

Spring 2023

Primeline

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRIES

RANDY
HURST

MISSIONS
MOBILIZER

Sent &
Sending

ALSO
CLARENCE ST. JOHN:
MINNESOTA
MISSIONS LEGACY

AGWM

My AGWM Heritage

My wife, Sherilyn, and I are honored to have been appointed as the Senior Adult Ministries leaders for the Assemblies of God. We are extremely grateful for the service Wes and Dianne Bartel gave to this department for many years.

The Senior Adult office has a great partnership with AG World Missions. We hope that *Primeline* inspires you to support what God is doing across the globe.

I will always be thankful for my family's rich AG missions heritage, as both sets of my grandparents served as missionaries to India. My mother and father were both born and raised there.

My paternal grandfather, Robert F. Cook, landed in India in 1913 with his young family (one year before the AG began in 1914). He preached the gospel and planted churches in the southern state of Kerala. After his first wife tragically died of fever, he met a woman named Bertha Nellie Fox, who had come to India to work in an orphanage.

Robert and Bertha eventually married and had three sons, the oldest of whom was my father, George Robert Cook. They stayed in India until 1950. I am thankful for the report that perhaps in part because of a short, bald, white man who obeyed God's

call, the state of Kerala has the highest percentage of Pentecostal Christians of any Indian state.

My maternal grandparents, J. Edgar and Virginia Barrick, moved to northern India in 1922 and stayed until 1960. My mother, Miriam G. Barrick, was born near Delhi in 1924. My grandfather served for many years as the district superintendent of the North India General Council. He loved to tell the story of welcoming to Calcutta a couple who planned to stay for, perhaps, a year. Their names were Mark and Huldah Buntain. Needless to say, they stayed for more than a year!

My parents, though both raised in India, did not meet until 1945 at an AG camp in Pennsylvania. They married later that year.

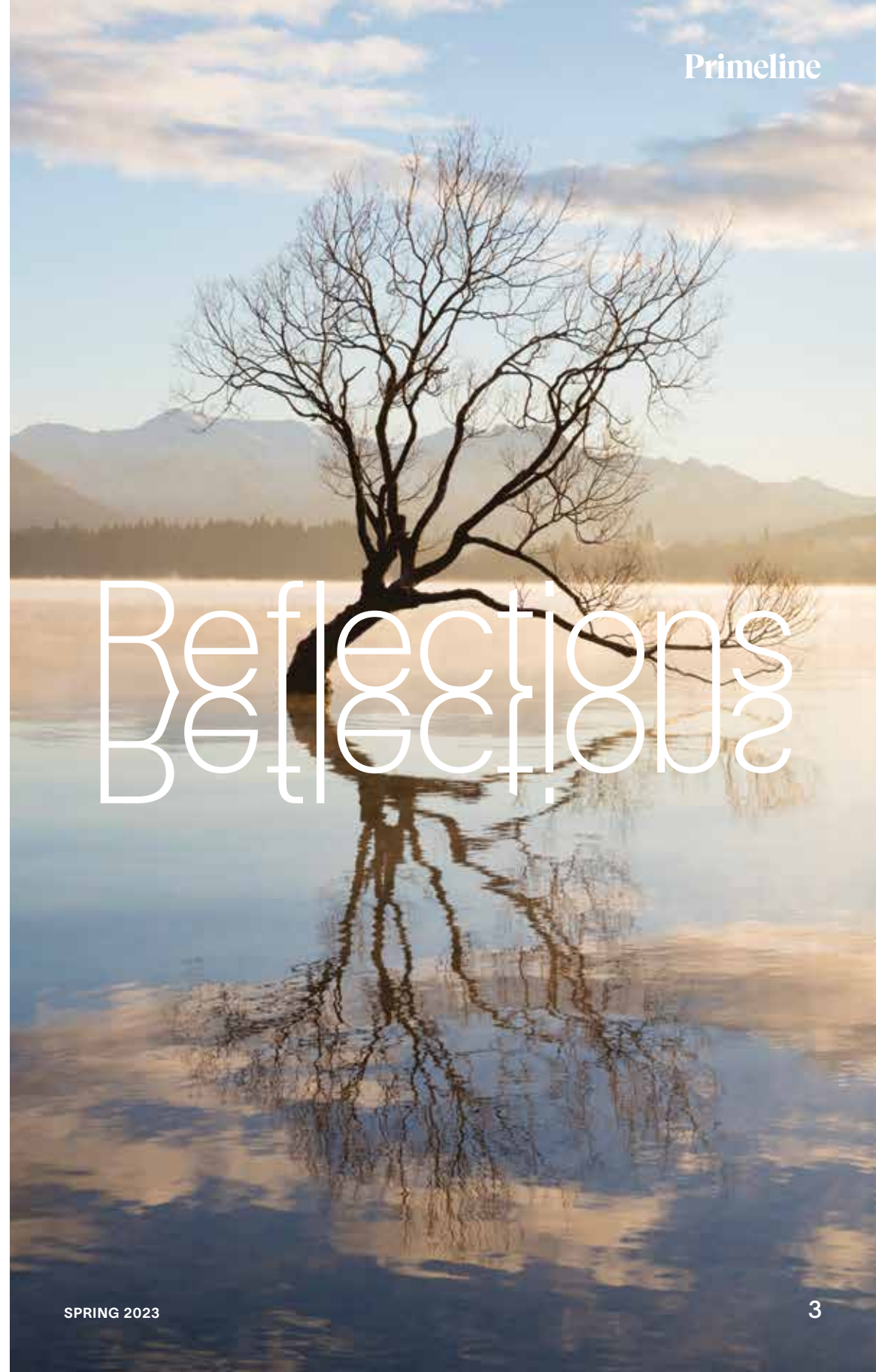
I was so privileged to be raised in a home with curry and Jesus-loving parents.

To those reading this issue, I hope you do so with a prayerful heart!

During our "latter years," let's continue to model the words of Psalm 92:14 — "They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing." (NKJV)

BOB COOK

Director of Senior Adult Ministries



Sent & Sending

STORY *Haley Victory Smith*

PHOTOS *Gaylon Wampler*

“There were occasions when I’d go out to our backyard in Africa and look up, and there’d be a leopard in the tree.”

Born in South Dakota, Randy Hurst spent seven years of his young life in Tanzania. His father, Wesley Hurst, was the first Assemblies of God World Missions resident missionary to the nation when he arrived in 1953. He helped form the Tanzania Assemblies of God, which thrives to this day.

Randy gave his life to Christ after a midweek service in Aberdeen, South Dakota, where his parents were itinerating. He was seven years old.

“I don’t remember what the pastor preached, but I went home, knelt down by the cot where I was sleeping in my grandparents’ bedroom, prayed, and asked Jesus into my heart.”



AG MISSIONS
MOBILIZER

RANDY HURST

Primeline

The family lived in Tanzania during a time of rebellion and political upheaval. The country was marked by animism and witchcraft. One witch doctor, who was exceptionally powerful at putting curses on people, came to faith in Jesus through a supernatural visitation from Him. The man's conversion became a powerful testimony to the surrounding area.

The Hurst family returned to the United States after Wesley experienced an illness that almost took his life.

As a teenager, Hurst was invited to travel across Canada and participate in tent crusades with evangelist Paul Olson. Over that summer, Hurst experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit and was called by God to become an evangelist himself.

While attending Central Bible College, Hurst met his wife, Ruth, daughter of Gustav Bergstrom, pioneer AG missionary to Brazil. After receiving his degree, Hurst ventured

“In my first year out of Bible school, I preached four to five times almost every week.”

to plant a church in a suburb of Chicago but couldn't find property zoned for church services, so he took a job in a factory to feed his family.

Hurst's district superintendent called him during this time and told him he should be out preaching. He arranged for Hurst to speak in five different churches over the course of



Randy Hurst prays for congregants of an Assemblies of God church in Tanzania.

the following five weeks. Then, other pastors invited Hurst to preach for them. Many pastors kindly gave young preachers speaking opportunities to help them get started in ministry, Hurst reflects.

“In my first year out of Bible school, I preached four to five times almost every week,” he recalls.

Hurst credits much of his formation as an evangelist to that year and is grateful to the many pastors who gave him those ministry opportunities.

After pastoring youth groups at two different churches, being the lead pastor of another, and teaching at his alma mater, Hurst and his wife became missionaries to Samoa with their two young sons.

When the family arrived in Samoa, there was no language school. Hurst learned Samoan by placing an English

Bible and a Samoan Bible next to one another and comparing them, asking questions of patient Samoan villagers.

“That was actually an advantage because it put me in the position of being a student of those villagers,” he describes. “I was demonstrating to them that I needed their help.”

In learning the language, Hurst also learned some oratorical Samoan, a version of the language meant for speeches, not everyday conversation.

For the first two nights of a three-night outreach in the village of Lano on Savai'i island, very few people showed up. The next day, a village chief died. Hurst attended the funeral and was able to give a message of comfort to the community in the oratorical Samoan. The next evening, the church was

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Do your choices represent your faith and
take advantage of current tax benefits?*

Legacy of Faith

AGWM

packed with villagers who wanted to show respect in return for the respect they had received. About 60 people came forward for salvation — one of them a chief in the village who received a word of knowledge through Hurst during the message. Nearly half of those who came forward were baptized in the Holy Spirit having never been instructed on the Baptism before.

“During a village outreach in Aleipata on Upolu island, we baptized 52 new believers,” Hurst remembers. “When the last girl to be baptized came up out of the water, the Spirit came on her, and almost immediately, many of the others were also filled with the Spirit. And again, in this instance, we had not taught on the baptism in the Holy Spirit.”

“I cannot recall a single service in Samoa where there weren’t multiple people that came forward for salvation,” he adds.

Just over a year after moving to Samoa, the Hurst family had to return to the United States so Ruth could undergo major surgery. During this season, Hurst continued his travel overseas as an evangelist, especially to Singapore and other countries in the Asia Pacific region. To date, he has preached in more than 100 countries.

Ruth and his sons, Rolly and Russ, have often traveled with him on those trips. Both of the boys became missionaries themselves. Rolly serves with Life Publishers in Asia, and Russ was a missionary to Europe and Asia before returning to the States and pastoring in Illinois, Massachusetts, and now in Fort Myers, Florida.

In 1997, Hurst was invited by the World Missions Executive Committee



Randy Hurst speaks to missionaries at a training seminar in Springfield, Missouri.

“Nearly half of those who came forward were baptized in the Holy Spirit having never been instructed on the Baptism before.”

to lead the AGWM communications department. Years earlier, he had received a master’s degree in intercultural communication from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. His father served in the same position at AGWM from 1960-1970. Randy would stay on the job for 19 years, making him the longest-serving person in that post.

“My objective was always to try to give fresh expression to our timeless missions message and methods and expand our impact in the Fellowship,” he says. “The Spirit charted the course of our mission more than 100 years ago, and we need to continue on that course effectively in each successive culture and climate. But the distinctive character of our mission, at its heart, does not change.”

“Executive directors John Bueno and Greg Mundis were always incredibly

kind and supportive, and my colleagues on the committee were as well,” Hurst adds. “It’s such an awesome group of godly and capable leaders!”

In recent years, Hurst has served as special consultant to AGWM Executive Director Greg Mundis. After Mundis retires this year, Hurst will transition back to missionary service and be engaged in ministry and projects in several regions.

When asked what is essential to being effective in ministry, he says, “to honor the Lord with our very best efforts in our work, while also remaining totally dependent on God to accomplish what we can’t.”

Whether preaching the gospel in an island village or communicating the cause of missions to the AG constituency, Hurst believes that nothing can be accomplished effectively without the Holy Spirit’s enablement.

Of his time on the field, he says, “Even with diligent preparation, I always knew that if the Holy Spirit didn’t act, I would fail.

“The farther I go in life, I’ve found that two critical perspectives must be foremost and constant in our minds,” he adds. “First, always be conscious that God knows us personally and intimately. He sees everything and will reward everything we’ve done for Him. Second, everything we do that truly matters is going to count for eternity.”

“If you keep these things in mind, then how could you not be involved in missions?”

HALEY VICTORY SMITH
AGWM Communications

CLARENCE ST. JOHN: A MINNESOTA MISSIONS LEGACY

BY *Cynthia J. Thomas*

In his early years, Clarence St. John was taught the importance of missions. He recalls monthly Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge (BGMC) offerings at his church and missionaries being introduced on the first Sunday of family camp. Those memories affected his 21 years of pastoral ministry. In 1968, he planted a church in Hibbing, Minnesota, now known as Abundant Life Church. When the fledgling congregation had only 25 people, they began supporting missionaries, and St. John started partnering with other churches to do missions conventions.

In 1989, after serving as a sectional presbyter, St. John was elected the

Minnesota district's superintendent, a position he held until his retirement in 2017. Previous superintendents were supportive of missions, but that support rose to a new level with his tenure. Under previous administrations, district missions care and support was handled by the secretary/treasurer. Under St. John, those responsibilities were given their own dedicated personnel assignment.

Tapping Pastor Mark Boone's experience in rural and small city settings, St. John asked him to "step out in faith" and accept the role, which would require him to connect with pastors, help churches plan missions conventions, and provide pastoral care for missionaries when they were back from the field. Boone's leadership role also included pastoral care for rural pastors who often face unique challenges, setting up a natural connection for missions.

St. John also implemented that, twice per year, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and Boone would visit churches in smaller cities and rural areas to pray with pastors and address different areas of ministry, including missions. Churches in each section of the district were encouraged to partner for conventions.

Twenty-seven regional missions conferences were held in the first year of this new initiative, and momentum and giving have continued to grow since. Retired missionaries are invited to participate and are usually eager to share their vision for countries they have served. In driving this project, St. John helped prove, yet again, that even small congregations can do great things for the global community of believers.

Another unique endeavor developed by St. John, and one he has participated in since retiring as superintendent, is called “intentional interim,” in which experienced pastors, often retirees, serve churches as they transition between lead pastors. They not only help identify tough issues to make it easier for a new pastor when one is elected but also encourage new outreach and an emphasis on missions.

The missionary associate (MA) application processes also changed during St. John’s leadership, as he realized many MAs entered the field on pastor recommendation without anybody in the district office knowing them. A district interview for all MA applicants has raised the level of perceived importance of the position for both pastors and missionaries

and helps familiarize those from ministries like Chi Alpha with Assemblies of God World Missions’ unique philosophy and culture. When the district began including them in their fellowship as “real missionaries,” introducing them at district councils and camps, MAs felt more appreciated. Missionary parades at family camp have continued, expanding to include food booths highlighting various cultures. St. John also made strides to ensure that missionaries were well-supported during their time in the United States.

These efforts, plus a get-acquainted table at district council, help MAs meet pastors and create paths to full-time missions, with the district’s latest 27 career missionaries starting as missionary associates. These district initiatives have also exposed its members to a larger number of missionaries, and subsequently, a wider variety of international ministry opportunities. In addition, many people aged 55+ are becoming MAs as their family and career demands slow down.

Increased visibility led to removing restrictions on the number of missionaries approved to itinerate in a given year, and God has provided abundantly. In terms of amount given per member, the Minnesota district is one of the largest missions supporters in the U.S. Assemblies of God. They currently have 155 missionaries and a \$16.1 million missions budget.

“Clarence is a big believer that it’s God’s economy, not ours,” says Boone.

St. John also encouraged missions efforts across other departments in the district. He says, “I tried to help

people achieve their goals as district leaders.” This included regular mission trips for men’s and women’s ministries and hosting conventions. Under former Minnesota women’s ministries director Carol Lund, profiled in a recent issue of *Primeline*, the department opened a boutique that raises money for missions and a warehouse of new household items where itinerating missionaries and rural pastors can take home things they need, free of charge. Angie Goetz, who served alongside Lund for several years and has since become her successor, continues to promote those ministries at their annual Thrive Conference and beyond.

The Minnesota youth department has also caught the vision for missions. St. John recalls current district superintendent, Mark Dean, who previously served as the district’s youth director, asking in 2015, “Why couldn’t a district give \$1 million to Speed the Light (STL)? Why not us?” St. John supported this vision wholeheartedly, and Minnesota became the first district to raise that much money for STL, the missions funding organization donated to by youth of the AG, in a single year.

Dean has continued to build on that missions-focused foundation by implementing mission trips for teams of pastors. Youth leaders also coordinate a missions trip for selected “Called” conference attendees, which includes youth who feel a specific call to ministry.

Kirby St. John, Clarence’s son, is the district’s current youth director. He follows his father’s lead in helping to foster district-wide connections,

St. John is a big believer that it’s God’s economy, not ours.

including a sectional STL tour, more in-person youth pastor meetings, and an emphasis on missions at camps and conventions. The state’s Chi Alpha department, which coordinates outreach to students on college campuses, also raises money for missions, and the children’s ministries department regularly raises funds for missions as well, helping to build water wells.

“The current trajectory of significant growth in Minnesota sending, giving, and going was seeded by Pastor St. John,” says Dean. “His strategic planning helped lay the foundation for what’s happening today.”

Summing up his approach to missions as superintendent and the district’s continued vision, Clarence St. John says, “When we as a district take care of our missionaries, more people want to be sent as missionaries. And when you’re out there where the people are, that’s key.

CYNTHIA J. THOMAS

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