

# THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

Howard Carter (1891-1971) was an early British Assemblies of God leader who planted congregations, trained ministers, and traveled the world encouraging missionaries. He also gave to the Pentecostal movement some of its most lasting teaching on spiritual gifts.

As a young man, Carter wanted to give himself to something that could impact eternity. A friend invited him to visit the Church of Christ, where he was impressed with the informal and friendly services. He accepted Christ and was baptized. A year later Carter experienced the fullness of the Spirit with the evidence of tongues.

In 1917 he was imprisoned as a conscientious objector during World War I. During this time he studied his Bible and constructed a balanced and scriptural teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, which was his greatest contribution to the Pentecostal movement.

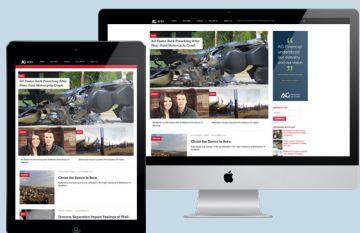
In 1955, at the age of 64, Carter married Ruth Steelberg, widow of the general superintendent of the U.S.



Assemblies of God, Wesley Steelberg. They traveled the world and ministered together until Carter's death in 1971.


Read Howard Carter's article "Speaking in Tongues as the Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit" on page 2 of the May 19, 1945, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/may191945](http://s2.ag.org/may191945).

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SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2018

# AG | NEWS

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

**INITIATIVE SEES  
OVER 3,000  
BAPTIZED**

**CELEBRATION SET  
FOR HISPANIC  
CENTENNIAL**

**A LARGE FEAT  
FOR SMALL FEET**

**WELCOMING THE  
OMAHA 'NONES'**



## INITIATIVE SEES OVER 3,000 BAPTIZED

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Rick Ross, the district superintendent of North Carolina, was troubled. Deeply troubled. As he reviewed 2016 annual reports from churches throughout the district, he noted at least half of them had one or no salvations for the entire year. It was evident many churches had lost their reason for being.

But what could he do to reignite a passion for evangelism in scores of churches?

God had the answer.

"God gave me water baptisms as one thing to highlight to kick-start churches," Ross says, "and to return us to the reason we exist — to reach a lost and dying world."

With the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Ross created the NC3000 initiative and presented it to ministers at the North Carolina district council in April 2017.

"NC3000 is similar to the day of Pentecost where 3,000 were saved and baptized," Ross says. "Only the challenge I presented was for the district to have 3,000 baptisms in a year — something that has never been done before in the North Carolina

district." He challenged ministers to baptize a number of people equivalent to 10 percent of their current church size over the next year.

His message to North Carolina ministers struck home. Ross says that churches recording no salvations declined from 41 to 28 percent; churches reporting no water baptisms declined from 43 to 33 percent. Ross was also excited to report that the district exceeded 3,000 baptisms in a year's time!

Mike Rakes, lead pastor of Winston Salem First Assembly of God, says that the renewed emphasis on evangelism has led to 150 people being baptized since April 2017 and a 5 percent jump in attendance at First Assembly.

"I think our people are discovering a more natural rhythm of living naturally supernatural and engaging with friends and co-workers on spiritual topics," Rakes says. "We have been seeing more people get serious about their faith and following Christ in water baptism."

At Generations Church in Goldsboro, Pastor Josh Clark says they

## WELCOMING THE OMAHA 'NONES'

BY IAN RICHARDSON

A new church plant with a heart for those with no religious background is thriving in the heart of Nebraska's largest city. My City Church in Omaha has experienced rapid growth since holding its first services last September. The church's weekly attendance tops 700. More than 800 people dedicated their lives to Christ in the church's first six months.

Jesse R. Norman, the 32-year-old lead pastor, says My City Church draws large numbers of college students, recent graduates, and young families. The church has made a strategic effort to create an environment where people with little to no church background feel welcome to visit and work out their faith, Norman says. My City Church also is visible in the community on a regular basis, including holding small group meetings in local restaurants.

My City grew out of Christ Place Church, a congregation of 2,200 adherents based in Lincoln, Nebraska's capital 60 miles to the southwest. Rick



S. Lorimer, Christ Place lead pastor, hired Norman three years ago with the intention of helping him start a new work in Omaha.

"A tagline that we say around here a lot is that we exist for those who aren't here yet," says Lorimer, 56.

My City Church added a fourth service on Easter. Norman says the church already is eyeing a second location before entering its second year. Christ Place operates two campuses in Lincoln and another in West Point, Nebraska.

### 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."



# CHRISTIAN FILMS SEEK MASS APPEAL

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

While a trio of faith-based movies that came out just before Easter garnered mixed results at the box office, it is clear that Christian filmmakers can extend their influence by producing a message designed to do more than preach to the choir.

*I Can Only Imagine* earned more than \$81 million in domestic receipts; *Paul, Apostle of Christ* garnered over \$17 million; and *God's Not Dead: A Light in Darkness* took in just \$5.6 million.

"The narrative about Christians in America in movies like the *God's Not Dead* series has been far more interested in bolstering a certain sort of persecution complex than in encouraging its audience toward Christlike behavior," says Alissa M. Wilkinson, film critic for Vox.

"Some of these movies tend to portray the antagonists in a two-dimensional way," says Cameron A. Pace, film and television professor at Evangel University. "Situations are more complex than the straw-man scenario."

"Cinema reflects the culture it helps to create," says William D. Romanowski, author of *Reforming Hollywood*. "Evangelical Christians believe they are beleaguered and in a battle for the soul of America."

"The glaring problem with most films marketed for the faith audience is that instead of challenging the imagination of their audience,



they shut down imagination," says Wilkinson.

Pace suggests a better way might be to follow the path Evangel University has adopted: students learning moviemaking while injecting their Christian values into secular stories.

"How can we still present truth in a story that doesn't have an obvious faith element?" asks Pace. "You don't want a movie to play like a Sunday School lesson."

Romanowski believes too many faith-based films suffer from being too obvious with the message. Because viewers want to have their basic spiritual beliefs clearly affirmed, presenting the gospel has become paramount to some evangelical filmmakers. Narrative consistency and character development sometimes become secondary.

"Popular art that endures has a way of showing us the truth without telling us the truth," says Romanowski.

# CELEBRATION SET FOR HISPANIC CENTENNIAL

Hispanic districts and churches in the U.S. AG will commemorate the centennial of its organizational convention Aug. 1-3 in Houston. The gathering will take place at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

Hispanic ministry has multiplied into 14 districts across the nation, serving the fastest-growing constituency in the Fellowship. Hispanics now comprise over 22 percent of AG adherents in the U.S. The AG has three Hispanic executive presbyters and 46 Hispanic general presbyters.

At the opening night of the Houston celebration, AG Executive Presbyter Wilfredo "Choco" De Jesús, pastor of New Life Covenant Church in Chicago, will reflect on the legacy of the past. The Aug. 2 morning meeting will feature Iglesia el Calvario Pastor Saturnino "Nino" González of Orlando, Florida, leading a commemoration of the current AG Hispanic church. An Aug. 2 lunch will include AG U.S. Missions Executive Director Malcolm P. Burleigh and AG World Missions Executive Director Greg Mundis. The Aug. 2 bilingual youth service could attract 10,000 young people. AG Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, will give an address. General Superintendent Doug Clay and Executive Presbyter Melissa J. Alfaro will talk at the concluding consecration service Aug. 3.

For more information on the conference, see: <https://hispanic100.ag.org/>.

# A LARGE FEAT FOR SMALL FEET

BY ANA ELLIOTT

Pastor Austin Bishop and a team from First AG in Philadelphia, Mississippi, witnessed beaming smiles more than 500 times after telling students they had a gift for them.

Previously, Bishop worked as an area sportswriter, which gave him some unique connections to stakeholders, including coaches, in the community of 7,400. The church found a school to serve and teamed with Rural Compassion to make the plan a reality.

Bishop and the team at First AG pulled off a large feat measuring the students for shoes, receiving orders, packing them, and distributing the footwear. Last year, Bishop and staff handed out over 300 shoes at Union Elementary School. Recently, they distributed 584 pairs of shoes at Philadelphia Elementary School.

"We have about 50 in attendance each Sunday," Bishop says. "A small church can do something like this. It takes a lot of organization, but it can be done."

"You could just feel the excitement in the air when the kids walked into the gym to get their new shoes," says Travis Creel, assistant principal at Philadelphia Elementary School. "Some of our students have never had their own pair of brand new shoes, so it felt like Christmas morning."



## COURT SANCTIONS SPORTS GAMBLING

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

The U.S. Supreme Court voted 6-3 on Monday to invalidate a federal law that kept states from operating, sponsoring, and promoting commercial sports gambling ventures. Under the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), passed by Congress in 1992, sports betting had been illegal in the U.S., except in Nevada.

Gambling interests view online betting as a lucrative new revenue stream. Americans already lose an estimated \$117 billion annually on state-sanctioned gambling such as lotteries and casinos. Les Bernal, national director of Stop Predatory Gambling, predicts a new set of problem gamblers will arise as a result of the court decision.

"Sports betting is especially dangerous for American kids," says Bernal, 48. "Studies show that children in those countries with legal sports gambling are repeatedly exposed to harmful messages and advertisements about sports gambling. It normalizes

gambling for kids."

Stop Predatory Gambling filed an amicus curiae brief along with various Christian organizations, including the National Association of Evangelicals, of which the AG is the largest member. The AG contends that gambling is wrong for multiple reasons.

Jerry Prosapio, 66, co-founder of Gambling Exposed!, spent 13 years on a destructive path, including gambling away his college tuition funds, and squandering the money he and his wife received as wedding gifts.

"As a former compulsive sports gambler, I know the passage of any state-sponsored gambling will only create more addicts," says Prosapio, who attends Crossroads Church, an AG congregation in Burbank, Illinois. "These addicts will most certainly come from teenagers and college-age students. I have helped compulsive gamblers in this age group who individually owe tens of thousands of dollars due to sports betting."

have recently exceeded 50 baptisms and have seen attendance go from 180 to about 225, noting that several entire families have come to Christ during this time.

"It's one thing to hear about people accepting Christ, it's another to be face-to-face with people who have just accepted Christ and are starting their journey of faith," Clark says. "[NC3000] has definitely ignited a fresh passion for evangelism — we're very excited about our church and the direction of the AG."

For Pastor Greg Davenport and his 1Hope congregation in Sanford, seeing more than 30 people get baptized and about 40 percent growth so now the church regularly runs 200

people, has given him a vision for even greater things over the next year.

"Our church's theme this year is Reach 600," he says. "We asked for 150 people, including teens and older children, to allow the Holy Spirit to lay four friends on their hearts who are unchurched and unsaved. Then we're going to hold four big evangelistic days that they can invite those friends to, and we're praying that at least 120 will make the decision to accept Christ."

"There is a new optimism in NCAG [North Carolina Assemblies of God district] that we really are making a difference," Ross confirms. "There's an excitement for our pastors to once again get back to the Kingdom business!"

## HOMELESS TO COLLEGIATE ATHLETE

BY MIKAYLA HEIDT

Matthew Perez grew up in an abusive home in McAllen, Texas. He was verbally and physically abused, called profane names, demeaned, and even the target of thrown objects.

Finally, Perez, then 18, packed his things and moved in with a friend. He attended church with the family and his relationship with God grew.

Perez got into a relationship with a girl and moved in with her family. He stopped going to church. When the girl broke up with him, he had nowhere to stay.

Depressed and alone, he attempted to take his life. But when Perez rammed into tree in an attempt to

impale himself with a knife, the knife barely scratched him.

"This is when I knew God existed more than anything else in the world," he says.

He learned about Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU) in Waxahachie, Texas, his senior year after his cross-country coach advised him to look into it. SAGU offered a scholarship to him to run cross-country. He eagerly accepted.

The new friends he's made at SAGU have become his family.

Perez says, "I've been [from] the verge of not wanting to live to living the best life I can to the glory of God."