

Groton Assembly of God

OCTOBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

PASTOR'S PEN Rebuilt

It's been around just a little longer than I have been. It's better built than what you can get today—heavier, with real steel. My dad and I bought it as partners about 30 years ago. To get parts for it, I have to go online to sites such as Broken Tractor. It's probably not an antique, but it's getting close.

The most important thing is this: We still need to use this tractor. Decades ago we used it to mow fields, haul firewood, mow lawns, plow the garden, and move snow. Now we use it to clear brush, lay stone in the driveway, and—still—to move snow.

When we had a tree taken down during the summer, I was counting on using the tractor to drag the greater portion of the log into the weeds. However, the old tractor failed us. Its generator wouldn't charge the battery.

Over the years, we've had the generator rebuilt several times, but this time, the man who repairs generators called me to say that the armature was shot. He asked if I'd considered converting the tractor to run using an alternator rather than a generator. He sold us the alternator, and I went to the online sites and ordered brackets. While we were on vacation, I used an angle grinder for the first time and put on the new brackets and alternator. After a friend came over to help me puzzle out why it wouldn't run, we used some wire to create one connection, and it was running.

Why am I writing you about our old tractor? Consider this: God wants to “convert” us to a new system—a new way of thinking, behaving, and living. He created us fearfully and wonderfully (Psalm 139:14); however, we are corrupted by sin and by a

fallen nature. When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, not only are we forgiven, but we are born again (John 3:16). At that time, God begins to transform us into the image of His Son. But for us to be transformed, we must cooperate with Him, refusing any longer to be conformed to this world but rather to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

Just as the tractor needed to have brackets removed and new ones put on, a generator taken off and an alternator put on, we too must allow God to remove parts of us to install new parts. We must allow Him to take our pride, our self-sufficiency, our self-centeredness, and replace them with humility, dependence on Him, and a focus on Jesus and on helping those He loves, who are all around us. Only as we allow God to work in us to effect such change will we truly experience the true joy of the Lord, peace, and hope.



Evangelistic Services, Sunday, October 19

On Sunday, October 19, we will be welcoming Evangelist Tim Bennett for evangelistic services at 10 a.m. and at 6 p.m. Please keep the services in prayer, and come in anticipation of witnessing and experiencing God's love being poured out in powerful ways.

October Service Schedule

Sunday, October 5

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Life Groups

10 a.m. - "He Does Not Change," water baptisms

Sunday, October 12

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Life Groups

10 a.m. - "Teaching"

Sunday, October 19, Evangelistic Services

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Life Groups

10 a.m. - Guest Speaker: Evangelist Tim Bennett

6 p.m. - Evangelist Tim Bennett

Sunday, October 26

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Life Groups

10 a.m. - "Lessons for the Chosen"



- 1 Deserae Miller
Betty Burhans
- 4 Ron Woodard
Brianna Morse
Sammie Price
- 5 David Morse
Zuleika Torres
- 9 Betsy Sears
- 10 Charlton Wright
Christeen Garrow
Carly Costa
- 11 Joan Zhe
Julius Lamb
- 12 Natalia Torres
- 13 Mary Ellen Brown
- 18 Liam Starner
- 21 Ethan Besler
Evan Besler
- 22 Assante Lamb
- 24 Mike Competillo, Sr.
Christopher Garrow
- 25 Keith Blanchard
- 26 Stephen Lizzo
- 28 Gabriella Kress
- 31 Brittany Wade

October Anniversaries:

- 10/2/1982 Jim & Faye Hacker
10/5/1991 John & Karen Huether
10/17/1976 Mike & Sue Sears
10/20/1979 Mike & Linda Competillo
10/24/2013 Bob & Deserae Miller
10/25/2014 Bruce & Tama Stotts

Light the Night

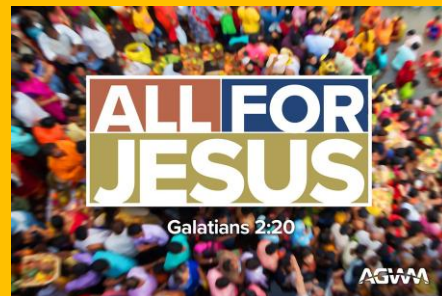
October 31

6 p.m.-8 p.m. Bring your family & your neighbors. Join us for wagon rides, hotdogs, chips, hot chocolate, and candy.

VOLUNTEERS & SUPPLIES NEEDED:

Volunteers are needed to serve hotdogs, rolls, chips. If you are willing to serve, please contact P. Sharon. (607)898-5263.

Donations of large bags of candy with no ghosts, Halloween images, etc. We also need donations of bags of chips.





Devastation in Our City
Missionaries' names withheld
Supported by Groton AG

Last night and early this morning monsoon rains and a cloud burst brought devastating floods to our city. Homes, roads, bridges, and even entire villages have been swept away. Landslides have washed away roads, stranding villages. The aftermath looks much like that which Texas experienced with the Guadalupe River. Our city was in chaos today. Watching the deadly effects of the cloudburst was almost sickening at times. The worst of these floods were happening only a few miles from our home. We are so grateful we only had a minor landslide on our road and lost power. Others have lost so much more. Please pray for wisdom as we, and other believers, try to help those around us and share the love of Jesus during this time.

LiveDead/Middle East
Missionaries names withheld
Supported by Groton AG

The center is finally finished! There's a reception entrance, a full-sized kitchen, a cozy coffee shop, a large multipurpose space and 4 classrooms. We are so grateful to the Lord, and all of you for making this dream a reality. We also completed our first program at the center! A one month-long summer club for a group of 22 children. We offered hands-on support in the areas of Arabic, English, and Math, and most of all, we showered them with love! These dear children were all in need of extra support both academically as well as emotionally

because of trauma, poverty, difficult home situations or lack of opportunities. One child when she first came into the center said, "This isn't a school, this is Heaven!"

We have launched our own media outreach. The ads about Christ and the Bible are run through a Live Dead team outside of Lebanon. They have correspondents who answer inquiries and filter those who are really interested in knowing more about Jesus. Then the correspondents do an online Bible study for a number of weeks until the contact feels ready to meet someone in person. Then our role as a team is to meet these contacts face to face and continue studying the Bible with them and disciple them! Since we began running ads, we've had many responses. One young man had been reading the Bible on his own and wanted to know more. Please pray for this young man. He is very fearful but boldly continues to meet for the studies. Also, his life

circumstances are very difficult. Pray that God would meet him where he is and draw him to himself. Pray for more open doors to meet with media contacts as God's word begins to flash across the screens of those who may never have read from the Bible before.

"Have you ever heard about Jesus? Do you know what He did for the world?" The two older boys in my little Sunday School class looked at me with blank stares. It was their first time ever coming into a church. I shared a kid's video in Arabic with them that tells the message of the Gospel, and we all prayed together at the end. Pray that their little hearts would understand how great the love of Jesus is for them. We've also been able to visit them in their home. They fled Syria several months ago because of a surge in violence with just a few backpacks. Please pray for this precious family!

**Fall Missions
Convention**

Join us on Sunday,
November 2

"The Call," with
special Missionary
Guest Speaker

Adopt-a-Missionary

Program Update: Thank you to Karin McCadam who "adopted" these three missionaries who needed prayer coverage: Steve & Jill McCarthy (Uruguay), Doug & Jackee Raught (IMM), and Stephen & Sonia Wallace (Finland). Anyone with a heart for missions is invited to "adopt" Hope Twitchell (Thailand) and/or 107th Psalm House. (Groton). See Laurie Wright with any questions.

**Testimony: Esther Vargas**

After finding Christ amidst the bleakest of circumstances, Esther Vargas now shares her testimony of God's deliverance and transformation. She realizes that some stories must be told, not to

glorify or perpetuate sin and suffering, but to glorify Jesus and His saving, redeeming authority.

For this reason, Vargas, now 52, testifies. She was sexually victimized on her thirteenth birthday by an older man in the church she attended with her grandmother. A very young girl from an unstable home, Vargas was scared and ill-equipped to properly respond or defend herself. The man continued his abuse.

By 15 years old, Vargas gave birth to a baby boy. Even with the victimization coming to light, charges were not pursued. Vargas continued trying her best to raise her baby, though she often found herself thrown out of her childhood home and without a place to stay.

At age 18, Vargas met an older man in a club who welcomed her to call him if she ever needed anything. One night, following a terrible fight with her mother, Vargas called the man in desperation. He arrived quickly, sweeping Vargas and her then three-year-old son away to a lavish house in a beautiful neighborhood.

TRAPPED

Pulling up to the house, Vargas was distressed. She expressed to the man her concern that she could not afford such a home. He immediately reassured her, telling her not to worry. He then said, "Unpack and get comfortable. I am going to take the baby to get some snacks." The man whisked her son off. One hour became two, and day became night. Vargas panicked. "I realized then that the doors of the house were locked, unable to be opened from the

Bottle & Can Redemption for Missions: Thank you to everyone who has brought plastic bottles & cans for our missions fund. The money raised goes into our Faith Promises fund. To date, we have collected \$297.35. If you are turning in plastic bottles & cans, please put glass bottles in a separate bag or box. The place that redeems them is very specific about not allowing glass bottles to go in with the bags of returnable plastic bottles & cans. Thanks for your help with this! See Laurie Wright with any questions.

"You Matter" T-shirts: Now that Groton Olde Home Days (GOHD) events & Parade are over, there are still some opportunities to wear a blue "You Matter" T-shirt. We will be holding the "Light the Night" event on October 31 at the Benevolence Building. We encourage you to wear this T-shirt for any outreach events in the area around the church. For the past several years, we have passed out cookies to our neighbors with an invitation to attend our Easter celebration. For that reason, there will be ONE FINAL OPPORTUNITY to purchase a T-shirt. Please see the order blank in the foyer.

The deadline to order is October 5. NO ADDITIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DEADLINE! Payment is required at the time you order because we must pay for the shirts when we place our order with Graph-Tex. See Laurie Wright with any questions.

inside, and the phones did not call out," she says. Finally, hours later, the man returned alone. He explained to Vargas that her "payments" would be made through sexual exploitation. Vargas was horrified. However, she was about to discover darker layers to the story — she was now a captive of a human trafficking ring.

She remained trapped in the house, where other girls were also kept, the youngest of whom was 12 years old. Vargas was only permitted to see her son once during the time she was held captive and was told that he was living with the man's family. She and the other girls were also required to work in a nightclub, reminded often that they and their families would be killed if they tried to escape.

PLAN OF ESCAPE

One night while confined in her room, Vargas stumbled upon a Bible. Apart from her childhood interactions with her grandmother's church, Vargas was unfamiliar with Jesus, and with much of the Bible. She says, "I always hated my name growing up. I didn't know anything about Queen Esther from the Bible, but when I opened that Book, my eyes alit on her story, and the Holy Spirit began to speak."

Vargas felt she heard the voice of Jesus prompting her spirit that He would get her out of her situation, but she had to submit to God's plan. "He began to quicken my mind over the coming days," Vargas says, "giving me plans and timing for steps to take." She was able to get her son to safety and secured a vehicle to make an escape. "But I was still just a teenager, and, not thinking properly, I decided to run back by the club to get my jacket before I ran," she says. Once at the club, the man and an accomplice caught her. All night long the man beat Vargas, until she was unrecognizable. The other girls living in the house were terrified, and thinking she had died, laid her on the bed. They alerted the

perpetrator, and in her blurred state of consciousness, Vargas heard the group discussing how to dispose of her body. "I made noise so they would know I was alive," Vargas says. "They took me to the emergency room." There, the doctor was immediately suspicious, asking Vargas repeatedly to tell him what happened to her, but she was too fearful to say. "I told the doctor I was carjacked, but he knew that wasn't true. He kept asking but I kept insisting. They posted two cops outside my door and even the FBI got involved, but the perpetrator still got in my room, bringing with him one dozen red roses and two of the other girls. He told me he would kill me and my family if I talked, and then he kissed my forehead."

After a week, Vargas was transferred to a different hospital where she remained for another week. That's when Vargas' parents came to get her. Upon her release from the hospital, her parents sent her to Puerto Rico, where her family had roots.

RESTORED

In Puerto Rico, Vargas was invited to her first Pentecostal meeting where she was gripped by a prophetic word and surrendered to Christ and His divine calling for her to share her story for the glory of God. During this time, thinking it would help give a better life to her son, Vargas married a man who did not follow Christ and moved to Tampa. Over the next several years, Vargas gave birth to a baby girl and continued to go to church. However, after being met with hostility from leadership and congregants who discouraged her from sharing her testimony, Vargas stopped going to church and joined the military.

While in the service, Vargas was faced with more challenges: Her husband left with another woman, abandoning Vargas' son and daughter at her mother's house. After a season of struggle that included divorce, and a traumatic brain injury while in the

military, Vargas met and married fellow serviceman Francisco — a godly and caring husband and father, who adopted Vargas' two children. They moved around the nation and the world while in the Army, and everywhere they went, Vargas shared her testimony of Jesus' redemption.

BUTTERFLY

In 2004, out of the service and now in Georgia, Francisco, who continued his service in the military, Esther, and their now three kids began attending Southside Assembly of God. At Southside, the Vargases founded the Arms of Comfort Ministry, providing fellowship and help for the families of combat deployed service members.

Vargas continued to share her testimony publicly, receiving invitations from all over the U.S. and Europe. As she continued to testify, she says she sensed Jesus calling her His butterfly, a treasured creation that was actively transforming. In 2017, the Vargas family settled in San Antonio, where Francisco and Esther pursued ministry credentials with the Assemblies of God, receiving their minister licenses in 2023.

That same year, the couple went to their first General Council. During the week, Vargas attended a lunch given by Project Rescue, an AGWM-rooted ministry to those enslaved in and rescued from human trafficking. She wept when she discovered Project Rescue's symbol is a butterfly. There Vargas connected with Project Rescue co-founder Beth Grant, and the connection between Vargas and Project Rescue blossomed. Today, she and Francisco travel globally for Project Rescue, advancing the cause of Jesus-based holistic care for trafficked women and children, and testifying to what Jesus has done in their own lives.

In 2025, Vargas graduated with her Bachelor of Arts degree in Church Leadership from Nelson University (with emphasis on compassion ministry) with

honors, despite being told she would never accomplish this due to cognitive issues brought on by her traumatic brain injury. She says, "I told the people who said I couldn't do it, 'You don't know my God! The God of the Bible is still writing our stories. Revelation 12:11 is about bearing witness to Jesus, not about telling bad stories about ourselves. We must tell His story.'"

From ag.org

Donna Barrett Retires



SPRINGFIELD, Missouri — Donna L. Barrett has announced her retirement as general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Her retirement will be effective by the end of 2025.

In late 2023, Barrett was surprised with a diagnosis of a fast-moving cancer. In her statement, Barrett said, "My battle with cancer gave me a new perspective on life and time. I'm grateful for my health and healing from the Lord. It's also a reminder to me that life is precious. I've worked hard all my entire career and I'm now beyond retirement age and feel it's time to embrace this next chapter." In her retirement announcement, Barrett noted she felt God's assurance the "time was right" to retire. "I'm proud to say I've completed the major projects and assignments I felt called to finish," she said. "I didn't want to leave things undone, and now I can step away knowing those assignments have been fulfilled."

Barrett made history in 2018 as she became the first woman to serve as an executive officer for the General Council. The Assemblies of God has ordained women for ministry since its founding in 1914, and women currently serve in all levels of local, district, and executive leadership throughout the Assemblies of God.

From ag.org