

GROTON ASSEMBLY OF GOD

FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

PASTOR'S PEN

Sputtering

This morning I plowed snow at our house, and the sixty-year-old tractor coughed, spit, and sputtered for a few minutes at one point when I was trying to back up. I knew what I wanted to do: Back up to scrape snow away from the front door. But every time I tried to back up, the tractor began to stall, as if there were something in the gas line plugging it for a moment.

After playing with it for a few minutes—which turned out to be half a dozen attempts to back up—she finally roared to life and kept roaring.

I'm pretty sure the tractor wouldn't have that trouble if I used it every day, but with life as it is, I don't take the time. I manage to get other tasks in every day—dump the coal ashes, load the coal stove, let the dog out (several times a day), feed the birds, check to see if I need to do laundry (Penny is laid up with her foot).

At the end of the day when I assess how the day has gone, I could sit and think, "Well, I'll start the tractor every day or two, and this stalling nonsense won't happen anymore." Realistically? I'm not going to do that.

Why am I telling you all this? Because I think that some of us spend time with the Lord like I use the tractor—when we need to. And at those times when we seek His presence, we find that sensing His presence can be a difficult task. We promise ourselves we'll do better—spend time with

Him every day. But then life happens, and when we want to draw near to Him, we feel stiff and stale, and He seems far away.

Might I make a suggestion? Rather than trying to spend an hour with God daily—and failing—why don't we try spending 5-10 minutes every day with Him? I suspect that if we do, we'll find that we enjoy that time and want more.

You might ask at this point, "And what are you going to do about your tractor?"

Well, that's not really the point of this piece, is it? May God bless You with His presence daily this year.

Inside...

***Testimony** by Faye Hacker

***Missionary News**

***Testimonies** from Ukrainian Church

***February Service** Calendar



February birthdays

- 3 Finnegan Webb
- 5 Jean Scott
- 7 Lexington (Lexi) Sears
- 8 Matt Starnier
Jeff Cargian
- 10 June Hall
- 12 Braelynn Miller
- 14 Melanie Billings
- 18 Denise Lizzo
- 23 Elly Starnier
- 26 Suzanne Manzari
- 27 Art Webb
- 29 Tom Brown



February Anniversaries

2/26/2022 Art Webb & Brittany Wade

February Service Schedule

Sunday, February 1 (New Sermon Series: "Bad News & Good News")

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – "Restraint Removed"

Sunday, February 8

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – Syracuse Adult & Teen Challenge

Sunday, February 15

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – "Reasons for Hope"

Sunday, February 22

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – "A Warning for God's People"

Who is My Neighbor?

By **Mark Brink, International Director Global Initiative**, Muslim Peoples AGWM

The reality is that immigrants are coming to our American cities.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimates that globally there are 60 million people on the move. One out of every 122 persons on the planet today is outside their native-born homeland.

Every day 42,500 people are uprooted because of war, strife, disasters, or persecution. They are running away from something and racing toward something. Many are coming to America, as they perceive it to be the land of opportunity.

America's population is currently pegged at 320 million and will reach 438 million by 2050. If current birthrates and immigration trends continue, by mid-century an estimated 162 million Americans, or 37% of the population, will be "immigrants and their US-born children." (www.yourneighbor.us)

Will the Church seize this great opportunity to share with them the message that Jesus is more than a prophet; that He is the Savior who died for them? Does God use migration and immigration as a tool to advance kingdom purposes?

As we consider the future of ministry in our local communities, we should deliberately plan to engage arriving immigrants. We need to recognize the sovereign hand of God in this 'age of diaspora' and use this opportunity to introduce new arrivals to Jesus Christ. It is important to continue to support and send missionaries to reach the lost around the world with the gospel. It is equally important to walk across the street to meet unreached peoples in our own neighborhoods.

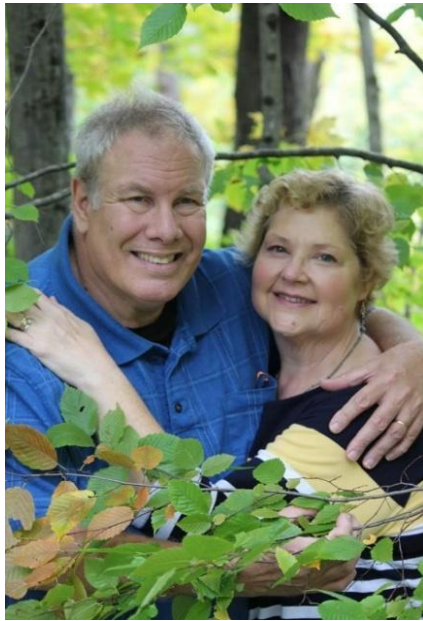
God, Use Me Faye Hacker

I was raised in a Nazarene church in Ithaca that was just around the corner from my house. During my childhood and teen years, I was very involved there and even worked and attended the church camp every summer. I loved those years but never truly had a personal relationship with Christ until I was nineteen. But even then, I was not always following His leading.

In 1980, I graduated college and started working in the accounting department at NCR, where my coworker invited me to eat lunch with her, her husband and several of the other guys in the engineering department. One of those men offered me some of his fresh grown strawberries, and soon after we had our first date (I do love strawberries!). That was 45+ years ago, and Jim and I are still together, and celebrated our 43rd anniversary last fall.

Jim was raised as a Catholic, and even though he wasn't saved at that time, he believed in God, and church was important to him, too. Our weekend dates were often planned around attending mass at either his home church or the Ithaca Catholic church. When we became engaged, I knew I wanted us to attend the same church and raise our family in that church, so I took classes (which Jim attended with me) and converted to Catholicism.

We stayed in the Catholic church until our daughter was about a year old then. Jim, through a series of events which included a family plan layoff while we were expecting Sara, joined a Bible study. This led to him being saved, and we left the Catholic church to find a Bible believing and teaching church. For a brief



time, we attended a local Baptist church, but they did not believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. After visiting several other churches that didn't quite feel right, we heard about Groton Assembly of God.

On a Wednesday night in September 1987, we attended a Bible study led by Pastor Richardson. From that night on we knew we had found our church. We went through membership classes, and I was water baptized.

That summer the church had tent meetings with Joe Chamberlain, and I received the Holy Spirit while eight months pregnant with our son Chris. I still remember the feeling of it washing over me with a joy I'd never felt before. God knew then that He would also work through Chris to lead me into teaching and working with children with special needs.

Through all these many years since, God has always been faithful even when I struggled, and for a time walked away. He forgave me when I repented for my time of questioning, and I rededicated my life to Him. God truly is good all the time, even when I don't deserve it. I pray that others will know His great love and give their lives to Him, and that He will use me in whatever way He wants to so that can be accomplished.

Beginning March 1st

We saved a place for you!



LIFEGROUPS
Life is better together

Missions News

LiveDead Algeria/sensitive country

Supported by Groton AG

Thank you for being generous to us! Because of your generosity we get to live in Algeria among a people who haven't heard the good news. We aim to make disciples and plant a church here! In our many conversations with Algerians we constantly look to speak truth and share the Gospel. In one recent conversation with a new friend, we shared that "giving is the best way of living." The next time we met up with him, this friend shared a beautiful story of costly generosity from his life. We were able to share with him that God has been generous to us and has given us the best possible gift. We asked if he would like to discover this gift from scriptures. And he said yes!

Over the last couple of months, we have had the opportunity to be a blessing to Algerian companies by training Algerian managers to be more effective leaders. During one of the professional trainings, we got to share that "giving is the best way of living." By the end of the teaching, one of the employees was touched and began tearing up.

Eric and Jan Muzart, Budapest, Hungary

AGWM Missionaries

Supported by Groton AG

God has called us to reach University students in Eurasia and beyond. This summer in Germany, we were privileged to lead a 6-day seminar we called "Pioneering with Pizzazz." About 20 people representing at least 8 European nations attended.

These included students, Students For Christ-Europe staff, and others interested in or currently planting new ministries, such as a retired Finnish woman on a church-planting team, a Nigerian about to begin his Master's in Finland who wants to use these two years strategically for



Christ, an Indian grad student in Germany who has 5 Hindu guys from his university attending a Christian group he recently started, an American missionary newly ministering to Middle Eastern refugees in Italy, and a French couple with decades of experience reaching students in overseas French lands but who are now involved in replanted Students for Christ in mainland France.

Each day Jan taught from student ministry, pioneering and spiritual warfare resources while Eric offered simultaneous translation to French. We then broke into small groups for Bible study on the pioneering ministry of Paul. After that, we came together for synthesis and application prayer. Praise God for these precious people. Please pray for persevering pioneers aplenty.

Eric continues to drive in and out of Ukraine delivering aid, especially for churches with outreaches to women and children. When he comes back, he brings more of our personal items we had left in Kyiv. It's like Christmas, both ways!

Eric also serves on the board at Kyiv Christian Academy, with students K-12, our kids' former school. We have many friends working there. Recently Eric was called to an emergency meeting online. Early on Saturday morning what they believe to be a *shahed* drone made a crater in the front yard. Praise God no one was hurt. The building, however, sustained an estimated \$50,000 or more in damages from the blast. Pray especially for rapid replacement of 75 windows. It is cold. Materials are in high demand and on backorder.

Please continue to pray for safety, provision, Spirit-filled fellowship that the lost might be saved.

Christ Amid Chaos — Testimonies in the Ukrainian Pentecostal Church

It has been more than three years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This invasion has decimated villages, destroyed lives, and torn apart families. Without a doubt, Ukrainians are marked by the deep pain of shared loss and trauma.

However, amid the turmoil, an unexpected community has brought hope and healing to Ukraine's citizens. **The Ukrainian Pentecostal Church (UPC)** has picked up the broken pieces left behind by war and responded to a new season of revival and hunger for the gospel.

In February 2022, in the town of Bucha, near the northwest outskirts of Kyiv, Pastor Oleksiy Khyzhnyak and his wife, Svitlana, awoke to the sound of bombing. Oleksiy remembers the chilling message he received over his phone: "The war is here."

The Russian army planned to use Bucha's airfield to bring in military transportation and troops. Their initial attack focused on that airfield, just 1½ miles from Bucha Assembly of God, Oleksiy's church. Oleksiy immediately contacted his congregation, especially those who lived close to the airfield. People began coming to the church for protection. Seeking safety and sanctuary, 32 people lived in the basement of **Bucha Assembly of God** for 36 days. Most were non-believers.

The nearby artillery systems and tank brigades fired almost constantly, only taking four 30-minute breaks per day. The church group covered the basement windows and relied on minimal light. They felt relatively secure with their water, electricity, and gas supplies still intact.



That would soon change. A large bomb landed approximately 200 yards from the church. Oleksiy remembers, "We felt our whole building move left."

The electricity went off, but they still had gas to power their oven. "I remember

thinking, *It's fine if there is no electricity. At least we have gas. We'll survive.* In three days, the gas went out," Oleksiy says. They found a car battery, hooked it up to a lamp, and that became the only light in the church. With 32 people packed together, the temperature in the dim basement remained about 64 degrees.

By mid-March, all but six people had evacuated from the basement. Among those remaining were Oleksiy, Svitlana, and their 19-year-old son. Their problems would soon become worse.

On March 19, Russian soldiers entered the church and brought the Khyzhnyak family outside. Their son had been texting updates to friends from other countries, including Germany and America. When the soldiers inspected his phone, they found the texts and dubbed him as a spy and a rebel. They led him away from the group, despite desperate pleas from Svitlana.

Svitlana and Oleksiy waited anxiously with the soldiers. Svitlana, under threat by soldiers with guns and with the possibility of looming death, began to pray in tongues. Her Christian sisters gathered around and prayed with her. When they finished praying, Svitlana began to sing Psalm 23, including verses 5-6 (NLT). Oleksiy remembers, "Svitlana could easily have been killed. ... When I heard her singing, my legs started shaking." Svitlana's prayer and song deeply affected the soldier in charge.

"Before the situation, he was in command. He was ruling the process. But as Svitlana sang, he stood powerless," Oleksiy says. The officer then

walked away, heading toward their son in a different building.

Unknown to Svitlana and Oleksiy, their son was extremely close to losing his life. As the officers led him away, followed by soldiers with machine guns, they accused him of rebellion and dishonesty. Their son pleaded, assuring them he had done nothing against them, but it was no use. The soldiers gave him one chance for his last words. He began to pray on his knees, "Lord, forgive me." Oleksiy retells the pivotal moment: "The officer pulled the trigger, but the gun didn't fire. Military vehicles packed the street. The officers threatened our son. They told him, 'We will take you to the woods and tie you to the vehicles to tear you apart.'"

It was this same moment that Svitlana was praying and singing, begging for her son's safety. Five minutes later — and for unknown reasons — the Russian soldiers released their son, telling him, "Go to your parents."

At the end of March, the soldiers left the area. However, with no open grocery stores and few people allowed to come in and out of Bucha, the town's residents were far from safe.

The church became a central point of aid, collecting and distributing food, medical supplies, and more to both Christians and non-Christians. Oleksiy remembers, "The church started baking bread immediately, and the smell brought hope. After the occupation, up to 350 people attended church every Sunday."

Bucha Assembly of God is still serving these people today, thankful for God's protection through extreme situations.

SERVING THE UNSEEN

When Russia invaded Ukraine, many people fled to bordering countries. Others, however, sought refuge in a safer place inside Ukraine. Many of the innocent victims of war are children. How do you minister to those who

have experienced trauma because of the ongoing war?

Gerald Dollar, an AGWM global worker, has remained in Ukraine. "One of the greatest needs is the restoration of families and relationships," Dollar says. "Many kids haven't seen their fathers for two or three years. Some kids will never see their fathers because they're dead."

The profound loss experienced by these children calls churches and believers to respond. Over the past two years, the Church has served people in village after village by bringing food, clothing, supplies, and toys for the kids. Dollar and other church leaders brought children from some of these villages to a camp in the central region. "We were able to pour into their lives at this camp," Dollar says.

The Ukrainian Pentecostal Church works alongside organizations like Save Ukraine to rescue abducted Ukrainian children. Local churches provide trauma care to help mothers and children.

The ravages of war have been especially difficult for mothers with young children. One global worker explained, "Everyone has a son, brother, relative, or knows someone experiencing trauma. We knew trauma would affect our people." They need the Church to respond so that many may experience God's love and come to know Christ as Savior.

War has not stopped the church in Ukraine from ministering to the smallest and unseen.

[edited from original article at ag.org]

Philippians 4:6 NKJV

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."