

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

While the Great Depression of the 1930s devastated many segments of American Christianity, evangelical and Pentecostal churches made significant gains.

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

Large-scale population migrations forced by the economic upheaval of the 1930s resulted in the unplanned evangelization of new regions. Pentecostals who left the Midwest during the Dustbowl established numerous Assemblies of God congregations in the western states. Pentecostals left the rural South and migrated to northern cities and started congregations in almost every major city. In the providence of God, the painful social dislocation of the 1930s helped bring about the rapid spread of Pentecostalism. Like pollen scattered

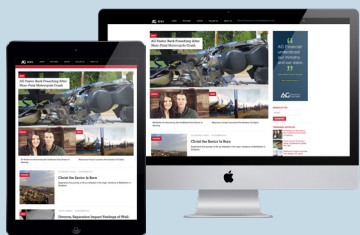


by a strong wind, Pentecostal refugees planted churches wherever they happened to land.

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

Read the full report about the growth of the Assemblies of God, "A Good Report Maketh the Bones Fat," on pages 2 and 3 of the Sept. 11, 1937, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel online at s2.ag.org/sept111937.

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AG[®] NEWS

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



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PRO-LIFE LESSONS

BY ONEYA OKUWOB

Father of five, pro-life activist, and church planter Henry Flowers IV overcame early struggles to find a place in ministry.

Flowers' father spent only sparse time with his son after he and Flowers' mother, Debra Sargent, divorced. In his father's absence, Flowers faced poverty, hunger, and instability, moving 12 times in 14 years.

In high school, Flowers saw increasing levels of violence and incarceration among his peers. Seeking a different path, he signed up for deferred entry to the U.S. Navy at the age of 17. As he finished his duty as a naval radioman, Flowers had a life-changing experience.

"At the end of the tour I found myself at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, and there I had a divine experience with Jesus Christ," says Flowers, 45. "He transformed my life, saved me on that day, and He called me into ministry."

Over the next 22 years, Flowers assisted with several church plants,

managed media and technology for a church, and mentored young people.

Despite having found a place in ministry, guilt from the past nagged at Flowers. He felt unworthy because he paid for a woman's abortion just three months before his salvation experience.

"I dropped her off at the abortion mill," he recalls. "Even though I knew that Christ had forgiven me, there was still that burden."

Because of his sorrow, Flowers leapt at the opportunity to prevent others from carrying the same weight. Flowers joined a ministry mentoring men at pregnancy care centers. When women walk into a pregnancy care center, they often leave a man in the waiting room or car. Flowers used his story, and the regret of helping his girlfriend procure an abortion, to counsel young men not to go down the same road.

Unknown to Flowers at the time, his history with abortion went back much further. He subsequently learned that his mother attempted to abort him, but failed.

LASTING LEGACY

BY ANA ELLIOTT

When it comes to ministry, 86-year old- Bobby R. Morris has a certain perseverance. "When I thought about quitting, I didn't," Morris says. His 42-year tenure as pastor of Lawson Assembly of God in northwest Missouri is evidence of that commitment. When Morris eventually did retire from the church in 2002, he became "interim" pastor at nearby Faith Assembly — for seven years. Most recently, he's been filling in as a Sunday School teacher at that church, located in Polo, 17 miles away.

Lawson Assembly of God has around 280 attendees each week in a town with a population of 2,400, located 40 miles northeast of Kansas City. Current pastor Zack Searcy says the proportionally high attendance is due to Morris's shepherding not only those within the church walls, but the entire community. Over the years, Morris served in two vocations: laboring with his hands weekdays in building and construction, then "heart work" on weekends and moments in between.



Searcy, 39, honored Morris in February at the church's 75th anniversary commemoration.

"That was the biggest day of my life," says Morris, ordained as an AG minister in 1965.

Around 350 people showed up, including missionaries who took furlough to join in the celebration. Over the course of his ministry at Lawson Assembly of God, Morris estimates he performed over 300 weddings and water baptized 1,000 people. During Morris' leadership, Lawson AG sent out 32 full-time pastors and missionaries.

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."



LONG-DISTANCE ASSISTANCE

BY DEANN ALFORD

When First Assembly North Little Rock Pastor Patrick Lander considered advantages to planting the church's eighth parent-affiliated church (PAC), this one a full two hours away in Jonesboro in northeastern Arkansas, he didn't necessarily think about the funnel cake machine.

Nor did he ponder the four-car train equipped with lights and music, each car a different color, that can carry 52 passengers on glee-filled rides in city parades, Christmas festivals, and church campus carnivals. While Jonesboro, population 75,000, is among the fastest-growing cities in the Natural State, Lander had never been there. But Lander, who attended that meeting while a staff pastor at the North Little Rock church, knew that planting in Jonesboro when connected with other First Assembly campuses would be a win-win for all involved.

"It's no mystery that starting a church costs a lot of money," says Lander, 33. Networking with a strong

church provides a financial umbrella of support. Rent in the area is exorbitant, but PAC affiliation enabled the Jonesboro congregation to buy property on which to build.

Lander loves the relational aspect of the PAC model, providing a community of established church leaders who can meet needs for prayer support and combating loneliness and isolation, especially as the only full-time staff member.

And then there's shared resources instead of starting from scratch.

"We don't have to buy or rent everything because another campus may have it," Lander says.

That's where the funnel-cake machine and the train come in. Congregations in the First Assembly North Little Rock network use them for community outreach events.

The Jonesboro church, with an average attendance of 140 per week, is in much better shape than if it had tried to launch on its own.

KIDS CURRICULUM ON HOLY SPIRIT

BY DAN VAN VEEN

There have been few more popular, yet more educational and edifying Pentecostal children's programs than the *Faith Case®* series. And now the *Faith Case* team is releasing a new series: *League of Investigators*. And the first question the league tackles is the challenge of Who is the Holy Spirit?

A four-session, video-enhanced children's church curriculum, *Who is the Holy Spirit?* features a team of young adventure seekers who help kids explore their faith. The curriculum was created in partnership with AG children's ministry leaders. It is the first in a new series that will continue to explore, explain, and help kids apply the Bible.

"We've received many requests for more resources that are easy for a volunteer and assures the pastor that Pentecostal beliefs are taught," Julie Horner, senior director of Publishing for the Assemblies of God says. "*Who is the Holy Spirit?* meets those expectations."

A sample of the booklet *Now What? for Kids: Baptism in the Holy Spirit* is included with the *Who is the Holy Spirit?* Kit. The booklet helps answers kids' questions about the Holy Spirit and what His baptism means to their lives.

As kids begin to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in their lives," say Children's Ministries Director Mark Entzminger, "they will begin to live the empowered life talked about in Scripture."

HAITI BLESSES CALIFORNIA FAMILY

BY JAMES & RACHAEL COURTER

The following report is from James and Rachael Courter, AGWM missionaries to Haiti.

For decades, the nation of Haiti and its people have been described as the least, lowest, and poorest.

In 2012, we recognized that many families of the 300 kids in our discipleship programs were struggling to pay for school tuition, books, and mandatory uniforms. Eighty percent of the Haitian population makes less than two U.S. dollars per day.

In response to these needs, we began Unveiled — a child sponsorship program. Micherline is just one of the children from the Unveiled program. Her sponsors are Nicholas and Nelly Brooks from Napa, California.

During the recent California wildfires, the Brooks lost everything. When made aware of the need, the Unveiled mothers and children raised 25,000 Haitian Gourdes — roughly \$378 — for the Brooks family. They also sensed a need to communicate the following: "A lot of times there is persecution in life, but we want to encourage you that you are always in the arms of God."

"We are overwhelmed with gratitude for our family from Haiti," Nelly wrote. "This reminds us of God's mercy for us, even in the most difficult times."

Truly the people of God from every nation, tribe, and tongue are a family of families!



NAVAL CHAPLAIN PIONEER

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Judy T. Malana didn't receive a robust welcome when she walked into a recruiter's office nearly a quarter century ago with the notion of becoming a Navy chaplain.

At the time, Malana — petite, Asian, female — didn't look the part of the traditional chaplain.

Yet by 1998, Malana, an endorsed chaplain with U.S. Missions Chaplaincy Ministries, became the first female chaplain assigned to any guided-missile cruiser, then the last male bastion in the surface fleet.

Now, Malana holds the rank of captain and currently serves as the regional Naval District chaplain based in Washington, D.C. The first woman Navy chaplain in the Assemblies of God remains the highest-ranking female naval chaplain representing the Fellowship.

Malana is a "sea services" chaplain who has served ashore, afloat, and overseas, rotating between the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines. Malana, who has traveled to two dozen countries, relishes serving outside the

four walls of the church.

"The most exciting place to be is where people need you the most," says Malana, 51, "whether that's providing services to sailors on a ship in the middle of the Persian Gulf, caring for wounded warriors and their families in a hospital, or providing pastoral counseling to first responders after a natural disaster. God's presence and comfort can become real when someone is in crisis."

Malana is appreciative of the AG's supportive stance of her role as a woman in ministry. Over the years she says she repeatedly has encountered male chaplains from other denominations that don't endorse women chaplains whose interactions ranged from indifferent to hostile.

Coast guardsmen, marines, and sailors usually aren't so picky.

"People who are in crisis and need a chaplain really aren't concerned about gender," she says.

Malana hopes other women consider the possibility of joining the military as chaplains.

"Henry came to me one day and told me that he knew and that he had found out," Sargent, remembers. "He said that he understood and that he forgave me. I thank the Lord that he was born. He has been a good son."

This personal experience adds urgency to his pro-life work. Flowers moved into a national ministry and works with predominantly African-American churches to prevent abortion. Today, Flowers continues to lend his story to preventing abortion, speaking at pregnancy care center events about how his mother unsuccessfully tried to abort him. He harbors no ill-will toward his mother, and often ministers alongside her. He believes his presence in pro-life work

is crucial as abortion is often seen as a white, politically conservative issue. He reframes it as a moral issue that impacts all.

"People don't have abortions because they just want to kill their baby," says Flowers, who has a YouTube channel. "People have abortions because they are engulfed in the struggle. Many of them are like my mom: already divorced, poor, broke, and hungry. She had two little girls."

Flowers is also lending his skills to an Assemblies of God church plant in Cincinnati.

"I really appreciate the AG for their heart and what they're doing for racial reconciliation and their supporting of black leadership," Flowers says.

SPREADING THE SALT

KEN WALKER

It snowed last Christmas in Boca Raton, Florida. Well, at least members of Salt Church threw manufactured snowballs after a service.

Among the curious visitors that day was a young woman addicted to prescription drugs. Fearful, she came inside only after the service started. She prayed to receive Christ after confiding to Pastor Rob Boyd that she had been mad at God because of her brother's death.

"That's what's so cool about church plants," says Rob, 44. "People come who wouldn't go somewhere else."

That woman — who died two weeks later from a seizure — represents dozens of individuals who have committed to

follow Christ, thanks to the ministry of the unusual congregation.

Rob and Lisa Boyd launched Salt Church in 2012 when they sensed God calling them to start an outreach aimed at reaching folks with no church background.

"We've had opportunities to lay hands on people who were sick," Rob says. "I had an atheist trying to refute anything about God and by the end of our conversation he asked me to pray for him because he was facing surgery."

The church also emphasizes helping children from traumatic backgrounds, one time throwing a first-ever birthday party for a boy in foster care who came from an abusive home.