



# THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

Anna Ziese (1895-1969), the legendary Assemblies of God missionary, lost her life during the height of the Cultural Revolution in China.

When Ziese arrived in China, the nation was in the midst of social turmoil. In 1920, two warring factions, the Communists and the Nationalists, were fighting for control. The ongoing war left the countryside in shambles.

Ziese worked to alleviate the suffering caused by war and famine. She wrote numerous letters, published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, describing the horrors of daily life endured by many Chinese. She sought funds to provide food for the hungry, and she ventured into the war camps to minister to the prisoners. In an article published in the Jan. 12, 1935, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, she reported that 86 prisoners followed Christ in water baptism.

When the Communists shelled and took the city of Taiyuan in 1949, she stayed and did not flee with the



other Westerners. Ziese was the only American Assemblies of God missionary who stayed in mainland China after the Communists gained control.

Read the report by Anna Ziese, "Eighty-Six Prisoners Baptized," on page 10 of the Jan. 12, 1935, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/jan121935](http://s2.ag.org/jan121935). 



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## AG PASTOR SAMUEL RODRÍGUEZ TO PRAY AT TRUMP INAUGURATION

BY DEANN ALFORD

In a pair of historic firsts, not only will Samuel Rodríguez be the first Assemblies of God pastor to take part in a presidential swearing in, but also the first Hispanic.

Inauguration Day for President-elect Donald J. Trump is Friday on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

Rodríguez is senior pastor of New Season Christian Worship Center in Sacramento, California, and president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. He told *PE News* that in mid-December he received a phone call and email from Trump’s inaugural committee asking him to participate. He will join other clergy on the platform, including Franklin Graham and televangelist Paula White.

“The opportunity to speak on the quintessential political platform in the world, and to be able to lift up Jesus on that stage before that global audience, without a doubt is one of the greatest privileges I have ever received in my

life,” Rodríguez says. “It’s a God-graced opportunity that one cannot turn down.”

Being the first Latino evangelical ever in U.S. history to participate in a presidential inauguration is humbling and honoring, Rodríguez says.

“It speaks to the growth of the Pentecostal movement,” he says.

Dennis Rivera, director of the AG Office of Hispanic Relations, says that Rodríguez has gained the respect of many leaders in Washington, D.C. Rivera describes Rodríguez as an eloquent speaker who has been careful not to be drawn into backing a political party or candidate. Rivera cites biblical figures Esther, Daniel, and Joseph, whom God called to advise government leaders. “God is still allowing certain men and women to have influence, to have the ear of our leaders,” Rivera says.

He notes that there was a time that Pentecostals would not likely have been invited to take part in such an event.

“It’s an honor for an ordained

## COACH BAPTIZES PLAYER; QUARTER-MILLION WATCH ONLINE

BY ANDREW HURST

Ryan Smith, a high school football coach in Newton, Mississippi, recently had the opportunity to lead one of his football players to Christ and baptize him in front of a unique audience of approximately 250,000.

Smith is a Southwestern Assemblies of God University (Waxahachie, Texas) alumnus and the head football coach at Newton High School. When one of his senior players, Garrick Alford, approached him about receiving salvation, Smith was more than happy to help.

“He (Alford) approached me one day and talked to me about a couple of things,” Smith said. “One of them was football-related and the other was about receiving salvation.”

A few weeks after that conversation, Alford expressed his interest in furthering his new commitment through baptism. However, rather than being baptized in front of a church congregation, Alford wanted to be baptized in front of his fellow



teammates. After finding an off-campus location nearby, teammates were invited to witness his baptism.

“You could see a lifestyle change,” Smith said. “You could see his (Alford’s) language change. You could just see him change, not anything that I have done but as a result of what Christ has done in his life.”

Along with students and members of the community that volunteered to attend, the baptism was also captured on video ([s2.ag.org/alfordbaptism](https://s2.ag.org/alfordbaptism)) and shared on social media. With approximately 250,000 views and counting on Facebook, Smith said that the footage has been a “rallying point” for local churches and the community. 

### 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.”

# MINISTERS TAKE TO THE STREETS

BY DEANN ALFORD

When Rhoda Nazanin moved to Los Angeles to pursue higher education, she became media and graphics director at Bridge of Life in Santa Paula, California. But the position didn't come with any pay.

Joe Pierce in Richmond, Virginia, is working on an online master's of divinity degree from Southwestern Assemblies of God University, and John Ware is a pastor at Lifehouse Virginia Beach, while planting Lifehouse Church Newport News with his wife, Kristen.

All needed a reliable income stream with flexible working hours. Each turned to Uber, an online transportation network that links clients needing rides to drivers who take them in their personal vehicles.

Clients with smartphones use the Uber app to request a trip. The app alerts the nearest on-duty Uber driver with the customer's location and destination and directions how to find both.

"It's basically a taxi service, except you're using your own car as the taxi," Ware says.

Nazanin reports that Uber driving in greater L.A. has easily brought her \$400 to \$500 per week. It's become her main source of income as she ministers and works on a bachelor's degree in communications.

"I've had opportunities where I've come across other believers and we've



had great, encouraging conversations, and they've spoken into my life," Nazanin says. Sometimes she has opportunities to pray with clients struggling with life's challenges.

Among common trips for Pierce are to the metro airport, restaurants, and residences after work. Late on Fridays, he picks people up from bars and nightclubs.

"Every 15 to 20 minutes I'm picking up people, taking complete strangers where they need to be," he says.

"Ultimately people ask what I do," Pierce says. "The conversation leads to talking about an M. Div. and being able to share my faith with people."

The perks include divine appointments, Ware says.

"Whenever I'm driving, I'm praying over the city," Ware says.

Ware recommends work for an app-based, ride-booking service as a good match for pastors.

"Clients know this isn't my full-time job, and that always starts a conversation," he says. PE

# NATIONAL AG FIGURES DIE

BY PE NEWS

**Loren O. Triplett**, former Assemblies of God World Missions executive director and veteran missionary to Nicaragua, died on Dec. 25. He was 90 years old. Triplett and his wife, Millie, pastored in Nebraska before embarking on their missionary career in 1954. To read the full online obituary, see [s2.ag.org/ltriplett](http://s2.ag.org/ltriplett).

**Duane V. (D.V.) Hurst**, 93, the former longtime president of Northwest University, died Dec. 29. Following 15 years of service at the national office, Hurst became president of Northwest Bible College (now Northwest University), serving from 1966-90. To read the full online obituary, see [s2.ag.org/dvhurst](http://s2.ag.org/dvhurst).

**David W. Flower**, 91, the last living child of early AG leaders J. Roswell and Alice Reynolds Flower, died on Jan. 4. In addition to serving as a district superintendent, Flower and his wife, Doris, pastored AG churches in New York, Maine, Massachusetts, and Ohio. To read the full online obituary, see [s2.ag.org/dwflower](http://s2.ag.org/dwflower).

Former Executive Presbyter and minister **Marvin E. Gorman**, who began his ministry career at the age of 16, passed away on Jan. 4. He was 83. Gorman and his wife of 61 years, Virginia, pastored Assemblies of God churches in Arkansas and Louisiana for more than 37 years. To read the full online obituary, see [s2.ag.org/mgorman](http://s2.ag.org/mgorman). PE

# SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

BY AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY

The J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship, one of four AGTrust scholarship and grant programs, is awarded each year to three outstanding high school graduates who are now attending one of the 16 AG colleges or universities as a freshman. The 2016-17 recipients are:

Laura Holeman (\$8,000 scholarship) of Broken Bow, Oklahoma, attending Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri. Daughter of Randal and Sherry Holeman, Laura is studying music and youth ministry.

Katherine Bussard (\$4,000 scholarship) of Oldtown, Maryland, attending Evangel University. Katherine, daughter of Russell and Melinda Bussard, is majoring in nursing and planning to enter the field of pediatric palliative care.

Kelsey Hornsby (\$2,000 scholarship) of Mobile, Alabama, attending Southeastern University, Lakeland, Florida. Daughter of Matt and Keri Hornsby, Kelsey is preparing for a career in Christian counseling at Southeastern University.

This scholarship honors the memory of J. Robert Ashcroft (1912–95), an educator and leader in the AG and president of four AG colleges. The scholarship is funded by the AG Trust and sponsored by the Alliance for AG Higher Education and National Youth Offices at the AG National Leadership and Resource Center. PE



## A BUFFER BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Economic disparities are apparent in Wilmington, California, an industrial community that hugs the Pacific Ocean via the Port of Los Angeles.

Teenagers with just a high school education can command a six-figure salary working on oil refineries or as unionized longshoremen. Yet outside the front door of Wilmington First Assembly of God are homeless people parked with shopping carts full of their few life possessions.

Pastor Adam De La Vega, whose grandparents emigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, has been lead pastor at Wilmington First since 2009. During that time, the Hispanic population of Wilmington has grown even larger, with new arrivals from throughout Central and South America replacing residences vacated by whites who moved to Orange County. Today, an estimated 87 percent of the city is Latino, and only 6 percent Caucasian.

De La Vega says the church of 130 regular attendees is starting to attract young adults who want to assimilate into American culture.

“We’re trying to reach the new community of first- and second-generation Hispanics,” De La Vega says. “They want the English. This is a rough neighborhood, with a lot of people dying too early.”

De La Vega knows the downward spiral from his own youth. He was a high school dropout, alcoholic, and drug addict.

Jimmy Gomez, whose parents are from Nicaragua, became youth pastor at Wilmington First in 2012.

“We live in a culture where teens are pulled in many different directions,” says the 30-year-old Gomez. “We get them only 90 minutes a week. Realistically, how can we make an impact? Only an encounter with God can transform them to be followers of Jesus.”

The area has grown rougher with an increased number of robberies and murders during De La Vega’s tenure at the church. Yet contrastively, teens working the high-paying jobs at the Port of Los Angeles suddenly have a lot of money to spend on swanky vehicles and high-tech toys. 

Assemblies of God minister to achieve this,” Rivera says. “Sam Rodríguez’s commitment is to the agenda of the Lamb, not the elephant or the donkey.”

Rodríguez says that he met with then-candidate Trump last June for “a very healthy discussion” of issues, including religious liberty and immigration. “We also talked about racial unity as it pertains to bringing the country together.” Without endorsing the candidate, Rodríguez worked with the campaign to promote these issues.

Rodríguez will spend a busy inaugural week in Washington, where he will speak at a Christian gala, several prayer services, and hold

media interviews, culminating with the inauguration. His wife, Eva, who pastors with him at New Season, will accompany him to the week’s events and sit on a platform close to those participating in the program.

The couple has offered invocations at previous national political events. In 2008, Eva Rodríguez’s prayer opened the Republican National Convention while Samuel Rodríguez’s prayer opened the 2012 convention. In 2008, Samuel Rodríguez took part in the prayer service for President Barack Obama at St. John’s Episcopal Church, next to the White House, on inauguration morning. 

## SEVEN PROJECT RALLY MAKES IMPACT

BY DARLA KNOTH

Charlie LeFort II was a senior at Bucktail High School in Renovo, Pennsylvania, when he met with missionary Lee Rogers about the Seven Project, a Youth Alive outreach which brings motivational speakers for a daytime assembly and an evening evangelical service.

Rogers told LeFort it would cost \$5,000 to sponsor the overall event. That seemed like a lot of money for a remote town with a population of 1,200. Nevertheless, Rogers made a commitment.

LeFort and a group of friends bought chocolate bars to sell. They went to neighboring churches to ask for donations. They sold food at local festivals.

“Charlie felt the Holy Spirit speak to

him to take money out of his college savings to buy a stereo system to give away during the event,” Rogers says.

The first event featured Steve McGranahan, who tore phonebooks in half and displayed other acts of strength. Zach Wenrich, a professional skateboarder, brought a team and performed skateboarding feats.

Everyone who attended the daytime assembly returned that night as well. In the afterschool gathering, the speakers clearly articulated the gospel.

A total of 35 students — in a school of only 232 — made salvation decisions.

“Morning prayer groups and Bible studies started springing up,” LeFort says. “God used the event to move in people’s hearts.” 