

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY GLENN W. GOHR

William Theodore (W.T) Gaston (1886-1956) was a general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. Born in Boone County, Arkansas, he converted at an early age and felt the call of God on his life.

As a teenager, he began testifying and witnessing, eventually becoming an evangelist. At age 20 he married Artie Mattox. Gaston started out in full-time ministry at the age of 23. He participated in many early camp meetings, including the organizational meeting of the AG at Hot Springs in April 1914. In addition to evangelistic work, Gaston also pastored churches in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, and California.

After serving as general superintendent from 1925 to 1929, he pastored again in California. In 1944, he was elected district superintendent for Northern California and Nevada, where he served until his death in 1956.

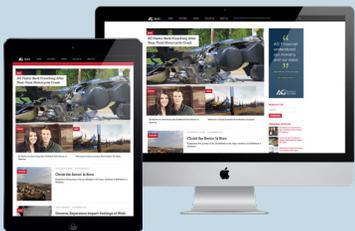
Gaston was noted for his generosity and for his encouragement and instruction of young ministers. He extolled the value of a solid Bible



education, yet he emphasized that “we can only learn to preach by preaching.” He also stressed that a person in ministry must have the calling and anointing of God in order to succeed.

Read more in “Helps and Hints for Christian Workers” on pages 5 and 7 of the June 8, 1929, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/june81929.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2019

AG NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM NEWS.AG.ORG

**STATE OF THE
PENTECOSTAL
MOVEMENT**

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FULLY PRO-LIFE

**EASTER RELAUNCH
BOOSTS CHURCH**



STATE OF THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

BY DONNA BARRETT

The Assemblies of God is part of the fastest-growing movement in the history of Christianity: the Pentecostal movement.

From humble beginnings at the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906, the Pentecostal and charismatic movement now numbers more than 660 million people globally.

I've often been intrigued by stories from great moves of God. The only AG general superintendent to attend the Azusa Street Revival was E. S. Williams. His recollections painted a vivid picture of people seeking God with great fervor.

"Prayer and worship were everywhere," Williams later recalled. "The altar area was filled with seekers; some were kneeling; others were prone on the floor."

We can rejoice that the revival he described continues. Perhaps the growth of the Pentecostal movement should not have come as a surprise. When Jesus promised another

Comforter in the Gospel of John, He said that the Spirit would point people to Him. Indeed, a Spirit-empowered life truly does focus on pointing people toward Christ.

One of the remarkable trends I've noticed in Assemblies of God history is persistence in the midst of impossible circumstances.

In the greatest financial disaster in modern history — the Great Depression — missions giving did not decrease. In fact, giving to Assemblies of God missions nearly doubled during the course of the Great Depression.

During the global turbulence of the Second World War, church growth did not stagnate. The global footprint of the Assemblies of God doubled in the six years of war.

These cases are not historical anomalies. They are consistent patterns of God moving His Church forward to reach a lost world.

Today, the Assemblies of God is represented around the world by more

AG CHAPLAIN HEADS ARMY CLERGY

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

The first AG chaplain to become chief of chaplains for the U.S. Army took over the position on May 30. Thomas L. Solhjem is the 25th Army chief of chaplains, a post inaugurated 99 years ago.

Solhjem, 62, had been deputy chief of chaplains since 2015. Just before assuming his new duties, Solhjem received a promotion to major general, the highest rank available to chaplains.

Scott McChrystal, AG military chaplain representative and endorser, says Solhjem has made enormous contributions to the Army Chaplain Corps, especially in the area of ministry to the special operations community.

"I particularly appreciate that his background includes duty as an enlisted soldier," says McChrystal, who attended the promotion ceremony in Fort Myer, Virginia. "Chaplain Solhjem knows how to communicate effectively across the spectrum, from private to general, and to civilians as well."

The AG has 106 Army chaplains. Overall, there are around 2,900 chaplains in the U.S. Army.

Solhjem has been an AG chaplain since 1988. He deployed a combined 68 months, including as command chaplain in both Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom. His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with four oak leaf clusters, and the Meritorious Service Medal with five oak leaf clusters.

A native of North Dakota, Solhjem enlisted in 1973 at the age of 17 and then went on active duty after high school graduation, becoming one of the first to join the all-volunteer Army following the end of the draft in the waning days of the Vietnam War.

In 1977, Solhjem married childhood friend Jill Walberg. The couple's three sons — B.J., Thad, and Sam — followed their father into the military.

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."



FULLY PRO-LIFE

BY CINDI BOSTON

This opinion piece is written by Cindi Boston, vice president Heartbeat International in Columbus, Ohio.

Elected officials, Hollywood stars and producers, and the like are regularly accusing us of misleading pregnant women or “forcing” them to have their babies. Because they’ve had media dominance, they appear to be winning. But it’s all been quietly changing.

There is a quiet but dedicated majority hard at work.

Heartbeat International pregnancy centers have been a pivot point of refuge for more than 40 years, with nearly 1,600 Heartbeat pregnancy centers throughout the U.S. These centers not only surround women with free pregnancy-related services, they offer services like:

- Long-term life coaching.

Professionals and volunteers make a tremendous impact on the way women view their world and their life goals.

- Motherhood classes. Learning opportunities such as nutrition education, biblical parenthood, and everything in between help prepare moms for their role.

- Fatherhood programming. Some pregnancy centers have a series of daddy classes along with personal

growth classes in a Christian setting. These prepare expectant dads, from diapering to their vital role as a dad.

- Education. From GED tests to college prep classes, pregnancy centers provide essential coursework that springboards pregnant moms and expectant dads to better employment opportunities.

- Practical resources. Most centers provide basic life resources such as maternity supplies, baby clothing and equipment, diapers and wipes, personal care items, and food supplies that make a difference in a woman’s ability to choose life for her baby.

Every day, women walk into their neighborhood pregnancy help center — they may be homeless, in college, have a job, or working on a degree. But these pregnant women can’t see the future because world of despair and crisis fills their vision. When a prospective mother arrives at a pregnancy center, she gets a free pregnancy test and, if pregnant, a follow-up ultrasound. She also receives services from a caring team who will help put shoes on her children’s feet, fill their pantry, help her enroll in college, fix her car, and catch up on utility payments — all the while showing the love of Christ.

LOOKING FOR A NEW DAY

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Joshua L. Hochstetler is ready for New Day Assembly to live up to its name. Hochstetler has been lead pastor of the Perry, Iowa, congregation for almost four years.

The congregation is small, around 60 attendees on average, but Hochstetler is encouraged by the opportunity to influence children and youth. Hochstetler notes that a child who started attending Junior Bible Quiz on Wednesday nights initially couldn’t read well and received poor grades in public school. Now he is better student because of his thirst for knowledge spurred by JBQ.

Hochstetler, 44, served as associate pastor at the church for 13 years before taking over as lead pastor. When he came in 2002, the average congregant age was 60; now it’s 30. Almost half the attendees have come since Hochstetler became lead pastor.

Perry is in a demographic shift. Although nearly 80 percent of Perry residents registered as white in the 2010 U.S. Census, more than 40 percent of the town is now Hispanic, in large part because of a Tyson Foods pork plant that employs 1,200 workers.

Teresa Wilkinson, 67, who is part of the church worship team, has noticed changes. Wilkinson, a licensed mental health therapist working in local schools, says around 50 percent of children enrolled are Hispanic.

PASTOR GIVEN VICTORY OVER FEAR

BY CINDY J. THOMAS

Jeff and Tiffany Wendt planted Canvas Church in Northfield, Minnesota, in 2011. The Wendt family — which included three young children when the church started — had grown by two more in 2016 when Tiffany received a diagnosis of stage 3 breast cancer.

The cancer turned out to be aggressive, so Wendt’s doctors developed a treatment protocol of chemotherapy to shrink the tumor, followed by a double mastectomy, more chemotherapy, radiation, and finally reconstructive surgery.

Unprecedented apprehension crept in for Wendt, who admits to having little patience before dealing with fearful and anxious people. Wendt relied on a journal of Scriptures about healing and God’s promises..

“Fear rushed in that I wouldn’t see my kids grow up,” Wendt recalls. “I was visualizing missed weddings and grandkids.” But after crying out to God, peace replaced fear.

Small groups at Canvas Church stepped up to provide meals, do laundry, and shovel snow. Amazingly, the support of friends helped Wendt to continue in ministry throughout her treatments.

She credits her husband and adherents of the church for taking on extra responsibilities to give her time to rest.

Wendt says during her cancer journey God gave her a special compassion for people dealing with fear.



OVERCOMING MANIFOLD OBSTACLES

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Drew Morrison started smoking marijuana in seventh grade. School authorities in Claremore, Oklahoma, expelled the youth for fighting and a county court placed him on probation after being convicted of assault and battery. By the age of 15, his steady weed habit morphed into an addiction to prescription painkillers.

At 16, Morrison sold many of his possessions, even his shoes, to raise money to buy meth. When he ran out of belongings to hock, he began to steal video games for resale.

His mother, Shelli Overacker, arranged for her son to enroll at Teen Challenge Adventure Ranch in Morrow, Arkansas.

"I hated the accountability, the structure, the discipline," Morrison remembers. Although many Adventure Ranch students have a breakthrough within the first couple of weeks, Morrison stayed out of control for six months.

Morrison, now 25, credits Kyle Tate, who served as a schoolteacher at

Adventure Ranch, with having a lasting impact on his life.

"Drew was the hardest kid I ever had at Teen Challenge," says Tate. "He came in as a drug user and was super rebellious. After Drew started reading the Bible some of the results were immediate and some took longer."

In 2011, after a 13-month stay at Adventure Ranch, Morrison entered the Youth With a Mission center in Ozark, Arkansas, for further Bible study. While there, at 19, he married his wife, Sarah.

Morrison went back to Adventure Ranch and served on staff for 3½ years. As a direct care supervisor, he trained and equipped staff, organized activities, and handled crisis situations.

In February, Morrison returned to work at YWAM Ozarks, where he is involved in prayer ministry and organizing youth conferences. He and Sarah now have three children: Ellen Rose, 5; Noah, 3; and Luke, 1.

than 69 million people worshipping in over 370,000 churches. That's truly a work of the Spirit. I can assure you the vision for a healthy, Spirit-empowered church in every community has never been stronger.

Twenty percent of Assemblies of God churches in the U.S. were planted in the past 10 years. In a time of trending decline in American denominations, God has blessed the Assemblies of God to experience 12 percent growth in U.S. adherents in the past decade. Also notable, the Fellowship has grown in the 18-34 age category (often classified as millennials) by 11 percent. God is on the move!

We are especially grateful that God has allowed this growth to represent

increased diversity and racial healing. In 2001, the U.S. Assemblies of God was 29 percent nonwhite ethnic minority. By 2017, that number had risen to nearly 44 percent, making the U.S. Assemblies of God one of the nation's most diverse religious groups, according to Pew Forum.

Still, my mind goes back to the recollections of a young E.S. Williams walking through the doors of the humble Azusa Street Mission, observing that "prayer and worship were everywhere." In the midst of the remarkable move of the Spirit among us, may visitors in our midst still see us as people of prayer — people dependent totally and completely on the Spirit.

SIX DISASTERS IN TWO WEEKS

BY JESSICA BLAKE

Monday, June 3, marked the 12th day since Convoy of Hope (COH) began responding to severe weather across the Midwest and in the South. Over the previous 11 days, its staff and volunteers have provided more than 1 million pounds of relief supplies in 41 communities across five states. Those numbers reflect six separate responses: Missouri tornado response, Missouri flood response, Oklahoma flood response, Ohio tornado response, Kansas tornado response, and Arkansas flood response.

"The unprecedented number of disasters within a short time has created a scenario similar to a major disaster event — positioning Convoy's response to be at a heightened level,"

says Jeff Nene, Convoy of Hope's national spokesperson. "Our team is responding to communities to bring help and hope to those who are in need during a terribly difficult time."

Currently, Convoy still has teams deployed in Oklahoma and Ohio. On June 2, Convoy also deployed to Fort Smith, Arkansas, distributing resources alongside Life Church's Fort Smith campus. The compassion organization is closely monitoring flood levels on the Arkansas River and those who would be affected by its historic flooding.

To follow Convoy of Hope's response or to learn more about Convoy's ministries and opportunities, visit convoyofhope.org.