



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

The Great Depression led to many mainline congregations, schools, and ministries closing or drastically cutting back; at the same time, evangelical and Pentecostal churches made significant gains.

Assemblies of God evangelist Christine Kerr Peirce, writing at the height of the Great Depression, warned that, "Instead of the Depression driving people to God, there has developed an apathy and indifference which has not characterized previous periods of distress, when men have turned to God for help."

According to Peirce, the Church was in a spiritual stupor because the work of evangelism had been left up to ministers. Instead, she contended, every Christian is called to be a

witness.

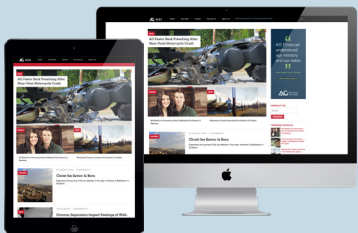
Peirce declared, "A true vision of the lost world will prostrate us on our face with a burden of intercession."

Visionary Assemblies of God leaders viewed the economic crisis as an opportunity, leading the Fellowship to engage in ardent prayer and great personal sacrifice. What was the result?

In September 1929, the AG reported 1,612 churches with 91,981 members in the U.S. By 1944, this tally increased to 5,055 churches with 227,349 members. During that 15-year period, the number of AG churches tripled and membership almost tripled.



Read Peirce's article, "Men of Vision," in the Sept. 14, 1935, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/sept141935.

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AG NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM NEWS.AG.ORG



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MULTIGENERATIONAL MINISTRY LEGACY

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

Tommy Barnett, 81, entered the ministry at age 16 and shaped some great ministries, including Phoenix First Assembly (now Dream City Church), a highly influential annual pastors' conference, and the Dream Center in Los Angeles, co-founded with son Matthew. Today, Tommy's three children lead ministries of their own as they carry the family legacy into the next generation.

When Tommy experienced a heart problem in 2011 that sidelined him for six months, Luke led the church in the interim, and it became clear that a transition was afoot. In 2013, Luke, now 50, officially became the senior pastor. Under his leadership, Dream City Church has grown to 20,000 adherents and added seven large multisite campuses in less than five years. It also started Dream City College in partnership with Southeastern University to train up leaders for churches from within.

Tommy's daughter, Kristie K. Sexton-Barnett, 51, chairs a human trafficking project called the Stop Traffic Walk, which benefits the Phoenix Dream Center and StreetLight USA. Phoenix Dream Center has become a national

leader in rescuing and restoring sex-trafficked women by using groundbreaking techniques that increase successful outcomes.

Matthew, the youngest Barnett, began preaching at 16 and went to Los Angeles at 20 to take leadership of a small, Filipino congregation. That grew to become the internationally known Dream Center, which has given rise to more than 200 other Dream Centers worldwide. Headquartered in a converted hospital downtown, the Dream Center houses 800 full-time residents in its drug and rehabilitation program, homeless shelter, homeless veterans shelter, domestic violence shelter, and human trafficking wing. The ministry feeds 30,000 people each week on campus and remotely with mobile trucks. Six thousand mostly young people travel to the Dream Center to volunteer every year.

"The Dream Center has had more impact than we fathomed," says Matthew, 45. What Matthew learned from his father still fuels his approach to ministry today.

"What impresses me about my dad's ministry is his ability to celebrate little

COMING HOME TO APPALACHIA

BY RACHEL ELLIS

Emily Landers Houser's dream of giving women a place to go after incarceration will become a reality when the Smoky Mountain Dream Center opens in eastern Tennessee.

Houser, a western North Carolina native, moved to eastern Tennessee with her husband, Britt, and three children, William, 13, Cora, 10, and Nate, 9. Houser found work as a U.S. Missions correctional chaplain for women in Cocke County Jail in Newport, Tennessee.

Upon release from incarceration, women face a bleak future due to depleted finances to cover court costs and restitution.

Fellow Appalachian Keith A. Hall and his wife, Alicia, worked as AG world missionaries in Ecuador until returning to the Knoxville, Tennessee, area. The Halls began ministering in schools through Intercultural Ministries in 2015 to gain trust in Appalachian communities.

"There were no transitional housing

beds for women parolees," Houser says. "Nothing for their children."

Houser became a U.S. Missions chaplain in 2017 and determined that rural Appalachia needed a Dream Center — one that would partner with the Halls' ministry.

In July, the Smoky Mountain Dream Center found a home on 94 acres in Cocke County.

Houser says the property, bought debt-free, will serve as an umbrella organization to serve women and children impacted by incarceration, abuse, and poverty. It will provide a place of refuge for healing.

The ministry uses Living Free curriculum. Prison ministries will be able to send women to the Dream Center after incarceration for a year of discipleship before they return to their communities.

The Dream Center will have transitional housing for women and leadership training and programs for youth.

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."



NINJA WARRIOR OUTREACH

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Salmon ladder, spider wall, peg board, 15-foot warped wall . . . for those unfamiliar with the American Ninja Warrior program, these are iconic parts of some of the challenging obstacle courses athletes face in their quest of becoming an American Ninja Warrior champion.

But can a Ninja Warrior obstacle course be an effective ministry tool? Jon Stem has no doubt.

Stem, 33, has been the student pastor at Claremore (Oklahoma) Assembly for seven years. For most of those years, he's also been an American Ninja Warrior, having competed on the program twice — in Dallas about five years ago and this year in Oklahoma City. He's also active in Ninja Warrior leagues and local, regional, and national competitions.

However, while competing in Oklahoma City, Stem met up with another competitor, Jared Greer. Stem had become acquainted with Greer, a former youth pastor, at the Dallas event.

Greer now travels the country putting on Ninja Warrior-type experiences as part of community events and church outreaches.

This news grabbed Stem's attention as it combined two of his passions in life

— God and Ninja Warrior competition. And in the Claremore area, American Ninja Warrior is extremely popular with young people.

"I spoke with Pastor Dave [Mewbourne] about bringing the event here, and he and the board were all for it," Stem says.

On Aug. 24, Greer and dozens of volunteers from the church started setting up the custom Ninja Warrior course for students and adults as well as a mini-obstacle course for kids 5-and-under.

The outreach drew 600 people, as young and old tested their mettle against the extreme obstacle challenges for fun and entertainment. Yet with all the fun and laughter, Stem and Greer also had the opportunity to present the gospel.

"We spoke about overcoming obstacles in life and how Christ is the One who can lead you through," Stem says. "I just love that 600 people from Claremore heard a clear presentation of the gospel.

"God can use your gifts, your passions, the things you're skilled at," Stem says. "It may not look like others' giftings, but He can use it for His ministry and I love that."

AGWM, COH DORIAN RELIEF

BY RANDY HURST

Last week, after Hurricane Dorian decimated the northern portion of the Bahamas, AG World Missions immediately sent emergency relief funds and a three-person Convoy of Hope (COH) team arrived in the islands to begin damage assessment and help AG leaders organize relief through local churches.

AGWM Caribbean Area Director David Speer reports that two AG churches in Abaco and Grand Bahama are being used as warehouse and distribution centers for family packs of relief supplies. Other packs have been taken by boat to Moore's Island.

Thanks to the generosity of a ministry partner, COH gained access to several planes to expedite delivery of relief supplies. Over 89,000 meals have been distributed to more than 7,500 individuals.

The Bahamas AG, which is still meeting needs of survivors, is moving into the cleanup phase of a five-phase relief and recovery plan. AGWM and Convoy will continue to assist local AG churches in carrying out each phase.

As in most major disasters overseas, AGWM Executive Director Greg Mundis and COH President Hal Donaldson sent a joint appeal to AG churches. Send checks to: AG World Missions, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894. Please indicate it is for "Bahamas Hurricane —AGWM/Convoy Disaster Relief acct 410946 (60)." To give online, see s2.ag.org/bahamas.

MINISTRY BANKS ON ACCOUNTABILITY

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

Lake City Church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, built a 2,400-square-foot food bank across the parking lot from the sanctuary in 2011. Joyce Dexter, director of the church's food bank, came up with a plan for life coaches to help those coming in for food: to overcome longstanding problems that had kept them in poverty, to track their progress, and ultimately to limit the number of times they could receive food.

Dexter began recruiting and training life coaches — many of them retired and with backgrounds in personal finance — to help people with résumés, job searches, interview skills, even how to buy clothing for job interviews.

She drafted a letter and announced that everyone receiving food would have to sit with a life coach each time and show progress toward financial independence.

"The Bible is pretty clear that if you want to eat, you must work," Dexter says. "Those difficult conversations are done in love and out of respect to people who are tithing to this ministry and trusting that we are being good stewards of what they give."

"Our heart has never been to enable someone in a pattern of dysfunction," says lead pastor Mike T. Rima. "We want to come alongside people and help them take their next steps."



THE LONG ROAD TO CHAPLAINCY

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

A trio of enlisted soldiers formerly assigned to Fort Bragg are beginning classes this term at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary after transferring into the Army Reserves and enrolling as U.S. Missions military chaplain candidates.

Brent J. Lake, Minhee Lee, and Jonathan B. Williams all have moved to Springfield, Missouri, from the North Carolina post. Although all three already have graduated from college with bachelor's degrees, military chaplains are required to have a Master of Divinity degree. They also must have at least two years of full-time ministry experience.

The three new chaplain candidates, all in their mid-30s, are ethnic minorities.

Williams has deployed four times to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Atlantic Resolve. A pivotal point in his career came in 2007 when his platoon team leader died in Iraq. At

that point, Williams served as a Ranger special operations medic. Jonathan and his wife, Shayla, have a son, Deshawn, and three daughters, Nasya, Charity, and Jude.

Lake served as a chaplain assistant for four years before enrolling at AGTS. As Lake served as a religion affairs specialist in the 82nd Airborne Division, he realized he really wanted to be a military chaplain.

He and his wife, Christina, have three children, Christopher, Lincoln, and Chloe.

Lee, a South Korean native, sensed God leading her to the U.S. — to become an American soldier. Five years ago she moved to the U.S. with only one suitcase.

"I went to the Army recruiting office and couldn't speak English at all," recalls Lee. "I didn't know anyone in this country. But I had a calling."

Lee and her Korean-born husband, Jaein, have a daughter, Sieun.

victories in the midst of going after bigger things," Matthew says. "He can rejoice over one person's life change as much as preaching to thousands."

One household rule in particular always remained in force: no talking negatively about people in the church.

"He always said, 'God's people are flawed, but they are the best people in the world,'" Matthew says.

Under Tommy's leadership, Phoenix First Assembly rapidly grew from 250 to 15,000. Its pastors and leaders school, the Dream Conference, has drawn more than 200,000 attendees in three decades.

Today, under Luke's leadership, the

church is continuing to innovate in areas such as Christian education, human trafficking, intercessory prayer, ministry to single moms, and "microsite" campuses.

The Dream Center in Los Angeles began in 1994 as an effort to rescue people from gangs, drugs, pimps, and traffickers, Tommy says. "Before we could build a church we had to build the people."

Though Tommy never graduated from college, he served as chancellor of Grand Canyon University for two years, and is now chancellor of Southeastern University, which named its ministry school the Barnett College of Ministry and Theology.

RE-EDUCATING THE CHURCH BIBLICALLY

BY CINDY J. THOMAS

Mark L. Fulks, lead pastor at Chandler Assembly of God in Texas, has found a way to direct the congregation back to a foundational understanding of the Bible. The effort resulted from a Wednesday Bible study when attendees couldn't answer some basic scriptural questions.

Now a connections class for new Christians incorporates basics of Bible study along with assessment of spiritual gifts. The children's ministry focused on Scripture memorization for summer 2019. To counter the tendency just to Google a topic and read the first Scripture that pops up, children study printed Bibles and learn how narratives fit together.

A key component of the church's focus, nicknamed "B-Lit," is a weekly teaching by Fulks highlighting a Bible

chapter, distributed via Facebook, Instagram, and email.

On Sunday, church attendees pick up a card with five questions about the passage, including questions requiring cross-referencing for deeper study. Completed responses are entered in a monthly drawing for a gift card.

Interest in what the Bible says is affecting other programs. Over 250 area women interact with a Facebook Bible study hosted by Calecia Fulks, director of women's ministry and Mark's wife. A youth study program is underway.

Last year, Jon Catron became national director of the Fellowship's Bible Engagement Project.

Resource materials are being developed through partnership with FaithLife and Logos.