

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

1968 was a year of social and political unrest. Cultural uncertainty and rumblings of revolution were on everyone's mind. In the midst of this cultural chaos, an article in the March 24, 1968, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* encouraged readers to remain grounded in their Christian faith.

Assemblies of God leader Charles Scott, in an article titled, "America Must Choose," expressed concern that Christians had become blinded to grave dangers attacking the vitals of America: immorality, alcoholism, and irreligion. He went on to point out that violence, sexual immorality, and drug addiction were hurting children and undermining families.

Scott recognized that the nation's woes, at their root, were spiritual. He recommended a spiritual solution to the problems enveloping the nation.

How should Christians work to spiritually rebuild America? According to Scott, Christians should dedicate themselves to worshipping God —



corporately as families and churches, and also individually. He described the need to rebuild family, church, and private altars.

"True patriots," Scott suggested, are people who seek "to destroy corruption, intemperance, wickedness, and selfishness" in their own lives.

Read Charles Scott's article, "America Must Choose!" on pages 2-3 of the March 24, 1968, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/mar241968. 



PENTECOSTAL
EVANGEL
NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S
TOP STORIES FROM PENEWS.ORG

SUNDAY,
MARCH 26,
2017



LUCIFERIAN LEADER NO MORE

PAGE 2



BLESSED BY IMMIGRANT INPUT

PAGE 4

AG MISSIONARIES TO THE DISABLED

PAGE 5

PASTOR FINDING VIRTUAL SUCCESS

PAGE 6

Read the full versions of these stories on PENews.org



NEWS FOR, ABOUT, AND FROM
THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

CONNECT WITH US ON

 FACEBOOK  TWITTER

 RSS

AND OUR [WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER](http://PENews.org).
VISIT PENEWS.ORG FOR
MORE INFORMATION.

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT PAYS DIVIDENDS [PAGE 3](#) • HOPE FOR THE ISLANDS: VANUATU CHURCH PLANTING [PAGE 5](#) • CHURCH BLENDS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES [PAGE 7](#) • THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY [PAGE 8](#)



LUCIFERIAN LEADER NO MORE

BY DEANN ALFORD

It was October 2015, and the Greater Church of Lucifer was set to open on Halloween in Spring, Texas, as the Luciferians' first public building. When another area church asked Spring First Church Pastor Robert D. Hogan to protest at the Luciferians' new location, not only did Hogan unequivocally refuse, he exhorted his Assemblies of God congregation not to protest, either.

"God hates sin; He loves people," Hogan said from the pulpit Nov. 1, 2015. "The only sinners are people. God hasn't called us to hate those people. He's called us to love those people."

Instead of picketing, Hogan asked congregants to pray.

Eight months later, Jacob McKelvy, the Luciferian church co-founder, drove by Spring First Church.

"I felt a burning sensation, as if whacked on the back of the head," McKelvy says.

He came into the church office and asked to talk to Hogan. Days later, after four hours of conversation, McKelvy,

37, prayed with Hogan to receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

On Feb. 5, 2017, Hogan baptized McKelvy and his wife, Michelle, in water. The couple — originally wed in the Luciferian church — renewed their marriage vows as Christians on the day of their baptism.

While a teen, McKelvy's parents sent him to treatment centers and rehab programs. Twice he attempted suicide. At age 15, he began serious practice of the occult.

As an adult, he connected with other occultists. He built a thriving online business selling satanic clothing and quickly rose to elite levels in the religion. With three other Luciferians in 2014, using the pseudonym "Jacob No" to protect his family, he founded the Greater Church of Lucifer. He says by 2016 the worldwide group had grown to 41 branches.

During the opening of the suburban Houston church, more than 200 people turned out on the Luciferians' property to protest. Demonstrators called the Luciferians rapists, pedophiles,

CHURCH BLENDS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

New Creation Christian Assembly in Artesia, California, started as a church plant in 2015. But by the end of the first year, around half of the then all-Filipino 80 attendees had left, unenthused about the vision of Lead Pastor Jojo Canlas to make the church multiethnic.

Now, a mixed crowd of over 60 people regularly shows up on Sundays, including Hispanics, Caucasians, African-Americans, and other Asians. These days, Filipinos are the third largest group at New Creation. The jovial Canlas emigrated from the Philippines to the U.S. after high school.

Heather Atkins is among those who filled in the gap. The 36-year-old Caucasian is children's ministries director.

"Filipinos build relationships first, and let ministry happen later," Atkins says. "It's a different dynamic than most churches."

New Creation became a Parent Affiliated Church planted by the predominantly white Life Center Church in Lakewood, California.

In 2013, AG SoCal Network Superintendent Rich Guerra had asked Life Center Church to take over the then-vacant building where New Creation now meets. Life Center Pastor Chuck Franco wanted to keep the building, which had formerly been occupied by an AG church, from falling into the hands of a developer or a group seeking to use it as a Hindu temple.

One day Franco went to the site seeking God's direction about what to do with the building in the ethnically diverse neighborhood.

"As I was praying in the sanctuary, God put Pastor Jojo's name on my mind," Franco recalls. "Right then and there I called him and asked if he could come over and talk about becoming a part of our church plant. Up to this point, I had never met Pastor Jojo."

Canlas indeed needed a place for New Creation to meet, and Life Center took the fledgling congregation under its wing. To this day, New Creation has occupied the space rent-free. 

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."



BLESSED BY IMMIGRANT INPUT

BY DEANN ALFORD

In Guatemala, little stops violent criminal gangs that demand young men either join them or die. After many of Bernal's* friends were killed, last year the 21-year-old construction worker who never wanted to leave his homeland had to flee for his life, leaving behind his wife and infant son. Criminals also extort his loved ones; if Bernal doesn't send thousands of dollars to pay them, his family will die.

Rod Loy, pastor of the ethnically diverse North Little Rock First Assembly in Arkansas, says Bernal's story is typical of those he hears as he ministers to the needy.

"They come here out of desperation because they don't have any money, and they have no food," Loy says. "They're so afraid of the cartel. Their lives are in danger."

Following Bernal's perilous journey north, in the tiny apartment where he's living with relatives, he shared his story with Loy. Bernal's aunt and uncle came to salvation in Christ through First Assembly.

Each week a ministry team from North Little Rock First AG visits the homes of immigrants, bringing each family a laundry basket full of groceries and an invitation to attend the church.

"I have prayed, Lord, bring us the people no one else wants," Loy says. "We know the issue of immigration is politically explosive. We're not taking a political stand. We're just being the Church."

Bernal is attending the church's Spanish-language services. More than 500 Spanish-speakers are now part of that church in some capacity, with attendance at a given service around 200, as many work three and four jobs to support themselves and their families.

David and Cheryl Richards pastor the Hispanic church. The couple helps immigrants needing assistance with food, clothing, and household items. They pray for those in their flock. They share the gospel with them.

"Everybody is fearful what is going to happen to them," Richards says. PE

* Bernal is a pseudonym

HOPE FOR THE ISLANDS: VANUATU CHURCH PLANTING

BY BRYAN WEBB

Editor's note: Bryan Webb is an AGWM missionary to Vanuatu and shares about the church plant in the village of Pemau.

The Asia Pacific Region of AGWM envisions an "effective community of Christ followers among every people group, every remote village, and every major city within Asia Pacific."

Pemau qualifies as remote. To reach the thatch huts of the village we cross an island by truck and a bay by boat, followed by a 4-mile trek inland.

Southern Missouri District Superintendent Don Miller is leading Project Reach, a church planting initiative to reach both home and abroad. To do that, the district has committed half of every dollar raised for Project Reach to planting churches overseas. The goal is 165 new churches locally and internationally.

"We are very excited to partner with the Vanuatu missionaries as they commit themselves to planting 25 new churches," Stan Welch, district missions secretary, says.

Hope for the Islands is a six-year plan to plant those churches among 16 language groups of Vanuatu, developed in partnership with the Vanuatu AG. It involves training pastors, developing training centers, purchasing properties, constructing churches, and reaching communities via primary schools and water wells. PE

AG MISSIONARIES TO THE DISABLED

BY MARY J. YERKES

When Joe and Ann Trementozzi's daughter Beth Ann was born with physical and neurological disabilities, the couple struggled to understand God's purpose amid such challenging circumstances. What they didn't realize at the time was that God would redeem their heartache and use it as a platform for His glory.

Today, 38 years later, the Trementozzis serve as Intercultural Ministries U.S. missionaries to the disabled and their families through Special Touch Ministry. Repeatedly they receive phone calls from people with disabilities, saying they quit attending worship services because a church couldn't accommodate their needs.

The Trementozzis understand the challenges all too well. When Beth Ann was younger, they became anxious when she made noises during services and fellow attendees shot unkind glances their way.

"Honestly, sometimes it was just easier to stay home," says Ann.

And that's the pattern most Christians with disabilities follow. Subsequently, people with disabilities represents a huge mission field.

Special Touch Ministry is working to change that by offering a Disability Friendly Church Certification program, establishing regional chapters across the country, and hosting five-day, camp-style retreats for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. PE



PASTOR FINDING VIRTUAL SUCCESS

BY DEANN ALFORD

The global number of people who play video games has risen to 1.8 billion. A year after the world's first gamer pastor Matt Souza launched the online GodSquad Church exclusively for gamers, 463 of them have received Christ as Savior through the ministry.

As word has spread about the virtual AG congregation, attendance for Souza's weekly 8 p.m. EST Thursday gamer service has quadrupled.

GodSquad, which features videogame-themed sermons, has connected with 87,000 people who play video games.

Souza, 25, under the gamer name PastorSouZy, is a bridge between the gaming community — an unreached people group — and the Church. He has an important message for both.

"Gamers are real people," Souza says. "We're not enabling people to play videogames. We're focused on ministering to the person sitting behind the screen, people who have been

rejected by society. They need God's love. We need to embrace them as they are, and reach their souls for Christ."

To that end, Souza not only spends time developing friendships with gamers on Twitch.tv game sites, but he's also recruited more Christian gamers and gamer pastors. Pastors specializing in an array of videogames, along with Christians who play the games, hang out both in GodSquad Church and their own gaming chat rooms and interact with non-Christians while playing the games, watching others play, or listening to sermons. Through Twitch.tv, Souza shares the gospel with around 200 to 300 non-Christian first-time guests every day.

"A lot of the gamers think if they were to walk into the local church, they'd be looked down upon, rejected," Souza says. "For a lot of churches that's true." PE

and child-killers. Occasionally the church received emails threatening violence, such as torching the church with everyone in it. Amid hate mail, however, the Luciferians' inbox contained messages such as this: *I don't agree with you, but I'm praying for you. Please do not judge all Christians like the protesters.*

"Those little emails let me know I couldn't take all Christians and put them in one pot," McKelvy says.

Meanwhile, McKelvy became increasingly disillusioned with Luciferian leadership and with life itself. By May 2016, he says, "I felt everything I had done was a lying fraud."

Early in August while driving, he spotted Spring First Church, hours of

conversations with Hogan followed, and McKelvy converted to Christianity.

With his livelihood gone, McKelvy now is living by faith and says he's never been happier. The death threats continue.

"When I was in the Greater Church of Lucifer, it was Christians doing it," McKelvy says. "Now it's the Satanists."

Hogan likens McKelvy's conversion to that of Saul, a powerful religious leader vehemently against Christianity who became the apostle Paul. Hogan and three other pastors are discipling McKelvy, who is also in Bible study and fellowship.

This summer McKelvy will release *The Book of Jacob: The Story of an Occult Leader Saved By God.* PE

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT PAYS DIVIDENDS

BY JENNIFER M. NELSON

As members of a New Mexico church have made it a priority to take an active role in the lives of kids in their rural community, God has opened up opportunities for ministry in the public school system.

According to Pastor Dereck S. Owen of First Assembly of God in Tucumcari — which has a population of only 5,000 — at least 90 percent of the students in the local high school have been involved with the church's Wednesday night youth ministry programs at some point.

Owen, who has been on the pastoral staff for 16 years, first as youth minister, says he attributes this

in large part to congregants being actively engaged in the community. Just in the school alone, church members have written encouraging notes to teachers, driven cheerleaders to games, attended extracurricular events, and treated the football team to a movie.

Each Wednesday night, the church draws as many as 80 middle school and high school kids, as well as about 60 elementary pupils, many of whom don't attend First Assembly. More than 20 people from the church, which has 300 adherents, volunteer as mentors for students and meet with smaller cell groups to counsel and teach youth. PE