

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

The Pentecostal revival that birthed the Assemblies of God in 1914 brought with it a dedication to the mission that each believer must “go into all the world and preach the gospel.” There was also a pressing need to communicate the progress, needs, and concerns of this effort.

The first official weekly publication of the AG, the *Christian Evangel* (renamed the *Pentecostal Evangel*), began publishing updates and needs from the 32 recognized missionaries approved at the first General Council. J. Roswell Flower served as the editor of the *Evangel*.

In 1944, under the direction of editor Kenneth Short, a publication devoted exclusively to missions was created — *The Missionary Challenge* (later changed to *World Challenge*).

The Aug. 30, 1959, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* announced a new missions periodical called *Global Conquest*, which continued until 1967

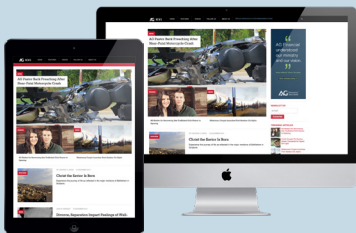


when it was renamed *Good News Crusades*.

In 1979, the publication became *Mountain Movers*, which continued until 1998 when it was merged into the *Pentecostal Evangel*. The first Sunday of each month the *Evangel* was a missions magazine. This continued until the *Evangel* ceased publication in 2014. *Worldview* magazine was commissioned in 2015 and continues today.

Read the announcement of the publication of *Global Conquest* on page 7 of the Aug. 30, 1959, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/aug301959.

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SUNDAY, SEPT. 2, 2018

AG NEWS

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

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SPIRITUAL RAGS TO RICHES

DAN VAN VEEN

When Richard Shreves, 39, was asked to be the undergraduate commencement speaker at the 2018 Global University commencement held in June in Springfield, Missouri, it was likely one of the most unexpected moments in his life. For although he was graduating Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Theology, Shreves has another 23 years before he is eligible for parole from Montana State Prison.

As a young person, Shreves had no use for God and his lifestyle reflected it. After dropping out of school and living a “normal” secular life, Richard entered into an ill-fated relationship with a woman. When that failed, he started using crank and filling his body with a cocktail of drugs — acid, crank, cocaine, ecstasy, or whatever was available — and dealing drugs.

In and out of jail and on the run from the law, his drug-addled mind was convinced his dealer was out to kill him and hurt his family. So, on Jan. 6, 2000, Shreves struck first. And at age 21, he started serving a 60-year sentence for

homicide, with no parole for 41 years.

Dr. Patricia Berkram is a 4-foot-11— 80-year-old who has been about God’s business for decades. As Pastor David Baker of Deer Lodge (Montana) Assembly noted, Berkram doesn’t let things stand in her way to achieving God’s purposes.

Berkram felt God calling her to begin a Global University course program at Montana State Prison (MSP). So Berkram, who is also an RN, got a job as a nurse at MSP with an additional goal of getting the program started. In 2008 the program began.

While at a regional prison in 2003, a fellow inmate invited Shreves to attend a church service. The Spirit-filled minister’s message connected. “Everything he said got me thinking about how much God loved me and His mercy — that was enough,” he recalls.

In 2009, Shreves signed up for the MSP Global University program. Approaching 6-foot, tipping the scales at 325 pounds, and having spent years lifting weights, Shreves is an imposing figure — dwarfing the diminutive

MINISTERING TO INDIAN IMMIGRANTS

BY TIMOTHY C. MORGAN

In greater Chicago, Austin R. Albertraj has achieved a church planting breakthrough by focusing on an underserved ethnic group — highly educated India-born immigrants, many who come to the U.S. with H-1B visas to work in high-tech or health care.

This spring, Albertraj launched his third congregation to this ethnic group. Calvary Indian Church is located in suburban Naperville. In March, about 200 people gathered for the launch service at Calvary Indian Church, where five of India’s 22 major languages are represented.

Numerous new arrivals from India do not have the problems typical of other immigrant groups. Indian Americans often are well-educated, speak English fluently, and have high-paying careers. Many families fill their homes with small shrines to Hindu gods. Albertraj says many Hindus have no problem accepting the divinity of Jesus.

“To have Jesus as their eleventh god is no problem for them,” he says. But they find the exclusive claims of the



Bible and monotheism unacceptable.

After years of outreach to Hindus, Albertraj has developed a strategic approach that begins, not with an invitation to Sunday worship, but rather to a weekday small group — a meal followed by a short Bible study. He also introduces Indians to traditional American-style Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, typically including a gospel message. Albertraj has seen the conversion process take months, even years.

In addition to Calvary Indian Church, Albertraj is pastor of Chicago Indian Church Assembly of God in Mount Prospect and Evangel Indian Church in Hanover Park. Evangel Indian Church is a parent-affiliated church in relationship with Evangel Church in Hanover Park.

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.”



OFFERING A PLACE OF HOPE

BY CHRISTINE TEMPLE

Nearly four decades ago, Carol Jean and Geary A. Smith wouldn't have dreamed of running a ministry for people struggling with homelessness and addiction. More likely, they would have been the ones seeking help.

"Both my husband and I were drug addicts and alcoholics," says Carol Jean, 60.

But in 1980, the course of their lives changed when they became Christians.

After years of discipleship, the couple received AG ministerial credentials and began pastoring a "normal" church in Minnesota.

Nearly a decade later, in 1997, Geary sensed God leading him to St. Cloud to start Place of Hope Ministries. Today, Place of Hope serves 140 homeless, drug addicts, and alcoholics a night and nearly 500 individuals a month.

"We serve people straight off the street that are under the bridge, sleeping in the woods," Carol Jean says.

"We minister to people who say, 'I'm hungry. I don't have a place to stay.'"

Place of Hope owns a five-story building that provides shelter and transitional housing, meals, social services, medical care, addiction counseling, and discipleship. A church also is onsite. In 2007, the ministry raised \$3.2 million to build an apartment complex on the campus that serves as low-income housing and transitional housing for people who are homeless.

Place of Hope partners with 20 local churches and over 2,000 volunteers to provide services and support to the city's troubled. This year, the ministry has continued to grow with a church plant on the east side of town: City Hope Church. This summer, the couple committed to start providing baptisms monthly because of a perceived need. The Smiths say God's provision — and daily miracles — keep Place of Hope operating.

MISSOURI'S SILVER-LINING SPECIALIST

BY ASHLEY B. GRANT

Stan and Michele Saunders became the lead pastors of Cornerstone Church in Chillicothe, Missouri, 30 years ago. Five years ago, Saunders says God began to impress upon him the need to go to some unusual places: where AG churches existed on life support.

The Northern Missouri District allowed Saunders to supervise a church in Milan that had no debt and 14 acres — but only three regular attendees. Today the church runs an average of 70 weekly attendees.

On Easter 2015, Cornerstone launched a third location in a public school building in Cameron. By November, the congregation attracted 70 on Sunday mornings. Saunders asked district officials about moving to the Cameron First AG property.

"The building itself could hold more than 200 congregants, but average weekly attendance was down to around 40," says Saunders. Cornerstone absorbed the existing congregation of Cameron First Assembly. Now, this location averages over 200 regular weekly attendees.

In August 2016, Saunders handed the Chillicothe location over to Chad Mayne and headed to St. Joseph to launch a church from scratch.

"Rural locations are not the most glamorous places to plant, but small towns deserve great churches," Saunders says.

PASTOR FACES GUNMAN

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Pastor Randal Ackland had minutes before the church campus and day care began teeming with parents dropping off their children. Just minutes to bring about the departure of the gunman he was face to face with in the church foyer Monday morning.

For the past six years, Ackland, 60, has pastored South Attleboro (Massachusetts) Assembly of God, which averages about 450 in attendance.

"I entered the building and encountered this guy sitting in the foyer, holding a gun," Ackland recalls. "He was shaking and sweating and pointing the gun at himself."

Stunned, Ackland asked if he could help the man or call someone to help. After a brief conversation, Ackland prayed. God responded. "He told me that if the gunman didn't want help, I could just ask him to leave." After offering help again, Ackland followed God's direction. The man left.

Ackland called the police. When the police found the suspect, he ignored instructions and reportedly opened fire on them. The officers returned fire, wounded, and subdued the man.

The potential for a far more tragic outcome isn't lost on Ackland. Yet from this potential tragedy, God is being lifted up.

"This has prompted opportunities for good conversations about God," he says, "which, in New England, is huge."

PASTOR ANSWERS BURNING CALL

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

After becoming acquainted with a couple of firefighters who attended Hope Christian Church, lead pastor Jim S. Detweiler took steps to initiate an annual firefighter appreciation day in North Haven, Connecticut.

That led Detweiler to wonder what else he might do for the department. In 2012, Detweiler became the first fire department chaplain in the community of 24,000. The department has 32 full-time personnel and around 65 volunteers.

Detweiler completed specific courses, including 12 weeks of FEMA training to assist fire and police personnel in disasters. Although a volunteer, he is on call around the clock — while continuing to pastor Hope Christian Church. Detweiler became an endorsed chaplain with Chaplaincy Ministries in 2014.

As chaplain, Detweiler has defined the job description. He hasn't shied away from a multitude of duties, such as responding to structure fires, counseling department employees and their families, working as a liaison with the Red Cross to find housing for those whose residences have burned, and delivering death notifications to relatives of fatal fire victims.

Now five firefighters attend Hope Christian. Several on the department remain unchurched, however, and that prompted Detweiler, with Fire Chief Paul M. Januszewski's consent, to



begin a monthly Bible study for first responders at the main firehouse. Eight attend regularly.

"The chief has been an encourager," Detweiler says. "He has expanded my role and found ways to develop more for me to do."

"Jim has created a bond with multiple members of the department," says Januszewski. "Often when first responders are hands-on trying to mitigate the hazards at a scene, the family is forgotten. Jim serves as a liaison to the family, not just at the scene, but for several weeks afterward."

"Being both a pastor and missionary in the community opens many doors," Detweiler says.

Berkram. But over time, a strong bond formed between teacher and student.

Shreves' infant Christianity began to grow under Berkram's tutelage and the Global University courses he studied.

"Having this lady come in, donating her time, dragging a suitcase full of books behind her . . .," Shreves says, shaking his head. "I got into the studies and learning the truth about God and His words, realizing my perception was wrong — He didn't give up on me; I had turned away from Him."

In three years, Shreves earned his Associate of Arts in Bible and Theology.

"He sacrifices a lot for what he believes in," says Terrie Stefalo, the Religious Activities Center director

at MSP. "He's not your typical inmate at this prison — what he believes, he does and talks about it."

Prior to the commencement in Springfield, a commencement was held at MSP. Shreves spoke. It was evident that although he had accepted God's forgiveness for the atrocities of his past life, the sorrow for the pain he caused others remains.

Shreves isn't sure what the future holds, but he's already working on his master's in Bible and Theology.

"There was a point in my life where I just as soon hang myself and be done with it," Shreves says. "It's mind-blowing to see where (God has) taken me."

ALABAMA CHURCH TURNS AROUND

BY ERIC TIAN SAY

An AG church in the rural Alabama town of Vincent that had struggled for years is now growing, while also helping to resurrect an abandoned congregation. Vincent Revival Center drew about 80 people in 2012 when Jason Allums, who served on staff from 2004 to 2009, returned as senior pastor. Thanks to an aggressive outreach approach, the church is attracting more than 400 congregants for Sunday services. Vincent's population is 2,100. Many attendees come from surrounding areas.

"We take a regional mindset when it comes to outreach, not just the city limits," says Allums, noting that strategy involves personal evangelism, event-based outreaches, direct mail, mass advertising, and follow up on salvation

decisions.

Vincent Revival also determined to reopen Parkway AG, which had been closed for almost three years in Talladega, a city of 15,540 located 25 miles east of Vincent.

Vincent Revival spent \$20,000 for materials, equipment, and programs for the church plant, launched in 2015 and dubbed Revive Church. Philip R. Jenkins is lead pastor.

Revive draws about 60 people for Sunday services. Jenkins, 38, says the church is meeting acute community needs, especially an addiction recovery ministry.

"We've seen prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, and all sorts of hurting souls come to the freeing power of Christ," Jenkins says.