



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY GLENN W. GOHR

Clarence L. Strom and his wife, Orvia, were pioneer Assemblies of God church planters. Practically every place they went, they started a church or helped a struggling one to grow.

The Stroms were, perhaps, best known for their 18 years of service as missionaries in Alaska. They went to Alaska in 1959 to become the supervisors at the AG Boys Farm in Palmer. They also planted and/or pastored five churches in Alaska.

Fifty-five years ago, Strom authored an article for the *Pentecostal Evangel* that provided a tour of ministries in the Southeastern section.

To begin his journey, he used boats and cars to reach Ketchikan Assembly. Next he traveled to Wrangell, an old

Indian village, followed by Petersburg. In Juneau, home of the largest AG church in the section, he also visited the AG Children's Home located there.

Strom next visited Haines, the village of Klukwan, and Skagway, a gold-mining town. After a stop at Sitka Assembly, he visited Yakutat. His last stop was Angoon, a little Indian village of 400.

Due to pioneer ministers, today Alaska has 89 AG churches and over 10,000 adherents.

Read more about "An Armchair Tour of Southeastern Alaska Assemblies" on pages 16 and 17 of the Sept. 20, 1964, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/sept201964.

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Final Pamphlet, Sept. 29

Sunday, Sept. 29, 2019, will be the final weekly print edition of *AG News*. Thank you for your readership. We will continue to publish stories daily on the *AG News* website at News.ag.org. A sign-up for weekly email updates is also available at News.ag.org.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 22, 2019

AG NEWS

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

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CAMPUS ACCESS CONFLICT

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

After five years of increasing restrictions on the First Amendment religious liberties of Christian groups at mainstream colleges and universities, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries officials are guardedly optimistic about the future.

"It's been hard for a long time, but we're hopeful that we may be reaching a turning point," says E. Scott Martin, national senior director of Chi Alpha, which is chartered on more than 300 U.S. campuses.

A shift came earlier this year with a ruling in what is known as the BLinC case. With assistance from the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, Business Leaders in Christ, a small student group at the University of Iowa, sued the school after being kicked off campus.

The university contended that BLinC had discriminated against an openly gay student who sought to serve on the organization's executive board. Federal Judge Stephanie Rose ruled that the university erred in deregistering the student group because its statement

of faith required student leaders to adhere to the conviction that sex outside monogamous heterosexual marriage is wrong.

"This could be a massive game changer," Martin says. "Before, student groups that disagreed with university policies were labeled as intolerant and bigoted. We're hopeful university officials will learn they can't just bully."

Still, issues remain. Since 2016, the AG has been engaged in a legal tussle with a West Coast college that decertified the local Chi Alpha group — specifically because of its Pentecostal heritage and doctrine.

"To deny Assemblies of God students the right to assemble with their peers based upon their theological and doctrinal belief system is true discrimination," Martin says.

Chi Alpha and other student religious groups consistently argue that they, unlike political or ideological groups, are being targeted because of Christian beliefs.

A 10,000-MILE JOURNEY

BY ROBERT E. MIMS

Danesh P. Manik's passage to America's Midwest covered 10,000 miles. But his faith journey took even longer, a bridge to eternity that spanned the cultural and spiritual chasm between his Indian Hindu upbringing and the gospel of Christ.

Born into a Brahman family — the highest caste in Hinduism — Manik was expected to follow his grandfather and father in priestly duties for the ancient, polytheistic religion of an estimated 1 billion people. The Mumbai resident went to school to study with a Hindu guru.

But improbably, yet miraculously, the 53-year-old Manik today pastors Bellevue Christian Church, an AG congregation in Michigan.

As he grew into young adulthood, Manik knew he didn't want to be a Hindu priest. Instead, he studied to become a computer engineer. He did well, being recruited and hired by a company supplying employees to the then rapidly growing technology industry in the U.S.

In 1989, Manik arrived in Lansing, Michigan. One day, a co-worker invited him to an Easter passion play.

"I didn't know much about the Christian faith at all," Manik says. An incredulous Manik thought the Resurrection had to be made up, poetic license to make the tragic ending easier to swallow. The lady who invited him explained that Christians base their whole faith on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead.

Unconvinced but intrigued, he attended Mount Hope AG for the next year. In 1991, he responded to an altar invitation.

Manik graduated from Mount Hope Bible Training Institute and in 1999 married his wife, Michigan native Michele. Michele directs children and preteen ministry at the church.

Manik always will remember the revelation of the Easter play he attended.

"I came 10,000 miles to find a better life," Manik says. "Instead, I found eternal life."

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."

MORE THAN A JAILHOUSE SALVATION

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Chaplain Bob Durham is potentially an inmate's greatest ally — just as much as he may be an inmate's greatest skeptic. Over his four-plus decades of prison ministry he has learned a thing or two about inmates, con games, jailhouse salvations, and authentic transformations.

When Durham, an AG-endorsed chaplain through U.S. Missions Chaplaincy Ministries, began as a volunteer prison chaplain with the New York State Department of Correctional Services 41 years ago, his first assignment was to begin a Bible study in a maximum security prison.

Durham wanted to do more than simply convey information about the Bible to inmates; he wanted to challenge them to apply Scriptures.

"Little did I know a lot of inmates have a lot of Bible knowledge," says Durham, now 75 and the director of Prison Ministries at Global University since 2007. "But it isn't the knowledge; it's the application of that knowledge that matters."

Shortly after starting that Bible study, Durham joined Richard Tanon, the AG's first Hispanic chaplain, in starting a fully accredited Bible college within those prison walls.

However, Durham urges inmates to first complete Global's School of Evangelism and Discipleship (SED) courses. There are 37 courses available at no cost to inmates, beginning with

The Great Questions of Life.

Since beginning to offer the SED courses to inmates, 25,000 have completed at least one course and 1,400 have graduated, having completed all 37 courses.



Rob Lindenberg, 46, church planter and pastor of The Peak Community Church in Peekskill, New York, knows firsthand of the value of Global University and SED materials within prisons. He served two years in the Franklin Correctional Facility (2007-2009) in New York.

"I don't think you can ever really understand the impact," Lindenberg says. "Guys, isolated, disregarded by society, thrown into a hole, but then to have (SED) Christian Life and Christian Services material available for free, it's like having a teacher right there in the cell."

"We've reached 1,000 facilities with SED," Durham says. "We started with 30 active students; today there are more than 3,200 . . . God is turning prison time into Bible school time."

SEU — "HOPE FOR THE BAHAMAS"

BY PRISCILLA BURR

When Hurricane Dorian devastated the Bahamas, Southeastern University students in Lakeland, Florida, were quick to respond. They launched an initiative, Hope for the Bahamas, and raised \$24,000 in a matter of hours. During the Sept. 9 night chapel services, students prayed for fellow students and others affected by the storm. They also took up a special offering to help with relief efforts.

With the funds raised through Hope for the Bahamas, students were able to purchase items to put together 1,000 hygiene kits to send to the Bahamas in partnership with Convoy of Hope. Students assembled the kits on Friday, filling bags with a towel, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, soap and shampoo. In addition to the kits, students wrote over 2,000 personalized notes to send to the churches of their fellow Bahamian students. The students also collected supplies and nonperishable goods during home athletic games and chapel services.

"When someone in our community faces tragedy, we face it with them," said Kent Ingle, president of Southeastern. "As we heard the stories of our students and so many others affected by Hurricane Dorian, it was imperative that we quickly respond. I am proud of our SEU community members for coming alongside those who were impacted by the storm."

DESTINY OF A FIRST TOY BEAR

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

Ten-year-old Iosif Hoca clutched his new teddy bear like a piece of gold. The 1996 gift marked the first toy he had ever received. Christians launching a children's street ministry in his poverty-stricken neighborhood in Transylvania, Romania, rewarded his rapt attention.

Hoca sat on the ground in a crowded alley savoring the worship music and beaming at puppets that told Bible stories about Jesus.

"They told me about a man who loved me so much that He died so I might live," Hoca recalls.

Today, Hoca lives the destiny of that stuffed animal, pastoring Mosaic Church in Kenhorst, Pennsylvania, a church started with his wife, Christin, in 2017.

Hoca, 33, tasted the bitterness of poverty and violence growing up in a 100 square-foot one-room apartment. The street outreach eventually merged into Good Samaritan Church, which Hoca began attending.

He met Christin during her mission trip to Romania in 2009. She belonged to GT Church, an AG congregation in West Lawn, Pennsylvania. The couple married in 2011.

Hoca connected with PennDel Ministry Network presbyter Steve C. DeFrain, lead pastor of Morning Star Fellowship in Bechtelsville, Pennsylvania. Under DeFrain's leadership, Morning Star has planted eight churches and agreed to parent Mosaic Church.



REFOCUSING CHRIST'S MISSION

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

For the first time in its 93-year history, San Antonio-based Christ Mission College is on the cusp of achieving accreditation status from the Association for Biblical Higher Education.

The school, formerly known as Latin American Bible Institute, has attained candidate status. A visiting team will be on campus in October, with a decision of the initial accreditation phase expected in February.

"This brings value to the whole institution, because parents see the school has been qualified through the certification process," says Monte R. Madsen, CMC president since 2003. "Parents have confidence that the curriculum and the program are of collegiate quality."

CMC purchased its current 82-acre site from a Nazarene seminary in 1981. Growth has been slow and incremental. With 50 students currently enrolled, Madsen — a 1985 graduate — says CMC is poised for growth.

One of the drawing cards of the school is affordability — and a promise

that students won't emerge saddled with student loans.

"We graduate every student debt-free," says Madsen. Although tuition and fees cover only 40 percent of operating expenses, CMC conducts fundraisers to help defray costs. The school also leases space on campus to three churches.

Alumni Arturo Carrasco worked as a coal miner and his wife, Alicia, as a public schoolteacher, but they left their jobs and returned as full-time employees at CMC. Arturo is director of maintenance, facilities, and safety; Alicia is vice president of academics.

"A lot of the staff and leadership are homegrown," says Alicia, 37. "They stay on because they have a heart for the school's vision and mission." The couple's three sons, Brandon, Benjamin, and Blake (ages 17, 16, and 12), all plan to attend CMC.

CMC has an enviable student-teacher ratio of 10 to 1. Every semester, all CMC students take missionary trips, both around the U.S. and abroad.

"Federal law and Supreme Court rulings have determined that a school must treat all student groups equally, without discriminating based on viewpoint," says Curtis Lee Cole, national Chi Alpha campus legal specialist.

Chi Alpha's best practices guidelines affirm that "our organization cannot survive if the spiritual leaders of said organization do not share and own the values, beliefs, and mission of the organization."

Thus, the election of officers remains an extremely important issue, as many universities insist that sectarian student groups can't discriminate when it comes to sexual orientation or gender identity.

"Chi Alpha needs to be allowed to have leaders who believe in the

God they are praying to," says Daniel Blomberg, senior counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. "It would be unfair to have someone undertake the serious spiritual responsibility of leading prayer, Bible study, or worship without believing in what they say. When the government tries to tell a religious group who its leaders should be, it violates fundamental aspects of the separation of church and state."

Martin stresses that any student can be a *member* of Chi Alpha, and anyone is welcome to attend small groups, retreats, trips, social activities, and worship services.

But when it comes to who is running the meetings and events, officers must adhere to AG theology and scriptural admonitions.

STILL PREACHING WEEKLY AT AGE 88

BY CINDY J. THOMAS

Buena M. Huffman is 88 and still preaching. In the mid-1960s, despite the AG's doctrine of no restrictions of females in ministry, not all rural Missouri congregants felt receptive to a woman in the pulpit. Huffman encountered protesters, some armed with rotten tomatoes and eggs, but she persevered. For the past half century, she has been pastor of East Side Assembly in Eldon, even after her husband Elwyn died at the age of 55.

East Side Assembly, with an average Sunday morning attendance of 75, supports over 20 active missionaries monthly. Huffman, who will be 89 in December, ministers at a nursing home each Sunday before church.

"We don't have a big band or a gymnasium, but we have the Word," Huffman says. East Side has a Sunday morning and evening service, plus Wednesday night, for multiple opportunities to study the Bible. Huffman is currently teaching prophecy.

Melissa D. Mentel, children's ministry director, finds Sunday evening Bible study particularly enjoyable. An interactive format encourages questions, and there are often guests whose home church doesn't have an evening meeting. Mentel says Huffman remains relatable to kids, many of whom address her as "Grandma."

"She's never too busy to help someone," Mentel says.