




THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

What role should music play in the church worship service? A 1929 *Pentecostal Evangel* article affirmed the value of music, while warning against the tendency to make the worship service into a form of entertainment. The article observed that, in many quarters, “much of the worship offered to God is governed by what the people want rather than by the divine plan.” What is the “divine plan”? According to the article’s author, Canadian Pentecostal pioneer George A. Chambers, a worship service should include prayer, music, preaching of the Word, and an experience of the “real presence of God.”

Chambers was not opposed to the contemporary worship music of his day. He affirmed the joyful singing accompanied by numerous musical

instruments for which early Pentecostals were known. He was concerned that, in some quarters, a certain professionalism was creeping into the church, which emphasized performance over the presence and power of God. He cautioned that musical performances could overshadow other elements of the worship service.

According to Chambers, various musical numbers — including solos, duets, and orchestral selections — were sometimes given so much time “that the Word of God is often relegated to 20 or 30 minutes’ time, and if its discussion is protracted beyond that the people show their disapproval by retiring from the service.” He noted that music often attracts people to church, but added, “Crowds are not always a sign of blessing and of God’s presence.” 



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MINISTRY TO BENEFIT RURAL CHURCHES

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Rural America Ministries (RAM) may not be a familiar name to most people yet, but ministers, ministries, and congregations located in the rural United States are soon going to have a new advocate and partner in ministry.

RAM was recently approved by the Assemblies of God National Leadership and Resource Center (NLRC) after it was presented by Wes Bartel, the former Christian Education and Discipleship director and Senior Adult Ministries director at the NLRC. Bartel, who grew up on a cattle ranch in Montana, has always had a heart for the rural church, and he envisions RAM being nothing short of an empowering inspiration and blessing to the rural church pastor and congregation.

“RAM is just in its beginning stages, but we want people to be aware of it and ready to reap the benefits of the ministry as soon as we’re fully operational,” Bartel says. “The focus of RAM will be on networking rural ministries to the benefit of the rural

church, being a source of counsel and encouragement, providing access to effective and affordable training for church leadership that they otherwise may not be able to afford, and, as RAM grows, we also want to provide forms of financial help, through scholarships and grants.”

Some of the rural ministries that RAM is partnering with include Rural Compassion, Church Multiplication Network, Lonesome Dove Ranch, Acts 2 Journey, along with other ministries and initiatives as they arise.

Bartel says that the needs of today’s rural church, which can range from a handful of members to multiple hundreds, have sometimes been overlooked, misunderstood, or simply gone unknown. However, with RAM as an advocate and partner, the rural church now will have representation and a reliable resource.

“I also want to partner with our Assemblies of God colleges to help them provide specific training to those

EVANGELIST TARGETS ADDICTIONS

BY DEANN ALFORD

Kandi Rose suffered date rape, gang rape, and incest. To cope, she mired herself in a toxic stew of addictions, including alcohol, drugs, pornography, and gambling. She earned a living as a prostitute and stripper who ran a lucrative strip-o-gram business.

Rose’s mother, Jeanne, came to faith in Christ and in 1984 led her to the Lord. Now as an AG evangelist based in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Rose wants to help others chained by addictions to likewise find hope and freedom.


That’s the purpose of Rose’s Addiction-Free Ministry, which offers video testimonies of those who have broken compulsions of all kinds through the power of Christ. Rose’s “traveling TV talk show” films the testimonies nationwide in churches and parachurch organizations. The program, which is called simply *Addiction Free*, airs weekly on Victory Television Network in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Total Living Network in Chicago.

In addition to her preaching ministry, she has written her biography *Free at*



Last and offers referrals to Christian rehabilitation centers and recovery homes such as Teen Challenge.

Rose, 68, interviews pastors about their hearts to reach addicts with the hope of Christ.

“Testimonies bring hope that what He’s done for others, He can do for them,” Rose says. Stories of trials as a result of substance abuse or other addictions always end in hope for freedom through Christ, Rose says. It’s something she knows firsthand, failing many times to beat addictions on her own, finally finding success only when she became a fully devoted follower of Jesus. 

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.”

MAKING THE ROCK EVEN MORE SOLID

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

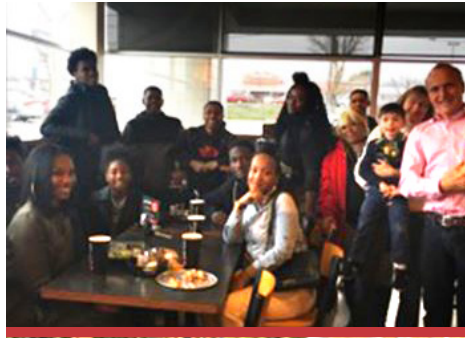
For three decades, Ed DiBlasio has operated a parachurch ministry in low-income areas of Baltimore that features mentoring, food giveaways, sidewalk Sunday Schools, clothing distribution, and Bible studies. Increasingly over the years, beneficiaries of DiBlasio's nonprofit Solid Rock Ministries have asked DiBlasio the location of his nonexistent church.

"People have a desire to go to some place for formal worship," says DiBlasio. "I've steered away from it, but now I realize there is a legitimate need."

Subsequently, at 54, DiBlasio and his wife, Gloria, are launching a church, to be known as Solid Rock and Redeemer AG. Central Christian Assembly in Baltimore will have oversight. Ed DiBlasio has attended the church for 32 years.

Solid Rock and Redeemer AG will be a missions-type church in the city, reaching especially African-Americans, single parents, and youth. The area is plagued by illegal drug use, alcohol abuse, gang violence, low school graduation levels, and high incarceration rates.

DiBlasio knows the plight well, growing up in a large Baltimore family that used food stamps. The last of eight children, he recalls wearing hand-me-down clothes while living in a housing project area, and how his mother cried when she received a food basket every Christmas. Distributing groceries and



turkeys at Christmas has been a Solid Rock Ministries tradition for 32 years.

The DiBlasios could be living a more comfortable lifestyle. Ed forsook a potentially lucrative CPA career; Gloria has a double master's in education and a law degree. But DiBlasio has been such a fixture in the neighborhood where he ministers for so long he isn't viewed as an outsider.

"When you form a relationship with people, they see beyond skin color," says Gloria.

Solid Rock Ministries impacts an average of 250 kids each week, through mentoring, tutoring, worship services, Scripture memory, and field trips. PE

WATER OF LIFE

BY DEANN ALFORD

If the U.S. is a melting pot, Yuma, Arizona, is the nation's salad bowl. More than 90 percent of green, leafy vegetables Americans consume in winter are grown in this desert oasis near the Mexico border.

Victor and Elizabeth Venalanzo became acutely aware of the vital nature of clean flowing rivers when, seven years ago, they assumed the pastorate of Iglesia Betania, an AG church. Many of Betania's congregants are seasonal agricultural workers.

"We have a commitment in the book of Genesis to be good stewards of the resources," Venalanzo says, specifying the Colorado River. "If we don't do something soon, we're going to end up with nothing. If the water disappears, our city will disappear."

For a time, the Colorado River water level was too low for baptisms. Additional danger comes from contamination.



"I want to keep serving my community, but if there is no water, there will be no community to serve," Venalanzo says.

The Venalonzos teach Iglesia Betania congregants to be practical regarding stewardship.

"Why wash your car in your driveway when you can take it to a car wash that recycles water?" Venalanzo asks. "Why take a 15-minute shower when you can take one in five minutes?" PE

TRINITY BLESSED WITH MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR MIRACLE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

A million-dollar gift is news, but recently Trinity Bible College & Graduate School was gifted more than \$3 million!

For the last several years, Trinity Bible College & Graduate School in Ellendale, North Dakota, has been experiencing steady growth. About a decade ago, Davidson Hall, a campus building, was closed due to repair issues. The closure had a domino effect, leading to the elimination of married housing on campus.

"With no on-campus married housing option, it made it difficult for someone to move here with a family to earn his or her degree," states Jordy Nunez, vice president of college relations. "And in a small town of only 1,500, it is hard to find housing."

However, housing is no longer a problem. A 34-unit, \$750,000, move-in-ready apartment complex adjacent to Trinity was recently gifted to the school!

Since 2012, U.S. Missions MAPS RV Volunteers have been working on Davidson Hall. However, the cost was prohibitive. Not anymore! Donors gave \$1.9 million toward helping complete the transformation of the building. Donors also unexpectedly gave an additional \$500,000 toward debt alleviation.

Nunez says the transformation of Trinity can be traced to the 2012 arrival of Paul Alexander and his wife, Carol Alexander. PE

A PASSION FOR RURAL VIRGINIA

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

At the age of 25, David Malcom sat in prison and assessed the years of drug and alcohol dependency that had landed him behind bars. He realized he needed God's direction for his life ever to get on track.

"The enemy told me God didn't want me because God doesn't want broken goods," remembers Malcom. As the father of two young daughters himself, Malcom reasoned that God wouldn't turn His back on him, no matter what he had done. Malcom committed his life to Jesus.

When Amanda Taylor, the mother of his daughters, arrived for a visit at prison, David shocked her by pulling out a Bible. Amanda had a similar background of addiction and a dysfunctional home. Nevertheless, Amanda welcomed David back after he served two years in prison.

In time, Amanda, too, accepted Jesus as Savior. The couple wed in 2009. The Malcoms began attending New Life AG in Farmville, Virginia.

"I've seen a tremendous trajectory in David's growth," says Bill McIntosh, lead pastor of New Life AG.

With McIntosh's blessing, Malcom accepted the interim pastorate of a dying independent church in Keysville, a town of 820 people 20 miles south of Farmville. Attendance rose from half a dozen to 70, but because of a Pentecostal emphasis, three of the original group asked Malcom to resign. He tried to reconcile, but realized


staying would only threaten the church's viability.

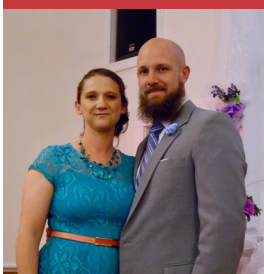
Nevertheless, after conferring with McIntosh, Malcom resolved to pioneer an AG congregation in Keysville.

"I had led people to the Lord, mentored them, and as a shepherd felt responsible for them," Malcom says. "God deserves a Spirit-filled church in every community. There's no other Spirit-filled church in the county."

King Street Church prelaunched in November in the former service area of a remodeled auto dealership. The first official service on Easter attracted 100 attendees.

"David is a bold preaching machine," says McIntosh, 49. "Because he has experienced the transforming power of God, he has a heart of compassion for broken people."

"We asked God to send us the ones nobody else wanted, and He did," says Malcom, 35. "We are the only multiethnic, multigenerational church in the community." 



preparing to enter the ministry," Bartel says. "More than 50 percent of new ministers begin pastoring in a rural church, yet they leave college with little or no training that would assist them in understanding and ministering to the unique needs and the unique culture of a rural community."


Much of the foundation, formation, and ongoing advancement of the Assemblies of God in doing Kingdom work can be traced back to the rural church. Even today, with 48 percent of current AG churches classified as rural, they have produced an estimated two-thirds of the missionary task force and a strong majority of national leadership.

Currently, the rural church is a

growing demographic that has also become very diverse, especially in the areas of the country that are seeing a boom in coal and oil and the influx of extraction services workers. This also presents new challenges to the local church.

"I believe the timing of RAM is part of God's plan to help rural churches flourish and impact lives like never before," Bartel says.

Bartel, who expresses appreciation for the support of the Executive Leadership Team, says plans are moving forward as quickly as possible.

"We plan to present RAM at General Council in August, with the full rollout being shortly afterward," he says. 

DREAMS OF FIELDS IN IOWA

BY DEANN ALFORD

Iglesia Evangélica Belén, the only Spanish-language Assemblies of God congregation in Ottumwa, Iowa, has long been ministering to the Latino community.

Victor Valdez Jr., the church's pastor since 2000, led Belén into a season of growth, in part by encouraging those in the congregation to pray for friends, co-workers, or acquaintances, asking the Lord for opportunities to invite them to church.

"There's lot of work to do, but Iowa is a field of opportunities," says Valdez's wife, Toni.

The church in Ottumwa has grown to 80 regular attendees. But Valdez felt a burden for those in Marshalltown, a two-hour journey north that had no AG

Spanish-speaking congregation.

So, Valdez, 40, and Toni, a teacher's aide and a middle school Spanish-language interpreter, decided to do something about it. They launched Camino de Vida church in a Marshalltown hotel conference room. After Belén's Sunday morning worship ends in Ottumwa, Camino's services 90 miles away starts at 5 p.m.

Beyond prayer, fliers, and word of mouth, Belén has raised funds to broadcast Valdez's sermon twice weekly on a secular Spanish FM radio station that reaches Marshalltown.

It's a hard field, as Marshalltown Hispanics largely hold to traditional religious beliefs they brought from their homelands. 