
12

THE FIGHTINGEST CHURCH IN THE NORTHWEST (1934-1936)

A preacher friend (James Matthew Alley) told him, "Arch, you'll never last at Montavilla! If you stay there six months, I'll buy you the best tie in town."

Eighteen months later A. Word had a new tie.

—Ron Carlson, *Montavilla Memories*

TOLEDO, OREGON

A Letter from Roosevelt and a Call from Montavilla

On September 8, 1934, Archie Word began a revival in Toledo, Oregon, the church he had helped Garland Hay establish in 1928; the same church he had served for two years before entering the field of full-time revivalism. The bright orange handbills capitalized on the slogan that had gotten him into *Ripley's "Believe It Or Not"*:

HEAR A. WORD PREACH THE WORD
West Coast Evangelist – Free and Unafraid
A Preacher Who Is Called Back to His Old Pastorate
The Little Red Tile Church On The Hill

The former Toledo preacher told a local reporter, "I intend to preach a straight gospel, solidly founded on the fundamental teachings of the Lord Christ which I firmly believe is the only remedy that will heal the sickness of America."¹ Two days after the meeting began, Senator Huey Long was gunned down outside the chambers of the Louisiana House of Representatives. Archie picked up on this tragic event:

No man ever climbs without . . . little curs snarling at his heels. Even Huey Pierce Long (and I am not an advocate of any of his doctrine . . .), now that he is dead and no longer to be feared is being lauded to the skies by the very men who opposed him . . .²

Archie appreciated any man who would come right out with what he believed and stood for. He was certainly ready and willing to speak on controversial subjects. One Sunday afternoon he led a mass meeting in Toledo, lecturing on the topic "Twenty Reasons Why I Am Not a Seventh Day Adventist." His anti-cult lectures had come to be a regular feature of his revivals by this time.

During the Toledo campaign, Archie received a letter from President Franklin Roosevelt. The president had written to a select number of American clergymen, seeking their advice. Roosevelt's letter, dated September 23, 1935, sought approval of his newly enacted Social Security legislation and Works Program. Roosevelt wrote, "I shall deem it a favor if you will write me about conditions in your community. Tell

me where you feel our government can better serve our people."³ This to Archie Word!

Archie wrote back to the honorable President on October 11. He told President Roosevelt that the mills were running day and night in Toledo, but so was sin! "Sin is what we are having to fight here," he told the president. He then listed several ways government could help improve conditions in America: setting aside a day of prayer for righteousness; encouraging regular church attendance; and, most of all, men in high places setting a proper example. "I do not believe that you can legislate men into being good," Archie wrote. "Preachers can preach their lungs out and run their legs off, but if there is no HIGH example it is almost impossible to get the common folk to live right."⁴

Both letters were printed in their entirety on the front page of the *Lincoln County Leader*.

During the middle of the Toledo revival, something happened that would change the future of the Word Revival Team. On September 28, 1935, Walter Stram resigned from the pulpit of the Montavilla Christian Church in Portland, Oregon, in order to re-enter the field of full-time evangelism and church planting (in 1942 he became the founder and president of Dakota Bible College). Who would replace Brother Stram at Montavilla? Many of the members remembered the great revival Archie Word had conducted in the summer of 1933 when 130 souls were reached for Christ. And now he was holding forth in a meeting in Toledo. One night in October, a delegation from the Montavilla church drove down to Toledo to hear Archie preach. But they also wanted him to hear something they had to say: would you consider leav-

ing the field of revivals and come to Portland to take the pulpit ministry?

For some time Archie had been thinking of settling down, mainly for his family's sake. Each time they would enter a town for a revival, the school-age girls would be enrolled for the duration of the meeting, anywhere from six to eight weeks. When the meeting was over, they would be uprooted and moved on to another school system, either in Oregon or California. Years later Archie said, "I had been considering that I had to do something because the kids were in school and moving them every six weeks (was) terrible."⁵

But the Montavilla church in Portland was not the only one desiring Archie's services. A church in Seattle, Washington, also wanted the 34-year-old revivalist to be their preacher. About this time another church called to inquire about his services (in later years he could not recall what church it was). So he was considering three invitations at about the same time.

Earlier in his career, another church in Portland had considered the outspoken preacher for their pulpit.

... in 1929, when Kern Park Christian Church, Portland, Ore., was looking for a successor to brother Lemmon (W.S. Lemmon, the man who "discovered" Archie Word — Author), I was being considered. The Friday before I was to preach my "Trial Sermon," I received a letter from an attorney named Hall who was on the pulpit supply committee in which he said, "Unless you are heartily in sympathy with the United Christian Missionary Society, we hardly think it advisable for you to make application for the Kern Park pulpit."⁶

But when Archie Word was invited to preach, he

always went. That Sunday morning, before the service started, Archie cornered the attorney in the church basement. The attorney assured Archie that Kern Park was fully united on the U.C.M.S. question, but Archie knew better. He believed in W.S. Lemmon — had gone to school with Lemmon's daughter, Vivian, who had gone to Japan as a missionary, independent of the society. Archie called the attorney a "despicable liar of an elder."⁷ Needless to say, Archie did not wind up at Kern Park!

The Montavilla church, known not too affectionately as "the fightingest church in the Northwest,"⁸ had somehow managed to go through 15 preachers in 24 years. James Matthew Alley, the preacher at Toledo where Archie was holding a revival when the invitation came, said, "Arch, you'll never last at Montavilla!"⁹ Nevertheless, a few days after their visit, Archie wrote the church at Montavilla, listing 17 things he expected from them, should he accept their offer. Among the demands: to preach tithes and offerings, to preach holiness, to have qualified elders with authority, to have all women in subjection to their own husbands and abide by the elder's decisions (two women left before Archie came), to have every organization in the church building answerable to the elders, and to be paid \$30 a week with a parsonage (or \$35 without).¹⁰

To the surprise of everyone, the fighting church in Montavilla went for the fighting West Coast evangelist. The vote was 100%. Indeed, Archie had asked for no less. When asked why he took the church, Archie replied, "It seemed like a challenge to me."¹¹

The *Lincoln County Leader* (Oct. 17, 1935) reported,

WORD REVIVAL SERVICES TO CLOSE SUNDAY, OCT. 20
 'The Word' revival meeting will close Sunday, Oct. 20
 . . . Mr. Word will go to the Englewood church in Port-
 land for one more meeting and then will accept the
 call to come to the Montavilla church in Portland,
 Oregon.¹²

In spite of all the interruptions, the Toledo meeting closed with 67 responses – 37 baptisms and 30 reconsecrations. Archie and Florence must have felt mixed emotions as they pulled away from the little red tile church on the hill and headed for the big city of Portland. It is more than ironic that the decision to leave the located ministry and enter the field of full-time revivals and the decision to leave the field of full-time revivals and re-enter the located ministry were both made in Toledo, "Holy Toledo."

PORTLAND, OREGON (ENGLEWOOD) **The Final Revival**

Archie Word booked his own revivals, and when he decided to leave the revival trail he was booked up for two solid years – 24 meetings scheduled in various churches on the West Coast. He immediately cancelled all of them except the next one on his list – Englewood Christian Church in Portland. After all, he was on his way to the Rose City! F. J. Winder, minister of the congregation which met at N.E. 35th Avenue and Killingsworth, had been converted at the Montavilla church when he was 16 – the 100th convert in a great revival led by Carroll Ridenour in 1922. Winder soon won his own family to Christ, then went on to Eugene Bible University where he met Archie Word. The two men had already worked one revival, Mill City, where 156 decisions for Christ had been made.

Once more the Nahigians provided the music and they took Portland by storm. Two weeks into the meeting,

The many who have heard them sing during the past two weeks have expressed amazement at the beauty of their harmony. They are accomplished musicians and singers, and lead the evangelistic song service in a masterly way. Their services are being sought for radio programs in this city. You will hear these talented Armenian Christian girls each night. . . .¹³

Archie was billed as "the West Coast's most outstanding evangelist," whose "John the Baptist messages" had "changed the thinking and revolutionized the lives of thousands of people."¹⁴ The heavily publicized meeting opened Sunday morning, October 27, with Archie preaching one of his favorites, "Why I Believe in a Personal God." Other messages followed that he had been preaching now for nearly five years: "Real Christians," "Seven Steps to Hell," "One Mile to Hell," "Scared to Death," "When I Was a Thief," "The Painted Face," and "Heading for the Last Roundup." "Heaven" was his final revival sermon, Sunday night, December 8, 1935. There is no entry in Archie's scrapbook recording the number of decisions (the only blank in nearly five years of revival meetings). The man who made Ripley's had conducted 34 revival meetings, most of them six weeks or more in duration. In 20 of those meetings, more than 70 had responded to the invitation; in 11, over 100. In all, nearly 3,000 people had been brought into the kingdom of God or had rededicated their lives to Christ. Over 100 men had entered the ministry because of his pleading. Untold thousands had been indoctrinated for life from his nightly teaching from his 24-foot Bible

chart. One era had ended, but another was about to commence: the Montavilla era.

THE MONTAVILLA YEARS BEGIN

After living out of a trailer and suitcases for five years, Archie and Florence were anxious to find a house and get the girls in school. They finally settled on a two-story house at 8624 N. E. Glisan Street, a big yellow house right across the street from the Oregon Blind Trade School. To Florence, it was like leaving earth and entering heaven.

As they walked into the house for the first time, she paused in the front hallway. "So this will be our home," she thought. "Thank you, Lord." She walked through double doors into the living room and automatically determined where the couch and chairs would go. Through the dining room windows she could see a beautiful cherry tree in the back yard. After examining the kitchen the family climbed the stairs to the second story. "Oh, Archie. This will be our bedroom." It looked down on the cherry tree and the back yard where the children would play. Across the hall, facing Glisan Street, were two bedrooms. "We'll put Margaret and Barbara in this one and Jenelle and Anna Jean in the other one." It was not long until Margaret and Barb were calling their bedroom the "guess" room. Margaret recalls, "From the very first we had lots of company and our room was the guest room – only we called it the "guess" room. We guessed every night who would be sleeping in it. When company came we slept in the basement."¹⁵ The first night in their new home, Florence told the girls, "Thank the good Lord for your bed. It is the first one you can really call your own." The girls were six

and seven at the time. But before long they were sleeping in the basement. A man named Spring was out of work and down on his luck. Archie and Florence took the Springs and their three children into their new home for three months until the man finally was able to secure work. They would be the first of a long line of people who found the house on Glisan Street a haven of rest.

It was winter when the Words moved into their new home. The winter of 1935 was extremely cold, claiming 212 lives in the United States. The Word home had no heating system. The first winter they tried heating the house with a small gas heater; the next year Archie put in a furnace that burned sawdust, something of which there was plenty in the Northwest. The sawdust truck would back up to the house and dump a big load right where Archie could shovel it into the basement. Later the furnace was converted to burn oil.

"Poor mother was so tired after all those moves that she didn't even put up curtains in the house for a year," remembers daughter Barbara.¹⁶ But eventually the Word family returned to a "normal" life. Margaret and Barbara were enrolled in school. Florence, relieved of her traveling tutoring duties, could stay home with Jenelle and baby Anna Jean. And Archie began his work with the Montavilla church.

BACKGROUND TO MONTAVILLA

Montavilla was a district in the northeastern part of Portland – Oregon's largest city. The congregation was "mothered" by First Christian Church of Portland on March 13, 1910, when \$10 a month was set aside to start a new Sunday School in the Montavilla district.

G. K. Berry was chosen to organize the new Sunday School. After doing considerable groundwork, the new Sunday School began meeting in September of 1910. Berry had chosen the Odd Fellows Hall as a meeting place – a second-story loft over a funeral parlor on the corner of N.E. 80th and Glisan. The building is still standing today.

The congregation officially organized on Wednesday, January 25, 1911. By the end of the summer, 60 names had been added to the church roll. Soon property was purchased at N.E. 76th and Hoyt. Construction on the new church building began in the spring of 1912, but was not completed until February of 1916 because of the war effort. When finished, however, it was an impressive building. Church historian Ron Carlson described it.

The new structure, built upon the basement which had served the congregation for nearly four years, provided ample space with a large auditorium, a balcony, classrooms and a low platform that extended across the entire width of the building. A baptistry was built beneath the platform on the north side. Behind the platform the young people had a large room separated by three large sliding doors. The front of the building outside was distinguished by four large round columns which supported the balcony.¹⁷

At this time the church was known as Christian Tabernacle, Montavilla Tabernacle, or Montavilla Christian Tabernacle. Perhaps they were better known as “the fightingest church in the Northwest.” One of Montavilla’s many ministers was once sent flying down a flight of stairs by a testy deacon. Bert Knight, a long-time member at Montavilla, warned the new preacher about the stormy temperament of the

church. “Brother Word, this church has split twice, disfellowshipped I forget how many people at one time, and in the ordeals that took place one of the deacons knocked the preacher clear down the basement stairs. They exchanged such reviling words as, ‘I’ll ruin your ministry’ and ‘I’ll expose you.’”¹⁸

Following World War I, the doors of the church were closed – literally. By order of the Sheriff of Multnomah County, a padlock was placed on the front doors in the summer of 1919. Thanks to the Oregon Christian Missionary Society the church was able to reopen in the fall. Carroll Roberts, a 22-year-old senior at Eugene Bible University, took on the church as a weekend ministry and managed to revive the dying flock. Soon over 100 people were attending services.

Between 1911 and 1933 the church went through 15 different ministers – G. K. Berry serving the congregation on four different occasions. Who was this remarkable man?

G. K. Berry was a large, well-proportioned man who usually wore a grey suit with a long-tailed coat, a stiff-front shirt and a white bow tie. His favorite expression was, “This is my opinion, take it for what it is worth.” . . . G. K. Berry publicly announced his retirement from an active ministry on April 2, 1933 and delivered his last Montavilla sermon at 11:00 A.M. on the 8th . . . He had been its first, eighth, eleventh, and fourteenth ministers . . . Mr. Berry stated that he had longed for the day when he could preach for a church without charge. Montavilla almost helped him achieve his desires while he was there the fourth time . . . finances were rather thin, the church offerings averaging \$26 a month.¹⁹

Montavilla’s fortunes took a turn for the better

when Walter and Thelma Stram came to work with the church April 16, 1933. Brother Stram had a good track record of building up churches in Rockaway and Milwaukee, Oregon. Walter immediately began preaching tithing – something most oldtimers at Montavilla couldn't remember hearing preached before. In fact, "most of the former ministers opposed tithing."²⁰ But during Stram's 29-month ministry at Montavilla, offerings increased by a whopping 1500 percent. This in spite of the Depression! Stram was also a tireless personal worker. He had ink blotters printed and distributed them by the thousands in door-to-door calling. The ink blotters read, "Blot Out Your Worries By Attending Montavilla Christian Church (Church of Christ)."

One thing that Stram blotted out was Montavilla's long standing association with the Disciples of Christ State Board Program. Another dramatic change was the name of the church from Montavilla Christian Church to Montavilla Church of Christ.

In 1935 many of the Christian Churches of the Portland area were using the name Church of Christ. Years before this was stoutly shunned by some. Francis Winder, years before, had suggested to a group at Montavilla that the name Church of Christ was more scriptural than Christian Church. To which a minister's wife flatly told him she hoped he would be killed! (Not all felt this strongly about it.)²¹

Stram also preached life-changing messages. One man who was converted under Stram's preaching was Homer Legg, who drove a beer truck for a living. "So deeply did the gospel penetrate his conscience that he gave up his job and began driving for Meier and

Frank."²² Another feature of Stram's brief ministry at Montavilla was to bring top-notch evangelists in for strong revival preaching (Archie Word for eight weeks in 1933 and Howard Hutchins for four weeks in 1934). Hundreds of people had been converted in these campaigns. All of this is to say that when Archie Word assumed the mantle of leadership of the Montavilla church in December of 1935, he had a good foundation to build upon. The church had been "Stramlined" for Archie Word. It was now a tithing, evangelistic, revivalistic, independent church. "Brother Stram," testified Archie Word in 1948, "had done a magnificent work."²³

So how did Archie Word, who had been on the road for five years in revivals, begin his work as evangelist of the Montavilla church? By holding his own revival meeting, what else? The two-week meeting, with the Nahigians providing the music once again, began December 22, 1935, the day before the Charles Lindbergh family moved from America to England because of threats to kidnap another son. But in Portland, Oregon, the Word family was happy and secure in its new home.

A ROUGH START

Archie Word was not yet 35 when he became the full-time minister at Montavilla. Area denominational preachers nicknamed him "The Kid Preacher." He had preached one year at Crabtree, two years at Toledo, and five years in revival work on the West Coast. Many of his methods from the revival circuit carried over into the located ministry. Some liked them. Some, decidedly, did not!

Some remember the real live monkey that was brought to church to illustrate the sermon on evolution. Some remember, to this day, specific sermons like "Five Thousand Suckers for \$210," "The Painted Face," and "Driving Away the Buzzards." Several visitors advertised to their neighbors that "it was a regular circus" or "he was better than a show." A few thought he was a "loud mouth," many agreed he was too loud, but scores kept coming back to hear Bible preaching like they had never heard before. . . .

During these days many slogans and signs were posted during meetings around the auditorium. One observant lady commented that it looked like a Safeway store. A. Word replied, "It is a Safe Way, and you can see who's selling the goods."²⁴

There were about 300 names on the church roll when Archie rolled into town. Like Gideon, he thought that might be too many!

The first thing we did was send out letters, put a notice in the paper, . . . we got the word around that we were going to have a congregational meeting — that if they were going to be members of that church, they were going to have to sign up. I had the approval of those who were meeting as a congregation. We were not going to spend our time running around looking for 300 people. When we got through we had about 75.²⁵

Next, Archie proceeded to "refine the eldership."

They had elders, but they weren't qualified (so) we sent out notices. The elders stepped down. They said, 'We want to be qualified or out.' We had six qualified elders when we got through with it (among them Crocker, Pittman, Morrison and Ballard) . . .²⁶

The next thing that caught the young preacher's

attention was the financial situation of the church. "It looked pretty black," Archie said. Actually, the church was operating in the red.

The church owed \$1,200 on the building. In fact, they had owed it for 12 years and had actually paid the entire principal in interest without paying a penny on the principal. But by the end of 1936 the \$1,200 indebtedness was gone, a new roof was on the building, the interior had been redecorated, a new furnace installed, and money was left over to help with mission works.²⁷

During his first year at Montavilla, Archie Word and as many as 50 of his congregation attended every evangelistic effort of the U.C.M.S. in Portland. Yet, when Montavilla had revivals (like the one with Elery Parrish in 1936), nearly no one came from U.C.M.S. churches. This cut Archie to the quick. Especially when he was later labeled as an "isolationist." He felt that the U.C.M.S. crowd were the real isolationists. On November 21, 1936, the *Christian Standard* published a letter Archie had fired off to them, "Love Me — Love My Dog".

"Love Me — Love My Dog"

Some ignorant folk say that the U.C.M.S. is not a test of fellowship, but if you read this news item you will be no longer ignorant.

The Montavilla Church, located at Seventy-sixth and Hoyt Streets, has let it be known that we are having nothing to do with the program of the United Society nor the state board. We are, however, still preaching the restoration of the primitive church minus all human additions and demanding Bible conversion and baptism. We have had delegations from fifteen up to fifty in number to visit every U.C.M.S. evangelistic effort in the city in the past nine months. Our

preacher has been asked to lead in prayer at these services and has even been asked to bring special music. This he gladly did.

In the meeting which just closed with Evangelist Parrish, who is one of the most sincere and loving men of God I have ever known, there was only one small delegation from a U.C.M.S. church in the entire city. Some of the preachers came, but brought no delegations. (Every church and pastor was invited.) One pastor excused himself – too busy – and while the meeting was on, went twenty-five miles to a U.C.M.S. revival and took a delegation.

The gospel and Christ's church and salvation is not enough. If you are going to love me, you must love my dog (little pet organization). I will not let my folk fellowship with you, for they, like the other denominationalists, might find out something about the religion of Christ, which would gum up our machine and cause them to become "unsettled" (in machinery doctrine).

Is it a test of fellowship?

Is the tail wagging the dog?

Can we not love one another and fellowship one another without having to swallow an unscriptural ecclesiastical machine?

I'm for Christ.

—A. Word²⁸

Many of those who left the church during that bitter first year did not like the way this "Kid Preacher" exposed sin – especially if it was a favorite sin in their own lives. One lady who left the church (although she later came back to the Lord), said, "Brother Word was much criticized by professing Christians who liked worldliness."²⁹ But the pointed preaching of Archie Word began to sink in. Archie recalled an early incident. "In one of the first services we held at Montavilla, there were several responses to the invitation. When I spoke to one of the ladies and asked her if she

was coming for reconsecration, I shall never forget her answer: 'How can I become reconsecrated when I have never been consecrated?'"³⁰

THE CONVERSION OF THE DEWELT FAMILY

Archie Word won untold thousands of people to the Lord, but one of the most celebrated cases of conversion was that of the Charles DeWelt family during Archie's first full year of ministry at Montavilla. Charles and Marie DeWelt, and their sons, Dave and Don, had moved to Portland from Oxnard, California, in 1933. They rented a house at 115th Avenue and Powell Valley Road. Don and Dave went to school at Powellhurst. They were typical boys in the 1930s – fun-loving, hard-working but non-church going boys. Dave was the first to be introduced to Christianity. A Baptist family invited Dave to Sunday School, where he soon "accepted Christ." His mother was stricken in her soul when she heard from the lips of her young boy this tender story. Charles and Marie had been away from the Lord for some time. In the providence of God, young Dave discovered the church at Montavilla and began attending. The sermons he heard there convicted his soul. Dave surrendered and was baptized into Christ. By this time the family had moved to 82nd and King Road. Don was now 17, dating a nice Baptist girl by the name of June Janis. One night he got into the family Buick and drove to June's house, intending to take her to a dance. But June refused, instead asking Don to take her to the Baptist church, where her father was a deacon. Reluctantly, Don went along. It was the first time he ever remembers being inside a church building and he felt very much out of place. Halfway through the service he leaned over to June

and whispered, "You can get your dad to bring you home. I'm leaving." June followed him out of the church building. Don hoped that now she would go to the dance with him. But the good Baptist girl was relentless! "There's another church right down the block," she insisted. Incredibly, it was the Montavilla church where Dave had been baptized. And now a devout Baptist girl was about to take Don DeWelt to hear his first gospel sermon! In his autobiography *Happy On My Way To Heaven*, Don writes,

A protracted revival was in progress when we stepped into the building. There were two very attractive Armenian girls, Esther and Margaret Nahigian, playing the pianos. The most lively singing imaginable was in progress. . . . Brightness and happiness was pervasive and Archie Word was God's man for my conscience.³¹

(Ironically, this was the last meeting the Nahigians worked with Archie Word. Their "bright and happy" music helped bring Don DeWelt into the kingdom of God.)

Don doesn't remember the specifics of what Archie preached that night. But he did come away from that meeting understanding for the first time in his life that he was a sinner, lost, headed straight for hell. "I'll never forget the unbelief in the eyes of my parents when I told them I had been to church. And most especially to learn it was in the very building where Dave had been baptized!"³²

It was not long until Preacher Word came knocking on the front door of the DeWelt house. Don was so scared that he scurried out the back door and hid in his father's workshop! He was not ready to talk to such an intimidating figure as Archie Word. But

Charles and Marie were ready. That day Brother Word, with tears in his eyes, brought them back to Christ. Even Grandpa DeWelt joined them in their new commitment. Soon it was Don's turn. "The preaching of A. Word was like a message from our Lord Himself," said DeWelt. "I was renewed every week — how lifted up — how wonderful was every service!"³³ Finally the day of his conversion experienced arrived.

Because I had no Biblical background, it took several sessions before I understood what was being said. When I finally did 'tune in,' it was to discover I was a sinner and lost. One never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning I stepped forward in the old Montavilla church building and walked down the aisle — my heart in my throat and my entire being vibrating at the thought of such an important decision.³⁴

My heart was pulsating so wildly I could hardly see. I sat down on the front pew and continued to shake. I made the good confession in the sight of many witnesses. 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God!' Brother Word immersed me by the authority of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the forgiveness of all my past sins. I remember so well that before my hair was dry I was asked to pray. I knelt in one of the back rooms of the church building and offered my first prayer: 'Dear God, thank you. Amen.' How eager and willing I was — and by his grace I have continued to be to this hour. . . .³⁵

The very next day Don DeWelt witnessed to a friend, Esther May Gianini, an Italian Catholic, about her need of accepting Christ. Why? "Because our Lord, through Brother Word, told me to! The emphasis I have consistently placed on winning the lost . . . to a large extent came from A. Word!"³⁶

DeWelt's conversion experience was typical of

many in the years to come at Montavilla. Word's method was: attract them with bright and happy music; convict them of sin through powerful preaching; baptize them into Christ; have them pray before their hair is even dry; and get them to witnessing to their lost friends right away.

In the 25-year history of the Montavilla church, only three young people had gone off to a Bible college (one of them, F. J. Winder). But now the preaching of one A. Word was stirring the hearts of many at Montavilla. They didn't just want to become Christians — they wanted to become preachers! As the summer of 1936 drew to a close (the same summer Jesse Owens won four gold medals at the Olympics in Berlin), nine newly consecrated members went off to Archie's alma mater, now known as Northwest Christian College. Eight of the nine were young married couples — including Mr. and Mrs. Homer Legg, the converted beer truck driver. Only one was single, Elston Knight, who was destined to send a good number of men into the ministry himself. By 1939 Archie Word began directing young people to the new college in California (San Jose Bible College). Later he would send them off to Boise Bible College in Boise, Idaho, and Midwestern School of Evangelism in Ottumwa, Iowa, before starting his own school in Portland in 1952.

On September 6 the Elery Parrish Revival Team began a five-week meeting at Montavilla. The advertising used in this protracted meeting was the first time the church was called "The Church at 550 N.E. 76th Avenue," a familiar appellation in years to come. During this meeting Elery came to the defense of his old college chum. Don DeWelt recalled the incident

when he gave a eulogy at Brother Word's funeral November 25, 1988.

Most of all, I thank our Lord for his constant emphasis on winning the lost. I shall never forget the summer I left for Pacific Bible Seminary in Long Beach, California. I worked most of the time in a saw mill here in Portland. But there was one Saturday when I attended a preacher's meeting . . . I never knew preachers were such gossips. I never knew they talked about everyone and everything but evangelism — even when evangelism was the purpose of their meeting. . . . In any such meeting if you just wait a little while the name of Archie Word will come up — and be tossed around from wall to wall. After what seemed to me like an avalanche of criticism Elery Parrish stood and held up his hand for attention. All of us looked his way, expecting to hear something from him — and we did! I never forgot it.

He said something like this, 'Men, as you can see Archie Word could not be here today. He told me to tell you why. He has four evangelistic calls to make this morning and two more this afternoon. Right now he is pleading with someone somewhere to accept our Lord. I suggest we all bow our heads and pray for Archie Word.'³⁷

Never was there such a humble prayer meeting among preachers!

"It was my privilege to befriend Archie when other men of the cloth, so to speak, were bitterly critical," said Elery Parrish, years after this incident. "It has always bothered me when ministers of the gospel tear each other apart over much lesser things than the wonderful gospel of our Lord."³⁸

Archie's first year at Montavilla was history. Then he remembered James Matthew Alley's prophecy and promise: "Arch, you'll never last at Montavilla! If you

stay there six months, I'll buy you the best tie in town."

So when I had stayed a year, I wrote him, 'I've been here six months and haven't gotten that tie yet.' I waited another year and wrote him, 'I've been here two years and haven't gotten kicked out. Where's my tie?' At the end of the third year, I wrote him again. Back came a box with a note in it. 'Here is your tie — I'm tired of being dunned.'³⁹

Arch donned his new tie and looked at himself in the mirror. His merry eyes twinkled. A grin spread across his face. He straightened his tie, dusted off his hands, and went out to win another lost soul to Christ.

Notes

1. *Lincoln County Leader*, n.d.
2. *Ibid*
3. Letter to Archie Word from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Sept. 23, 1935
4. Letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt from Archie Word, Oct. 1, 1935
5. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
6. *The Church Speaks*, Feb. 17, 1952
7. *The Church Revealed in the Scriptures*, p. 203
8. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 31
9. *Ibid*, p. 32
10. *Ibid*, p. 31
11. *Ibid*, p. 32
12. *Lincoln County Leader*, Oct. 15, 1935
13. *Portland Oregonian*, n.d.
14. *Ibid*
15. Letter to author from Margaret Word Hunt, June 19, 1990
16. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 99
17. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 13
18. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Sept. 1967
19. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 9
20. *Ibid*, p. 28
21. *Ibid*, p. 30

22. *Ibid*
23. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Dec. 18, 1948
24. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 33
25. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
26. *Ibid*
27. *The Voice of Evangelism*, July 1967
28. *Christian Standard*, Nov. 21, 1936
29. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 33
30. *The Other Day*, p. 26
31. *Happy On My Way To Heaven*, pp. 42, 43
32. *Ibid*
33. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 33
34. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 130
35. *Happy On My Way To Heaven*, pp. 43, 44
36. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 130
37. *One Body*, Spring, 1989
38. Letter to author from Elery Parrish, Mar. 27, 1989
39. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Sept. 1967

13

THE CHURCH AT 550 (1937-1940)

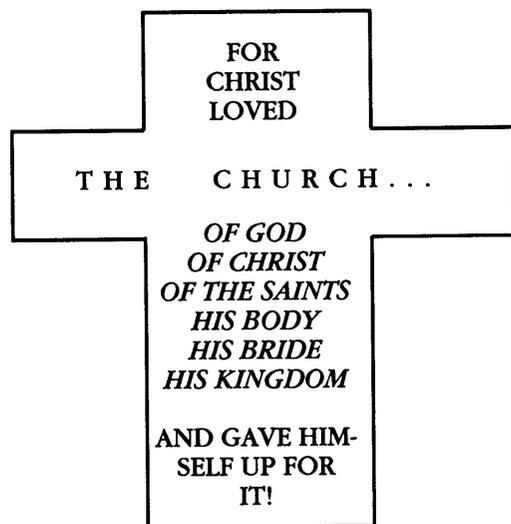
The next morning I went to church and heard preaching the likes of which I'd never heard before. This preacher had a way of preaching on every sin you'd ever committed . . . and if he missed any, it surely wasn't intentional!

—K.O. Backstrand on A. Word's preaching

"I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished," spoke President Roosevelt as he was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 1937. Archie Word probably saw an even greater percentage of the church spiritually ill-clad and ill-nourished in 1937. He had set out to "do the work of an evangelist," and part of that work was to "set the church in order." Archie Word believed in the local church and

was not reserved about letting the community know that the church belonged to the Lord. Sometime in 1937 a large sign was erected on Glisan Street (between 76th and 78th Avenue), advertising "The Church at 550 N.E. 76th Avenue." One day a newcomer to Portland, Will Weideman, had his curiosity aroused as he drove by the sign. He took his wife to hear Archie preach and, although she thought the preacher to be "a bit loud," they soon both came to love his straight-forward preaching and became a part of the growing congregation.¹

It was not long before a new sign graced the front of the church building – a sign that would be talked about and remembered for years by anyone who ever visited Montavilla, or just drove by for that matter. The sign was in the shape of a cross and carried these words:



The wording was based, in part, on Ephesians 5:25. In time a seventh descriptive title was added, OF THE FIRSTBORN (from Hebrews 12:23). To those who were used to church signs merely depicting whether a church building was a "Christian Church" or "Church of Christ," this was almost heresy. Critics, usually the uninformed or misinformed, charged, "Archie Word's got a sign out in front of his church building that lists every name of the church in the Bible" (as if that violated some scripture in itself). But to the unchurched, or those not yet initiated in denominationalism or sectarianism, the sign looked just fine. Many people actually entered the doors of Montavilla because of the sign, and many found salvation there.

(The sign also bespoke Archie's contention that the church does not have one exclusive name, such as "Church of Christ." He felt that to isolate one title was sectarian; hence, he believed he was consistent in using several, all from the Bible.)

During the winter of 1936-37, some of the young men who had gone off to Northwest Christian College came home for the holidays. Archie was delighted to give the preacher boys an opportunity to preach in the old home church. Elston Knight, in particular, showed great potential as a preacher of the gospel. Soon he would call Archie for an unforgettable revival meeting in South Dakota. That summer Archie invited Bill Jessup to Montavilla for a revival meeting

THE CONVERSION OF DON JESSUP

Another Jessup (no relation to Bill Jessup) was about to enter Archie's life. In the fall of 1937, Archie was invited back to his home church in Lindsay, California, for a fourth revival meeting. Roy Shaw was the

preacher and Dorothy, his wife, said this fourth meeting brought "great results" but, as with many of Archie's revivals after 1935, no exact figures are available.² One of the converts, however, was a young man who would go on to become a powerhouse for God, Don Jessup.

Don was a junior in high school when home town boy Archie Word returned to Lindsay for another revival meeting. Like Archie, he was a football player; in fact, he was quite a bit better than Archie in that regard. The big redhead was an All Southern California fullback and several PAC 8 teams were already scouting him as a prospect. One afternoon Archie was out calling and walked into a meat market owned by Don's father. He handed the young man a handbill and invited him to come hear an old Strathmore football player preach. Don accepted the invitation and went to church that very night. Being naturally shy, he did not go forward that night, but three nights later he overcame his shyness and walked down the aisle to be met by Archie Word. He became a Christian and then did something rather strange — he gave up football his senior year to concentrate on preparing to become a preacher. Giving up a promising college football career, Don enrolled at Pacific Christian College after graduation from high school, went there one year, and then transferred to the new school in San Jose, becoming the first student to enroll at San Jose Bible College.³ Jessup would go on to have a long and fruitful ministry with the Workman Street church in Los Angeles.

(As an interesting sidenote: Don Jessup converted a young man in Los Angeles, Tom Burgess, who in time would become Archie Word's son-in-law and succes-

sor to the Montavilla pulpit!)

THE WORDS BEFRIEND A LONELY BOY

Overseas, the Nazi party of Germany held its largest-ever rally in a town called Nuremburg. It was the biggest display of military power in Germany's long war-like history. War was not far off, but in America, all remained quiet and secure. The house on Glisan Street was becoming a beloved home to the Word children by this time. Margaret was now 10, Barbara 9, Jenelle 6 (and just starting school), while baby Anna Jean had grown to 3. The Word home was about to become a shelter for a lonely boy in Portland.

On the first day of 1938, the United States government announced that one-fifth of all Americans were unemployed — 7.8 million people were without a job. The first "minimum wage" would go into effect that summer — forty cents an hour! It was in these hard times that Archie and Florence took in another mouth to feed. His name was Warren Bell. Bell recounts the story.

It was the spring of 1938. A broken-hearted boy sobbed at the fresh graveside of his mother in Lincoln Memorial Park. As he walked down the green slope to the car, an arm went around his shoulder and a minister of the gospel hurt with him.

I was that boy, and Brother Word was that minister.

Death breaks up a home. Later, as a senior in high school, I would ask to live in Brother Word's home. They didn't need me; they had five children, but I needed them — the feeling of security, of family, of being loved.

Room was made in the basement near the old sawdust burning furnace. Sister Word ironed my shirts and packed my school lunches.⁴

Young Warren Bell would not be the only one whom the Word family would befriend in the years to come. Dozens of others, including Tom Burgess and Graydon Jessup (Don's son), found a warm welcome in the house on Glisan Street. Archie would have found it hard to believe that 14 years later Warren Bell, who by then was the preacher in nearby Gresham, Oregon, would help him found the new Bible College and would become one of its most loved teachers.

F. W. STRONG COMES TO MONTAVILLA

After preaching in Medford, Oregon, and Camas, Washington, in the summer of 1938, Archie decided it was time for another revival at Montavilla. This time it was F.W. Strong, a successful businessman turned evangelist, who would preach for six weeks during July and August. "During the six weeks Mr. Strong never opened his Bible when preaching, but always quoted the scriptures (and he used many verses when preaching)".⁵ For Archie's part, he usually read from the Good Book. An earlier incident in his ministry had convinced him that reading from the Bible was the best thing to do.

I learned from experience that it is better to turn to the page in the Bible and read it than it is to just quote the Scripture. Of course, quoting it makes some people think you are a big shot, but there are others who are doubtful.

I was standing by the door one night as the people went out and heard one man say to another, 'How in the _____ do we know he was quoting the Bible? He didn't have no Bible up there!'

Right there I decided to have the Bible open when I quote it. It may be upside down, but I am going to

have it open. I want the people in the audience to know that what I am saying is from the sacred Book.⁶

(Strong went on to found Ozark Bible College in Bentonville, Arkansas.)

SHARING THE PULPIT

By this time Hitler had strolled into Austria, receiving a victor's welcome. Back in America, to everyone's special delight, Joe Louis, "the Brown Bomber," decked the German heavyweight boxer Max Schmeling in the very first round of their bout. The "expugilist and fighter for God," Archie Word, now slugging it out with Satan in Portland, must have gotten a bang out of that.

Archie Word believed in giving up the pulpit — whether it was to returning preacher boys from college, visiting evangelists, or former preachers. He was not selfish in that respect like many preachers are. In 1938 Archie and Walter Stram, the former preacher at Montavilla, participated in a five-night pulpit exchange. Each night Archie preached in Medford while Walter enjoyed a reunion at Montavilla. It was during this special nightly preaching that Don DeWalt finally decided to become a preacher of the Word. Don remembers Stram's sermon as "one of the greatest influences in his life in leading him into the ministry."⁷ Don himself testifies:

I heard him bring a message, 'Vanity of Vanity — All is Vanity.' . . . I walked up to the front of the auditorium and said, 'I want to be a preacher.' . . . and so it has been from that day to this . . .⁸

That September, while Czechoslovakia was being

divided up by Germany and Italy (while Britain and France looked on), Don DeWelt went off to Bible College in Long Beach – another A. Word convert “going to work.” As for Archie, he was off to Coos Bay (Marshfield) once again – the sixth meeting he had held there in 10 years! At least one of these meetings was held in a huge tent. Sawdust was strewn on the mud floor and large crowds, “attracted by Archie’s showmanship and by his ‘hell-fire-and-damnation’ sermons,” sat on wooden benches in rapt fascination. Many present-day members at Coos Bay were baptized in one of Word’s meetings.

Florence and the children now stayed at home while “Daddy” was gone in meetings, at least during the school months. Perhaps they sat around the radio one night in October while Daddy was gone and listened with wide eyes to H. G. Wells’ “War of the Worlds.” Radio was about to enter its golden age and soon Archie Word’s booming voice would be heard over the airwaves in the city of Portland. In 1938 the Federal Communications Commission had strict controls – even rebuking NBC in May for a “lewd program” which starred Mae West. NBC was told to curb material “offensive to the great mass of right-thinking, clean-minded American citizens.”⁹ (What would the 1938 FCC officials and Archie Word think of today’s “shock radio?”)

THE WORD “RIPPLE EFFECT”

World War II was now just around the corner. A record 1.3 billion was allotted for defense – the largest war chest in America’s history. But, surprisingly, not everyone in America despised the dictator in Germany. On February 22, 1939, over 20,000

people jammed Madison Square Garden in New York City (where Archie had battled with Bolsheviks in 1918) for an American Nazi rally! The only war Archie Word was concerned about in the spring of 1939, however, was his ongoing war with sin. In March, after speaking at Albany, Oregon, he was off to one of his most interesting revivals, this time in the town of Brookings, South Dakota.

Elston E. Knight, one of Archie’s “preacher boys,” was the minister in Brookings. Word called him, “a young live-wire preacher just out of school (who) was getting quite a hearing in the community.”¹⁰ As Archie Word looked out over the audience that first Sunday morning, he thought to himself, “This is going to be a fine meeting.” But after the first service he was in for a big surprise: no one was willing to house the famous visiting evangelist! Brother Knight got up and asked for someone – *anyone* – to put the preacher up and prepare him one meal a day. No one volunteered. Knight pleaded and pleaded. Still no response. It was getting embarrassing.

Finally, a man stood up, and said, “I am not a member of this congregation, but if the preacher wants a place to stay and breakfast, my wife and I will be glad to have him at our house.”

The friendly non-member was the garbage man of Brookings. Archie later likened this good-hearted man to a Biblical character.

... When Peter abode with Simon the tanner in Joppa, he knew what it meant to dwell where the smell was not always the best. (How many of you have been around a tannery?) God bless the man for his goodness to me. I had my meals with him, and among the twenty-five responses to the invitation were this man,

his wife, his two children, his hired man, and his wife.¹¹

When the meeting in Brookings came to an end, the newly converted garbage man took Archie down to the train station to catch the next train west. As the train pulled into the station, the grateful convert (who reminded Archie of Simon the Tanner) grasped Archie's hand. "Brother Word," he said, "the stinginess of these people meant the salvation of my family's souls." As Archie reflected on it later, as the train rumbled its way back to Oregon, he thought, "It was not the stinginess of the church members that saved him; it was his hospitality that opened the doors of his house to allow Christ's preacher to come into his home and thereby bring him salvation."¹²

In addition to the 25 conversions in Brookings, at least 13 preachers (including a future Bible College president) and four preacher's wives came out of Elston Knight's one-and-a-half year ministry with the church. This was the A. Word "ripple effect" at its best. The preachers included: Leon Appel (who became president of Lincoln Christian College); Bob and Earl Chambers; Delmar Freeman; Allen, Lloyd, Merwyn and Ronald McMillan; Vernon Norris; Darrel, Harold and Rodney Reyman; and Robert Wagner. Four of these men's sons went on to become preachers (Appel, Bob Chambers, Norris, and Harold Reyman). Four preacher's wives also emerged from this little church: Bernita Chambers Shoemake, Leona Wagner Freeman, Lois Reyman Dailey, and Nellie Peterson Paul.¹² Nothing on earth could have pleased Archie Word more than to know that one of his boys had "made good" and now more men and women were in

full-time service for Christ. Years later Leon Appel would say of Archie Word, "He preaches as a dying man to dying men."¹³ Bob Chambers would testify that A. Word was "one of the greatest preachers I ever heard . . . the prince of preachers, a superstar in the pulpit."¹⁴ And Rodney Reyman, speaking for the three preaching Reyman brothers, would add, "His life on my life and ministry is immeasurable. We are so thankful for his influence upon many young men. (We) are as Elisha who determined to stay with Elijah and receive his spirit and power."¹⁵

THE SAN JOSE CONNECTION BEGINS

The opening of the World's Fair in New York City in April, 1939, was not as important as the opening of a greater institution, at least in Archie's opinion, for that was the year in which plans were made to open a new Bible college in San Jose, California. E.C. Sander-son, the president at Eugene Bible University when Archie was a student, had moved to San Jose in the hopes of beginning yet another Bible college, but his health failed, his wife died, and the new school never really got off the ground. On May 29, 1939, however, a group of interested people met and laid the groundwork for the opening of San Jose Bible College. The college opened on September 20, 1939. A number of Archie's friends and acquaintances were a part of the faculty and student body: Bill Jessup was president; Roy and Dorothy Shaw were on the faculty; Don Jessup, a sophomore transfer, was the first student to enroll; Dave DeWelt, another A. Word convert, was the first freshman to enroll (the next year he was joined by his brother Don). Archie threw his support

behind the new conservative school in the brotherhood. "During the first few years quite a group of young people came from the Montavilla church," said Bill Jessup. "Archie spoke for us a number of times, when he was in the area, at our chapel services. When we began the Conference on Evangelism he spoke several different times. Our close fellowship continued until 1950 . . ."16

Woody Phillips testifies to the dynamic messages of Archie Word on the San Jose campus. "The most powerful sermon I ever heard anyone preach was Archie Word at a Conference on Evangelism at San Jose, 'The Non-Conversion of Felix.' The audience was absolutely spellbound. There were at least 50 responses to the invitation."17 Phillips' wife, Minnie, says the one she remembered most was Word's sermon on "The Sacredness of Marriage."

On September 1, 1939 (19 days before San Jose Bible College opened her doors), the Nazis invaded Poland. World War II had begun. Soon Britain and France declared war on Germany. Would America follow suit?

ARCHIE OPPOSES AMERICA GOING TO WAR

Archie Word was a consummate reader of brotherhood publications. On June 3, 1939, the *Christian Standard* published a lengthy letter from Archie in rebuttal to an article by S.S. Lappin (former editor of the *Standard*) in which Lappin had justified Christians going to war. The mini-editorial was entitled, "Incoherent, Disjointed, Unscriptural."

Of all the disjointed, incoherent, un-Scriptural, biased and assinine, I think your article, "Can Christians

Go to War?" by S.S. Lappin, is the worst you've ever printed.

Why did the Puritans have to carry a gun? Because of the injustices they had heaped upon the unsuspecting natives of this land into which they "invited themselves." Just because the Puritans burned witches at the stake with an open Bible near by does not justify their acts. If his article had been entitled, "Can Americans Go to War?" it would sound like sense.

The church (as such) – what does he mean? What is the church if it is not those who belong to it? Jesus did not say, hate your enemy if he is a Samaritan or a Roman. He said, "Love your enemies and pray for them who despitefully use you . . . return good for evil . . . heap coals of fire upon his head" (not hot lead).

The martyrs who died the first three hundred years did not go to war, but by their suffering in the name of Christ, they did more for humanity than all the wars that have ever been fought. Paul did not talk to the "obstreperous" men in "language they understood" (that is, physical force).

I am an ex-member of the A.E.F., but thank the Lord I have not been looking at the writings of the historians who laud war and the "brave" invalid that lies on his bed in hell, but I have been digging into the hidden records that divulge the truth about the last World War, and, for that matter, all other wars of which we have any record.

I have my doubts as to a man using force to evict an outlaw that comes into my own home and "abused my women and children." We have law-enforcement officers to care for such a one. But when you realize that war is not like that you will not be led too quickly to run down and enlist. Here is war: Two hardware stores that sell guns take it upon themselves to come over, one to your neighbor and one to you, to persuade you that your neighbor is dangerous; that he intends to come over during the night and massacre you; that you had better beat him to the draw. *All for the purpose of selling you and your neighbor the*

necessary ammunition to annihilate both of you — that is war!

Would it not be better to take what Jesus said literally and be a “fool for Christ’s sake”? — A. Word¹⁸

Some may find it a bit surprising that a 38-year-old “fighting evangelist,” who had run away from home at 17 to “fight the Kaiser,” would now promote pacifist views. Several years later he elaborated at length on the topic in an article, “When War Comes” (published in the August 20, 1949 *Voice of Evangelism*). At the conclusion of the article, after establishing his points on why he felt going to war was wrong, he stated,

Just in case someone might be saying, ‘This fellow is just a coward, and he does not know anything about military service or war firsthand,’ let me give you this information. I honorably served a good long hitch in the armed services during the first World War and received an honorable discharge from the services. Thirty years, this August, have passed since I was mustered out, but now, if I were awakened at midnight suddenly and given orders to mount bayonets, I could mount my bayonet in the dark and cut your insides out from hip to hip and from your pelvis bone to your breast bone in less than five seconds.¹⁹

MANKAMYER COMES TO MONTAVILLA

In August 1939, Archie found time to address the Gideons’ convention in downtown Portland. But what he was really looking forward to was Orlin L. Mankamyer’s five-week revival with Montavilla in the fall of 1939. Mankamyer was a huge man, weighing well over 300 pounds. Never educated beyond the third grade, he struggled through four years of Bible college at Cincinnati Bible Seminary before becoming

an evangelist. The man who could neither read nor write before he went to CBS would eventually author over 70 manuscripts (50 in support of the premillennial position), a book on the Holy Spirit, plus numerous booklets and tracts. Like Brother Word, “Brother Mac” ran away from home at an early age and married a girl who would not consent to marriage until he settled down and was converted.²⁰ The two evangelists became fast friends — Mankamyer returning for two more meetings at Montavilla.

O.L. Mankamyer, in addition to being a singing evangelist (he loved to sing “When They Ring Those Golden Bells For You and Me”), was a gourmet chef. He loved to cook and would normally close his revivals by cooking a gourmet dinner for the entire church. Ladies would ask him for his recipes; preachers would ask for his sermon outlines. Mankamyer’s enormous appetite brought a mild rebuke from Archie one afternoon. The two men were out calling after a big dinner one day and Mac got hungry for some ice cream. They stopped at a store where the big preacher devoured a half-gallon on the spot. Archie watched the scene in wonder, then said, “Brother Mac, you’re a glutton!”

THE CONVERSION OF K.O. BACKSTRAND

Before we leave the decade of the 30s, we must go back to August, 1939, and look at the conversion of another young man who would play an important role in the life of Archie Word — K.O. Backstrand, Archie’s first associate minister. K.O. was born October 19, 1919, in Spokane, Washington, to Oscar and Hilda Backstrand. Shortly after his birth cancer was detected in his mother, and the family subsequently moved to

Portland to be near a breast cancer specialist; all to no avail. When K.O. was only 18 months old his mother died. For a time he was raised by his aunt who lived on a farm 15 miles east of Gresham. She took him to the Swedish Covenant Mission Church (a church where Archie preached in November, 1939).

When K.O. was 10 he moved to Portland to live with his father. A few years later he began attending the Montavilla Tabernacle, where G. K. Berry, noted author of *The Eight Leading Churches*, was holding forth as minister. Berry was followed by Stram, who in turn, invited Archie Word for a revival in 1933. By this time K.O. was 14. He remembers Walter and Archie driving up and down the slopes of North Mount Tabor in a car equipped with a loud speaker, singing gospel songs at the top of their lungs. More out of curiosity than anything else, young K.O. attended the revival services.

When K.O. was a sophomore in high school, his father died, leaving him an orphan in the world. Archie Word, now the minister at Montavilla, conducted the funeral service of Oscar Backstrand. Shortly thereafter, K.O. began to live the life of a prodigal, "raising hell and drinking too much."²¹ One Saturday night, after a typical evening of carousing, K.O. turned on his radio and heard Charles E. Fuller's "Old Fashioned Gospel Hour." A quartet was singing a beautiful song and it touched the prodigal's heart. He determined to go to church the next morning. He remembered that Archie Word was "a man's man," so that is where he would go to church. The next morning, true to his vow, he went to church and there heard preaching "the likes of which I'd never heard before." "This preacher," said K.O., "had a way of

preaching on every sin you'd ever committed from the time you were knee-high to a pup, and if he missed any it surely wasn't intentional!"²²

Archie happened to be in a four-week revival — in the middle of a hot summer — in his own church! Backstrand recalls that he had a soloist from the University of Kentucky, a Miss Elizabeth Hall, leading the music. K.O. loved the music but the preaching made him miserable! One Sunday afternoon he went to the Word's house on Glisan Street and found Archie out in the barn, milking the family cow. As Archie milked, he counseled K.O. "You know K.O. (swish, swish), if you keep coming to the revival (swish, swish), the nightly preaching will do you good (swish, swish)." Soon the pail was full of milk and K.O.'s mind was full of determination. The night he decided to surrender his life to Christ he threw his pack of cigarettes in the parking lot before entering the church at 550. He was baptized into Christ "the same hour of the night." The next night, Archie looked down from the pulpit at K.O., who was seated on the front row, and said, "K.O., do you like steak?" Right in the middle of his sermon! K.O. answered, "Sure!" Archie invited him to a steak dinner at his house the next night. Why? Because he knew K.O., being a three-pack-a-day smoker, was going to have a rough time of withdrawal and wanted him to have some good solid food in his system. By October, 1939, K.O. Backstrand, the converted orphan, was preaching A. Word's sermons on Portland's "skid row," Burnside Street, to all who would lend him an ear!²³ In time, he became A. Word's first associate minister at Montavilla.

Several young men, in fact, were eager to learn how to preach the Word from A. Word. Accordingly, in the

fall of 1939, night classes were begun at the Montavilla church. This was a joint program with the Alberta Street Church of Christ where F.J. Winder preached. Backstrand and an encouraging number of boys studied under Archie Word, who taught Homiletics, Winder (Old Testament History), Elery Parrish (Life of Christ), and W.L. Demming (Bible Doctrine).²⁴ This was the beginning of an idea that Archie would take all the way in 1952 when he started a Bible college in Portland.

THE FAMOUS TOBACCO SERMON

Archie Word was an avid reader of the *Christian Standard* and would often write letters to the brotherhood journal, either taking them to task or praising them for a particularly good article. In the January 6, 1940, issue he praised the *Standard* for running an article by Z.T. Sweeney.

Congrats on the article in the last STANDARD by Sweeney on 'Fellowship.' I think it is one of the best articles that has been presented in many a day. I want also to express my appreciation to you for your articles on the all-sufficiency of a qualified eldership in preference to the state board set-up, as is being advocated. 'The pastor at large' attitude of many of our well-meaning presiding elders, in the state secretaries' chairs, is truly a forerunner of the bishopry of Methodism and formerly of the Roman Catholic Church.²⁵

The January 20, 1940 *Standard* carried a letter praising Charles H. Phillips for his sermon, "What Do Ye More?". "I believe (it) to be one of the very best sermons, even of your usual good sermons, in the STANDARD."²⁶

Early in 1940 the Montavilla church purchased air

time on radio station KALE in Portland for a half-hour preaching program featuring Archie Word. Each week Archie would preach a sermon from his series "The Church Revealed in the Scriptures." Each message was then printed in booklet form and offered over the air to interested listeners. (The individual booklets were later compiled into the book *The Church Revealed in the Scriptures*.) But after only a month or so of radio preaching, the "censor's ax" came down on the neck of Archie Word. The management at KALE got wind of a soon-to-be-aired sermon, "Ten Bible Reasons Why My Mother Told Me To Leave Tobacco Alone." At this time the station was receiving a considerable amount of its advertising revenue from the tobacco industry so they refused Archie air time, not even allowing him to advertise the banned sermon over the air.

Archie and the Montavilla elders did not take KALE to court; they simply went across the Columbia River and purchased air time on radio station KVAN in Vancouver, Washington. Every Sunday morning at 8:30 folks on both sides of the river could tune in to "The Word" program and "hear A. Word preach the Word." One announcement he probably did *not* make over the air was the announcement Florence quietly made to him in February: a fifth Word was on the way! The popular radio evangelist was soon asked to address a convention of the WCTU. No doubt the ex-bootlegger and saloon keeper raised the hair on the heads of the ladies who attended with tales of his lurid past.

In April President Roosevelt announced that commercial television could begin as early as September, 1940. A spokesman for the Federal Communications Commission predicted television would not have the impact of radio on the nation's economy. Television

would certainly not have the impact of radio in Archie Word's ministry – he refused to use it. Radio was his operative. That and the printed page.

On June 5, 1940, the day after the British Navy rescued over 300,000 Allied troops from Dunkirk, Archie Word launched his first religious publication. The full-size newspaper called *The Faithful Watchman* was in reality a broadside against the restrictive policies of radio station KALE, the station that had refused to air his sermon on smoking. The front page headlines screamed:

THE SERMON THAT BROUGHT THE RELIGIOUS
CENSOR'S AXE DOWN ON MY NECK!!!

Then, in smaller caps:

DO WE HAVE FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS SPEECH
IN AMERICA ON THE AIR?
MULTI-MILLIONAIRE TOBACCO CORPORATIONS DICTATE
THE STATION'S POLICY!

Finally, in larger caps again:

WHY IS THE PREACHER MUZZLED, ON STATION KALE,
WHEN HE SPEAKS AGAINST TOBACCO?

The full text of the famous tobacco sermon was carried, along with another full-length sermon, "What Is a Christian Preacher's Business?" About 3,000 copies were printed by Cosby Printers in Portland and were sent free of charge all over the state of Oregon. A copy of *The Faithful Watchman* fell into the hands of one Elmer James, a former world weight lifting champion (499 pounds in the bench press).²⁷ The strong man liked what he read. He showed it to a friend, Stewart

Baker, who liked the messages too. They decided they would visit the church and hear Archie preach, but when they got there, much to their disappointment, they didn't get to hear the man who was "kicked off KALE." But they were not disappointed in what they heard – Roy Shaw, Archie's bosom friend, was engaged in a five-week revival at Montavilla. Night after night gospel blows against sin reverberated around the walls of the Montavilla church. Soon Stewart and Marie Baker placed their fellowship with the folks at 550 and not long after, Big Elmer James and his wife Lillian did the same (Baker eventually became an associate minister and editor with Archie).

The Faithful Watchman was not intended to be a continuing publication, even though many readers wished it would. Archie felt that he did not have the time to devote to editing a newspaper, but four years later he would change his mind with *The Church Speaks*, a publication he would edit for 24 years!

ARCHIE JAMES WORD, JR. ARRIVES

As the summer of 1940 came to an end, Archie wondered if he and Florence would at last have a boy. It was an ominous time for anyone to be born: the world was at war; Leon Trotsky was assassinated; the first military draft was about to be established. In September Archie sent eight of their finest young people off (not to war) to Bible college in San Jose, among them, K.O. Backstrand, the converted orphan boy.

In October Archie went from taped radio messages on KVAN in Vancouver to "live" broadcasts on KWJJ, a Portland radio station. The live broadcast was aired on Sunday nights at 9:30, necessitating Archie to rush

from the evening service at Montavilla to the studio at KWJJ. One night, October 10 to be precise, he had to rush to Portland Adventist Hospital. But this time it would not be to make a sick call on one of the members. He made it in time to welcome the arrival of a new baby, a long awaited son! Barbara remembers that Archie James Word, Jr., was born to "loud toots and whistles."²⁸ On the very day Archie, Jr., was born, the German air force bombed St. Paul's cathedral in London, destroying the high altar! Was nothing sacred anymore? But all was well in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A. Archie had a son – a namesake. Now there were five little Words. The Final Word was yet to be.

Notes

1. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 34
2. Letter to author from Dorothy Shaw, April 24, 1989
3. *Voice of Evangelism*, May, 1991; *San Jose Christian College Broadcaster*, Spring 1991
4. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, pp. 121, 122
5. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 34
6. *The Other Day*, p. 30
7. Letter to author from Don Stram, Mar. 20, 1989
8. *Happy On My Way To Heaven*, p. 46
9. *Chronicle of the 20th Century*, p. 478
10. *The Other Day*, p. 104
11. *Things I've Learned in the Service of God*, p. 16
12. Letter to author from Earl Chambers, June 26, 1990
13. *The Church Speaks*, Jan. 1947
14. Scottdale (PA) newsletter, Nov. 30, 1989
15. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 127
16. Letter to author from Bill Jessup, Mar. 3, 1989
17. Author's interview with Woody Phillips, July 13, 1990
18. *Christian Standard*, June 3, 1939
19. *Voice of Evangelism*, Aug. 20, 1949
20. *Impossible Without God*, pp. 13-41
21. Tape to author from K.O. Backstrand, Mar. 21, 1989
22. *Ibid*
23. *Ibid*

24. *Ibid*
25. *Christian Standard*, Jan. 6, 1940
26. *Ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1940
27. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 43
28. Letter to author from Barbara Word Brink, Feb. 28, 1989

14

MONTAVILLA LEADS THE NATION (1941-1944)

No one who hears him can wonder at his power in evangelism. He speaks as one who knows he has divine authority behind his message. He speaks with brilliance, passion, zeal for souls – one of the real evangelists of our time. . . . When A. Word says anything, he makes it clear that he means it.

—*Christian Standard*, July 10, 1943

On April 21, 1941, Archie James Word celebrated his 40th birthday. The war in Europe was still raging. On May 27 the German battleship *Bismarck* was sunk. The last day of June saw Hitler's army attacking Russia, beginning the two-front war. But in Portland, Oregon, where ships were made for war, Archie Word continued to maintain his pacifistic position. He

proclaimed these views, as well as others, on his Sunday night radio program on KWJJ. A book of his radio sermons, *The Church Revealed in the Scriptures* was distributed to interested people all over the United States. One day a copy of the book found its way into the hands of a young ministerial student at Ozark Bible College in Bentonville, Arkansas. The student's name was Burton W. Barber. Barber remembers:

While a student at Ozark Bible College in 1941, a friend loaned my wife and me a book of sermons by Brother Archie Word. We had never read or heard sermons with such importance and power to change lives. These had an impressive influence on our convictions and spiritual lives. That book influenced us to transfer to San Jose Bible College where we met many who had been converted through Brother Word's life and preaching. . . .¹

Thus was the beginning of a connection between Archie Word and the "Ottumwa brethren," as they came to be called: Burton W. Barber, Donald G. Hunt, and James McMorrow. These three men, in time, would begin to publish *The Voice of Evangelism* (1946) and open a school in Ottumwa, Iowa, Midwest-ern School of Evangelism (1947). More on this connection later.

WORD'S WORK WITH PRISONERS AND PAUPERS

Murderers, rapists, embezzlers, prostitutes: Archie Word called on them all. No sinner was too tough or hard for him to talk to. He loved to share the love of God, as it had been revealed to him through Jesus Christ, with Portland's down-and-outers. Many of these visits became riveting sermon illustrations.

I was called into the cell to speak with a man who had killed his wife and her illegal lover. For years he had continued to love her even though he knew she was no good. He had pleaded with her to leave her illicit affairs and stay home and take care of the children. She just kept on running and finally took his car. She and her lover came home from the dance and sat in it in front of their home and made love (even honking the horn so he would know and see who it was). He got up, loaded his shotgun, and went out and blasted both of them into eternity.²

For seven years Archie Word worked under Judge Olson in the court handling domestic relationships in Portland. Archie wanted the young people at Montavilla to be involved in the prison ministry, so in the summer of 1941 he began taking some of them along on his visits to the city and county jails. The young people would sing and Archie would preach to the prisoners. No one — youth or prisoners — ever forgot his visits.

Many a down-and-outer was helped by Archie and Florence during the 33 years they spent in Portland. He had a special place in his heart for men who were conquered by the bottle (perhaps because he himself had been ensnared by the liquor business in his younger years). Earl was one such man with whom Archie worked.

We had a man in our community whose wife was a Christian. He came to church and claimed to be converted but kept right on with his drunkenness. We tried every way in the world to help the man. We prayed, pleaded, even helped him financially, but to no avail.

One winter we gave her money to get the three boys some underwear for cold weather. Earl stole the

new underwear and hocked it.

His wife was worried to death and died of cancer. While she was hospitalized, he was shacking up with a no-good, drunken Indian woman.

Years passed by, and I got the sad news of one of his boys being killed in an automobile accident. The body was shipped to Portland. The other two boys gave explicit orders that their dad was not to be allowed to see the body of the son whom he had deserted.

The next time I saw Earl, I asked him what he had been doing. He replied, "A hundred and eighty days." He had just gotten out of jail. He had been thrown out of a bar and landed on his back – crippled for life.

I gave him breakfast and sat with him while he ate it so he would not take the money and spend it for booze. As we sat there, he said, "The devil surely gives a man hell all the time he serves him, and then gives no hope when I am going out to judgment."³

HOW ARCHIE GOT HIS FAMOUS NOTEBOOK

In the summer of 1941, one of Archie's "Timothys," Don DeWelt, returned from Bible college in Long Beach, California. Don had been doing student preaching in Maricopa and now wanted to be ordained to the preaching ministry by his home church, Montavilla. Don wrote, "I knelt on the platform of the building that meant so much, so very much, to me. What a good day that day of ordination was!"⁴ Don fell in love with the church pianist at Montavilla and soon they were engaged. But when Don asked her, "Would you be happy married to a man who will not do anything else but preach and teach the gospel?" he was disappointed with her lack of enthusiasm. That fall Don, along with Warren Bell and four other young people, went off to San Jose Bible College. Shortly thereafter he came back to Portland for a brief visit. His fiancée

had hired someone to prepare for him a beautiful leather 3-ring binder with Don's initials engraved on the outside. Again Don shared his convictions with her that he wanted to preach, even if he never made a dime from it. The tears began to fall and Archie Word was called to the house that night. Archie said,

If ever a man got covered up in tears and pleadings for me to talk to the young man, I got it. (But) I agreed with the young man. . . . What is the outcome of the situation? That young man is now a famous preacher right here in the United States, and has been on preaching missions around the world. But it took conviction to do what he did!⁵

There is an interesting postscript to this story. The broken-hearted girl gave Archie Word the leather briefcase that she had made for Don DeWelt. Archie used it the rest of his life, lugging it into every pulpit from which he ever preached.

Don later recalled, "I saw that binder often as Archie used it every time he preached, but it was years and years before I knew the initials that were scratched out were mine!"⁶

ARCHIE CALLS BLESSING'S BLUFF

On August 24, 1941, William L. Blessing, a member of the National Evangelistic Association of the Churches of Christ began a four-week meeting in Portland. What a different revival this one turned out to be! Before it was over, Archie had publicly challenged Blessing to "put up or shut up" when he told the crowd that he could heal the sick! Blessing

is remembered as one who spent much time on prophetic sermons about Hitler, the Jews, the beast of

Revelation, Solomon's temple, the pyramids and King Tutankhamen's tomb. Some recall that he went through antics and foretold the coming of Christ — supposedly telling the exact time (2000 A.D.). Still others remember receiving his paper listing suit, shirt, shoe, hat, sizes for any who might be interested. One even recalls his supposed claim that he could heal the sick, but (he) refused to even attempt to heal a lady in a wheelchair sitting in the audience when challenged by A. Word.⁷

Needless to say, Blessing was not asked to bless Montavilla with a meeting again!

ARCHIE WRITES FOR THE *STANDARD*

From 1941 to 1950 Archie Word had a number of articles published in the *Christian Standard*, the brotherhood journal of the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. On October 1941, his first full-length article was published, "Repentance and Faith." It was based on Mark 1:15, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." The man from Montavilla wrote,

"Recently I purchased some cold meat, and the butcher guessed at the weight, threw it on the scales and, when he saw that it was way off, he cursed. Then he turned to me and said, "I beg your pardon, Reverend." He respected me, a man, while he despised the holy and righteous God who made him. . . . He begged my pardon, but did not repent and beg God's pardon."⁸

Writing that "any preacher can preach repentance in the abstract," the 40-year-old author proceeded to lambaste sins like swearing, tobacco, liquor, "the worldly-minded jazz-hound, the thrill-seeking movie addict, the card-playing hypocrite," and the like. He

likened his efforts at preaching to those of an old Puritan preacher.

Old Mr. Dodd, one of the earliest Puritan preachers, used to be nicknamed "Old Faith and Repentance," because he never failed to appeal for these two indispensables. I admire him for his orthodox stand and, as far as I am concerned, I intend to practice that too as long as I live, and I feel it would be a pleasure to go from this body to His presence preaching repentance and faith.⁹

Prophetic words, those, for Archie Word indeed practiced the preaching of repentance all his life. The editor of the *Standard* praised him for "his sterling firmness of conviction, unflinching courage and unflagging zeal," adding these words about the ministry of the man from Montavilla:

The energy and the ideals that dominate his service are to be surmised from the facts that 50 percent of the membership of that Portland congregation is in the regular prayer meeting; that the church has sent out twenty full-time workers, that it renounces all financing other than storehouse tithing, and raises about \$4,200 a year from a membership of 150 and lends its minister to other congregations for two meetings annually with about 100 converts a year.¹⁰

AMERICA GOES TO WAR!

On December 7, 1941, "a day which will live in infamy," some 360 Japanese airplanes bombed American military bases in the Hawaiian Islands. The next day the United States declared war on Japan, and three days later, December 11, made a similar declaration of war against Germany and Italy. America was now at war. By the end of 1942, America's shipyards,

including the big ones in Portland, had produced 488 battleships for the war effort in the Pacific theater. "Victory gardens" were springing up everywhere. In nearly every community across America there were drives for rubber and scrap metal. Meat, coffee, butter, shoes, and gasoline were scarce – some items even to the point of "rationing." Many women began to join the work force. The era of "Rosie the Riveter" had begun.

Not so in the Word household on Glisan Street. Florence believed in being a mother at home. Daughter Anna Jean remembers those years:

Whether I was sitting on the back porch turning a butter churn, or sitting on the kitchen counter to help dry dishes, the memories are the same. There was a love and tenderness that pervaded our home such as is rarely found today.¹¹

Chickens and rabbits were kept in the back yard, keeping the Words supplied with eggs and meat. Archie milked a couple of cows, kept in pastures on Halsey and 102nd (not far from the present Crossroads church building). All of the children worked in the big garden. One summer they helped Florence put up 1500 jars of vegetables and fruit. Sometimes they would pick strawberries in Gresham. "We learned many lessons of responsibility in those tender years," says Barbara. "How thankful we are now – but not then!"

It was about this time that Florence, afflicted with anemia, suffered a miscarriage of twins. Margaret says, "It was summertime and on a Sunday night after church (or a Wednesday night after church). Mother told me that Daddy wept when he saw they were twin

boys. They were so premature they could not have lived."¹² Archie hurried home from church, knelt at the bedside of Florence, and cried as though his heart would break over their loss. Florence cradled his head in her arms and whispered through her tears, "It's O.K., Daddy. God will give us more."

LIFE GOES ON

Archie now threw himself into the work at Montavilla with all his heart. In 1942 the Montavilla church was able to pay off all past debts, purchase two lots for parking, make some improvements on the building, and send money to missionaries in Alaska (Franklin Smith and Charles Railsback), Hawaii (Owen Still), India (Harry Schaefer), San Jose Bible College, and many others. (It should be noted that Alaska and Hawaii were not part of the United States at this time.) That summer two young men who had gone away to Bible college came back to hold a revival meeting from June 28 to July 26. Rusty Ingraham and "Buddy" Sundquist preached and their wives led the singing. Archie took the youth group singing each Sunday afternoon to the German Baptist Home on 82nd and Oregon. In the fall four more young men went off to Bible college.

PUBLISHING *THE GOOD NEWS*

Perhaps the most significant thing that happened in 1942 was the decision to publish a church newspaper. Back in 1940 a special newspaper, *The Faithful Watchman*, had been issued, but, according to church historian Ran Carlson, it was a single issue venture – to protest radio station KALE's decision not to air Archie's explosive sermon on smoking.

Its success, however, had proven the effectiveness of the printed page in the hands of searching readers, but the lack of time because of the many other involvements had prevented A. Word from making headway in the journalism field. It now became apparent that a paper would be an ideal follow-up for the radio, revival and regular preaching, so in May 1942 another four-page newspaper-type publication was printed.¹³

The new publication was called *The Good News*. Archie admitted that when he began the paper he knew nothing about writing or publishing; he just wanted to get the message out to more people. His intentions were to publish the paper every month, but "as often as God permits" became the reality. Five issues of *The Good News* were printed and mailed between 1942 and 1943. The mint issue (May 1942) is the only one the author could track down. Printed on wartime newsprint, the headlines reflect the hard times brought on by the war: "God's Road is Open and Always Safe to Travel! No Worries! Wise People Save Gas and Tires to Come to Church!" A box at the bottom of the first page asked, "Why Print This Paper Now?" The editor answered his own question:

Because I believe if Jesus Christ were here HE would not keep silent. . . . I am declaring myself in this community: As long as I have been here I have preached as straight as a die and as true to the teachings of Christ as I have known how, and GOD WILLING I INTEND TO BE TRUE TO THE LORD AND TO YOU AS LONG AS I AM PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN THIS COMMUNITY.¹⁴

The feature article was "What Comes Next? When Man Dies, Where Does He Go?", and directed pertinent questions to agnostics, materialists, scientists and

then gave the answers of Jesus Christ. Two old enemies of Archie, booze and the dance, also came in for goodly blasts.

The Good News became the precursor of a publication that would, in time, become synonymous with the name Archie Word, *The Church Speaks* (1944). But there was even more "good news" for the Words in late 1942: Florence was expecting a child again. She may have had to write Archie the news because in October he was off for meetings in Wilkinson, Indiana, and Sedro Wooley, Washington.

THE LAST WORD

The longest meeting in the history of the Montavilla church began in January of 1943 and did not end until the 14th of February — seven Sundays later. Harold Buckles was the guest evangelist. Then it was Archie's turn to hit the revival trail. Don and Dave DeWelt did the preaching while he was gone in the spring of 1943.

On the 4th of February the War Department made one decision with which Archie Word was in hearty agreement: they banned hard liquor from the U. S. Army! These were hard times for many in America: shoes were now being rationed (each American was allowed only three pair of shoes per year); canned food rationing began March 1. The garden in back of the Word home on Glisan Street became a very important place that summer! All of the children worked in the garden and helped Florence, now heavy with child, can vegetables in the kitchen. But life was not "all work and no play" at the Word house.

Throughout his 33-year ministry at Montavilla, Archie Word would take Mondays off. He loved the

Columbia River and would often take the whole family on outings in their beloved boat, *The Florence B.* Many happy days were spent boating, fishing, swimming and enjoying a wiener roast on the shore.

Archie spent the last days of March and the first day of April in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was one of the speakers for the Conference on Evangelism, sponsored by Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Appearing on the program with him were: Burriss Butler, S.S. Lappin, W.R. Walker, Orval Morgan, Edwin R. Errett, P.H. Canary, Ira Boswell, W.E. Sweeney, and O.A. Trinkle. Word spoke from II Cor. 5:17, "A New Creature." Several remember his preaching. Malburt Prater: "I first heard Brother Word at the Conference on Evangelism in about 1943. He spoke on "Qualifications of Church Officers." I thought at the time, "That's what we need."¹⁵ Dale V. Knowles adds his impressions: "His sermon was 'Vintage Word,' the first of 'that kind' I had ever heard. Evidently there were some in that sizeable audience of a common spirit and mind, for there were numerous 'Amens' responding to many of his hard hitting points."¹⁶

"The Last Word" was born June 17, 1943, at Adventist Hospital in Portland, Esther Elaine Word (Margaret and Esther Nahigian must have been proud that two of the Word girls had their same names). Little Esther would in time marry Tom Burgess, the eventual successor to the pulpit at Montavilla. Tom liked to tease Archie that he got "the last Word." But there was another "birth" of sorts in the Word family in the summer of 1943: Anna Jean (who had wanted to be baptized two years earlier) went forward during an invitation and was baptized in the name of the heavenly Father by her earthly father.

Another "unofficial" member of the extended Word family experienced an important milestone in his life that summer. Warren Bell, whom the Words had befriended and taken into their home, came home from Bible college and was ordained to the ministry. He was the 10th young man to be ordained to the ministry in five years.¹⁷

MONTAVILLA ACKNOWLEDGED BY *CHRISTIAN STANDARD*

These were turbulent times in the world – and in the United States. In Detroit, 29 people were killed in race riots. Strikes were called by rubber workers and coal miners, resulting in additional violence. In Europe, World War II continued to make bloody history. Stalingrad. The Warsaw uprising. Surrender in North Africa. The war fever had even caught on in some American churches. A combination of these events precipitated an interesting event at Montavilla. Donald G. Hunt writes,

During World War II it was common for churches to have a display showing their young men serving in the military. Somebody suggested to the *Christian Standard* that it find out what congregation had the most members either in some phase of the ministry or preparing for such.

Each week the *Standard* carried the listing by congregations. The big church at Canton, Ohio, where P.H. Welshimer preached, jumped into the lead with 30-some names.

Somebody in the Portland congregation recognized that it had more and suggested that they send in their list. They did, and their 46 topped the whole nation. The congregation was given the winner's flag with 46 crosses on it – a real tribute to the preaching of Archie

Word and the power of the gospel when preached as it ought to be.¹⁸

On July 10, 1943, while young American troops under Patton were invading Sicily, the *Christian Standard* carried a report of the Montavilla church leading the nation in giving 46 of her sons and daughters into fulltime service in the Lord's army. J. Willis Hale, representing Standard Publishing Company, would later present the Service Flag to the congregation (it was Hale who kept Archie in college when he was about to leave). For years the banner hung on the front of the big pulpit – a constant challenge to young people who heard A. Word preach the Word. In time there was no room left to add more white crosses!

BLASTING BOOZE

In that same July 10, 1943, *Christian Standard*, the celebrated preacher had another feature article, this one on "Bible Teachings on the Cost of Drinking." The editor of the *Standard* prefaced it with these words:

When he writes about the cost of liquor he knows whereof he speaks. He has seen the ravages firsthand. He has been around. After a year in high school, he joined the Navy in 1917. After honorable discharge, in 1919, he finished high school and business college and went to work as a salesman for Standard Oil Co., until W.S. Lemmon, now at Madera, Calif., got hold of him and induced him to go to Eugene Bible University. . . . When Archie Word says anything, he makes it clear that he means it.¹⁹

In the article, Archie commenced to blast the booze business "in this liquor-soaked, blind and stupefied nation." He wrote, "If you think I am overstating the

case, go down to your city hall next Sunday morning and take a look into the 'tank' and see men and women with swollen faces, eyes cut and black, wives and husbands standing outside crying or in quiet pre-conference with the judge." Because of the current war effort, he charged, many men and women were making big money in the war plants and spending it on booze. "Nations are made up of individuals, and as individuals go, so goes the nation. We as a nation have been slipping into the drunkard's grave ever since 1933. For ten years we've been spending millions to lead our citizens to become 'sots.' "

"What is the preacher's part in meeting this age-old curse of mankind?" he asked. "He should remember that he is no policeman to force people to obey, but, nevertheless, he is God's agent to warn. . . . there is only hope in Jesus Christ. . . . when Jesus Christ is accepted as your Lord, he causes us to repent of all our sins. . . . old habits are lost under the cleansing blood and through the Holy Spirit the life is kept in God's way."

He then proceeded to share a story from his home town of Lindsay, to illustrate the power of God to deliver from strong drink:

In my own home town we had a fine Christian woman who had a son who was a heartache from his early childhood. He would not go to church or Sunday School. He chose his friends from the element in society that kept the small-town police busy. He went "wild" at about seventeen and in a drunken stupor had one arm severed from his body while bumming a ride on the freight train. That taught him nothing. One drunken spree followed another. . . . He tried to kill his own mother with an ax and just missed killing his own twin brother.

The law came and jailed him. . . . He yelled and screamed and roared all night. The next day a minister, who was not allowed to go inside the jail, came and stood outside and preached Christ to that poor suffering soul. He listened instead of cursing the preacher, as he had done before, and through the bars he took the minister's hand and confessed his faith in the only One who could save a drunkard. . . . he asked to be confined for 30 days where he might read his Bible and fight out this battle with the Lord's help.

At the end of the 30-day period he was let out. He made his way to the church and was baptized. . . . He faithfully attended all the church services. He became an ardent personal worker, led many to know Christ right there where he had been a living example of the cost of drinking. He married a fine Christian girl, went to Southern California to the seminary to study to become a missionary to the Mexicans. His successful work there for years before his untimely death shows God is able to save even the worst of drunkards.²⁰

ARCHIE ANSWERS THE "CALL FOR ENLISTMENT"

On October 13, 1943, Russell Boatman, whose soul had been "set on fire" during an early A. Word revival, wrote Archie and asked him if he could hold a revival in Wichita, Kansas, sometime in the spring of 1944. He wrote that the church board wanted Archie to "state the terms on which you would come." Archie Word, unlike other evangelists, did not have a set fee, normally taking whatever the church felt led to give in a special offering once a week. Boatman also mentioned that he wanted to attend the spring Conference on Evangelism in Cincinnati with Archie. The Wichita church, where Russell was preaching, was now free of U.C.M.S. ties, thanks largely to a sermon in which Boatman "blew the top off things." Boatman concluded his letter by saying, "I am ashamed of what our

so-called brotherhood is coming to. God pity us, Archie, lest the candlestick be taken from us and having lost our savor we be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord."²¹ For a long time a great battle had been taking place between conservatives and liberals in the Disciples of Christ/Christian Church brotherhood. In 1927 the conservatives formed the North American Christian Convention, a gathering distinct and separate from the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ. Through the years many skirmishes had been fought on the floors of the conventions and in the pages of brotherhood journals. The *Christian Standard*, *Restoration Herald* and *Touchstone* spoke for the conservatives; the *Christian Evangelist* being the main organ for the liberals.

On November 27, 1943, the *Christian Standard* issued a historic "Call for Enlistment" on its front cover and subsequent pages. Stephen J. Corey later called it "a blueprint of separation for the brotherhood of Disciples of Christ."²² Among other things, the *Standard* called upon brethren the world over to "discard a leadership which has misrepresented or minimized our plea" and to "go forward by rallying the rank and file to a seeking out of a new and consecrated leadership. . . . (to) set congregations in order after the New Testament pattern."²³ This was right down A. Word's alley!

A total of 49 prominent conservatives signed the historic document. Among them were Burriss Butler, Lester Ford, R.C. Foster, Ard Hoven, Howard Hutchins, S.S. Lappin, Orval Morgan, Harry Poll, Roy Shaw, Fred Smith, W.R. Walker, P.H. Welshimer and Archie Word. (It should be noted that four of the signers were E.B.U. graduates: Hoven, Hutchins, Shaw and

Word). "The Committee of 49," as they came to be known, then chose 11 of their number to serve on an "action committee." (Those elected were restricted to the greater Cincinnati area because of war-time travel conditions.) Welshimer and Walker then issued a joint statement on behalf of the others, condemning the Disciples for their "Fascist" ways: centralizing control of conventions, missionary organizations, educational institutions, and publishing houses; dictating programs to churches and ministers; compromising with denominations; and exhibiting indifference to the authority of the Scriptures. The statement also called for a re-emphasis of the Restoration Plea for simple New Testament Christianity.

THE WICHITA REVIVAL

In the spring of 1944 Archie Word held one of his most successful revival meetings ever with Russell Boatman and the Westside Christian Church in Wichita, Kansas. Boatman called the meeting (February 18-March 12) "a turning point" in the history of that church.

It was both an extended reconsecration service as well as an evangelistic meeting – a revival for the believers as well as a born again experience for many who were brought to Christ by his preaching.²⁴

There were 177 responses to the invitation in the Wichita campaign, including nine life-work recruits (eight of the nine immediately enrolled in San Jose Bible College). Among the life-work recruits were the wives of Willis Harrison and Wilbur Fields, both presently professors at Ozark Christian College.

From Wichita Archie traveled back to Cincinnati

where 2,500 people packed Emery Auditorium for the annual Conference on Evangelism. Following the conference he held a four-and-a-half week meeting at Washington, Indiana, before returning to Portland.

THE CHURCH SPEAKS BEGINS

In the spring of 1944 General Douglas MacArthur began his sweep through the Pacific. In Germany U.S. planes were dropping bombs on Berlin. In America Archie Word had a new weapon to sweep sin off its feet and drop a few bombs on the bunkers of the enemy – *The Church Speaks*, a newspaper-size religious paper. Over 3,000 copies of the first issue were mailed to Restoration churches in the United States. The front page featured two full-length articles: "What the Sunday School Does For Our Nation's Youth" (by none other than J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the F.B.I.), while Editor Word took on the movies, "What the Movies Do To Our Youth."

The Church Speaks was sponsored by the Montavilla church and was published "as often as God permits." It was mailed free of charge. Cosby Printers in Portland printed the paper which was folded and addressed by members of the church on Monday nights.

Three days after D-Day – the invasion at Normandy – the second issue of *The Church Speaks* came out, June 9, 1944. The lead article, "Make Us a King," lambasted those who were leaving the conservatives and going over to the "machine" (the U.C.M.S. and "unified promotion"). Thundered the editor,

I WON'T DO IT! MY SOUL IS WORTH MORE TO ME
THAN ALL THE BIG CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE

STATE OF OREGON. I'LL STAND WITH MY WORST ENEMY ON EARTH IF HE STANDS FOR WHAT I KNOW TO BE RIGHT, AND I'LL FIGHT THE BEST FRIEND I HAVE ON EARTH IF I KNOW HE IS STANDING FOR THE WRONG.

(The use of capital letters was an Archie Word trademark in letters as well as printed articles and sermons.)

He praised three men who stood with him in the fight against the Disciples: P.H. Welshimer ("cursed and denounced his independent stand"); George Taubman ("excommunicated in Southern California"); and William L. Jessup ("under fire for his non-cooperative stand").²⁶

MONTAVILLA MOTHERS A NEW CHURCH

On July 16, 1944, the Montavilla church sponsored a new church in nearby Gresham, Oregon. The Gresham church would prove to be the first of nine congregations established in the Portland-Vancouver area during the A. Word era at Montavilla. He called it the "swarm method."

I made an agreement with them (Montavilla) that when we got to 200 we would swarm, we would start a new church somewhere. . . . Everytime we started one it was a traumatic experience. Turn loose 20 or 30 people, give them \$5000 to buy a piece of land and put a tent on it or whatever they put up to start their building.²⁷

Elmer James and Vernon Beeks were instrumental in helping the new church at Gresham get off the ground. They began meeting only on Sunday nights, but by April of 1945 they were conducting both

morning and evening services in Gresham. Following his graduation from San Jose Bible College, Warren Bell returned to the Portland area and became Gresham's minister for the next 20 years. Today the 4th Street church in Gresham is a thriving congregation.

BOATMAN COMES TO PORTLAND

In August of 1944 Russell Boatman came to Portland to hold a revival for Archie Word and the Montavilla church. The celebrated meeting began August 13 and ran through September 10. Archie praised Russell to the heavens:

We have long prayed for this blessing! Great preachers are hard to get, for smaller churches, but here is one of the South's finest preachers! Pastor of the great "Westside Christian Church" in Wichita, Kansas. He is young! He has God's blessing on his ministry! He received the highest scholastic standing in the history of Phillips University, and stepped into a first pastorate in a church with over 1100 members. (Boatman had taken the church from 800 members to 1100 in three years — Author). He is in his 4th year there. Many souls saved! Over 12 young people sent out as ministers and missionaries! Prayer meetings have increased 500 percent. Truly God has blessed!²⁸

Years later Boatman recalled working with Archie in this greatly publicized meeting:

The experience was somewhat akin to working side by side with my father at a task in which he was highly proficient, yet (he) allowed me to take the lead. Archie Word is 14 years my senior, chronologically. Evangelistically, energetically, he is the senior of every man I have ever known.²⁹

CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES

Following the Boatman meeting, Archie took on his first associate minister, Berle Thomas, whom Archie called "the Singing Irishman Jesus saved." Thomas had a fine tenor voice and used it in leading music at revivals, rallies, and regular church services as well as on the radio broadcasts. He served in this capacity until February 5, 1945.

In September Archie sent more young people off to Bible college in San Jose, including an older married man, Stewart Baker. Baker would eventually return to Portland and become the associate editor of *The Church Speaks*. Archie threw open the columns of his paper in 1944 to such men as S.S. Lappin, Bill Jessup, Walter Stram, Melvin Traxler, Russell Boatman, and others. On October 24 Orval Morgan, then minister of the historic Broadway Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, wrote:

From time to time you have sent me your paper *The Church Speaks* and I have been somewhat negligent in thanking you for your thoughtfulness in remembering me. . . . I thought your paper of June 23, especially the two articles on "The Unpardonable Sin Among the Disciples" and "Why I Am Not a Seventh Day Adventist," was especially good.³⁰

(The article on "The Unpardonable Sin Among the Disciples" is "vintage Word" at his best. It is not the practice of liberalism, divorced leaders, immoral members, bootlegging, tobacco, lying, open membership, departing from the Restoration plea, interdenominational hobnobbing, that is the unpardonable sin among the Disciples, he charged. But if you practice what the Disciples used to preach, i.e., refusing to go

beyond what is written, having a Christian passion for unity, seeking to be Christians only, pleading with all to unite with Christ in His church, *that* was the "unpardonable sin among the Disciples," according to A. Word.)

Oregon Disciples, in turn, charged that Archie Word was "anti-missionary." Archie answered these charges in the October 24, 1944, *The Church Speaks*:

Last year the congregation which meets at 550 N.E. 76th Avenue gave \$3,063.80 to the cause of missions, both foreign and home, and this in the face of the devil's lie that we are not "missionary," and that we do not believe in missions. . . . This money was not given to support a State Secretary, who in turn becomes a "Pastor at large" or "Bishop," nor was it given to agencies whom the world knows believe in modernism and compromising with unbelief, but rather we sent our money direct to the man on the field and to work for the cause of Christ.³¹

In October and November Archie led a home mission revival with the new church in Gresham, now meeting at 416 N.E. 4th Avenue. Each night Archie preached and Berle Thomas, "the Singing Irishman," led the singing.

With World War II continuing, Archie sent the following letter to the *Christian Standard*, published November 18, 1944, just after Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to an unprecedented fourth term as president of the United States:

God has given unto us the ONLY remedy for this old world's ills. She is a sin-sick world, and the only thing under heaven that will make for a decent world is the change of the intellect, will, conscience and emotions of every man that makes up its population.

That is the fundamental, basic and foundational structure that needs changing, and God has given us the medicine to administer.

After two thousand years we should have learned that by the foolishness of preaching the gospel, God chose to save the lost world.³²

Preaching that changed the heart of a man was the only way to change the world according to Archie Word and that was what he was doing as 1945 approached.

Notes

1. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 117
2. *The Other Day*, p. 3
3. *Ibid.*, p. 71
4. *Happy On My Way to Heaven*, p. 67
5. *The Other Day*, p. 32
6. *Happy On My Way to Heaven*, p. 69
7. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 39
8. *Christian Standard*, Oct. 25, 1941
9. *Ibid*
10. *Ibid*
11. Letter to author from Anna Jean Word Rodda, Dec. 11, 1989
12. Letter to author from Margaret Word Hunt, Jan. 1, 1990
13. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 41
14. *The Good News*, May 1942
15. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 117
16. *Ibid*, p. 126
17. *Montavilla Memories*, p. 43
18. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 16
19. *Christian Standard*, July 10 1943
20. *Ibid*
21. Letter to Archie Word from Russell Boatman, Oct. 13, 1943
22. *Fifty Years of Attack and Controversy*, p. 185
23. *Christian Standard*, Nov. 27, 1943
24. Letter to author from Russell Boatman, Oct. 4, 1990
25. *The Church Speaks*, June 9, 1944
27. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
28. *The Church Speaks*, Aug. 4, 1944
29. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 127

30. *The Church Speaks*, Oct 24, 1944
31. *Ibid*
32. *Christian Standard*, Nov. 18, 1944