t have as children — a knowledge of and a love for Christ.

“Kids come into our building and they see what life can be like,” Maritza says. “They see young people modeling what it means to be a man or a woman of God. In the two years we’ve been here, the children’s ministry has doubled in size to over 400 every Sunday.”

Last year, Sarah gained acceptance into a day program for people with traumatic brain injuries, as well as a therapeutic intervention program designed to assist with retraining thinking skills.

Sarah has made much progress because of the programs, Sean says, and her verbal skills are quite good. Yet Sarah still struggles to recall her identity. Memories from before the accident are limited, and she doesn’t recognize many past events.

“Right now we’re kind of old,” Lee says, laughing. “I will serve the Lord until He calls me home.”

Still based in Minnesota, Lee began a radio broadcast called Voice of Hope that today reaches Hmong people around the world. He and May Lee work with over 100 churches internationally to reach Hmong people with the gospel. They provide materials and teachings to pastors, most of them without a formal education. The broadcasts are conducted over FM and AM radio, as well as online.

As with his own family, Lee says Hmong people often have to see God work miraculously before they believe in Jesus as Savior.

“I just preach the gospel and they call,” Lee says. “Some people are very sick or are possessed by demons. They call me and ask me to pray for them.”

Tou Pheng Lee says he has promised his 70-year-old dad that he will continue preaching to Hmong people through the radio ministry after Gia Tou Lee is gone.

“Right now we’re kind of old,” Lee says, laughing. “I will serve the Lord until He calls me home.”

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When people ask if the Ceballoses think they’re too old for children’s ministry, they laugh. “So many people think children’s ministry is only for young people,” Gilbert says. “But with age comes experience — and you not only need experience, but the right kind of experience.”

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