THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY
BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

Ruth Trotter Garlock (1897-1997) and her husband, Henry B. Garlock, were Assemblies of God missionary pioneers in Liberia, Ghana, and Malawi.

After receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit and a call to African missions as a teenager, Ruth determined that she would only marry a man who was a committed Christian with a sincere call to Africa. Henry Garlock was that man.

When Henry graduated from college in 1920, the couple became engaged. Henry received AG missionary appointment to Liberia, West Africa, and departed for Liberia on Oct. 23. On June 26, 1921, Ruth joined him.

Three days later they were wed, with another missionary couple serving as witnesses.

The next day they arose at 2 a.m. to begin the two-day trek to their home, riding in a dugout canoe through crocodile-infested waters, walking miles on jungle trails in the rain, and wading through waist-high waters. The adventure of a lifetime had begun — which would include ministry to African cannibals and witch doctors!

Together, the Garlocks spent over 60 years in ministry, pioneering fields that now have strong Pentecostal churches.

Read about one of the Garlock’s treks in Africa on page 13 of the Nov. 24, 1945, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel online at s2.ag.org/nov231945.

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COMPACT SEEKING HOUSEPARENTS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

HOT SPRINGS, Arkansas — Tony and Kerri Ballard gather with other houseparents at the COMPACT Family Services pavilion at 3:30 on a warm late-October afternoon. As they wait for the busload of students to arrive after school, Tony lifts up specific prayers on behalf of staff and the young residents of Hillcrest Children’s Home in Hot Springs.

Tony, 43, and Kerri, 40, are among the 49 employees providing care to abused and neglected children in age- and gender-based housing on a 65-acre campus. They are full-time parents around the clock, 10 days in a row, until getting four consecutive days off.

The couple greet half a dozen girls ages 6 to 10 as they file off the bus. For the next 4½ hours, the Ballards will be dealing with a cauldron of emotions at Garrison Cottage. The girls might be affectionate, mouthy, isolated, cheerful, and energetic. At some level, all are needy and demanding attention.

After-school activities include chores, dinner, homework, showering, playtime, a snack, and bedtime story. The Ballards don’t primarily view their role as rule discipliners.

“If we are too stern in their eyes, they see us as just like the abuser who put them here,” Tony says. “I don’t want to mess up the entire night because a child didn’t eat the beans on her plate. This is a mission field to an unreached people group. Even if it’s a tough day, you still know you are walking in obedience.”

The evening meal, white bean chicken chili and cornbread, is scrumptious and filling. Everyone around the table has opportunity to share something good, and bad, that happened during the day.

VIP at Freedom Assembly has drawn more than 100 people in each of its two gatherings so far. A third intercession outreach, which is supported by some other area churches, is set for January.

Because of interacting with Unger and VIP, Lindsey Hutchinson-Kish accepted Christ as Savior and started attending Freedom AG. Unger reached out to Hutchinson-Kish, who had been jailed on drug-related charges, and invited her to church. Hutchinson-Kish says the initial VIP event inspired her because of inspirational accounts from people formerly hooked on drugs.

“As an addict, you live in a state of constant fear and judgment,” says Hutchinson-Kish, who has been sober for a year. “It’s such an amazing feeling to know that the community and churches opened their hearts and their doors to help show support and love without judgment.”

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.”

BATTING THE DRUG DEMONS

BY ERIC TIANSAY

An AG layperson and former drug addict recently launched an outreach to support addicts and families devastated by dependency. Janelle Lanning Unger, who oversees the recovery ministry at Freedom AG in Mentor, Ohio, started VIP (Vigil, Intercession, and Prayer) Outreach to fight drugs in a spiritual manner.

Unger also ministers to female inmates at the Lake County Jail near Cleveland. Unger, 51, is no stranger to the drug scene. In her early 20s, she became addicted to cocaine, ecstasy, and crack.

At 24, Unger gave birth to a son, but she resumed using drugs and continued down a destructive path. But a year later, she accepted Christ at Lakeshore AG in Mentor, was delivered from drugs, and has been sober ever since.

“My heart is with the hurting, the forgotten, the struggling, the hopeless, the addict,” Unger says.

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An inner-city ministry in Iowa started at the height of the Jesus movement is shifting its focus to reach a largely biblically unaware generation. Helen I. Martin launched New Life Church in 1972 and served as pastor for 40 years before retiring. Jamel Crawford has been lead pastor since 2013.

“The church has always wanted to bring hope to the broken,” says Crawford, 41. “Today it looks different, but the goal is the same.”

Martin started the church as a coffeehouse in 1972, to reach out to those who might not be welcomed elsewhere. Miraculous healings and deliverance from addictions took place at coffeehouse prayer meetings. Martin became a pastor, teacher, and counselor when the sheep needed a shepherd.

These days, instead of drug addicts, the neighborhood is replete with recent immigrant arrivals.

“The church truly has impacted the neighborhood for the better,” Crawford says.

Still, generational poverty is a characteristic of the mostly lower-income neighborhood.

“We want to reach out to young people and give them every opportunity to become followers of Jesus Christ,” Crawford says. “We want them to understand that Jesus can change their circumstances, that they don’t have to drop out of school or become alcoholics.”

Crawford spent 5½ years as executive director of the YMCA of Greater Des Moines before joining the New Life Center staff.

An entire block is anchored by New Life Center — which owns a dozen rental properties. A total of 49 affordable units are a major source of income for the ministry. Staff members all live on the block.

Martin will be 95 in January. Her husband was killed in the South Pacific near the end of World War II. A widow at 22, she never remarried. She raised a daughter, 8 months old when Martin’s husband died, as a single parent. Martin now lives in Redding, California, near her daughter and grandchildren.

It was a fascinating and diverse group of cyclists that hit the “Mother Road” of Route 66 recently — a Canadian evangelist, a 79-year-old Olympic qualifier from the former Yugoslavia, a Ph.D. student from the Congo, some members of the Pentecostal Church of Canada, and a mixture of participants from the Family Life church of Penns Valley, Pennsylvania, all led by an AG pastor who once biked across the United States for missions.

The “Mission 66 . . . If My People” ride from Chicago to Santa Monica, California, that took place Sept. 6 – Oct. 7, wasn’t about raising funds or speed. According to K. R. Mele, pastor of Family Life, the ride was about praying for America and calling people back to God.

“We chose Route 66 because it was . . . symbolic of our desire to see America to return to the old way of thinking — a return to biblical values,” Mele says. “We’ve given out hundreds of Mission 66 tracts and prayed with so many people” and saw several accept Christ as their Savior.

The team cycled six days a week, averaging about 88 miles a day. On Sundays, they ministered at AG churches along the route.

Dream big and start small. That’s how Pastor Richard C. Gurganus started an outreach that has transformed a community in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

Begun as a missions initiative of Church on the Rise, over the past decade Rocky Mount Peacemakers has grown from neighborhood Bible studies into a multifaceted ministry touching many lives.

In the past 11 years, it has gained nearly 30 sponsors. Its program features such components as after-school tutoring, a computer lab, Bible study and addiction recovery groups, and a summer school that enhances children’s reading skills.

Peacemakers also hosts monthly community events at its 23,000-square-foot building. The property first served as an auto parts plant. It’s now the site of a community playground, built last year with a $125,000 grant.

Gurganus and Peacemakers Director Jesse M. Lewis flew to Miami to meet with Rich and Robyn Wilkerson of Trinity Church, which started the original Peacemakers in 1998. Lewis says the trip helped them better understand how to put the pieces of the ministry together plus how to pursue funding from corporations and government grants. Those two sources now provide two-thirds of their annual budget.

Peacemakers helped accelerate the congregation’s openness to diversity, which is demonstrated among staff, elders, and deacons.
refer to him as Daddy, Poppa, or Mr. Tony.

“I welcome them to call me whatever they choose, as long as it’s not vulgar,” says the quietly passionate Tony. “Even in the least traumatized situation, these kids still have been completely rejected.”

This night, story time in the living room before bed features the account of Queen Esther. Kids sit on couches, an ottoman, and a bean bag as Tony leans on a table and reads.

Hillcrest needs 10 houseparents to be fully staffed; one of the cottages is closed because COMPACT is short three couples to serve as houseparents. Both regular and relief houseparents are needed.

“One of our primary needs is for the Lord to send good quality, God-fearing people to take on this mission,” says Brian J. Page, COMPACT administrator. “It’s a tough job.”

Houseparents don’t need to be ordained pastors or missionaries. A college degree isn’t required. They must believe in Jesus as Lord and adhere to Assemblies of God doctrinal beliefs.

“Ideally, we are looking for a husband and wife who can model what parents look like for the kids,” says Page, 46. “But we also need single men and women willing to serve in a relief houseparenting capacity.”

BGMC — I CAN DO THAT
BY DAN VAN VEEN

Emily Hardy was 10 years old when Eric Hoffman, the Illinois District Youth director, came to her church, Industry Assembly of God. Eric shared the story of his daughter, Emma, who in an effort to raise $1,000 for BGMC (Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge), took pledges to smash eggs on her dad’s (Eric’s) head.

Inspired, Emily believed she could raise $1,000 as well. By June, she had already met her goal!

“I thought, why stop there? So, I kept going,” Emily says. By the end of December, she had raised over $4,500 for BGMC.

For most kids, that would have been enough, but God had given her a burden for kids in difficult circumstances who needed to hear about Jesus. This year, Emily’s goal is $10,000!

“I’ve sold T-shirts, necklaces, key chains, bracelets, and a (fundraiser) stuffed lion,” Emily says. “I also held a yard sale, bake sales, created and sold some canvas art, did some dog sitting, and I still help my grandfather (a contractor) with projects.” So far this year, Emily has raised more than $7,500.

Emily’s parents, Brian and April, and her pastor, Jon Keck, agree that the church’s culture of missions played a part in preparing Emily.

Keck, who came to Industry in 2004, says the church has always been missions minded. Throughout Keck’s tenure, God has shown himself as Faithful Provider. As the church continued to make missions a priority, it grew; as the church grew, the more money went to missions.

Keck says God intervened when his faith in God’s ability to provide wavered. Struggling with the strain of missions giving and launching a new building program, he received a call from a friend who told him, “God wants you to know, if you take care of His missionaries, He’ll take care of whatever you have in mind to do.”

Keck and the church did just that. Although the $1.5 million building took seven years to complete, it only cost $700,000 and it was finished in 2015 completely debt-free!

“The only way to explain it is, God blesses churches who put missions first!” Keck says.

PLANTING IN THE CITY’S HEART
BY IAN RICHARDSON

In the shadow of one of the nation’s top party schools and in a city where two-thirds of the population claim no religious affiliation, a new church plant has entered its second year seeking to increase its influence.

For the past 12 months, CityChurch has held services in downtown Iowa City. The church sets up each Sunday in a senior citizen’s center a block away from the campus of the University of Iowa.

Lead pastor Heather W. Weber, with the support of LIFEChurch, launched CityChurch with a core group of 15. In its first year, the congregation doubled to 30. In addition to college students, attendees have ranged from physicians to lodgers at a nearby homeless shelter.

Webber says many in Iowa City are turned off by their perceptions of previous encounters with Christianity.

“People have been hurt or offended because of the judgmentalism that they’ve experienced,” she says. “I have a heart for those people.”

While some may find it out of the ordinary to see a woman pastor planting a church, Weber says she’s been well-received. She has been looking for ways to minister in the community that her male counterparts cannot, such as seeking to assist female sexual assault victims at the university.

“In this context, being female is a bonus,” she says. “Iowa Citians appreciate diversity.”