

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

Henry H. Ness (1894-1970) found wealth and opportunity in America. But when he dedicated his life to Christ, Ness became an influential Assemblies of God pastor and educator.

Born in Kristiania (Oslo), Norway, Ness grew up attending prayer meetings and church services. But when he was 17, he immigrated to America.

Ness ultimately took a job with Standard Oil Company in Minneapolis, making good money. In 1919, he married a young Danish immigrant, Anna. They were living the American dream, but had no time for God.

In the early 1920s, Anna attended a Pentecostal service and committed herself to God. Two weeks later, Ness joined her.

Feeling called to the ministry, in 1925, Ness accepted the pastorate of an AG church in Brainerd, Minnesota. The following year, he pioneered Fargo (North Dakota) Gospel Tabernacle (later First AG), which grew to over 500 in attendance.

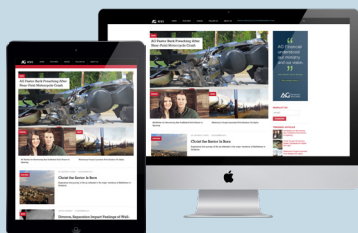
In 1933, Ness accepted a call to



pastor Hollywood Temple in Seattle. The church affiliated with the AG in 1934. Later that year, he founded Northwest Bible Institute (now Northwest University). He served as pastor and college president until 1948. In the years following, Ness traveled the world on God's behalf.



Read Ness' obituary on page 28 of the March 22, 1970, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/mar221970.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 2018

AG NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM [NEWS.AG.ORG](https://news.ag.org)

THE FORGOTTEN GRIEVERS: CHILDREN

PE NEWS BECOMES AG NEWS

DISASTER TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST'S LOVE

RENEWED FERVOR TO FIGHT OPIOIDS



THE FORGOTTEN GRIEVERS: CHILDREN

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Chantel Longino's mother, Patricia, died of lung cancer at 39, barely two months after her daughter turned 3. After Patricia's death, few traces remained in the family home to remind Chantel of her mother.

"I was not led through grief properly," recalls Longino, 29. "We did not talk about Mom."

Sadly, the belief that children are too young to understand the process of mourning a loved one still leads many parents to simply ignore their child's feelings.

"Children are forgotten grievers," says U.S. Missions Chaplain Wes M. Bynum, director of care support services for the Hospice of East Texas in Tyler. "We think of children as resilient, which they are, but that does not mean we don't need to pay attention to them going through grief. We have a tendency to neglect them."

For Longino, various decisions she made even in adolescence resulted directly from lack of a female adult

role model. Since 2016, Longino has been children's bereavement specialist at the Hospice of East Texas. She has helped 200 kids grapple with the death of a loved one — grandparent, parent, sibling, aunt, uncle.

She prefers to meet a child before a loved one's impending death in hospice care so that she can prepare the boy or girl for what is happening: the biological process involved, the medical equipment being used, and introducing the doctor providing end-of-life care.

"I tell the child why Grandma looks different than she used to, and that it is still OK to hold her hand," says Longino, who has two sons, ages 4 and 1.

Longino facilitates conversations between children and parents — who often are unsure how to share the grim report of an impending death.

"Children have such vivid imaginations, it is better if they know what to expect," Longino says. "It is

RENEWED FERVOR TO FIGHT OPIOIDS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

President Donald J. Trump Monday afternoon unveiled his Initiative to Stop Opioid Abuse, and Adult & Teen Challenge USA President Joe Batluck is making a pitch that the AG ministry be considered part of the administration's solution.

Trump, in a New Hampshire speech, reiterated the administration's threefold plan of action against the opioid emergency: prevention, treatment, and recovery. Trump also urged legislative changes to a law that prohibits Medicaid reimbursements for residential treatment at facilities with more than 16 beds.

Earlier this month, Batluck attended a White House summit. Five Cabinet members met with 200 individuals. At the March 1 summit, Trump expressed gratitude to agencies that are helping in the fight, and he voiced support for faith-based groups. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar promised that a portion of the \$6 billion in proposed new funds to fight the epidemic will be used to build and improve medically assisted facilities to

help those in need of recovery.

Batluck remains convinced that a gospel-centered approach is the solution to recovery.

"It is important to incorporate new ways of reaching and helping the addicted, while retaining our original core values and DNA," Batluck says.

After the summit, Batluck wrote a letter to the president and eight key advisers, primarily Cabinet members, requesting support in obtaining Adult & Teen Challenge funding as a grassroots solution to the crisis.

"Adult and Teen Challenge is the most successful, one-of-a-kind, oldest, long-term residential, Christian drug and alcohol recovery program in existence," Batluck wrote. He explained that 227 centers in the U.S. house over 6,000 students and residents.

"These programs are funded, in whole or in part, by donations from individuals, churches, and sympathetic businesses," Batluck wrote.

"Government assistance is minimal. Funding is the main roadblock to helping more individuals."

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."

THE MRI SAID HE WAS PARALYZED

BY DAN VAN VEEN

The neurosurgeon entered the room, examining the MRI images. He glanced over at Pastor Steve Lebsack lying on the hospital bed and shook his head, then studied the MRI images again. A puzzled look crossed the surgeon's face — this couldn't be right, something was wrong . . . impossibly wrong!

The MRI told the neurosurgeon that Lebsack was paralyzed. The problem? He wasn't! It didn't make any sense.

On Jan. 15, Lebsack, 45, his son, Jaden, 11, and friend Gary McCoy, 44, were riding their dirt bikes and four-wheelers on the La Grange (California) ATV and Motorcyle Park. Lebsack, a bivocational minister, pastors Community Family Worship Center in Modesto.

While riding, Lebsack hit a hidden rock. The impact sent him up over the edge of an embankment. He fell head first down the other side — a 7-foot drop.

When he came to, he had no feeling or movement in his legs. "I laid my head down on the dirt and just prayed, 'Jesus, I need a miracle,'" Lebsack says. "I said that maybe two times, and then suddenly I felt a tingling in my toes. I started wiggling my toes. Then the tingling went to my feet, ankles, and all the way up to my waist — I could move my legs back and forth!"

McCoy and Jaden transported Lebsack to the hospital by truck — not



realizing the seriousness of his injury.

Lebsack had three MRIs and three CT scans taken. The neurosurgeon came in. He explained that when vertebrae are compressed and crushed like Lebsack's were, and when a broken vertebrae pushes up into the nerve, like Lebsack's had, there was no question — that person is paralyzed. He couldn't explain why Lebsack wasn't.

"He told me I was one lucky person," Lebsack says. "I corrected him and said, 'No, I'm one blessed person,' and I told him what happened when I prayed."

Surgeons still had to fuse four of Lebsack's vertebrae together with titanium rods and screws, but his recovery has been remarkable. Now, wherever he goes, people can count on him sharing his MRI miracle.

DISASTER TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST'S LOVE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

When a pair of tornadoes ripped through two Clarksville, Tennessee, neighborhoods on Feb. 24, 10 homes were destroyed and 150 more were damaged. Shortly afterward, Clarksville's LifePoint Church became the staging point for first-responders and a shelter for victims.

Since then, LifePoint has focused on being a physical, financial, and emotional resource to victims, helping to meet their needs.

Beginning Feb. 25 and for days afterward, LifePoint, a church of about 3,600, sent out teams of 100 to 150 to help with the clean-up and to assist victims.

On Feb. 26 the church hosted a meal, gathering information and offering help. Words of appreciation mixed freely with choking sobs, hugs, and tears.

Convoy of Hope arrived on Feb. 27 with cleaning and hygiene supplies. Teams from LifePoint went door-to-door distributing the items along with food and water.

Kelli Ferguson, Next Steps pastor for LifePoint, says the church has raised and is distributing nearly \$100,000 to victims. "We tell them we just want you to know that Jesus loves you, sees you, and wants you to know that you're not alone," she says.

CHURCH BECOMES A REGIONAL BENEFACTOR

BY REBECCA BURTRAM

Clayton Assembly of God is a small New Mexico congregation that has connected with Rural Compassion to show kindheartedness in a big way.

On a regular basis, Pastor Randall Floyd and many of the 40 regulars at the church support the faculty, staff, and students of six surrounding school districts. At least every month and a half, Floyd and various members visit one of the half-dozen school districts in the area, bringing various resources for teachers to use in their classrooms.

Congregants gave 350 children name-brand shoes during giveaways at two of the districts. They also distributed over 400 backpacks at all the locations. Last Christmas, each teacher in each district received a gift bag from the church.

One local school has begun to use the church building for events such as a high school band awards banquet and the National Honors Society induction.

During a shoe giveaway at Texline, Floyd and the congregation expected to purchase footwear out of pocket for kindergartners through 12th graders. However, the school counselor recruited the dozen seniors in the school to help.

"They each took the name of one student and bought each one a brand-new pair of shoes and a pair of socks," Floyd says.



REVITALIZING SACRAMENTO'S HEART

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

At the historic Crest Theatre just blocks from California's state capitol, Project Church is attracting a new generation of young professionals, the "de-churched" and "unchurched" in the city's urban center.

"There hadn't been a new church downtown in years, and there were all these young people," says Pastor Caleb D. Cole, 36. "We felt that the city was on the cusp of a resurgence, and there needed to be a spiritual resurgence, too."

Cole and his wife, Chrissy, planted Project Church in 2012 with half a dozen other couples. Every couple in their first small group included a white man and a nonwhite woman (Chrissy is Filipina). Today the church remains less than half white — and it is young. The average age of attendees is just 28, and many are single and highly mobile due to careers. Others are state workers who live downtown — as well as a number of homeless people from a nearby park.

"It's an eclectic mix of people, and a

diverse mix of races because that's what Sacramento looks like," Cole says.

In five years, 2,000 people have committed their lives to Christ at Project, and more than 500 have been baptized in water. The church draws around 450 on Sunday mornings. The downtown has received a billion dollars of public and private money for revitalization in the past decade.

In 2015, Project launched a campus in West Sacramento, which is 8 miles and a world away across the Sacramento River. Project Church West Sacramento meets in a new elementary school and draws young families. It also is diverse, with Asians representing around a quarter of attendees, according to Loren M. Zamora, the 29-year-old campus pastor.

"Having a church that's part of the community makes a big difference to people," Zamora says.

As with the downtown campus, many attendees had drifted from faith and are now coming back.

better if we can build rapport before the death, because a familiar face makes it less scary and traumatic than if a strange adult delivers the news."

After the death, Longino typically visits with a child for three to five sessions. Much of the time, Longino facilitates conversations between parents and children — who may have misinterpreted information dispensed by adults.

Bynum, who sees between 40-50 clients die in an average week, notes that children don't process grief the same way as adults. Bynum and Longino ask children who are grieving to write out stories or to create pictures to express how they feel.

An adult who simply tells a child "you need to be strong" in the wake of a death can send a message that it's inappropriate to show emotion, says Bynum, 58.

Bynum cautions against vague expressions or lying in an attempt to spare the child's feelings. Telling a youngster that a deceased relative is sleeping or on a long trip only causes confusion about when that person will wake up or return home.

"Lots of times parents or grandparents want a pastor or counselor to talk for them," Bynum says. "But the news is much better received if it comes from those who are closest to the child."

PE NEWS BECOMES AG NEWS

On Monday, the official Assemblies of God online news service changed its name to AG News.

Formerly known as *PE News*, the new name is designed to help readers of the news and those curious about the AG easily connect the news and the Assemblies of God together.

PE News launched in 2014 as the official news source of the Assemblies of God.

"When we originally went to an entirely online format, we combined the *Pentecostal Evangel* news with the AG News email news service," explains Mark Forrester, Communications director. "At the time, we chose *PE News* as the name as it was important to identify with the rich heritage of the

Pentecostal Evangel."

However, Forrester says that moving forward, the name AG News communicates more clearly. "We've been incredibly grateful for the success of *PE News* and how it continues to grow. As we transition to AG News, our hope is that our readers will associate the inspiring stories they read with great local AG churches in their community."

AG News will continue to post stories online for, about, and from the Assemblies of God every weekday, with an email collection of stories being distributed each Friday (see news.ag.org to sign up for free), and a free weekly print version available for download no later than every Friday morning.