

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

Hillcrest Children's Home, an Assemblies of God ministry located in Hot Springs, Arkansas, was founded in 1944 in obedience to the scriptural mandate to care for orphans (James 1:27).

Edward Weaver, director of Hillcrest Children's Home, posed the following question to readers of the *Pentecostal Evangel* on Father's Day in 1956: "It's nice to have children to remember you on Father's Day – but how would you like to provide for 70 of them every day?"

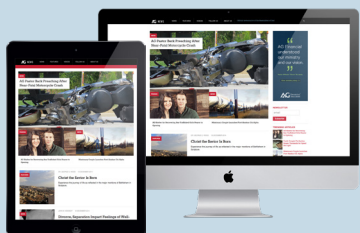
Hillcrest began as the vision of Gladys Hinson who was disappointed that she was unable to serve on the foreign mission field. Unable to open an orphanage in China due to World War II, she approached AG leaders with the idea of opening a nationally supported home to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of America's most vulnerable children. Approval was given and ideal property was soon found in Hot Springs, the birthplace of the Assemblies of God.



Just like her inspiration, missionary Lillian Trasher, Gladys Hinson cared for children who were neglected or forgotten by others. Hillcrest Children's Home continues to operate today under CompACT Family Services (compactfamilyservices.org).



Read Weaver's Father's Day request on page 16 of the June 17, 1956, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/june171956.

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DESTROYS CHURCH**

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MENTORING UNDER 40 LEADERS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Gary Wayne Grogan retired in December 2016 after leading Stone Creek Church for 29 years. While leading the congregation in Urbana, Illinois, Grogan, affectionately known as "Papa G," also mentored dozens of young pastors around the country.

Even before Grogan retired, Illinois District Council Superintendent Phil B. Schneider asked him if he would consider an ongoing arrangement of mentoring young pastors around the state. Grogan agreed to a consultant role approved by district presbyters.

The need to encourage young pastors isn't specific to Illinois. The number of Assemblies of God ministers under 40 has been declining gradually all century. Even with a record number of credential holders, the average age of an ordained minister in the U.S. Assemblies of God is at an all-time high of 60. Half of the more than 37,600 AG ministers are 60 or older. Only 21.2 percent of AG ministers are under age 40, an all-time low.

"The problem is not that our ministers are getting older," says Grogan, 66. "The problem is we are not getting and keeping new ones. Our young people are not going in the ministry, not staying in the ministry, or not staying in our tribes. We have to be more intentional about young men and women in leadership."

Grogan says the new post is loosely structured and designed to be highly



relational. His role is to assist district leaders in mentoring, coaching, and being a spiritual father to budding ministers. This is accomplished through team collaboration, intentional events, and personal contacts. One day Grogan may facilitate a face-to-face session with a half a dozen ministry leaders, and the next day he will mentor others over the phone.

Part of Grogan's job is simply to help younger ministers develop healthy work habits: managing time, developing church budgets, leading meetings, casting vision.

Scott D. Love has been a licensed AG minister in Illinois since 2005, serving as a church planter, youth pastor, and campus pastor. Love now is associate pastor at Christian Life Fellowship in Antioch. He connected

INVITATION LEADS TO SALVATION

BY DEANN ALFORD

When Jessie Taft was growing up in Burleson, Texas, life didn't include church. Her parents stopped going before Jessie's birth.

In 2011, a neighbor called Jessie's husband, Forrest, a plumber, to fix her shower and ended up inviting the family to Lifegate Burleson. As the worship leader sang "The Great I AM," Taft says Jesus touched her heart. She committed her life to Jesus.

The Tafts found themselves drawn even more deeply into service and studying God's Word. Jessie joined the worship team and invited her parents, Cecil and Jody Johnson, to the church.

Today her parents lead a Lifegroup together, and Jody works in the nursery. Additionally, Jessie reached out to her sister, Terra, with whom she had had a falling out three years earlier. They reconnected and forgave each other. Terra began attending Lifegate as well.

Chad M. Benson, 41, Lifegate's senior pastor, says that family's story isn't uncommon.

"We reach them with relationships, through people in the church who have natural

relationships with one another, creating a culture and community environment," Benson says. Benson and his wife, Amber, the executive pastor, planted Lifegate in 2006. Church attendance now averages around 500 in three weekend services.

Today Taft is Lifegate's church administrator. She credits the church for her own transformation and that of her entire family. Each member has become a fully devoted follower of Christ. Forrest leads the men's group and volunteers with Life Kids and attends camp with the couple's son, Dayton. Together the Tafts lead a Life Group. Their daughter, Caydence, works with the children's ministry and is part of the youth worship team. Dayton just started volunteering with Life Kids as well.



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."

MISSIONARY URBAN ENCOURAGERS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Sharon L. Thomas vividly remembers her father's "war spells." Almost anything could trigger his temper eruptions that instantly transported him back to fighting Japanese during World War II, a condition now recognized as post-traumatic stress disorder. Sharon's mother, Bertha, and Sharon's seven siblings, six of them younger, lived in terror.

John Cornish was a mean, abusive alcoholic who wouldn't seek employment. The family of 10, which didn't have indoor plumbing, lived on \$320 monthly welfare checks. John beat up Bertha two or three times a week, undeterred by the children screaming and pleading for him to stop. Even in his drunken state, John lined up his children on the property and shot objects out of their hands — or off their heads — with guns.

Through all the ordeals, Bertha faithfully took the children to Family Worship Center in El Dorado, Kansas. At night, Bertha sang hymns with her children. Sharon Sometimes retreated to the yard and recited memorized Scripture during her father's drunken rampages.

At church, Sharon met Tim L. Thomas, and the two went to Central Bible College. They have been married almost half a century.

Bertha Cornish died of cancer when her youngest child was 3. Even with her wife bedridden, John continued to



pummel her. John suffered a fatal heart attack eight months after his wife died. Despite being embittered toward their father, all but one of the eight Cornish children went into ministry.

For the past 29 years, Tim and Sharon have served as U.S. missionaries, primarily planting inner-city churches in Chicago. Since 2010, the Thomases have worked with 40 urban missionary families as national liaison. They encourage and mentor via phone calls, texting, Facebook, and personal visits to missionaries in 25 cities, from Los Angeles to Boston.

"We counsel, we coach, we mentor, we pray with them," says Tim, 68. "Our role is to affirm and to encourage them. Many young people come to the city with a lot of zeal, only to leave defeated a couple of years later. "People aren't lining up to go into tough and dangerous inner-city neighborhoods. Those who do are specifically called."

THE OVERCOMERS WIN JBQ TITLE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

For the second time in four years, a Junior Bible Quiz (JBQ) team from Braeswood Assembly of God in Houston has come away as national champions at the National JBQ Festival held at Faith Assembly of God in Orlando, Florida.

The Overcomers went 8-1 in the top flight of quiz teams during the second and final day of the 33rd annual competition to secure the title, edging out second place Knight 4 Christ — Salvation from Monmouth, New Jersey (7-2), and third place Naperville (Illinois) D, which also finished 7-2.

Precious Cyrus-David, 12, led The Overcomers in scoring, finishing eighth overall in individual points, with 2,580. Teammates Priscilla Adu-Gyamfi, 11 (1,475 points) and Garen Umukoro, 10, (900 points) rounded out the team.

The overall individual performer was Remiel Brigilin of Knights 4 Christ — Salvation with 2,975 points, followed by David Biruduganti of Naperville D with 2955, and Reagan Stevens of Naperville S with 2,675 points.

Lindsay Marwil, 61, the JBQ coordinator for Braeswood AG, says the kids studied hard, but it was good coaches and parent involvement at all levels, that exceeded anything he's ever seen, that made the difference for the team.

The 2019 National JBQ Festival is slated for Tucson, Arizona.

OPEN DOORS DESPITE GANG LINES

Following is a report from Kenton Moody, an AGWM missionary in El Salvador:

For the past three years, La Puerta Abierta (Open Door Church) has been on the dividing line between the infamous MS-13 and 18th Street gangs in Santa Ana, El Salvador. Despite being told our church could never have success because the people would not cross gang lines, we have found that not to be true.

Our church has more than 100 youth and about 125 children who attend our four weekly services. We've never had an issue. Our walls have never been painted with graffiti. No one has ever tried to break into the church or rob anyone.

Hundreds of people visit our campus each week. Our medical/dental clinic at the church serves the local area with excellent care, charging a minimal price for the services. Those who can't afford it get free care sponsored by the church. We also have built more than 400 small homes for needy families, and gang members have helped us build the homes.

El Salvador is one of the most dangerous countries in the world due to gang-on-gang violence. Yet God has given us great favor and many wonderful opportunities.

This is the hand of God. Our team members are simply His instruments.



FREEDOM FROM SEX TRAFFICKING

BY DAN VAN VEEN

What began as one man wanting to do something memorable to mark his 30th birthday two years ago has since become an international event. This year, Brent Silkey's 30 for Freedom was held on May 26 and saw 750 people in 11 chapters on four continents work to raise more than \$153,000 (and counting) to help end sex trafficking.

Silkey, the director of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries in St. Paul, Minnesota, began this journey by wanting to run one mile for each year of his life. After receiving an unsolicited donation, it inspired him to create 30 for Freedom, where he sought out pledges for each mile he ran (30) to benefit anti-sex trafficking efforts by AG ministries, including Project Rescue and F.R.E.E. International. He opened the doors for others to join him, not knowing his personal 30-mile run would catch the imaginations of dozens, then scores, and now hundreds of others. To date, they have raised more than \$400,000.

A key partner for Silkey has been Venture.org — an organization that helps individuals and groups raise funds to help ministries and

missionaries, especially those involved in helping end sex trafficking. Founded by three AG college students, last year the organization helped raise \$3.7 million.

Although not all participants run 30 miles to raise funds, individuals do what they're capable of doing — from a 5K to an Ironman. Silkey says the idea isn't just about raising the money, but doing something uncomfortable — something that takes sacrifice to prepare for — on the behalf of those who are truly suffering, some in unspeakable ways.

Kirby St. John, district Youth director for Minnesota, has been involved with 30 for Freedom from its start, and says Minnesota is fortunate to have a guy like Silkey and believes the effort will only continue to grow.

"My 6-year-old nephew ran the 5K with his dad," St. John recalls. "Every day, when they would go for their training run, he would ask, 'Dad are we going to save someone today? Are we going to rescue someone today?' Even at that age, he was already beginning to catch the vision of why we're doing what we're doing."

with Grogan last October at a leadership conference. Grogan — who has preached in more than 50 nations — quickly invited Love along to a weeklong leadership training event in Cuba. Love had been praying to participate in such an overseas ministry opportunity.

Since being saved 20 years ago at City First Church in Rockford, Love says he's had several mentors, but most have been peers. Papa G proved to be different.

"He instantly became a father figure

I can respect," says Love, 36. "He invested in me on that trip, and not just by conforming to all the formulas that are out there. He imparted genuine wisdom from the Lord."

Now, Love says he can reach out to Grogan when he's facing a difficult decision or he needs an elder's perspective.

"He's going to listen to what's going on with me, pray with me, and really join with me in asking the Holy Spirit for direction," Love says. "I can't get that in an online resource."

BURNING BUSH DESTROYS CHURCH

BY DAN VAN VEEN

When Faith Assembly of God in Pine River, Minnesota, caught fire on May 23, it appears a bush outside of the building was the source.

Tim Walker, who has led the church for nearly 19 years, surmises that perhaps a cigarette was tossed into the bush. His wife, Lisa, had been in the building just 30 minutes prior to the fire being reported that afternoon and hadn't seen any indications of a fire.

The church's main sanctuary and youth area were destroyed. The remainder of the building suffered extensive smoke and water damage and was declared a total loss.

The community of about 1,000 quickly rallied around the church. "Before we left the fire scene, every church in our community had contacted us offering some kind of tangible support and help," Walker



says.

Even though the loss is heartfelt by the church and community, there is also a growing sense of excitement about what the future holds.

"I used an illustration in this week's sermon," Walker says. "When you run a marathon, there are people positioned along the course to offer water and energy bars. Those resources are all prepositioned. I just showed our congregation how God has prepositioned so many things to help us through this journey."