

Groton Assembly of God

JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

PASTOR'S PEN

Yikes!

Last night when I was downstairs about 3 a.m., I heard something outside the backdoor, where our plastic garbage cans stand. Quietly, I opened the door to our mud room, then quickly opened the back door, switched on the floodlight, and yelled, "Hey!" I saw something scurry into the weeds a few yards away, but my eyes could not adjust quickly enough to see it. I am guessing it was a racoon. I could see that two of our garbage pails were tipped over, the lids off, and a bag of trash partly out of one.

This morning, Penny followed me into the backroom when I was headed outside to clean up the mess, and she startled me when she said in an excited voice, "It's a snake!"

I am not partial to snakes, and I looked around for where it was. It was behind me, dead on the mudroom floor, apparently ripped by the door when I had opened it at 3 a.m. It was dead, dead, dead. I was very glad it was dead, but I was amazed I had not seen it at 3 a.m. when I must have run the door over it—and it must have been writhing in its death throes.

Why do I share this story? Vigilance. We need spiritual vigilance, for a couple of reasons. First, to be ready to respond to what we see and hear the enemy doing, for He is actively working against us and God's work (1Peter 5:8).



Secondly, to be ready for what we do not see because the enemy seeks to destroy us in ways we do not anticipate (1Peter 5:9).

On one hand, I was grateful I had heard the racoon working on our garbage cans. On the other, I was very surprised I had not seen the snake, which I am sure would have awakened me even more if I had seen it at 3 a.m. The event reminded that while often we can perceive the enemy's work, sometimes we do not.

God will help us perceive even the enemy's more hidden efforts, but we must continually be talking with God (1Thessalonians 5:17) and living in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-11).



**Be Prepared to Respond in an
Emergency/Red Cross First Aid Class**

Get the information and skills you need to help adults and children during many emergency situations with the latest information.

More details on next page...

June Service Schedule

Sunday, June 2

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – “Worship”

Sunday, June 9

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – “Take Communion”
11:30 a.m. – Fellowship meal

Sunday, June 16 (Father’s Day)

9:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m.- Breakfast
10 a.m. – “Baptize,” water baptisms

Sunday, June 23 (Recognize Graduates)

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – “Seek the Baptism in the Holy Spirit”
11:30 a.m. – Senior Moments

Sunday, June 30

9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. – Life Groups
10 a.m. – “Not Fear Death”

Birthdays:

- 1 Bob Gudbranson
Addy Woodard
Ivy Woodard
- 2 Jeff Haley
- 4 Sandi Wright
Jay Northup II
- 5 Delaney Ayer
- 12 Arianna Rose Stone
- 14 Penny Neno
Maureen Fitzgerald
- 22 Cheryl Rose
Bruce Stotts
- 24 Roger Ming
George Arujau
- 30 Yvonne Ellis

Anniversaries:

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| 6/1/2014 | Scott & Serina Craig |
| 6/7/2003 | Justin & Melissa Besler |
| 6/9/2012 | Mike & Jennie Rinchack |
| 6/26/2008 | Mike Jr. & Betsy Sears |



Life Groups Summer Session Begins!

- **LG Adults & Youth** with Pastor Sam
- **LG Children (K-5)** with Chuck & Chey Hendrickson
- **LG Preschool & Nursery** with Penny Hendrickson and Penny Neno



Be Prepared to Respond in an Emergency

American Red Cross First Aid

Get the information and skills you need to help adults and children during many emergency situations with the latest information.

Cost: FREE. Registration is required. Contact **Matt Starnier to register (607) 227.9151**

Time: 1 p.m.- 3 p.m.

Location: King Ferry, NY (Transportation available from church)

Choose Only **ONE** Saturday:

- June 8
- OR July 13
- OR August 10



ADULTS Summer Session,
June 2-Aug 25 **Sundays at 9:00 a.m.**

AG Center for Holy Land Studies:
Foundations of New Testament Church

We will dive into the New Testament time period to understand more about the world of the disciples and the Early Church. We will encounter the challenges, beliefs, and drive of those who gave their lives to obey the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19.

The Center for Holy Land Studies specifically incorporates the following method to uncover the stories and lessons in the pages of the Bible:

CULTURE Discover, in the original context, how the culture and language of the biblical story are interwoven in ancient society and daily life.

HISTORY Find out what was said and done, and what was meant by it, in the biblical and historical context.

LAND See geographic landscapes come to life, allowing the land to have its own narrative in Scripture and the biblical story, and is as much a character itself as any person in the text.

SPIRIT Explore the common beliefs of the biblical time period, and how the spiritual climate impacts our understanding of the story.



KIDS Summer Session
LG Nursery/Preschool & LG kids,
Sundays 9:00 a.m.

Sunday morning Life Groups is about the entire family of God—you and your kids!

While you grow in Life Groups, so can your kids.

Here are 4 REASONS for your children to attend Life Groups (adapted from cefonline.com):

1. Your kids, just like you, need fellowship with other believers, and nothing can replace the **fellowship with peers of their own age.**
2. Life Group classes are small and more personal. When your child can have their peers or their teacher pray for them personally, **they'll know that other people in the body of Christ care about them**—and that God cares for them too.
3. It's easy to get lost in a crowd, **but in Life Groups, your children can feel a valued** and important member of Christ's body.
4. Lastly, another extremely important reason to attend Life Groups is that children can **receive age-appropriate instruction in the Word of God.**

Testimony: Emily Oakley

Editor's Note: Emily R. Oakley, 34, was raised in Wichita, Kansas.

An Evangelist

University graduate, Oakley is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God and is the founder of Rebirth Ministries, a ministry that provides counseling and equips and trains churches to address today's most controversial topics with biblical compassion and conviction.



AG News: How did all of this affect you as you continued to be involved in your church?

Emily Oakley: The next few years, I was so ashamed of my struggles that I kept completely silent. I knew I

had been called into ministry and I knew God had a plan for my life, but I began to hide from that, thinking my issues had disqualified me. The spiral continued as I played hopscotch from one warped attachment to another, all the while hiding my issues in darkness instead of bringing them into the light. It was a very miserable time.

AG News: Would you please give us a bit of your personal background and history?

Emily Oakley: I have always been a church kid. I grew up in church and sensed a unique calling on my life for ministry when I was just 12 years old. Growing up in the church, I developed into a kid who always wanted to fix things for other people. Helping people and finding approval in the eyes of others is how I began to find value. The flesh issue that arose out of that was codependency. Seeking that approval became something I constantly craved.

When I turned 14, my need to fix people and situations, and my issue of codependency finally came to a head. I got involved with a group of friends who I thought I could save but the friendships quickly became intense and volatile. As these unhealthy relationships continued, I was lured into a web of deceit and manipulation with the girls, and it became a breeding ground for the enemy. Soon, the people I was hanging out with were validating sinful choices I was making, and I began to feel a need to control my life as much as I could. I started to be tempted with same-sex attraction, controlling of what I ate, and I began to self-harm. Seeking an emotional void that only God was meant to fill, I began to attach myself to females in a co-dependent way. I knew what I was doing wasn't right, but because I was anchored in all the wrong places, I couldn't get free of the things that were holding me down.

AG News: What made you finally decide to confront some of the things that were holding you captive?

Emily Oakley: The turning point for me was when I was 18 years old. I was home from college on winter break with a friend, and was in an unhealthy place, spiritually. Late into the night, the Holy Spirit began challenging me to tell my friend what I was facing. I really didn't want to. I was afraid of losing the friendship, but I knew it was time to surrender to the Lord. So, I started sobbing and began telling my friend about the things I had been dealing with for the past four years. The two things she said to me immediately after I shared my struggles changed the trajectory of my life. First, she said she still loved me. Secondly, she spoke right to my identity and said, "I know who you are and that's not it."

Although I hadn't quite figured out what had been going on, I had been having an identity crisis. I had forgotten that I was a child of God and that would never change.

AG News: The issue of identity has become a big cultural hot-topic. Why is the issue of identity so important for believers?

Emily Oakley: I think a lot of times we get

wrapped up in an identity that reflects our current roles, our present circumstances, or our past choices. When we allow these temporary things to define us, we risk experiencing a lot of grief and pain because things change. If our identity is in the temporary, when it changes or goes away all together, we lose sight of who we are. Losing sight of our true identity in Christ comes about because we've anchored our identity in the wrong place.

AG News: For those who may be struggling, how can Christians rediscover their God-given identities and what safeguards can be put into place so that they aren't misplaced again?

Emily Oakley: First of all, I would encourage anyone struggling to ask God to show the root of misplaced identity instead of just tackling the symptoms. We need to understand what the underlying issue is that is causing us to find value outside of God. If we ask Him, He will tell us. He's not a hide-and-seek type of God; He wants to bring to light all the things that have been covered in darkness.

Secondly, we have to stay anchored in what we believe; that Jesus died to save us and adopted us into His royal family. That has to be our anchor point. He chose us even when He didn't have to. We are co-heirs with Jesus before God and, no matter what, we can trust that God loves us and wants us in His family.

Once we have established our true identity, we have to continue to seek the presence of God and the accountability of others. Our goal in everything should be to draw closer to Him and seek His presence. However, we can still be tempted. Our weakness is an opportunity for God's strength to be made perfect if we allow Him to do that. It will also take the encouragement and support of other strong believers to help us keep things in perspective.



AGWM | **europa**

Fishers, England Supported by Groton AG

We praise God that Jason received his ministry credentials Assembly of God Great Britain (AoG GB) in May at the National Conference. Please join us in praying for Jason. He has been battling various physical symptoms since the end of December, which intensified toward the end of February. We have been consulting with multiple doctors who have run many tests and scans, but no diagnosis to date.

Thank you for providing the funds so that we were able to apply for Visas and will have our in-person meeting soon. We continue to work with our local church who just planted a sixth location which is focused on reaching a large population of Cantonese speakers in our area.

The digital tools—community analysis and resource data that we have developed for AoG GB have been incredibly well received. We have seen 50 new church plants since we started in 2022. We are passionate about continuing to use these resources to help church planters in Great Britain; however, there is also strong momentum to make these resources available in Europe.



Names withheld, Live Dead Africa Supported by Groton AG

Please pray with us.

For the household of Mzee Ali. We have known each other since 2017. We are neighbors and we pray for their salvation daily.

For the household of Aziza. We have been friends since 2017. Aziza has been struggling with the effects of diabetes for years now. Please pray for her salvation and health.

For our many friends in the neighborhood. Chris often has tea at the local tea stand where he can chat with local friends and catch up on the latest news. Most of the men are local shop owners, but one man is the Imam of the local mosque. Please pray for salvations.

Daily life here is very different from the United States. For a year and a half we have been blessed to be able to see patients and serve alongside staff at our local government clinic. We provide health care, a listening ear, and prayers for healing in Jesus name. Please join us praying for both the staff and patients.

We have also had the opportunity to teach English at the Aslan English Center to men and women of many nations right here on our little island since 2017! We have taught hundreds of students, befriended teachers, and staff at Aslan. Please join us in praying for everyone at Aslan.

Thank you for your prayers and support.



Doug and Jackie Raught, Spain Supported by Groton AG

With AG International Media Ministry (IMM) in Spain, we've been in Spain for two years already! We are continually grateful to be able to serve here with IMM, sharing the gospel through media evangelism. During our first ten years with IMM in the 90's, Doug taught himself how to animate with the computers and software he had access to at the time and produced a short cartoon. It was based on the comic book *Edward the Elephant Says Let's Stamp Out AIDS* that AG missionaries were distributing all over Africa. When they received IMM's animated version, they were showing it wherever they could. Years later we found out that someone from the UN saw it in a clinic and then worked to make it available in many more places. Since it also included a gospel message, we were amazed to hear that someone from the UN would be willing to do that. God works in creative ways! Thank you for your support and prayers.



Dan and Deanna (Richardson) Kleppel, Thailand Supported by Groton AG

In March, we visited with Pastors Mig and Ying in the Rayong province. We spent three days with them visiting cell groups and attending Sunday worship service. In the last ten years since the church was planted, over 100 people have given their lives to

Christ. Revival has truly come to Rayong! Once a month I, (Deanna) and Kaytee join Jeab teaching the children in her village of Nakom Nayok. They are learning about Jesus on her front porch. Dan continues to teach online via Zoom through Liberty Ministry Training Center. There are over 80 students. And these 80 students have led over 218 people to Christ! Pastor Anuharp of Liberty church has a heart to plant a church in all of Thailand's 77 provinces. Some of these students will be the future pastors of these church plants.



Name Withheld, Live Dead China Supported by Groton AG

Hello friends and family. I arrived on my mission field and am successfully connected to the internet. Whew. [Editor: Many countries, like China, do not allow missionaries to officially share the gospel or plant churches. But it's not only the missionaries, but the local Christians are also at risk. Missionary access is severely restricted by denying religious visas, preventing people from entering or staying in the country. So, how can a missionary gain access to closed countries? There are many ways including coming as a student, teacher, professional, or business owner.]

I had a meeting with the owner/boss of the school where I will be working. She said that she considers me more of a business partner than an employee/teacher, so she gave me the title New Programs Director. She wants me to create multiple new programs - especially online courses - that will generate

enough revenue within this year to repay 50 - 60% of the loans she took out for school operations AND for salaries. I will only get paid as the revenue comes in. My hours are completely flexible, and my boss doesn't care if I go to the school or not as long as I get the programs developed. God is good.

I can't believe I have been back here for a little over a month already; this was the fastest month ever! I had a friend visit me for three days this past weekend. Her English name is Chrysty. This is very much a case of the sower who had some seed fall on rocky soil. I'll let you go and read the passage to familiarize yourself with the rocky soil situation in case you forgot. Anyway, she has two sons Her oldest, Eric, is 14 and her youngest, Alex, is 10. Pray that their hearts would be open to receive Him.

I have also been speaking into the life of the principal here; her name is Liza. I asked her if she still considers herself to be His follower, and she said, "Yes, but I'm not a very strong one." Please pray for her. She is extremely stressed out and burnt out. She is doing the work that should be done by three people. While in conversation with her, she remarked, "It's okay, I can get myself out of this." To which I replied, "No, you can't. You don't have the strength or ability to do this yourself. You need to look to Him for your help." I prayed with her and as I did, I could sense the Holy Spirit begin to move in the room. Pray that she remembers to look to Him and rely on His strength before anything else.

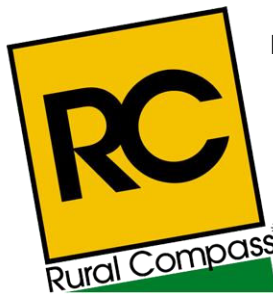
I am doing well. There are some challenges with new policies that are in place that were not the case the last time I was here. It's fine though. I am so grateful for each of you and am so glad that we are in this together. May the Lord bless you.



Leslie Latona, Colombia Supported by Groton AG

We have begun to buy the materials for construction project in Simon Bolivar. Here in Colombia, you rent a cement mixer and it is all done by hand. The process consists of one part stone, two parts sand and one large cement bag. It is poured into the mixer with buckets then transported by wheelbarrows to fill the columns and foundation. The first floor is done. We are now preparing to begin the second floor. I am blessed to be overseeing this project. It will eventually be three floors with a covered terrace on top (top floor will be the prayer room). Please continue to pray for my health, stamina, and wisdom.

Kent and Judy Anderson, Rural Compassion, U.S. Missions Supported by Groton AG



Rural Compassion is an Assembly of God, non-profit, humanitarian ministry organization that partners with Convoy of Hope. Steve Donaldson, co-founder of Convoy of Hope, founded Rural Compassion in 2003.

We were able to minister to the church in Marshall, Illinois, with Pastor Joey and Jessie Harryman. They write, "Rural Compassion provided us with invaluable teachings and product to distribute. Through their

guidance, we have stepped outside the walls of our church. We have developed a great relationship with our school. We have offered free haircuts, treated teachers to free Starbucks, distributed socks, shoes, and backpacks." In May-July, we are scheduled to give seminars at 4 churches in Illinois and across Nebraska. Thank you for your support and prayers.



Names Withheld, Live Dead Missionaries, North Africa Supported by Groton AG

Sunny with a high of 75. That has been the average weather forecast for May. We have been taking advantage of the weather for BBQ and Bible studies. One evening, my husband and two Live Dead team members and four Algerians spent several hours sitting around the charcoal fire and talking about Jesus, God in the flesh, in John 1. Two men had to leave after a couple hours, but the other two stayed. One of the men has been studying the Bible with us, and it is amazing to see God working in him, softening his heart, and drawing him.

We are grateful to be living here and be part of the local community. We are also grateful to be expecting eight summer interns! Please pray for these interns, and for our team, that we would continue to find ways to engage with the community, and share the Truth of Jesus.

Hope Twitchell South Asia/ Short-Term Missions Trip Supported by Groton AG

May 2024 Warm smiles with hands pressed together in the traditional greeting. Colorful clothes and sandaled feet. Small, dark, calloused hands holding mine. Smells of pine and woodstoves burning. Goats trotting down the road and bounding up rocky cliffs. Bubbling cauldrons of rice, lentils, and potatoes. We stayed at the missionary's children's home where they currently support 10 girls, ages 4 to 14. From there, we traveled to multiple homes and churches in the area, sometimes walking for a couple of hours and other times driving up to 6 hours. Over the course of two weeks we had many ministry opportunities. We also had adventurous tasks, including putting out wildfires (wildfires were frequently starting around the children's home since it was the end of the dry season), trekking through hail and rain, playing futsal with the locals (very similar to soccer - I scored 2 goals 😊), chopping wood, killing a goat (which we ate the next day), utilizing squatty potties (and often just the great outdoors), and hiking up to 13,400 ft. with a view of Mount Everest at sunrise.

Testimonies.

Everywhere we went, we heard the stories of the local people we encountered. In one village, we met a woman who had been very ill at one time, to the point where she was nearly unable to walk. After some convincing, she went to the church and received healing in Jesus's name; thus, she decided to follow Jesus and was baptized. After becoming a Christian, her village excommunicated her from village life,



including cutting off her water supply so that she could no longer drink the same water as the rest of the villagers. Yet, she had such joy knowing what Jesus had done for her. Now, both her husband and her son have become believers as well, and other relatives are also considering faith in Jesus. In another village, we met a blind couple and heard their testimony. The husband's blindness started due to an accident while building a Buddhist temple. "You might not believe me," he told us, "but I was dead for 12 hours." When he regained his life, he was in a persistent vegetative state, unable to use his senses or communicate. One day, a Christian man came and prayed for him, which resulted in his senses returning to him, except for his sight. The Christian man told him about the love of Jesus, and for years after, the blind man wrestled with his blindness and the purpose of his life. Yet through it all, he never forgot what the Christian man had told him: "Jesus loves you and he can give you peace." The blind man and his wife came to understand that Jesus's love for them gave them a purpose that defied their blindness. When the couple decided to put their faith in Jesus, they built a church and became the pastors there. They have faced their share of persecution from the village monks and leaders; however, they trust in Jesus and count all their sufferings as joy, just as it is written in James 1:2.

What's Next? My hope is to continue serving in Asia as a long-term missionary and to remain in contact with the pastors we served with on this trip. I am excited to return one day to this place filled with such beautiful people and powerful testimonies of God's faithfulness.



Linking the Generations Through Prayer

What is it? *The Pray for Me Campaign* is rooted in the truth that God uses his Word, His people, and prayer to change the world. This ministry creates a web of intergenerational spiritual relationships where adult believers intercede for elementary, secondary, college, and graduate students who attend Groton AG. Prayer Champions boldly go to the frontlines in the battle for young people's faith.

Thank you to all the Prayer Champions for the 2023-2024 school year! **Thank you** for answering the call to invest in the lives of the next generation. **Thank you** for your willingness to help point students to the hope that is theirs in Christ.

Elizabeth Ballistrea
Vince Ballistrea
April Bateman
Justin Besler
Melissa Besler
Donna Bernhardt
Tom Brown
Jim Burns
Robin Cargian
Steve Chandler
Kathie Collier
Linda Competillo
Tammy Conner
Peggy Cortright
Rick Cortright
Diane Costa
Debbrah Fernandez
Donna Garrow
Chris Hacker
Faye Hacker
Jim Hacker
Chuck Hendrickson
John Huether
Karen Huether
David Hull
Linda Hull
Audrey Inman

Ruth Lisk
Denise Lizzo
Suzanne Manzari
Karin McCadam
Mike McCadam
Steve Milhan
Erin Neno
Penny Neno
Sam Neno
Sharon Newman
Leilani Norman
Ted Norman
Clifford Ostrander
Sara Ostrander
Barbara Patterson
Raybert Patterson
Jennie Rinchack
Mike Rinchack
Sandra Rivera
Brian Scott
Jean Scott
Karen Scott
Mike Sears
Sue Sears
Tiarra Sellers
B.J. Stamp
Matt Starnier
Elly Starnier
Sandy Tanney
Debbie Todd
Brooke Twitchell
Annette Twitchell
Erin Wright
Joseph Wright
Laurie Wright
Linda Van Burkom



As we turn Scripture into prayer for the next generation, we are ushering a clear call for God to act on their behalf.