



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

In January 1907, Thomas King Leonard (1861-1946) purchased an old hotel in Findlay, Ohio. This two-story hotel and tavern, which had doubled as a brothel, seemed the appropriate place to begin a mission to reach those who were most in need of his message of salvation and deliverance.

Feeling that the word “church” carried a negative connotation, he searched for another word and finally fell on the Greek word “ekklesia” (the called-out assembly) and changed the name of his church to “The Assembly of God.” He also started up a print shop that he christened “The Gospel Publishing House.”

When the call was issued in 1914 for a gathering of Pentecostal

believers in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Leonard was elected one of the executive presbyters. It was T.K. Leonard who wrote the constitutional preamble which established the term “Assemblies of God” as the name for the new fellowship.

Leonard offered his facilities for the headquarters of the newly formed Assemblies of God in Findlay, Ohio, and began using Gospel Publishing House to print materials. He later served on the committee that drafted the Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths.

See the notice for T.K. Leonard’s death on page 12 of the March 2, 1946, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/mar21946. 



PENTECOSTAL
EVANGEL
NEWS

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

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MARCH 5,
2017



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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SPORT

BY MEL SURFACE

For thousands of families in northwest San Antonio, life revolves around sports. Parents want their kids involved at every level, and Westover Hills Assembly of God is turning that reality into its primary outreach. Lead Pastor Jim D. Rion says the megachurch is determined to give the people what they want in order to give them what they don't have, or haven't discovered, in Christ.

This translates into a \$5 million sports complex, which will offer year-round soccer, basketball, and softball leagues for children and teens. The ministry moved to a higher caliber two years ago when National Basketball Association veteran Antonio Daniels agreed to serve as sports director.

Daniels played 13 seasons in the NBA, including four years and a championship with the San Antonio Spurs. He currently works as a TV analyst for the Oklahoma City Thunder and the New Orleans Pelicans, and as a cohost for SiriusXM's NBA Radio's *Off the Dribble* program.

Rion says he felt intimidated asking a renowned athletic hero and busy media personality to join the staff, but

Daniels had told Rion he sensed God had more for him to do. Daniels jumped at the offer when he realized it would help people and introduce them to Christ.

Even with a rigorous media and travel schedule, Rion says Daniels is an integral part of the sports ministry. Daniels is known for heading straight to a church service or sporting event immediately after an airport landing.

Daniels directs planning for each sports league, along with clinics and boot camps. He works directly with almost two dozen coaches and about 40 sports volunteers through preseason trainings. For youth basketball leagues, Daniels meets with parents before the launch of each season to set expectations and answer questions. He attends as many games as possible during the season and is often seen encouraging and helping young players with their technique.

Daniels says he and his wife, Sonia, have been given so much it would be selfish to fail to give back to others. Rion feels the same way about the church he founded in 1986, a church that now has 5,400 attendees during

FRAGILE SOUL NOW FAITHFUL ADVOCATE

BY DARLA KNOTH

Bethzaida Garcia's husband became abusive. The beatings occurred repeatedly, but Garcia continued to think her husband would change. But one day an argument with her husband turned more violent than ever before.

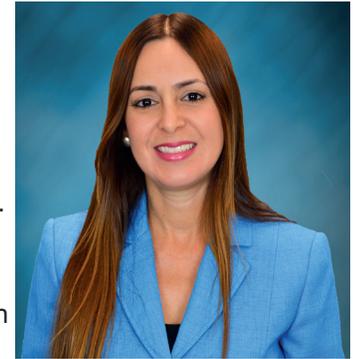
"He fractured my nose with his knuckles," Garcia recalls. "His punches splattered my blood on the walls as I tried to cover my face."

Garcia cried out to God, vowing to leave her husband if she survived. With her daughter Beangely, Garcia, in 2001, moved to Florida from Puerto Rico as a wounded, depressed woman. She entered the Help Now of Osceola shelter for domestic violence victims.

She was also hired to a teaching assistant position, to work with special education students, and learned how to speak English. Within a year, with help from other agencies, she was able first to rent an apartment, then buy a house. She was then hired as a full-time special education teacher.

Garcia developed a Fragile Soul support group at *Iglesia El Calvario*, an Assemblies of God congregation

pastored by Nino and Abigail Gonazlez. Many women have been blessed



through a seminar to prepare leaders to work with survivors and to create ministries in local churches.

"Beth has allowed God to use her own experience as a domestic violence survivor to share His redeeming power," Nino Gonzalez says.

Garcia obtained a master's degree in counseling and created the nonprofit organization called Life in Your Hands, which has gained recognition as an authoritative organization regarding domestic violence. Hundreds attend her seminars, and at churches she has trained leaders in starting a ministry to domestic violence victims. She serves as a member of the executive board of Help Now of Osceola, the shelter that helped her. PE

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."



MOVABLE MINISTRY HELPS HOMELESS

BY IAN RICHARDSON

Staff and volunteers at the Atlanta Dream Center have been putting hands and feet to homeless ministries for more than a decade. This year, they're getting some added help from two sets of wheels.

For the past year, Atlanta Dream Center representatives have driven a "mobile walk-in closet" truck to needy areas on the streets of the Big Peach, outfitting the homeless with new or slightly used outfits as part of the ministry's weekly compassion nights. In the autumn, the Dream Center will also begin providing free showers through a companion truck dubbed the "Clean Machine."

Paul V. Palmer, senior pastor of Atlanta Dream Center Church and the Dream Center's founder, says both vehicles will help not only meet practical needs faced every day by the homeless, but also expand the number of connections they make to help people get off the streets and connect with Jesus.

"It is not only giving them clothes and soon giving them a shower, but what it's really doing is giving them an opportunity to completely change their life," says Palmer, a U.S. missionary.

The Dream Center purchased a

used box truck and installed cabinets, mirrors, shelves, air conditioning, and heating. Now, during outreach nights, several people can go through the truck and take two sets of clothes apiece. Everyone who receives the apparel also receives a Bible.

Outreach director Adili Kea says the Dream Center clothed 560 people in 2016.

"We have been able to see an increase in salvations since using the clothing truck and have been able to more effectively disciple those on the streets," Kea says.

The new shower truck is equipped with four showers and instant hot water tanks. Shampoos and soaps used will be biodegradable so the water can empty right into the gutters.

Kea says the Dream Center plans to offer showers, breakfast, and ministry outreach to areas of high homelessness on select mornings. Palmer says the two trucks will be able to work in tandem to provide a more complete experience.

"We're going to take the shower truck out with the barber chair in it, with mirrors, cut hair, let them shower, and they'll have clean clothes to put on when they walk out," Palmer says. 

COINS FOR KIDS HAS ANOTHER STRONG YEAR

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Through the help of Girls Ministries Coins for Kids (CFK) missions effort in 2016, missionaries Bryan and Laura Davis have already broken ground for a new Christian school in Senegal, West Africa.

"For the sixth time, Coins for Kids giving broke the \$200,000 barrier," says Mandy Groot, national Girls Ministries director. "Girls raised \$204,335.92 so kids in Senegal can go to school, and learn about Jesus."

Mark Entzminger, senior director of Children's Ministries, praises the efforts of girls in their support of missions.

"What many people may not understand is that the projects undertaken by local Girls Ministries in Coins for Kids make something possible that might never happen any other way," Entzminger explains.

The CFK project for 2017 is Caring for Baneasa. The project will outfit a community center for kids in Baneasa, Romania, where children will also hear the gospel. The exterior of the center is completed, but the interior now needs to be finished, a playground added, and a greenhouse built.

"Children in this area live in homes without electricity or running water," Groot says, "and most people in the hill country this center serves travel by horse- or donkey-drawn carts."

The CFK goal for 2017 is a record \$300,000. 

CHURCHES JOIN MISSION EFFORTS

BY ERIC TIANSAY

A small AG church in Key Largo, Florida, has increased its missions outreach by joining forces with an independent Spanish-speaking congregation.

"It made sense to consolidate the churches, reduce overhead, and be more strategic in our efforts to reach families in this community and beyond in English and Spanish," says Eric Fisher, pastor of Lighthouse on the Rock, which draws about 45 people for its Sunday service.

In January, Lighthouse en Español pastored by Juan Velizaroff — with approximately 30 attendees for Saturday night services — officially became part of Lighthouse on the Rock as a Parent Affiliated Church.

Velizaroff says the two congregations are both missions oriented, so it's a perfect partnership. Bilingual missionaries now have an opportunity to share at both services at the church.

Fisher and his wife, Janeen, received approval in 2012 to serve as AG World Missions missionaries to the Dominican Republic before moving to Key Largo with their four children to pastor Lighthouse in 2014.

"Our missions experience taught me that every church can give something," Fisher says. "It isn't the big, wealthy churches alone that make missions possible. It is the many small faithful churches who give \$10 or \$15 a month that make the difference." 

AN INNER-CITY VOICE IN L.A.

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

When Jamal Alexander felt called to ministry, he didn't expect the location God assigned to him: 51st and Compton in inner-city Los Angeles, right back where he had grown up.

In obedience, Alexander in 1991 started First InnerCity Assembly of God. The church, comprised primarily of African-Americans, is the only AG congregation in inner-city L.A.

A life of crime consumed Alexander until age 37. At 13, he began committing home burglaries and later he stole vehicles. Selling and addiction to heroin and crack cocaine followed. Multiple incarcerations, sometimes for years at a time, accompanied his wayward years. But at a Teen Challenge program, Alexander committed his life to Jesus.

The neighborhood has changed since Alexander's formative years. Many African-American residents have moved elsewhere amid an influx of Latino immigrants. Yet long-term problems persist: drugs, prostitution, gangs.

Today, Alexander, who holds a master's degree in theology and biblical studies, wants to see other local residents better themselves so they aren't reliant on government programs, crime, or illicit drugs.

"We work with individuals to create a plan," says Alexander, who with Gwendolyn, his wife of 40 years, has three adult daughters. "Sometimes it takes years to get them to focus on education and really get in a position of



taking care of themselves rather than being dependent."

Alexander, who will complete his doctorate next year, stresses the need for education with local residents, pointing to the church as a source for job training and referrals. First InnerCity AG urges local employers to hire people without a strong work history, and partners with non-black congregations to try to help African-Americans be comfortable in ethnically diverse settings.

"Some people have never dealt with others from a different demographic in a positive way," says Alexander, a U.S. missionary with Church Planters & Developers. "They have to learn to exist outside their own ethnic community in a workforce or university environment."

Woody Robinson, pastor of Lynwood Worship Center just south of L.A., has known Alexander for two decades. Robinson says the fact that Alexander has advanced degrees after a difficult youth and early adulthood is an encouragement to those who are struggling to escape the area's chaos. PE

an average weekend.

For instance, Westover Hills charges only \$20 for sports camps and waives even that fee if it is a hardship. Rion lists two major conditions for participation.

"Absolutely no alcohol and no screaming of foul words is tolerated," Rion says. "This is a church campus, and people get that."

Coaches and players pray before every game, and youth leagues include a time of devotion. Rion says a teen may refuse to come to church to hear a sermon, but he will hear a lot of the same messages if he plays on a ball team.

"The coach will tell him over the year the same things the youth pastor would share in a sermon," Rion says. "And he'll take it from a coach!"

This year, a second softball field, an adult soccer field, and multiple kids and youth fields will be added, along with irrigation, fencing, and lighting for night and day usage. A second gymnasium will follow.

When the projects are completed, the church will have invested more than \$5 million in sports ministry, Rion says.

"Our job is to bring them, to get them around Christians, to speak into their lives, and win them to God," Daniels says. PE

UNITED IN CHARLESTON

BY MARK FORRESTER

CHARLESTON, S.C. — On June 17, 2015, churchgoers at Charleston's historic "Mother" Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church welcomed a stranger in their midst. Their trust was betrayed when the assailant fired multiple rounds, killing nine of the faithful gathered in prayer — including the church's pastor, Clementa Pinckney.

Last week, leaders from eight major Pentecostal denominations gathered at the church for a time of prayer. Denominations represented included Open Bible Churches; International Pentecostal Holiness Church; Church of God in Christ, Inc.; International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; Church of God of Prophecy; Pentecostal Church of God; Church of

God; and the Assemblies of of God.

According to AG General Superintendent George O. Wood, the leaders "prayed in the place below the sanctuary where these dear ones died," describing the gathering as a "sobering experience, reminding us of the need for genuine racial reconciliation."

The Pentecostal leaders had gathered in Charleston for the annual meeting of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA).

As for the hope of racial reconciliation, the Pentecostal groups in the PCCNA are seeing progress. In the AG, 43 percent of adherents in the U.S. are ethnic minority. That's up dramatically from 29 percent in 2001. PE