Sixty-five years ago, members of an Assemblies of God congregation of lepers in New Hope Town, Liberia, caught the vision of missions and desired to help those who were less fortunate. They took up an offering of $2.65, which they sent to the Leper Home of Uska Bazaar in North India.

AG missionary Florence Steidel wrote a letter recounting the sacrificial spirit of the congregation, which was published in the March 4, 1951, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel. She explained that the offering was generous, as the lepers earned just seven to 10 cents per day.

Steidel founded New Hope Town in 1947. Tribal chiefs gave her 350 acres to build a town for people with leprosy who were unwelcome in their own communities. From 1947 until 1962, Steidel oversaw the construction of a town, including 70 permanent buildings and six main streets.

Steidel established a school to train lepers to become carpenters, weavers, brick makers, and clinic workers. They also planted 2,500 rubber trees, which helped the town to become economically self-sufficient.

Steidel is remembered as an AG missionary hero. She melded compassion with proclamation of the gospel.

Read this issue of the Pentecostal Evangel online at s2.ag.org/mar41951.
Leaders of “Say Something,” a touring school assemblies program about human trafficking, say their goals for the initiative are to not only increase awareness of the problem in the U.S., but to empower students to take pre-emptive action on behalf of vulnerable youth.

Currently in its fourth year of existence, Say Something has made presentations at 200 schools and in front of about 300,000 students. Say Something partners with F.R.E.E. International, a ministry of AG U.S. Missions.

“Trafficking happens in our rural communities, it happens everywhere,” Say Something co-founder Lowell Hochhalter says.

While featuring three-dimensional video presentations and live speakers, including a trafficking survivor, the assembly becomes a catalyst for students to want to take action.

“Through video, humor, survivor stories, and interactive dialogue, students are encouraged to evaluate their surroundings, their relationships, and their acquaintances for signs of sex trafficking,” Hochhalter says.

Say Something Director Jody Dyess says the assemblies also address issues such as being bullied, suicidal risks, and low self-esteem.

“Those are the kids that are vulnerable or are already being exploited, or recruited, or groomed,” says Dyess, who formerly worked with Youth Alive.

Dyess adds that the presentations spur kids to ponder not only whether they are safe, but whether others around them are, too.

“I want students to walk away and say, ‘This is not going to happen, not in my town, not in my school,'” Dyess says. 

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Members of a suburban Phoenix church that was once the nation’s largest Lutheran congregation have voted to become a satellite campus of one of the largest congregations in the Assemblies of God, Dream City Church.

The Feb. 21 merger of Community Church of Joy of Glendale, Arizona, with the Dream City megachurch, known until six months ago as Phoenix First Assembly, brings with it a 140-acre campus, 2,000-seat auditorium, gymnasium, youth complex, Christian school with an enrollment of 800, cemetery, and mortuary, according to Luke Barnett, senior pastor of Dream City Church.

He described the union of the divergent congregations as “groundbreaking.”

“Without a doubt, this is something that the Lord arranged and put together,” says Tommy Barnett, who pastored Phoenix First Assembly for 33 years and is Luke’s father. In 1994, Tommy Barnett founded the first Dream Center in Los Angeles. That vision has grown to inspire the start of more than 150 Dream Centers throughout the world.

Between Dream City Church’s four Greater Phoenix campuses, its number of adherents has grown to 15,000, Tommy Barnett says.

While intra-Pentecostal mergers are not uncommon, Pentecostal-Lutheran mergers are less so. The roots of the union began in 1979 when Tommy Barnett arrived in Phoenix, where Walt Kallestad, the Lutheran pastor who founded Community Church of Joy, had moved the previous year to plant a church. The men became friends. Attendance at each church grew to more than 10,000.

In 2006, Tommy Barnett founded Phoenix Dream Center, which each month serves more than 40,000 people through programs that “renovate lives and infiltrate the love of Jesus throughout the inner city.” Phoenix Dream Center ministries include 110 weekly street, prison, and nursing home outreaches that provide food and clothing to people in need. The ministry offers a comprehensive Christian-based life recovery program that houses 300 people every night.

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**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.”
OVERCOMING BEANTOWN OBJECTIONS
BY SHANNON M. NASS

Boston is ranked the next to last Bible-minded city in the U.S. by the Barna Group’s annual rankings, but that didn’t stop Caleb McNaughton from launching The Link Boston in Dedham in 2013. McNaughton says many residents have a faith based on works, and they have never experienced the gospel on a personal level.

“Even if they have dark areas of their life, they perceive themselves as good people,” he says. “Even if they don’t follow Jesus, they still pray in times of need.”

Sports are a major part of the Boston culture, so church members connect with people by viewing and attending sporting events together and hosting sports-themed parties in their homes.

McNaughton coaches Pee Wee football. A weekend football and cheer camp, which draws about 250 kids each summer, is hosted at the church. McNaughton says it’s rewarding to see perceptions about church mellow.

“When God’s love becomes real and personal to them, it changes everything,” he says. “Their outlook and perspectives change from not just being a good person, but to a person who loves God.”

Anchor Church, planted by Randal Quackenbush in 2013 in the heart of downtown Boston, is about five miles away from The Link. Quackenbush equates past difficulty in church planting in “Beantown” to a mix of intellectualism, apathy, and angst toward the church.

“The intellectual community is all about reason and doesn’t leave much room, if any, for faith,” he says.

A focus on community, music, and the teachings of Christ has drawn various college students and young professionals with an interest in authentic Christianity.

However, Quackenbush says the biggest challenge is engaging long-term residents in discussions about faith.

“You have to commit to investing in building relationships with people in the community,” he says. “It’s only through friendships that they start trusting you and you have the opportunity to share the gospel.”

BREAKING NATIVE BOUNDARIES
BY ANDREW HURST

Assemblies of God U.S. missionaries Jason and Amy Metz are reaching the next generation of Native American students through Breaking Camp, a campus ministry at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

Breaking Camp is a nonprofit organization designed to share the gospel with Native Americans by building relationships through outreaches, small groups, workshops, and student interactions.

“There is a need for distance between the Native American students and the local churches,” Jason Metz says.

Breaking Camp’s strategy is to create a strong connection with students and to help them develop a personal relationship with Christ.

MINNESOTA BREAKS $1 MILLION STL GIVING BARRIER
BY KRISTEL ORTIZ

There have been a lot of big moments in Speed the Light (STL) history, but 2015 may have provided the biggest moment thus far — Minnesota became the first Assemblies of God district ever to raise more than $1 million for STL in a single year!

Speed the Light provides much-needed equipment to missionaries across the nation and in more than 180 countries. Since its inception in 1944, STL has raised over $290 million dollars to equip AG missionaries to spread the gospel around the world.

Mark Dean, district youth director (DYD) of Minnesota for 26 years, has built a culture of Speed the Light giving in that district. In fact, six of the top 20 churches that gave the most to STL are from Minnesota. Dean is quick to recognize the many lead pastors, youth pastors, and leaders who have sacrificed to mature the current culture of generosity and pursuit of the Great Commission.

Senior Director of Youth Ministries Heath Adamson states, “When our students plant their treasure in the soil of eternity, it produces a harvest for decades to come, both around the world and in the very life of the student. I’m thankful for the students, parents, pastors, churches, and DYD’s who labor intentionally!”
The leaders of seven of the world’s most influential Pentecostal movements recently met for an intensive discussion on vital issues impacting the world and the ministry of the Church today. Held Feb. 22-23 in Dallas/Fort Worth, the Pentecostal leaders meeting explored a variety of issues critical to the health, advancement, and cooperative efforts of the Pentecostal movement. Topics ranged from racial reconciliation to global conflicts and the adverse effects of terror and fear on the world.

In addition to George O. Wood representing the Assemblies of God, the other denominations represented included: Open Bible Churches; International Pentecostal Holiness Church; Church of God in Christ, Inc.; International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; Church of God of Prophecy; and Church of God.

“This gathering of Pentecostal leaders opened doors not only to better understanding and cooperation between our fellowships, but brought about unity of direction,” states Wood. “Through putting aside past fears and uncertainties and together pursuing the direction of the Holy Spirit,” Wood says, “we believe the Pentecostal Movement, joined with others in the Body of Christ, can be used by God to create a fresh destiny of hope for the nation and the world!”

It was a white church and a predominantly black church. It was a white minister and a black minister. It was an Assemblies of God congregation and an independent Pentecostal congregation.

And now — they’re one church! About two years ago, the 65-member congregation of Cornerstone Assembly of God in Hillsboro, Ohio (population 6,700), purchased a larger facility as its new home. Pastor Mark W. Smith says the 10-year-old building, a former church, sits on five acres along the main highway, and has a maximum seating approaching 250 people.

Patty Burns, the pastor of Resurrected Truth Ministries, a primarily black independent Pentecostal church of 35 to 40 people in Hillsboro, explored the possibility of that congregation purchasing Cornerstone’s old building. Although unable to purchase the building, Burns and Smith became friends throughout the process.

“The Holy Spirit began dealing with me and speaking to my heart about inviting her and her church to be a part of Cornerstone,” Smith says. Meanwhile, God was also speaking to Burns. “I kept feeling like He had another plan for the church — only I didn’t know what it was,” she says.

Smith went to his church board with what he felt the Holy Spirit was impressing upon him, and asked his all-white board to pray about inviting Burns and the 75- to 80-percent black Resurrected Truth congregation to become a part of their church body. The board fully supported the idea. Smith then presented the idea to Burns.

“When Pastor Mark met with me, I felt that his offer was an answer to prayer,” Burns says.

When Smith and Burns presented the idea to the congregations about a merger, it was clear that God had been at work in more than just the ministers’ hearts. Both congregations were overwhelmingly in favor of the idea.

On Jan. 17, 2016, the two churches became one.