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CONNECTION chi alpha

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EVANGELICAL COLLEGE LIBRARY
SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI
College Youth Division
Assemblies of God

Chi Alpha: Reconciling Students to Christ

By Sarah Malcolm

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors ... We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Chi Alpha is the fourth-largest evangelical campus ministry in the United States, with organized groups at more than 300 colleges and universities.¹ Established in 1953, it became the collegiate wing of the Assemblies of God youth program, Christ’s Ambassadors (now National Youth Ministries). Chi Alpha in recent decades has become a major campus ministry that serves and networks Christian students from varied denominational, ethnic, and national backgrounds.

Christ and the University

The university has always been a center for new ideas, cultural transformation, and religious awakening. The first universities emerged about 900 years ago from medieval schools that were attached to cathedrals and monasteries. Universities provided students with intellectual, technical, and moral training. Asking questions about the meaning of life and finding causes bigger than themselves, these students have proceeded to shape the contours of society.

Strategically located at the intersection of faith and education, Chi Alpha has provided community and spiritual guidance to tens of thousands of students. For six decades, Chi Alpha has played a vital role in shaping Christian leaders for both the church and the marketplace. St. Francis Xavier, a missionary to Asia in the 1500s, once challenged a graduating class of students, “Give up your small ambitions and come with me to save the world.” Chi Alpha leaders frequently repeat almost this same challenge to new generations of students, encouraging them to dedicate their lives and talents to the glory of God and in service to others.

Knowledge on Fire

The Assemblies of God, which sponsors Chi Alpha, was birthed in the fires of a revival among radical evangelicals that swept the world at the turn of the twentieth century. Partici-

pants in this revival – known as Pentecostals – quickly formed Bible institutes and colleges. When Pentecostals united in 1914 to form the Assemblies of God, one of their stated purposes was to establish “a general Bible training school with a literary department for our people.”²

In its first decade, the Assemblies of God opened or endorsed at least ten schools.³ The primary objective of most of these new schools was to train pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. The schools’ schedules included “compulsory attendance at daily chapel, quiet hour twice per day, a noon missionary

prayer, weekly missionary meetings and a prayer in each class.”⁴ Special times of revival and spiritual outpouring occurred on these campuses, causing numerous young people to yield to God’s call. Pentecostals believed that education had to be accompanied by spiritual vivacity to accomplish God’s call. Assemblies of God missions leader Noel Perkin pleaded for Pentecostal

leaders to meld study with passion — which he called “knowledge on fire.”⁵

Laying the Groundwork for Chi Alpha

Prior to 1940, American universities were primarily the domain of elite young people from middle- and upper-class families.⁶ Some early Pentecostals also received higher education.⁷ However, when World War II ended and Congress passed the G.I. Bill, returning soldiers were granted an entrance to col-

“I’ve been changed.”

— Molly, Sam Houston State University



Chi Alpha Chaplain J. Calvin Holsinger (center) conducting a Bible study with students at Southwest Missouri State College, 1953.

lege free of charge. While some feared this would cause the United States to fall into another Depression, it had the opposite effect. Millions of students suddenly flooded the universities and ultimately found work in diverse fields.⁸

This influx of students into the universities was of special interest to the Assemblies of God. Never before had so many Assemblies of God young people headed off to college. About this time, Assemblies of God educator J. Robert Ashcroft introduced a resolution at the 1947 National Sunday School Convention which issued a challenge to develop ways to minister to Assemblies of God youth attending colleges outside the Fellowship.⁹ Ashcroft later became the secretary of the Education Department of the Assemblies of God and eventually became president of four different Assemblies of God schools.

Then in 1948, the Christ's Ambassadors Department (now National Youth Ministries) formed the College Fellowship (renamed Campus Ambassadors in 1951).¹⁰ This resulted in the publication of a newsletter mailed occasionally to

Assemblies of God students who attended non-Assemblies of God colleges. The first issue of *College Fellowship Bulletin*, dated September 1948, was mimeographed. By November 1951 the publication had changed its name to *Campus Ambassador Magazine (CAM)* and was beautifully lithographed on the Gospel Publishing House presses.¹¹ By 1953, the mailing list for *CAM* had grown to 228 students representing 110 colleges and universities.¹²

Formation of Chi Alpha

A few Assemblies of God student organizations developed on college campuses in the 1940s. Assemblies of God students at Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois) formed "Assembly C.A.'s" as early as 1946.¹³ Similarly, students at Southwest Missouri State College (Springfield, Missouri) organized a Christ's Ambassadors chapter during the 1949-1950 school year.

However, it was not until 1953 that the Assemblies of God began establishing an organized program that encouraged the development of student groups

on non-Assemblies of God college campuses.

This new program — called Chi Alpha — was pioneered by J. Calvin Holsinger, a young professor at Central Bible Institute. In the fall of 1952, Assemblies of God pastors in Springfield, Missouri, asked Holsinger to serve as chaplain to a group of young people who attended Southwest Missouri State College (later Southwest Missouri State University and now Missouri State University) and Drury College (now Drury University). A 1953 article in the *Springfield News & Leader* recorded:

Last fall when Assemblies pastors of the Springfield area met to discuss the need of a special counselor for their young people attending Southwest Missouri State College and Drury, it was decided to appoint Holsinger to the post. He was given the title Official College chaplain at Springfield colleges.¹⁴

Holsinger was asked to develop an appropriate campus program, to choose an appropriate campus name, and to develop materials and manuals that would help future AG university youth to become leaders of their campus chapter.¹⁵ Holsinger further reflects that the "Chi Alpha program was ecclesiastically voted and initiated at a local Presbytery Section and approved by the Southern Missouri District."¹⁶ He drew from his own experience in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship during his studies at the University of Pittsburgh and developed

National Chi Alpha Directors



Lee Shultz (1963-1964)



Russell Cox (1964-1965)



Rick Howard (1965-1968)

a program for Assemblies of God collegians.

In the spring of 1953, Holsinger decided upon the name Chi Alpha. He began preparing manuals defining the organization's mission and purpose, and the Springfield group became the pilot project for the new program.¹⁷ The name "Chi Alpha" was derived from the name of the Assemblies of God youth program, "Christ's Ambassadors," also known as "C.A.'s." This name was taken from 2 Corinthians 5:20 where Paul wrote, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God." Holsinger and his contemporaries believed the biblical admonition to "be reconciled to God" should be demonstrated in a student's life according to Christ's example.

The first letters of the two Greek words for Christ's ambassadors, *christou apostoloi*, are chi and alpha (XA).¹⁸ The use of Greek letters in its name helps Chi Alpha to fit into campus culture, where other honorary groups and societies are similarly named. Holsinger began writing the first Chi Alpha training manual in 1953, and it was completed by 1956.¹⁹ He quoted Luke 2:52, inserting in parentheses how students were expected to grow: "And Jesus grew in wisdom (Training) and stature (Recreation-Social), and in favor with God (Worship) and man (Service)."²⁰

J. Calvin Holsinger reported in the October 1953 issue *Campus Ambassador*: "Every C.A. should have two spiritual objectives on campus. One should be to join forces with other C.A.'s there

in college to strengthen each other's spiritual life, and the other, to reach new students with the Pentecostal testimony. The Christ's Ambassadors at Southwest Missouri State are trying to accomplish these objectives."²¹ He went on to share a number of ways in which the campus group at Southwest Missouri State in Springfield, Missouri, was reaching out to college students on their campus.

At a meeting of the Executive Presbytery in November 1953, Assistant General Superintendent Bert Webb "reported on the progress being made in the organizing of groups in liberal arts colleges to be known as Campus Ambassadors. Bulletins designed to promote these groups are being issued from time to time by the C.A. Department. The objective of the Campus Ambassadors is evangelism. Officers must have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Anyone may attend and join the groups."²² A further report from the Christ's Ambassadors Department in 1954 declared: "We come to the close of another school year with 545 students on our mailing list to receive the publication 'Campus Ambassador.' This is the largest list that we have yet had. There has also been a renewed interest among the various organizations on campus."²³

During the first full year of the Chi Alpha program, about a dozen chapters were formed, one of which was overseas in the Philippines. By 1955, a Chi Alpha logo appeared on every issue of the *Campus Ambassador*. About this time, Holsinger identified the influx of college students as an excellent opportunity for ministry:

Today there are thousands of Assemblies of God young people on university campuses. The National C.A. Department believes that these students could become agents of the Lord for a renewed spiritual revival. It has been true in the past; why not today?²⁴

Assemblies of God campus ministries continued to expand, and gradually the chapters at various colleges began to adopt the name "Chi Alpha" instead of "Campus Ambassadors." By the spring of 1959 there were 25 Chi Alpha chapters. The number of students receiving CAM had increased to 1,864 on 298 campuses.²⁵ In the decade that followed, Chi Alpha leaders built upon this original philosophy and developed a culture that fostered both faith and the life of the mind. Instead of creating a shield that would insulate students from the surrounding world, Chi Alpha leaders encouraged students to engage issues of Christian faith and practice using critical reasoning skills. This ministry philosophy continues today.²⁶

Campus and Culture in the 1960s

During the 1960s, the Fellowship recognized Chi Alpha's significant ministry on college campuses, and new leadership laid the groundwork for Chi Alpha's expansion. The General Presbytery affirmed Chi Alpha in 1961 with this declaration: "That the Chi Alpha and literature projects merit the wholehearted endorsement and backing of our con-



Jerry Sandidge (1968-1971)



Dave Gable (1971-1979)



Dennis Gaylor (1979-present)

stituency.”²⁷ In January 1963, Lee Shultz became the first appointed full-time national director and traveled extensively as an advocate for Chi Alpha on school campuses.²⁸ At the time, direct contact with the college president or dean often provided the only means to establish a group. According to Shultz, this impediment actually worked in Chi Alpha’s favor. A face-to-face meeting provided Shultz the opportunity to explain Chi Alpha and to dispel misperceptions. As a result, Shultz was never turned down.²⁹

Chi Alpha’s depth of involvement on individual campuses increased significantly in the 1960s. The first Chi Alpha house with a full-time director opened in 1964, located at the University of California-Berkeley. By the end of the decade, at least ten Chi Alpha houses existed across the nation, mostly located in the Midwest and on the East Coast.³⁰

Denominational leaders noticed Shultz’s success with Chi Alpha and, in 1964, asked him to serve as secretary of the Radio Department. Shultz went on to serve as producer and narrator of the *Revivaltime* broadcast for 25 years. Russell Cox succeeded Shultz as national Chi Alpha director and served from 1964 to 1965.³¹

The creation of strong national and local tiers of leadership provided focus to Chi Alpha. When Rick Howard became national director in 1965, he propelled Chi Alpha into engagement with the cultural chaos. Howard described the campus as literally “on fire” due to the civil rights movement and the Vietnam protests.³²

Rather than merely providing a shelter for Christians on campus, Howard challenged students to actively reach out to the broader community. He believed that the unrest provided an opportunity to help those who are searching for truth. He wrote a new Chi Alpha manual, published in 1966, in which he instructed:

Chapter meetings are not retreats for protection from the flying shrapnel of intellectual attack. Nor do they

serve as a rallying point of social contact. Each meeting should be a cell of life where students gather to refresh themselves mentally, spiritually, and socially to go to the campus and into dorms as dynamic personal witnesses for Christ in the power of His Spirit.³³

Howard envisioned Chi Alpha to serve not only as a campus ministry, but also as a “leadership training program for the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal movement in general, and the Christian world community at large.”³⁴ Chi Alpha sought to achieve this goal in part by establishing “koinonia groups,” which were small community groups that emphasized Bible study, prayer, disciple-making, and evangelism.³⁵

Jerry Sandidge picked up the baton as national director from 1968 to 1971. While continuing campus unrest limited ministry at some schools, Sandidge made progress on the implementation of Howard’s vision. Sandidge believed Chi Alpha could be salt and light via two important means: leadership development and the production of quality literature that addressed sensitive topics. As editor of *CAM*, the Assemblies of God campus magazine that originated in 1948, Sandidge employed his significant writing abilities to tackle important social issues of the day. His articles, including one about the civil rights movement, received five awards from the Evangelical Press Association.³⁶

The cultural turmoil of the 1960s was more evident on college campuses than perhaps anywhere else in America. The rise of Marxism, the sexual revolution, and various protest movements on campuses caused evangelicals and Pentecostals to view universities with increased suspicion. For instance, when the *Pentecostal Evangel* requested Assemblies of God adherents to join in prayer for “C.A. Day” on April 27, 1969, the invitation suggested that the college campus was “enemy territory.” The article read:

When our astronauts set foot on the moon in the months just ahead, they will be in, but not of, that mysterious world ... The CA Day theme, Survival, suggests that our born-again young people are like the astronauts, sustained in an alien environment by a heavenly life-support system.³⁷

Chi Alpha leadership worked hard to overcome these negative sentiments toward non-Christian colleges. Chi Alpha leaders challenged the view that college students were unreachable. Moreover, they established a precedent for creatively engaging college culture rather than retreating from it.

Integration: From Faith to Leadership in the 1970s

By 1970, the direction of Chi Alpha was firmly rooted in workers reaching the campus as missionaries of the gospel. Dave Gable, who became national director in 1971, explained Chi Alpha’s philosophy of ministry:

Our primary strategy is to work toward the building of a group, or community, of people who share these ideals [the four-fold philosophy of worship, fellowship, discipleship, and witness]. We believe the most fertile atmosphere for people to come to faith and maturity in Christ is warm exposure to a group of people, fervently committed to the God of the Bible, to one another, and to the task of evangelizing the campus. As a worshipping, loving, discipling, witnessing community, they demonstrate the kingdom of God and most effectively enculturate others in it.³⁸

There was no turning back. Chi Alpha leadership had come to view the organization’s identity as missional, and its success depended on how well



The San Antonio Seven in front of the Alamo in 1977.

it reached the campus. Chi Alpha had to develop leaders who could carry out its missionary purpose. This was no small task. Campus ministries were growing, and Chi Alpha began asking its campus leaders focused questions like, “How does a student find faith?” and “How are we teaching students to live out the gospel?” Gable spearheaded and sustained a national effort that mobilized campus missionaries and students into focused agents of the gospel. In a video presentation in 1997, Gable said, “We started out looking like a fraternity but ended as a ministry of student leaders on campus.”³⁹

During the 1970s, Chi Alpha began investing significantly in leadership development. Only four districts (New York/New Jersey, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Michigan) had full-time Chi Alpha directors in 1970. These four directors met that year in Springfield, Missouri, for a time of prayer, organization, and vision casting — the first conference for district leaders.⁴⁰ By the mid-1970s, these leadership retreats — called District Chi Alpha Representative (DXAR) conferences — had become a regular function. Now termed the District Resource Conference (DRC), district Chi Alpha leaders continue to meet every other year.

In 1972, Chi Alpha hosted its first Student Activist Leadership Training (SALT) conference in Waxahachie, Texas.⁴¹ SALT gathered Chi Alpha students from various campuses for the purpose of providing training for leadership and missions. These points of contact proved to be incredibly fruitful both in equipping believers and joining together for fellowship. The first National SALT was held in 1975 in Springfield, Missouri.⁴²

As a result of the 1975 conference, Gable took another important step forward by initiating the formation of a formal ministry philosophy. In 1977, he asked Chi Alpha campus ministers to recommend two district Chi Alpha representatives, two university church pastors, and two local Chi Alpha campus ministers who, along with himself, could be the voice for Chi Alpha’s future. Those leaders met in the summer of 1977 in San Antonio, Texas, for what would later be called the “San Antonio Seven.” The men (Dave Argue, Brady Bobbink, Dave Gable, Dennis Gaylor, Jim Hall, Harvey Herman, and Herschel Rosser) spent five days formulating guiding principles by which Chi Alpha has been identified ever since.⁴³

In 1982, Chi Alpha published *Campus Leaders Notebook*, which was a guide to campus ministry based on Chi Alpha’s philosophy. The loose-leaf book, written by experienced campus ministers, provided foundational Chi Alpha materials for decades to come. The current incarnation of this publication is *Reach the U: A Handbook for Campus Ministry* (2003), which corresponds with Chi Alpha’s Reach the University Institute (RUI) staff training for campus leadership.

Gable not only launched SALT and oversaw the formulation of Chi Alpha’s formal ministry philosophy, he also pioneered national training seminars for both current missionaries and new workers. ICM (Institute for Campus Ministries), formalized in 1976, became the entry point for all new missionaries. CMC (Campus Ministers Conference), begun in 1977, provided ministry to ministers by gathering national workers

for fellowship and continuing education. In the same year, Chi Alpha trained its first intern, Greg Smith, at Western Washington University under the newly-established Campus Missionary in Training program (CMIT).⁴⁴

As Chi Alpha developed a culture of disciple-making, its leaders reflected deeply about their mission to be Christ’s ambassadors in order to reconcile the world with Christ (2 Corinthians 5). In an article published in CAM titled “Agents of Reconciliation,” Herschel Rosser described the Chi Alpha philosophy in this way:

God’s redemptive purpose in giving the command to make disciples is to use us to rescue folks from Satan’s domain, His ultimate purpose being to make all the redeemed ones become like Jesus. *This process requires the body of Christ.* He makes us disciple makers by making us disciples, using us to possess the land of our own hearts.⁴⁵

In a broader culture marred by hyper-individualism and secularism, Chi Alpha went against the current and sought to build the community of believers through discipleship.

Throughout the 1970s, Chi Alpha demonstrated its commitment to develop both leaders and a culture of discipleship. Because of this focus, Chi Alpha witnessed incredible growth in its organizational structure, in the number of participants, and in the depth of their commitment to Christ. According to an article about the 1977 ICM, 155 Chi Alpha ministries had formed across the nation with 2,500 students involved in weekly events. The growth from 1976 to 1977 alone was 18%.⁴⁶

Fruitfulness in Mission in the 1980s

By 1980, Chi Alpha had become a unified missions movement on campuses across America with a highly-developed

structure that allowed missionary work to flourish. The vision of reaching the whole campus and training students for righteousness in a lifetime of service was deeply embedded in the DNA of Chi Alpha. Dennis Gaylor, who joined Gable in 1978 as a training coordinator, became national director in 1979 and continues in that post in 2012.

Few people have left a larger imprint on Chi Alpha than has Gaylor. While Gaylor has provided overall direction, the development of numerous highly-visible leaders has allowed Chi Alpha to make a larger impact than could be achieved by any one person. Chi Alpha is stronger because diverse voices have shared their experiences in campus ministry, helping others to learn effective methods of relating the gospel to students.

Chi Alpha adopted a new organizational structure in 1983. Nine leaders, called area representatives, were given oversight of campus ministry in their geographic areas. Each region held its own SALT conference for students and LIGHT conference for Chi Alpha staff. SALT conferences have attracted thousands of students annually.⁴⁷ One of the first area representatives was a soft-spoken young man, Jim Bradford, who had pioneered a church at the University of Minnesota, where he had also earned a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering. In 2009, Bradford went on to become the first Chi Alpha pastor to serve as an Assemblies of God national executive.

Numerous Chi Alpha publications networked its students and leaders. *CAM* was the best-known Chi Alpha periodical, ceasing publication in 1980. Other publications included: *Chi Alpha Newsletter* (1960s-1970s); *Communicue* (1978-1980); *Fellowship* (1980-1991); *Nationally Speaking* (1995-1999); *Campus Upgrade* (2000-2004); *The Home Office* (2001-2007); *Influence* (2002-2006); and *Chi Alpha Connection* (2008-present). These publications included articles by national and regional Chi Alpha leaders, as well as by oth-

ers, on a variety of topics ranging from women in leadership to missions trips to understanding culture.

1986 was a pivotal year in Chi Alpha history. For 33 years, Chi Alpha had been under the leadership of the National Youth Department of the Assemblies of God. A study committee determined that Chi Alpha should instead become its own department within the Division of Home Missions (now Assemblies of God U.S. Missions). This change in structure allowed Chi Alpha staff to raise a U.S. missionary budget, which made possible a much broader ministry. In 1992, U.S. Missions Director Charles Hackett said, "Granting home missions appointment to qualified workers will do more for you [Chi Alpha] than any other single step you can take."⁴⁸ In 2011 Chi Alpha was served by 326 nationally-appointed missionaries and spouses, 119 district appointed campus missionaries, 110 church staff, and 380 Campus Missionary Associates.⁴⁹

As Chi Alpha continued to develop on a national scale, it broadened its ministry horizon to international students studying in the United States. David Schaumburg launched ministry to international students in 1981. In 1987, he wrote *A Manual for Ministry to Internationals*, and the following year International Student Friendship Ministries (ISFM) held its first training conference in Springfield, Missouri. In an article in *Fellowship*, Roberta Rasmussen encouraged Chi Alpha readers to embrace visitors to America: "God loves the alien and foreigner who live among us. As His imitators on earth we will do the same."⁵⁰

The opportunity to reach countries where Americans could never gain a passport propelled Chi Alpha workers to resource and develop leaders who work with ISFM. In 1989, the second ISFM director, Samuel Mathai, launched the annual All Nations Conference with significant support from one of the strongest international student ministries in the nation, Southern Illinois University Chi Alpha.

In 1989, Chi Alpha hosted its sixth national SALT in Indianapolis, Indiana, with a record 800 students and leaders in attendance. By the end of the decade, Chi Alpha was chartered on 165 campuses with 80 full-time missionaries as well as 105 part-time staff.

Strategizing for Expansion in the 1990s

Three months after the 1989 national SALT in Indiana, Chi Alpha handpicked 38 leaders to gather in Arizona to strategize about their participation in the Decade of Harvest — the Assemblies of God emphasis on church planting and evangelism in the 1990s. This group — known as the Arizona 38 — drafted a strategy that was ultimately presented to a field committee in New Orleans, Louisiana, on October 26-29, 1991.⁵¹ The report included quotes from key leaders, a plan to develop staff and resources, as well as the top 100 campus targets for new ministry by the year 2000. Several of those goals came to pass, including the development of a national staff team. However, many of the targeted campuses were without a ministry by the end of the decade. The northeast region, led by Harvey Herman, grew by the largest percentage of any region during the 1990s.⁵²

Chi Alpha began to develop its national staff. In 1989, Nick Fatato became the first nationally-appointed field representative. In the two years he served, he chaired the Chi Alpha committee on the Decade of Harvest and provided invaluable resources and promotion to Chi Alpha groups across the nation.⁵³ From 1990 to 1992 five more leaders transitioned from local leadership to national Chi Alpha assignments: Mike Olejarz (East Coast field representative), Harvey Herman (training director), Joe Daltorio (national field representative), Steve West (technical support), and Bob Marks (national field representative).

The development of a national staff team has defined Chi Alpha's culture. Incredibly committed to training both young and seasoned leaders, Chi Alpha

USA Campus Christian Organizations, 2010

Organization	Number of Campus Groups	USA Student Involvement
Baptist Collegiate Ministry	800	83,000
Campus Crusade For Christ	1,000	55,000
Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA	279	22,878
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	859	33,671
Navigators	172	10,000-15,000

*Information on 5 of the top campus Christian organizations collected by Dennis Gaylor, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA in 2010.

continuously seeks to train its leaders in biblical literacy, leadership skills, and practical implementation of the gospel on campus. In 1997, Chi Alpha announced that it had broken the 200 barrier, claiming 210 chartered groups across the nation. The credit for that growth was attributed to CMIT programs, nationally-appointed campus missionaries, district development, and open doors of favor.⁵⁴

Chi Alpha, in the 1990s, was defined by an emphasis on reaching new campuses, training leaders, and broadening the vision of Chi Alpha. This latter emphasis gained new focus in 1993 when the seven national staff members met in the Colorado Rockies for several days of prayer and planning. As a result, they added “prayer” to the Chi Alpha philosophy and coined the mission statement that has since defined Chi Alpha missionary service: “Reconciling students to Christ — transforming the university, the marketplace, and the world.” The “bottom line” in the Chi Alpha’s mission statement communicated a sense of urgency:

Deeply aware of the urgency of this moment in history, we commit ourselves unreservedly to the work of reconciling men and women to God by the power of the Holy Spirit. We consider the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to be our personal and primary responsibility before God and dedicate ourselves to reaching and discipling students to impact the nations of the earth before Christ’s return.⁵⁵

Chi Alpha Goes Global

The national staff took the vision of the 1993 dream for expansion and adapted it for the year 2000 and beyond. Increase — in missionary personnel, campus groups, and the number of students reached — continued to be an overarching theme; however, the methods were becoming more sophisticated. As the na-

tional program continued to grow, so did the procedures. Following its successful push in the 1990s, Chi Alpha set out to better define and promote its national identity, to increase district support and budgets, and to add new workers.⁵⁶

National Chi Alpha conferences set milestones. At the turn of the century, more than 2,000 students and staff members, including representatives from 25 nations, attended the first World SALT, held in Los Angeles, California. Bill Bright, president and founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was one of the featured speakers. Following World SALT, Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) established the Commission on University Ministry (now University Ministries Network) that continues to advance university ministries globally.

With Chi Alpha flourishing in the United States and with the creation of a network of global campus ministries, two other voices began calling students to think globally. E. Scott and Crystal Martin, a husband and wife team, joined the national office in 1997 and served respectively as the Student Mission director and the Chi Alpha Internationals director (XAi, formerly ISFM). They began mobilizing teams of students on short-term missions trips. Their infectious passion and vision for global evangelism were felt throughout the nation. In a 2011 editorial, Scott wrote, “It has

been said, ‘preach the gospel and if necessary use words.’ Then you better plan to use words because it is necessary. Let’s once again be rugged, radical, and adventurous and tell His story to the lost around the world.”⁵⁷

During the New Year’s break of 2006, the Martins directed the first World Missions Summit (WMS), held in Louisville, Kentucky. They challenged each student in attendance to “give a year and pray about a lifetime.” In partnership with Assemblies of God World Missions, students were introduced to nations across the world in high-sensory fashion. Over the course of the three-day conference, students were invited to travel the globe and to meet missionaries serving in a variety of contexts. As a result, 689 students committed to spend one year in short-term missions, resulting in a significant increase in MAPS (Missions Abroad Placement Service) workers, solidifying a partnership between AGWM and Chi Alpha, and birthing a student missions movement in Chi Alpha. The second WMS was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, during the New Year’s break of 2008, and the third will take place in Fort Worth, Texas, in December 2012.

Chi Alpha hit another milestone in 2010 in Phoenix, Arizona. Over 600 missionary workers and family members attended the Campus Missions Confer-

“The university, like the headwaters of a great river, feeds into the entire world: the leaders, the poets, the writers, the philosophers, the educators, and those who will control the media. To leave the secular university unreached is to leave this culture hopelessly separated from any opportunity for a deep, entrenched Christian reformation.”⁶⁰

— Brady Bobbink,
Chi Alpha leader at
Western Washington
University

ence (CMC, formerly Campus Missionary Conference) — the largest such gathering in Chi Alpha history. In addition, Chi Alpha leaders presented the five-year strategic plan for 2010-2015, which focuses on: branding, diversity, post-college network, resources, systems, and post-high school transitions. By 2011, Chi Alpha had grown to nearly 300 campus groups with more than 700 missionary personnel, reaching over 25,000 students. Today, Chi Alpha is the fourth largest evangelical campus ministry in the nation, including parachurch and denominational campus ministries.⁵⁸

Their Story — The Students of Chi Alpha

Benson Hines, an author, minister, and consultant to evangelical campus

ministries across the nation, wrote an e-book in 2009 called *Reaching the Campus Tribes*.⁵⁹ The book documented a road trip Hines took in 2007 and 2008 during which he visited more than 180 campuses. In 2009, Hines visited ten Chi Alpha ministries across the nation. He recorded the following testimonies about Chi Alpha’s impact on students’ lives:

“During my three years at MSU, I attended Chi Alpha on a weekly basis. Chi Alpha gave me the tools to live a strong Christian life through its weekly meetings, which included anointed worship and challenging teaching. I also formed friendships with other students that gave me encouragement in my walk with God. Many of those friendships continue to this very day.” — Scott Stensgard (Minnesota State University, Moorhead)

“I probably would have never considered going on any of these mission trips if I didn’t go to Chi Alpha first.” — Caitlin Flanagan (Rowan University)

“These people weren’t just Christians, they were actually practicing (what they believed).” — Scott Graves (Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi)

“These people care so much about me, and I don’t even know why!” said Eric Cmar (University of Virginia) after describing an experience where he was “love-bombed” by the ministry at UVA.

The story of Chi Alpha is a heroic adventure of faithful men and women unwavering in their resolve to reach every student for Christ. Testimonies from students compel these Chi Alpha missionaries forward year after year. Through Chi Alpha, students are rescued from moral depravity, broken homes, religiosity, and

spiritual void. Students experience real love for the first time and make genuine friends; they discover their place in the community of believers and radically proclaim the good news; and they find Christ on campus and then walk alongside Him into the marketplace and across the world.

Chi Alpha is not just a program, it is a culture of disciple-making. The transformed students and committed missionaries of Chi Alpha are laying the groundwork for the next generation of the Assemblies of God. ✝



Sarah Malcolm holds an M.A. in Practical Theology from AGTS and is a member of the Chi Alpha Training Team. She and her husband, Rob, are currently pioneering a Chi

Alpha group at Yale University. She is also the daughter of Harvey and Sally Herman, who have served as Chi Alpha ministers for over 30 years.

NOTES

¹See chart of *USA Campus Christian Organizations, 2010*, listing 5 of the top campus Christian organizations. The 2010 statistics list 279 Chi Alpha groups. In 2012 there are over 300 Chi Alpha groups in the US.

²“General Convention of Pentecostal Saints and Churches of God in Christ,” *Word and Witness*, December 20, 1913, 1.

³P. Douglas Chapman, “In Spirit and Truth: Higher Education in the Assemblies of God,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 31 (2011): 49-50.

⁴Educational Institutions of the Assemblies of God (Springfield, MO: The Education Department of the Assemblies of God, 1951).

⁵Noel Perkin, “A Call for Christian Leaders,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 7, 1948, 14.

⁶Jillian Kinzie, et al., “Fifty Years of College Choice: Social, Political and Institutional Influences on the Decision-Making Process,” *Lumina New Agenda Series* (September 2004): 8.

⁷“A surprising number of first-generation leaders possessed a respectable formal education beyond high school and sometimes beyond college.” Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostal and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

University Press, 2001), 204.

⁸⁴“By the time the original GI Bill ended on July 25, 1956, 7.8 million of 16 million World War II veterans had participated in an education or training program.” United States Department of Veteran Affairs: The GI Bill’s History: http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/history_timeline/index.html, accessed November 2011.

⁹William W. Menzies, “The Chi Alpha Story,” *Campus Ambassador Magazine* 20:1 (September-October 1966), 16. See also: Rick Howard, *Chi Alpha Manual* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1966), 5; and Wayne Warner, “The Beginning of Chi Alpha Campus Ministry,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 12, 1999, 9. Documentation of Ashcroft’s resolution has not been located. In a video clip used in *Chi Alpha: 50 Years of Reconciling Students to Christ* (1997), Ashcroft does mention having a burden for college-age youth in the late 1940s.

¹⁰“Campus Ambassadors,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 12, 1953, 6.

¹¹*Ibid.* CAM continued publication until 1980.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Wheaton College yearbook, 1946, 157; “Constitution of Assembly C.A.’s,” Wheaton College, October 21, 1948. FPHC.

¹⁴“Assemblies’ College Chaplain Once Wanted to be Musician,” *Springfield News & Leader*, March 1, 1953, D4.

¹⁵J. Calvin Holsinger, email to Dennis Gaylor, November 8, 2003.

¹⁶J. Calvin Holsinger, email to Darrin Rodgers, April 13, 2012. This appears to be the first college ministry in the nation to be approved by an ecclesiastical body.

¹⁷J. Calvin Holsinger, correspondence regarding the history of Chi Alpha, FPHC; “Assemblies’ College Chaplain once wanted to be Musician,” D4.

¹⁸J. Calvin Holsinger, *Chi Alpha Manual* (Springfield, MO: Campus Ambassador Division, National C.A. Department, [1956?]), IV-1.

¹⁹The April-May 1956 issue of *Campus Ambassador* advertised a special announcement that the National C.A. Department “has just prepared a Manual for Chi Alpha Chapters.” This indicates that the final draft of the *Chi Alpha Manual* was completed in the spring of 1956.

²⁰Holsinger, *Chi Alpha Manual*, VI-3.

²¹J. Calvin Holsinger, “How We Do It at S.M.S.,” *Campus Ambassador* 6:1 (October 1953): 6.

²²*Executive Presbytery Minutes*, November 17, 1953, 8.

²³*Executive Presbytery Minutes*, May 20, 1954, 2.

²⁴Dr. J. Calvin Holsinger, “A Campus Witness,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, October 2, 1955, 17.

²⁵“Forward with Christ,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, September 20, 1959, 4.

²⁶Holsinger, *Chi Alpha Manual* (Springfield MO, 1953), A-5, A-6.

²⁷*General Presbytery Minutes*, August 21, 1961, 18.

²⁸“Leland Shultz Now Working with Chi Alpha

Groups,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 14, 1963, 28.

²⁹Lee Shultz letter to Dennis Gaylor, April 4, 2001.

³⁰Jerry Sandidge, “The World’s Most Neglected Mission Field,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 14, 1969, 12-13.

³¹*Assemblies of God Ministers Letter*, September 4, 1964, 2.

³²Two national events demonstrated this tension. 1) The non-violent protest in 1960 at a Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina where four African-American students challenged segregation. Six months later, they were served in the same store where they were originally denied. 2) In 1970, four students were shot and killed by the Ohio National Guard during an anti-war protest, otherwise known as the Kent State Massacre. Howard confirmed a Chi Alpha presence at Kent State during this event.

³³Howard, *Chi Alpha Manual*, 17-18.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 72-74.

³⁶Both Howard and Sandidge mentioned this achievement in video presentations which were included in *Chi Alpha: 50 Years of Reconciling Students to Christ, Transforming the University, the Marketplace, and the World* [(Springfield, MO: Chi Alpha, 1997)].

³⁷“Survival in an Alien World,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 20, 1969, 32.

³⁸Dave Gable, “The Chi Alpha Philosophy,” *Campus Ambassador Magazine*, February 1978, 7.

³⁹This video presentation was included in *Chi Alpha: 50 Years of Reconciling Students to Christ, Transforming the University, the Marketplace, and the World* [(Springfield, MO: Chi Alpha, 1997)].

⁴⁰The third annual conference was held in 1972 and included plans for the upcoming SALT conferences. “Chi Alpha Directors Meet,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 14, 1972, 26.

⁴¹Sarah Malcolm, “70s Chi Alpha,” e-mail to Dave Gable, November 18, 2011. Gable says John Koeshall (who was ministering in Wisconsin) predated SALT with a two-week instructional conference called FIRE (First Institute of Right-on Evangelism). While the model was kept, the name was changed. The second (SIRE) and third (TIRE) institutes posed an obvious problem.

⁴²“250 Collegians Gather for First National ‘SALT,’” *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 28, 1976, 24.

⁴³The four-fold philosophy was defined by a commitment to worship, fellowship, discipleship, and witness and was described in full to the broader Chi Alpha community in the February 1978 issue of *CAM*.

⁴⁴The CMIT program at Western Washington University under the leadership of Brady Bobbink is the longest-standing campus training center in the nation.

⁴⁵Herschel Rosser, “Agents of Reconciliation,” *Campus Ambassador Magazine*, November 1979, 12 (emphasis added).

⁴⁶News clip on Chi Alpha training in 1977 from May 22, 1977.

⁴⁷“Chi Alpha’s Mission: Reaching the University,” *Recapturing the University*, 1983, 14. Among this group was Dr. Jim Bradford who brought oversight to the North Central region. Bradford holds a Ph.D in aerospace engineering and served Chi Alpha in Minnesota and California. In 2009, he was elected to the position of general secretary of the Assemblies of God.

⁴⁸In 1997, Chi Alpha introduced a new missionary category called the Campus Missionary Associate (CMA). In the year of its introduction, there were 12 missionaries under this title. Today there are 256 missionary units serving as CMA’s.

⁴⁹Statistics based on Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, U.S.A., 2011-2012 charters and affiliations.

⁵⁰Roberta Rasmussen, “Welcome International Students,” *Fellowship*, December 1987, 2.

⁵¹Notes from College Ministries Targeting Strategy Report, New Orleans, LA, October 26-29, 1991. Report approved by the College Ministries Field Committee.

⁵²By the late 1990s, Harvey Herman (then a national field representative for the Northeast) decided to spearhead a collective dream to pioneer Washington, DC area campuses. In 1999, eight missionary units began pioneering eight target campuses and established a CMIT program. CMIT graduates are now serving across the nation but primarily in the Northeast.

⁵³Fatato left the national office and organized a team to pioneer Boston area campuses, one of the first to tackle unreached urban environments in the Northeast. Today Fatato is the executive director of minister development in the Southern New England Ministry Network and pastors Common Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

⁵⁴*Nationally Speaking*, Summer 1997, 1.

⁵⁵*The Essentials of Campus Ministry* (Springfield, MO: Chi Alpha, 1994), 12.

⁵⁶Executive Director of AG U.S. Missions Charles Hackett stated the following in a presentation to the Executive Presbytery in January 2000: “There are five reasons why I believe Chi Alpha has a major role in what God is doing on the secular college campus: competent leadership, a detailed strategy based upon success, in-depth training, adequate finances, and dependence on the supernatural.”

⁵⁷E. Scott Martin, “Letter from the Editor: The Truth Hurts, Sometimes,” *Expeditions*, 2011, 3.

⁵⁸The top three ministries are: Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ), Baptist Collegiate Ministry, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. See chart of *USA Campus Christian Organizations, 2010*, listing 5 of the top campus Christian organizations, along with statistics on the number of campus groups and number of students involved. Chi Alpha Christian Ministries ranks fourth in these numbers.

⁵⁹Benson Hines, *Reaching the Campus Tribes* (N.p.: the author, 2009), 23, 27, 35, 43: <http://reachingthecampustribes.com>, accessed November 2011.

⁶⁰“Chi Alpha’s Mission: Reaching the University,” *Recapturing the University*, 1983, 3.