

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

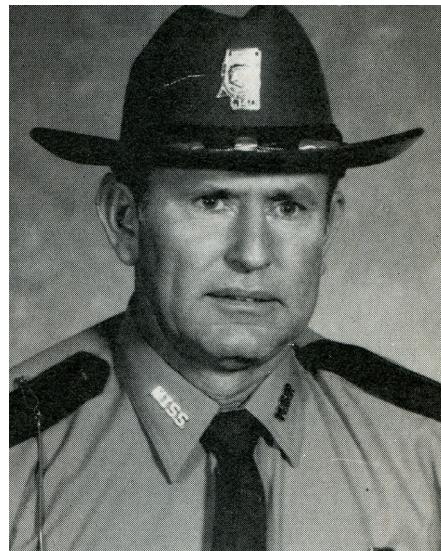
Opal W. Eubanks, a large, broad-shouldered white man, joined the Mississippi Highway Patrol in 1964. He relished striking fear in the hearts of African-Americans who were in trouble with the law. By his own admission, he was a foul-mouthed sinner who liked "rough stuff."

In the early 1970s, while experiencing deep personal suffering, Eubanks began attending an Assemblies of God church, where he accepted Christ, was healed of back pain, and was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Eubanks started witnessing to people and His Bible became his companion in his patrol car.

News of the conversion spread through the largely African-American rural community of Bay Springs, Mississippi, where racial segregation remained. People took note when Eubanks began ministering Christ's love to African-Americans as brothers in Christ.

Eubanks stated, "If a man is a child



of God, then he's your brother."

In 1974, Eubanks started holding a Bible study, which developed into a thriving congregation. In the first two years, about 45 people accepted Christ under Eubanks' ministry. The congregation, Bay Springs Assembly of God, was organized in 1975.

Read Eubanks' article, "Highway Patrolman Pastors New Black Church in Mississippi," on pages 8-9 of the Feb. 8, 1976, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/feb81976. 

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TREATING FORGOTTEN FOREST PEOPLE

BY TIMOTHY C. MORGAN

Missionary dentists have traveled to the far corners of the world for generations.

But what if the need is in your backyard, and you are a pastor and not a dentist? This is the dilemma that faced David W. Houck, pastor of Salt Life Church in Salt Springs, Florida.

The Assemblies of God church serves the “forest people” of central Florida’s Ocala National Forest, 600 square miles of rivers, lakes, vast marshes, sand pines, and a bombing range for the U.S. Navy.

Despite the photogenic landscape, the forest has a dark reputation as an ideal place to operate a hidden methamphetamine lab, dump the bodies of murder victims, or live as a squatter. But Houck and a corps of Christian volunteers have made it their mission to bring hope and help to the estimated 8,000 forest-dwelling children and their families.

In the forest, extreme poverty is widespread. Some squatter families live without indoor plumbing and electricity. They survive by hunting,

fishing — and charity. The dental needs of forest people include everything from preventive care for children to treatment of “meth mouth,” an affliction of addicts that rots out their teeth.

About a year ago, Houck, who is also an AG U.S. missionary, shared a grand idea with his AG pastor friend Jay B. Schwab: A mobile dental clinic able to travel the back roads of the forest, providing free dental care to forest families. Schwab immediately agreed to help.

Houck, 44, persuaded Operation Blessing to donate an aging bus. Houck and Schwab then recruited volunteers to clean out the bus and prep it for rehab. Houck, who completed studies at Global University, spoke with local dentists about designing the interior. The bus will have one exam chair, two work chairs, and new equipment for cleaning, X-rays, drilling and filling teeth, plus tooth removal. In remote areas, a propane generator will supply power. Houck received a \$33,000 grant from a hospital and has raised \$75,000 in

GOOD THINGS – EXPECTED AND UNEXPECTED

BY DAN VAN VEEN

“Can *anything* good come from this?”

For Bryan Koch, lead pastor of GT Church in Reading, Pennsylvania, it’s a fair question. In June 2015, a drunk driver crashed head-on into the motorcycle he and his wife, Lynn, were riding, instantly killing her and all but totally severing Bryan’s left leg (see s2.ag.org/koch).

“People, especially those who don’t believe in God, often come up to me and say, ‘You lost your wife and you lost your leg in seconds, where’s the miracle in that?’” Koch says. “I just tell them that the very fact that I’m talking to you is a miracle. I shouldn’t be here.”

The local media documented Koch’s journey, leaving many people wondering if his faith would prevail or crumble — it prevailed and God brought about good!

As Koch’s recovery progressed, his influence in the community grew. He was asked to speak at local schools, high school baccalaureates, blood center events, and to other churches and groups, both locally and nationally.

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.”

And when the hospital dedicated its new trauma wing, they asked Koch to speak and say a prayer of dedication.

Koch’s faith has impacted the entire county.

“The one word we hear most of the time is inspiring,” says Deb Bube, creative director for GT Church. “In fact, at the end of 2016, he was named the most inspiring person of the year in Berks County.”

God has also revealed an even more far-reaching impact.

While Koch was recuperating from the accident, GT Church still flourished — attendance grew from 2,700 to 3,500 a week. This remarkable feat, Bube says, was due to Koch’s method of developing church leaders. Now, other churches and leaders want to know more — and the GT Church staff is responding. Koch has even been asked to share his testimony at General Council this August.

“God can take all those broken pieces of our lives and make something beautiful,” Koch says. PE



LEARNING TO FISH WITH CANDLES

BY JENNIFER M. NELSON

The motto of, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime,” has become the maxim for a new business started under the umbrella of a Texas Adult and Teen Challenge campus.

The residents in the recovery program at the Adult and Teen Challenge of Texas (ATCOT) women’s campus in Pasadena are learning to “fish” as they work in the handmade candle-making business and gain new skills for future employment. Teaching these women various skills can help them as they look for jobs when they re-enter society, according to ATC Candle Company Director Michael Derrick.

At the same time, staff members are learning how to make the business a part of the ministry to help the local campus become more self-sustaining.

The idea to create the candle business came from longtime ATCOT supporters Rodger and Greer Kenworthy, who own a Christian company in Houston, where they manufacture products such as anointing oils and candles. In August 2016, the Kenworthys provided funding

to help start the candle company, which is managed by Derrick, along with two of the residents.

Since the launch, Rodger Kenworthy has been training Derrick and some of the residents in all aspects of the candle-making business, from production to sales. According to Derrick, producing these candles includes melting wax at the proper temperature, mixing in just the right amount of fragrance, picking the right wick, curing the candles, and labeling the containers.

The women also have been learning other business skills, including inventory control, marketing, sales, and basic accounting, as well as interacting with vendors and suppliers.

Alaina Foster is thankful for a second chance to accomplish something worthwhile after drug addiction took over her life.

“When you’re in an addiction, there are no rules,” Foster says. “For me, it’s all about having a routine every day, but also learning something new and knowing that when I leave (and graduate), I’ll be able to apply for jobs that I’d never been able to before.” 

CHAPLAIN HELPS BEREAVED COPE

BY MARY J. YERKES

When U.S. Missions Chaplain Liz Danielsen opened the doors of Spiritual Care Support Ministries (SCSM) more than 12 years ago, she began to fulfill a dream to provide faith-based education, counseling, and in 2016, support services to those who are ill and suffering loss.

To Vickie Richey, those services proved to be a lifeline.

“Losing my husband after 40 years of marriage was like a violent amputation,” Richey says. “There is a large chasm between the facts of deep loss, which is crippling, and the truth of loss, which is liberating and healing.”

SCSM helps bridge that gap between the harsh realities of bereavement and the love of God, by leading people to a more intimate knowledge of the Creator.

Danielsen sits with people in their pain, listens to their hurt and disappointment, and provides them with spiritual and practical means to move forward. People learn about the grief process, to cope with chronic pain and illness, and to move forward in faith after life-altering events.

Through the services SCSM provides — such as one-on-one counseling, recovery groups, and Bible studies — people receive the compassionate care they need. But those coming for services also contribute to the healing of others, through group discussions and the relationships and friendships that form. 

SPEED THE LIGHT SEES INCREASED GIVING

BY DAN VAN VEEN

With its best giving year since 2011, Speed the Light (STL), the Assemblies of God national youth missions effort, exceeded the previous year’s giving by more than \$500,000 and at the same time helped STL eclipse the lifetime \$300 million giving mark.

STL’s focus is essential transportation, creative communication, and compassionate demonstration as it provides these resources for AG missionaries in the U.S. and abroad to help them reach people for Christ. Created by former National Youth Ministries leader Ralph Harris in 1944, a total of \$303,427,657.35 has been raised through STL since then. In 2016 alone, \$8,795,123.89 was raised.

National Youth Ministries Director Heath Adamson says he is grateful for all the hard work and the increase in giving in 2016, but the needs are greater than ever.

“We just had nearly 2,000 students pledge a year and consider giving a lifetime to missions at the World Missions Summit in January, and we already have a growing number of missionaries on the field,” Adamson says. “We have the willing workers, now it’s up to the rest of us to put the tools they need into their hands.”

Adamson says he’s challenged each district to increase its STL giving by 25 percent in 2017 to help STL break \$10 million this year. 



A NEW BLESSED PROPERTY

BY PETER K. JOHNSON

Barriers frustrated the plans of Grace Trinity Church (GTC) to build a new campus on vacant retail space in Sacramento, California.

Potential lenders were wary about approving a mortgage. Municipal regulations demanded more parking spaces for the projected congregation. The only solution seemed to be to also purchase the adjacent lot, which stirred up a storm of angst because of its unsavory past. That property had been home to a recently shuttered strip club.

GTC, one of the largest members of the AG's National Slavic District, needed to move from the confined space of its rented facility in the northeast Sacramento suburb of Antelope to accommodate a growing congregation.

"We tried to focus more on the younger generation and took a very personal interest working with these families," says Aleksandr Kalinyuk, senior pastor. "We also added English interpreters to the worship services that attracted new people."

Kalinyuk, who has served the church since 1996, emigrated to the U.S. in 1989 from the Ukraine. GTC Russian and Ukrainian worship services are

translated into English. Adding English has attracted more second-generation families.

In 2013, GTC began investigating options for building a new facility. In addition to mortgage negotiations, the lengthy process included obtaining numerous permits and certificates from more than 20 state and city agencies.

Obtaining the \$800,000 mortgage for the 13,000-square-foot main church depended upon purchasing the former strip club's property. GTC was willing to pay \$300,000 in cash for the land, valued at \$600,000, which would serve as additional equity for the mortgage.

However, a bank official cautioned church officials that it was highly unlikely for the loan underwriters to approve a mortgage based on buying a former strip club. To everyone's surprise, the loan was approved the next day.

The main building site and adjacent space in Sacramento were purchased simultaneously in 2014. The club property will include 108 parking spaces and a multipurpose hall for youth ministries, child care, and fellowship events. The new church is scheduled for completion in April and will seat up to 400 congregants. 

private support.

After hearing about Houck's outreach, retired dentist A.J. Montacelli offered to help. Montacelli says he expects that the mobile clinic at first will do emergency care for people in pain. The state has granted him a limited license to provide indigent dental care at no charge. This will allow the ministry to provide services without full-blown malpractice insurance.

"Hopefully we catch patients at a time where you can teach them oral hygiene and give them self-esteem," Montacelli says. "This is a forgotten population."

Over the past 24 years, Houck has developed a reputation as a missionary entrepreneur.

"He's a networking guy," Schwab

says. "He grew up in the forest. He runs a camp, pastors a church, has a health agency. He has a restaurant and a restaurant school." The food banks that Houck's church volunteers help operate feed 7,000 people per month.

Houck's strategy is to start ministry first prior to planting a church. That way, the surrounding community already benefits from Christian mission before attending a single worship service. Houck and his wife, Tammy, also have adopted seven children, adding to their four birth children.

"We don't shun people with issues, we embrace them," Houck says. "That's the only way real change comes. Our message is that God has a plan for your life no matter who you are or used to be." 

BEHIND THE SCENES AT NASCAR

BY KEN WALKER

When Steve Post's life was coming unglued amid a divorce and other setbacks, the professional auto racing reporter knew who to call: Brian Nelson.

After working for several years alongside Nelson — a producer with the Motor Racing Network (MRN), Post saw a steadiness and a strong Christian example. That's what Post needed after wandering away from the faith he had embraced in childhood.

"The challenge of traveling with NASCAR and juggling other responsibilities is overwhelming sometimes," says Post, who has custody of his two daughters. "Brian was someone I could talk to. He has an

outstanding recollection of Scripture. We'll do Bible study and he'll pull a verse out from memory."

Nelson, 44, sings with the worship team at Concord First Assembly in North Carolina. He seeks to bring his faith to work, using opportunities to casually weave a Bible verse or a scriptural viewpoint into a conversation.

Nelson's primary role is behind the scenes — satisfying MRN's sponsorship obligations, developing story lines, and coordinating broadcasts while the on-air talent describes races. MRN covers most of NASCAR's Sprint Cup and Xfinity Series, and all of its Truck Series races. 