



## THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY GLENN W. GOHR

Morris Plotts (1906-1997), born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, received Christ in an evangelical church in 1923. He began preaching two years later. In 1932, he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In 1933 Plotts planted a church in New Sharon, Iowa, and evangelized neighboring towns. He also built a church in Lynnville, Iowa, and later took a pastorate in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

In 1955, at age 49, Plotts felt called to missions.

He traveled to Kenya and worked with the Wanga people, who had never heard the gospel. The chief offered land for him to build a church and a school. Plotts built a 500-seat church and began preaching salvation,

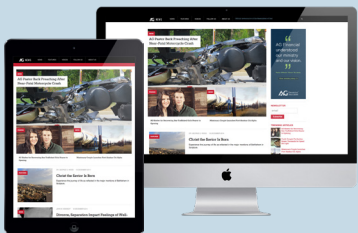
healing, and Spirit baptism.

Later he served as a missionary-evangelist. His ministry extended from Africa to Australia, Indonesia, and Japan. It is reported that Plotts traveled 2 million miles, preached 10,500 times in 3,367 places, raised over \$3 million for missions, built 38 churches and three Bible schools, finally retiring at the age of 83.

Plotts wrote an article published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*. It was written as a parable to emphasize that missionary service is not optional.

Read about "The Undelivered Letter" on pages 2 and 3 of the Sept. 6, 1964, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/sept61964](http://s2.ag.org/sept61964).

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SUNDAY, SEPT. 8, 2019

# AG<sup>®</sup> NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM [NEWS.AG.ORG](http://news.ag.org)

## CHEESEBURGERS AND THE GOSPEL BRING INMATES TO TEARS, CHRIST

### CHLS — 10 YEARS OF MINISTRY

### LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

### DRUG DEALER'S TRANSFORMATION





## CHEESEBURGERS AND THE GOSPEL

BY DAN VAN VEEN

For three years, Freedom City Church (FCC) in Springfield, Missouri, has held an annual Festival of Hope at its OCC Campus in Fordland. The festival consists of live music, hip hop, testimonies, ministry, and freshly charcoal-grilled cheeseburgers with sides. But the guest list to this event is highly restricted as the OCC (Ozark Correctional Center) Campus is located *behind* prison walls.

John Alarid, lead pastor of Freedom City Church, a former drug addict and inmate, established the OCC Campus in order to reach inmates with the gospel. As inmates are released, Alarid and his congregation are prepared to welcome those staying in the area to the church and its nine-month Hope Homes residential discipleship and recovery program.

"The OCC is a treatment facility for inmates who have issues with substance abuse," Alarid explains. "They only stay a year and then are released. However, most have 'backup' time — meaning if they violate parole or commit another crime, they not only have to serve the

time for whatever new crimes they committed, but also serve any time remaining on their original sentences."

On Aug. 17, Alarid and 40 volunteers from FCC were welcomed into the OCC — including six volunteers who once served time there — to put on the festival. But what difference can a "cheeseburger outreach" make in the hearts of inmates?

Alarid, an endorsed AG chaplain with the AG U.S. Missions Chaplaincy department, puts that question to rest. He says the effort is one of the church's most effective outreaches.

"Most people don't understand the kind of impact a grilled hamburger can have on an inmate," he says. "I often have inmates come up and thank me, with tears in their eyes, for the meal." Whether it's the smell of grilled food taking inmates back to a better time or the taste that reminds them of a picnic or even freedom, it's hard to know, but whatever it is, the meal, music, and testimonies prepare inmates for ministry.

Similar to previous years' festivals, Alarid spoke and then gave an altar

## MULTISITE APPROACH GOES RURAL

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

Michael R. Guillen has been a gardener and landscape business owner for 20 years. Thirteen years ago, he joined The Worship Centre, an AG church in Fowler, California, and became a lay leader in prison and men's ministry.

Today, Guillen is the lead pastor of The Worship Centre Orange Cove, a congregation of nearly 80 people. He still operates his gardening business.

The Worship Centre founder, Rod M. Haro, 64, planted the church 18 years ago with 22 people. When The Worship Centre had 1,200 attendees, the church agreed to take another congregation near closure under its wing.

Today, The Worship Centre's rural multisite strategy includes eight campuses, all but one in small communities near Fowler.

One main factor in success has been raising up people, like Guillen, from within the main congregation to lead other campuses. Guillen had completed

two years of study in the SoCal Network School of Ministry when Haro approached him with the opportunity to lead the Orange Cove campus, in the foothills 25 miles east of Fowler.

Haro says having multiple, smaller campuses opens up opportunities for gifted teachers, worship leaders, and preachers within the main congregation to exercise leadership. Haro spends much of his time mentoring and coaching younger leaders now.

"We had a number of awesome men and women who needed an outlet," Haro says. "Many of them weren't even pastors. But we recognized those giftings, and motivated them to go to the next step."

Each campus offers live worship and live sermons. All campuses preach on the same theme with different nuances and personal examples. Each site draws between 75 and 250 people, and the main campus has grown to 1,400 per weekend.

### 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."





## LIGHT IN THE DARK PLACE

BY ERIC TIANSAY

An AG chaplain is helping spark a spiritual awakening in the oldest and one of the largest prisons in Arkansas.

For the past nine years, Jim W. Babcock has been working at the Cummins Unit in Gould. The penitentiary holds 1,650 inmates, 425 of them serving life sentences. A significant part of Babcock's job as a chaplain is delivering death messages — to an inmate about a relative or to a relative about an inmate.

Joshua K. Mayfield, administrator of Chaplaincy Services for the Arkansas Department of Corrections, notes that Babcock has provided stable leadership with great concern for both inmates and staff.

"He preaches, counsels, teaches, and prays," Mayfield says. "Under Jim's leadership, 'all-day prayer' has become a regular item on the Cummins chapel calendar."

Babcock, 60, is no stranger to the prison life. He is a former alcoholic and drug addict, as well as an ex-felon.

Babcock became a Christian 31 years ago.

Babcock, despite looking tough and sounding gruff, has earned respect of prisoners. He, in kind, shows kindheartedness toward them.

"My compassion comes from knowing how they feel and my understanding that no matter the crime, Jesus can free them," Babcock says.

Babcock has learned that how he conveys messages can change an inmate's attitude toward him and God.

"I must live out the Word I am preaching," Babcock says. "I can tell an inmate that Jesus loves him and can change him, but showing him that walk daily is what really works more than anything else."

"Jim courageously carries the light of Jesus Christ in a very dark place, providing pastoral direction and leadership to those seeking after God," says Daniel Odean, Correctional Ministries representative for AG Chaplaincy Ministries.

## DRUG DEALER'S TRANSFORMATION

BY REBECCA BURTRAM

Jerad Stevens of Two Rivers Church Ithaca in New York proclaims the gospel in the city where he previously sold drugs.

Two Rivers Church launched the parent-affiliated church Ithaca location on Easter with Stevens as the community pastor. Aug. 25 marked three years of sobriety for Stevens.

At 19, Stevens went to Teen Challenge in Rochester, New York, and also completed the full program at The Farm in Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania.

Following rehab, Stevens reconnected with Dave M. Quigley, pastor of Asbury Church, an Assemblies of God congregation in Lansing, New York. As a youth, Stevens sat under Quigley's ministry, and he views him as a trusted spiritual mentor.

After Stevens spent a year being sober for the second time, Quigley connected him to Will W. Hampton, who invited Stevens to a Church Multiplication Network Launch event. Hampton, who is a CMN representative, says he has confidence in Stevens, even though he has a difficult past.

"If we are going to get behind the underdogs we have to have a team culture of confession and healing," Hampton says. "I feel better about underdogs who live in continual repentance than the elite who never open up to live in real accountability. So we focus on creating sons and daughters that we care for and love instead of employing hired hands."

## BILINGUAL SPANISH MASTER'S OFFERED

BY ERIN HEDLUN

The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary of Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, has designed a Bilingual Spanish Master of Leadership & Ministry degree in recognition of the growing constituency of Hispanic ministry leaders within the Assemblies of God fellowship.

The goal of the degree program is to further educate and equip these ministers and missionaries with relevant and practical advanced training.

"AGTS has a solid history of developing church leaders for the 21st century," said Tim Hager, dean of AGTS. "Equipping the next generation of Hispanic leaders for powerful and effective ministry is a strategic initiative inspired by the Holy Spirit."

The bilingual degree program launches this fall, with a cohort of AG Hispanic district leaders among its first participants. An entirely online course delivery allows increased access and the ability for students to study anytime, anywhere.

Any student interested in this degree program is encouraged to apply. Scholarships are available to AG-credential holders.

"We are focused on continuing to expand the bilingual degree programs offered through AGTS," Hager said. "It is our hope that this focus supports increasingly diverse global ministry efforts, specifically those of our AG world missionaries serving in Central and South America."





## TRANSFORMING LIVES IN JAIL

BY TAMMY REAL-MCKEIGHAN

Trouble paid an early visit in Andrea L. Eberhardt's life. She was 3 years old when her dad committed suicide. She taught herself to smoke at age 11, and by that time she drank alcohol, too. At 14, she became sexually active.

Her downward spiral accelerated with the selling of methamphetamines by 15. The dreadful existence continued with an abortion, drug addiction, and later losing custody of her two children.

Her out-of-control life came to a halt after Eberhardt went to jail in Fargo, North Dakota, and participated in the Jail Chaplains Bible study and church services. Now 34 and sober, she credits Living Free groups for helping her stay clean. Living Free is a faith-based, small-group program that includes 29 different topics and covers life-controlling situations.

Today, laypeople and clergy from about 16 churches help with more than 20 hours of faith-based programming each week at the county jail.

"Many times, a life-controlling problem develops because there's been a situation that's caused great pain in someone's life that's not been dealt with in a healthy way," says Gerri R. Leach, executive director of the Jail Chaplains ministry. "People can build up walls to protect ourselves and get into a very dysfunctional state, but God never intended for us to carry burdens alone."

Thus far, 106 people from 29 churches have completed Living Free training. Leaders facilitate small studies from nine to 13 weeks with no more than 10 people per group. Participants can gain hope from a biblical perspective by learning how they developed an unhealthy pattern and how to make different choices.

Groups meet in the jail, coffee shops, libraries, churches, and a bank in a 50-mile stretch. A year after the first groups began, 1,191 people ranging in age from 13 to their 90s, have participated.

call. As many as 150 inmates gave their lives to Christ. Immediately after the altar service, a baptismal service was held. More than 70 inmates chose to be baptized, publicly declaring their faith in Christ.

Ch. Daniel Odean, Correctional Ministries representative for the AG U.S. Missions Chaplaincy department, states, "Pastor John understands reaching out with the simple method of a barbeque is impacting, but when seasoned with compassion and culminated with a Spirit-empowered gospel message, it becomes powerful and life-changing!"

Over the past three years, through the ministry of the OCC Campus and the Festival of Hope, more than 1,200 inmates have made decisions for Christ.

Each Sunday, following the morning service at the FCC, a DVD of the morning's message is driven to the OCC church for an afternoon service that includes live music and worship.

Manuel Cordero, senior director of Chaplaincy Ministries, states, "God is using John's terrible life journey for reaching lost souls and bringing them to himself. Freedom City Church and Hope Homes are plundering hell by their presentation of the gospel."

"Years ago, the Lord called me to raise up an army out of the prisons that will go across this land and boldly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with signs and wonders following," Alarid says. "We are beginning to see that happen."

## CHLS — 10 YEARS OF MINISTRY

BY CENTER FOR HOLY LANDS STUDIES

Ten years ago, the Center for Holy Lands Studies (CHLS) formed under the leadership of the Assemblies of God through the vision of former General Superintendent George O. Wood. Today, General Superintendent Doug Clay continues that vision with a core value of Biblical Engagement, which dovetails directly into the reason for being for CHLS.

Over the years, CHLS has used the lands of the Bible to enhance biblical education in a physical and spiritual environment. The ministry accomplishes this through discipleship and deep biblical teaching.

"We understand this is a priceless experience that will transform lives,"

says Amy Flattery, CHLS director. "We know participants are investing in their relationship with God, and will relive the memories every time they open the Scriptures."

"One of the most incredible things that occurred on my Bible Lands trip is instead of hearing lectures in a classroom, our teachings were given onsite — in the Lands of the Bible," states Luis Murillo, a student at Southeastern University's extension in Ocala, Florida. "As I read and listen to the Word of God now, it comes alive in a way that I never imagined possible."

To learn more about CHLS and upcoming trips to the Holy Lands, see its website, [holylandsstudies.org](http://holylandsstudies.org).