



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

What is the distinctive feature in a Pentecostal worship service? The answer, according to a 1946 *Pentecostal Evangel* article by P. S. Jones, is "the prominence given to the prayer room."

Early Pentecostal churches usually dedicated a room to prayer, where earnest believers would intercede during the preaching service and where prayer would continue long after the benediction had been pronounced. Jones asserted, "Pentecostal prayer rooms are truly the power-houses of the assemblies. Everything else can be counted of secondary importance in the church's program."

According to Jones, the success of a ministry is proportionate to the prayer

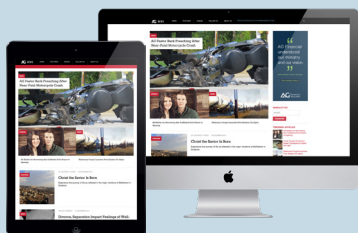
life of those involved in the ministry.

Jones described how an active private prayer life is essential if Christians are to effectively engage in spiritual warfare. The "treasures of heaven," he wrote, are often only gained by spending hours in "hot, animated, boiling-over prayer."

According to Jones, "Pentecost can very well do without the carnal decorations and the tinsel of this pleasure-crazed world, but it can never do without its prayer room, its prayer-loving pastor, and its prayer warriors."



Read Jones' article, "A Unique Pentecostal Feature," on pages 1 and 8 of the May 18, 1946, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/may181946.

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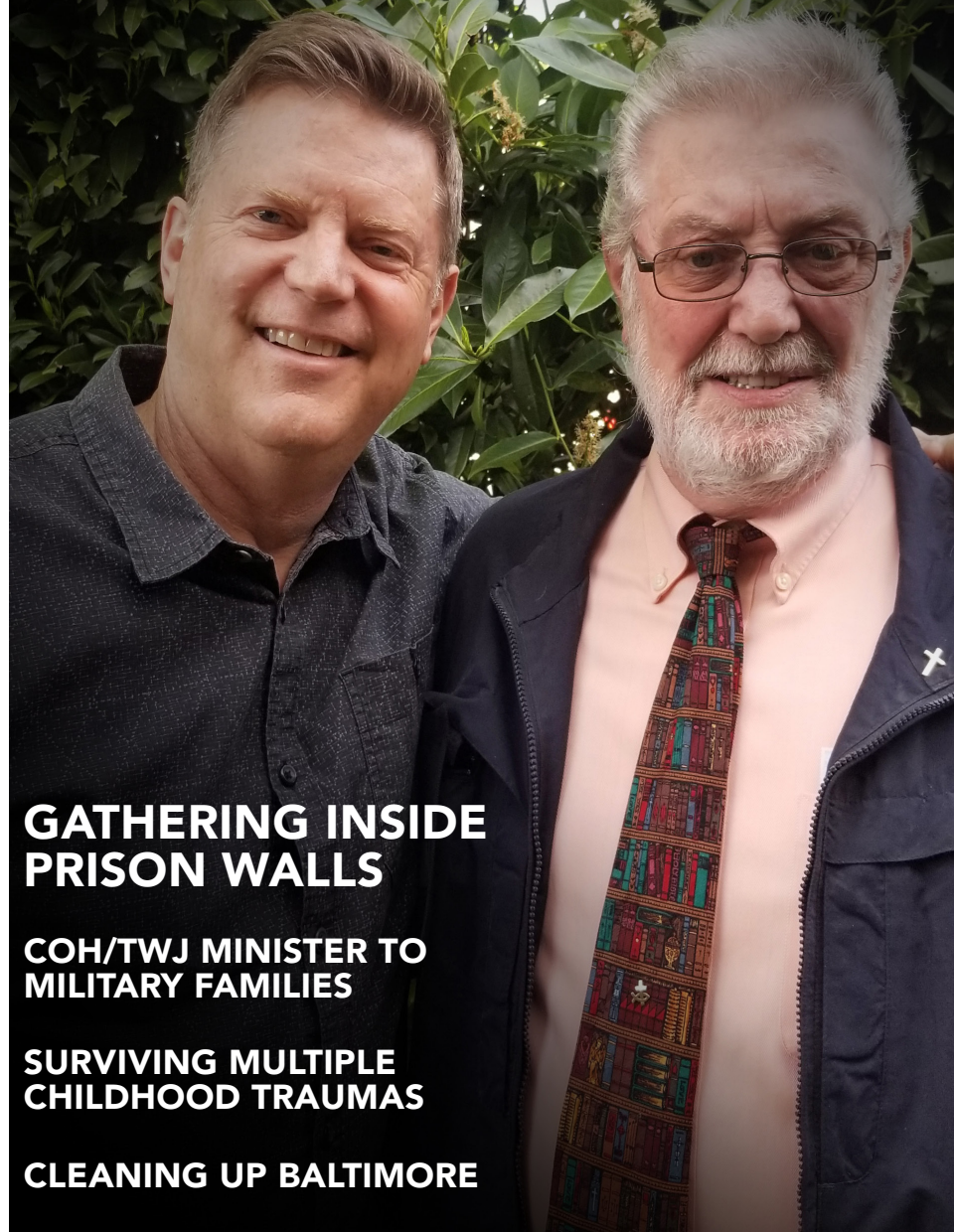
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AG[®] NEWS

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GATHERING INSIDE PRISON WALLS

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

Every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, the men of The Church at Twin Rivers in Monroe, Washington, praise and worship to live music, pray together, then dive deep into Bible study. When the meetings end, they return to their cells inside the Twin Rivers Correctional Facility, which houses convicts who have committed crimes ranging from sexual assault to murder.

"There is a living body of believers inside prison," says former inmate Mike A. North, 45, who spent a year at Twin Rivers and became a worship leader there. "When you see someone who has joy in his heart behind bars, you know he has Christ."

Twin Rivers' vibrant prison church is in a parent-affiliated relationship with The Church at Maltby in Snohomish, Washington, and is led by Dennis M. Stoycoff, 73, or "Pastor D" to the inmates. Three weekly services draw nearly 100 incarcerated men.

"The Lord laid on my heart that

I needed to get behind Dennis to encourage and inspire him to keep doing what he was doing, because the Lord was using him in that prison," says David N. Brakke, 58, lead pastor at The Church at Maltby. Stoycoff, a retired truck driver, never envisioned himself in prison ministry.

"When you go in it's a whole different atmosphere than you have experienced," Stoycoff says. "You go through multiple locked doors with buzzers. Everywhere you look there's barbed wire, razor wire. I came home and told my wife, 'Somebody has to go in there and preach the gospel.' She said, 'You're somebody.'"

Since then, Stoycoff visits the facility an average of five days a week. Stoycoff preaches interactive sermons in which men raise their hands and ask questions. He finds the feedback amazing, and says some men have six years of lessons stored up.

"I have to talk bluntly or they don't believe me," Stoycoff says, "I have to be

NEW LIFE AND NEW HOPE

BY ROBERT E. MIMS

Down to less than two-dozen mostly older worshippers, the only AG church in Laramie, Wyoming, nearly shuttered its doors 2017. But at 36, Matt Baumgartner became lead pastor for the first time at New Life Church. Baumgartner, his wife, Melanie, and their children, John, now 15, and Faith, 11, moved from Round Rock, Texas, to Laramie and found a congregation of 20 souls.

"We felt strongly that there was potential, that God wasn't through with this church," Baumgartner says. "We were prepared for a long road and prepared for what could really be a difficult first several years before there could be any turning of the ship."

The church now averages 110 congregants. For a building with a capacity of 75, the attendance surge first meant putting up overflow seating in the foyer, and then going to two Sunday services. The growth has revolutionized the congregational demographics, too. Beginning with

a remnant of mostly senior citizens, New Life Church today is made up of worshippers of all ages — including dozens of children and youth, the latter incorporating students from Laramie's University of Wyoming campus.

The key, Baumgartner explains, is a commitment to pastoring not just those inside the walls of New Life Church, but the community of Laramie at large. The church joined the Chamber of Commerce right away as a first step toward engaging the community. The church also connected with the Chi Alpha Campus Ministries chapter that is active at the University of Wyoming.

Until recently, the church had not been able to pay Baumgartner a full-time salary. He initially sought extra work, which led to additional opportunities to minister: as a full-time hospice chaplain for his first year, and occasionally driving an on-campus bus for physically challenged students and area residents.

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."



SURVIVING MULTIPLE CHILDHOOD TRAUMAS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Although only 8 years old, Michael Anthony Ellis had grown despondent over repeatedly being shuttled from his mother's residence to a foster home.

On a weekend visit to his mother's residence, Ellis grabbed a knife, with the intention of slitting his throat. But just as he contemplated suicide, Ellis says he clearly sensed God telling him: *Stop! I have a plan for you.*

It marked a turning point in the life of the boy, who had been attending First AG in Kirksville, Missouri, since the age of 3 with his foster parents, Donald and Blytha Ellis. They became Michael's foster parents when his mother, Maurena, went into a drug treatment center. Michael went back and forth to the custody of the foster family five times over seven years.

Maurena ultimately decided to relinquish her parental rights to the 10-year-old Michael so her son could have a better life. Michael didn't see his biological mother again for a decade.

"I had anger toward her," recalls Michael, 27. "I finally got to the place where I did forgive her, because God told me I had to forgive her."

Maurena died in October 2017 from a liver ailment related to alcoholism and drug abuse. Maurena is buried in the Ellis family plot.

Michael and his wife of four years, Rachel, met when they attended Central Bible College. These days Michael spends as much time as possible with his own two children: 2-year-old David Spenser and 1-year-old Elsie Maurena.

Michael manages the Ranch Quick Lube, which helps fund Chestnut Mountain Ranch, a residence and school in Morgantown that helps children with behavioral issues to develop spiritually, educationally and socially.

"I know how it is to have a family that has trouble," Michael says.

"I see the hand of God on Michael's life from the beginning," says Blytha, 72.

"I can't brag enough about him."

CLEANING UP BALTIMORE

BY RACHEL ELLIS

Every month in the Baltimore neighborhood of Carrolton Ridge, volunteers from the CityBeat Baltimore Dream Center wade through piled up mattresses, torn apart trash cans, and blocked alleys — physically cleaning up the area while sharing about Jesus as they go.

Dream Center founder and CEO Jared E. Michael, 28, knows these streets. He grew up in the neighborhood as his father, Ed C. Michael, pastored Westside AG. Deeply affected by the high rate of drug abuse, prostitution, and gang violence he witnessed as a child, Jared dealt with fear and nightmares from his experience. Nevertheless, Michael spent six years at Eastern Assembly youth pastoring a group of teens battling drug addictions, child prostitution, and gang pressure. He then founded CityBeat Dream Center in 2015.

The ministry began with monthly Adopt-a-Block outreaches in impoverished communities around the city, including work with the homeless and kids' outreaches to help protect children from gang influence. After four years, efforts include feeding programs, targeted outreaches called "Dream Kids," street evangelism, and picking up trash.

"Dealers and pimps block the alleys with trash so cops can't get through, and they can do their drug deals in the middle of the alley," Michael says.

The Dream Center also runs Bread of Life, a semiweekly feeding program giving 150-200 locals a fresh meal.

PROJECTS CONTINUE TO IMPACT LIVES

BY DAN VAN VEEN

If one word could sum up the efforts of the Girls Ministries annual Coins for Kids (CFK) projects, it may be the word *compassion*. Over the years, CFK projects have helped missionaries around the world compassionately meet the physical needs of children while also providing opportunities to share the gospel.

CFK efforts have included building cooking centers to provide food and education to children in South Africa, building up a campground for kids in Alaska, providing for unwanted babies in Northern Asia, and the list goes on.

"Coins for Kids is changing the lives of children all over the world," states Lori Warning, national Girls Ministries director. "Even when one project is complete, the impact is multiplied for years to come."

In 2018, the CFK project, Wonderfully Made, benefited Special Touch Ministries, which ministers to those with disabilities. Warning says a record of just over \$282,700 was given.

Recently, the 2019 Coins for Kids project, Argentina Mission, was announced. The goal is to raise \$300,000 to assist missionaries to Argentina, Gilbert and Virginia Contreras, establish rural community centers.

As Warning explains, girls are learning what it means to have a heart of compassion for those in physical need and spiritual need — and the result of that compassion.



CHURCH CAMP: WHERE THE SPIRIT DWELLS

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Swarms of high-energy kids, shouting, calling out in a cacophony of sounds and activities, seems to be a solid description of a typical week at an Assemblies of God church camp.

Yet over the last 10 to 15 years, God has been expanding His influence in church camps across the nation in a way some might find unexpected. Relatively Spartan camps have been transforming into destination centers designed to not only host kids camps, but additional events, even those not specifically religious or tied to the AG.

Sue Nigh, the executive director of the Ohio Ministry Network's campgrounds, known as the Heartland Conference Retreat Center, says their facilities are now suited to host groups in sizes up to 700 and offer them a variety of amenities.

"The campground/center was running in the red every year," Nigh explains. "We were either going to have to sell it or do something to make it profitable."

The issues of money and ministry are often complex, but as Nigh explains, God is not only providing the money, but also a ministry that most didn't imagine.

Under the direction of then Ohio

Ministry Network Superintendent Doug Clay, Nigh was instructed to "fill the rest of the calendar" at the center with nature events for schools, church getaways, and even nonreligious events such as leadership development trainings and corporate team building.

"Now we have hundreds of guests on the grounds every week who are not affiliated with the Church or Assemblies of God," Nigh says. "But what's incredible is that people come here, even with no religious background, and they can feel a difference — they can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit and they start asking questions."

The center has become so popular that Nigh has had to turn away many groups, so currently the Network is in the process of raising funds to nearly double the capacity of the center.

AG camps across the country are experiencing similar impacts. The Holy Spirit's presence doesn't disappear after church camps, but remains to draw the hearts of whoever chooses to enter grounds dedicated to glorifying God.

"What happens at Heartland Retreat Center and AG camps and centers across the U.S. changes the world," Nigh says.

stone-cold direct." Stoycoff has baptized 90 men in the past three years.

Some attendees send tithe envelopes to the church bearing firstfruits from their 40-cents-an-hour jobs. Two volunteers from the church accompany Stoycoff on Wednesdays to help teach the Celebrate Recovery class and the afternoon Bible study, which is heavy on apologetics and theology.

Former inmate North, who led worship on an acoustic guitar and taught himself bass while in prison, says Stoycoff impressed him by coming midweek just to sit in the room so the worship band could rehearse. North says the camaraderie among Christian inmates

helped him grow considerably while he served time. He says Christians in prison simply don't want to be forgotten.

"I learned so much from the men in there about life and dealing interpersonally with other people," North says. "If you can get past the fact that you're incarcerated, you can get a lot of good Bible study in."

North, who has a wife and two children, is now a ministry leader at a church in Woodinville, and is vice president of communications at a Christian ministry to prisoners.

"God has gone beyond restoring the years the locusts have eaten," he says. "I am living the most blessed season of my life."

COH/TWJ MINISTER TO MILITARY FAMILIES

BY ANGELA FRIZELL

Recently, The Warrior's Journey (TWJ) joined forces with Convoy of Hope in Philadelphia as part of the Veteran's Services Connections portion of their community events.

The April 27 event in Philadelphia, the first of 18 events scheduled for 2019, TWJ, along with 700 volunteers, served 3,750 people and 170 veterans.

Last year was the first time TWJ served with Convoy of Hope.

"2018 was the beginning of what has turned into a powerful opportunity to not only touch lives of those who attend, but to establish lasting relationships with local churches for ongoing ministry," says TWJ Director of Project Management Ernie Bywater.

Steve Pulis, the Community Events

senior director for Convoy of Hope, says TWJ leaves a lasting impact, providing veterans with ongoing discipleship and a connection to Jesus and the local church.

"When Convoy of Hope leaves and goes to the next town, the infrastructure of Network211 and The Warrior's Journey stays and continues to help veterans," Pulis explains. "The Warrior's Journey has been asked by some communities to provide ongoing help to their veterans organizations."

In 2018, The Warrior's Journey — a ministry endorsed by AG U.S. Missions Chaplaincy Ministries — participated in 16 events, distributing over 3,000 Warrior's Bibles and connecting with over 1,700 military community members.