

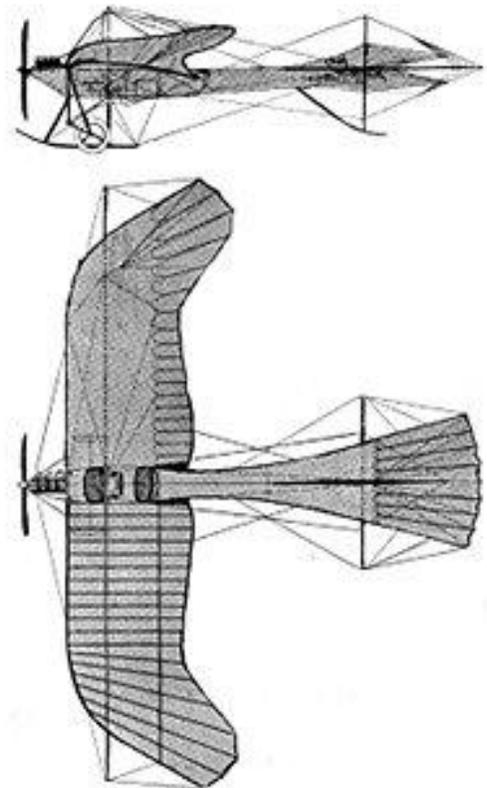
Missionary Aviation Blossoms



Lilienthal's Glider in Flight

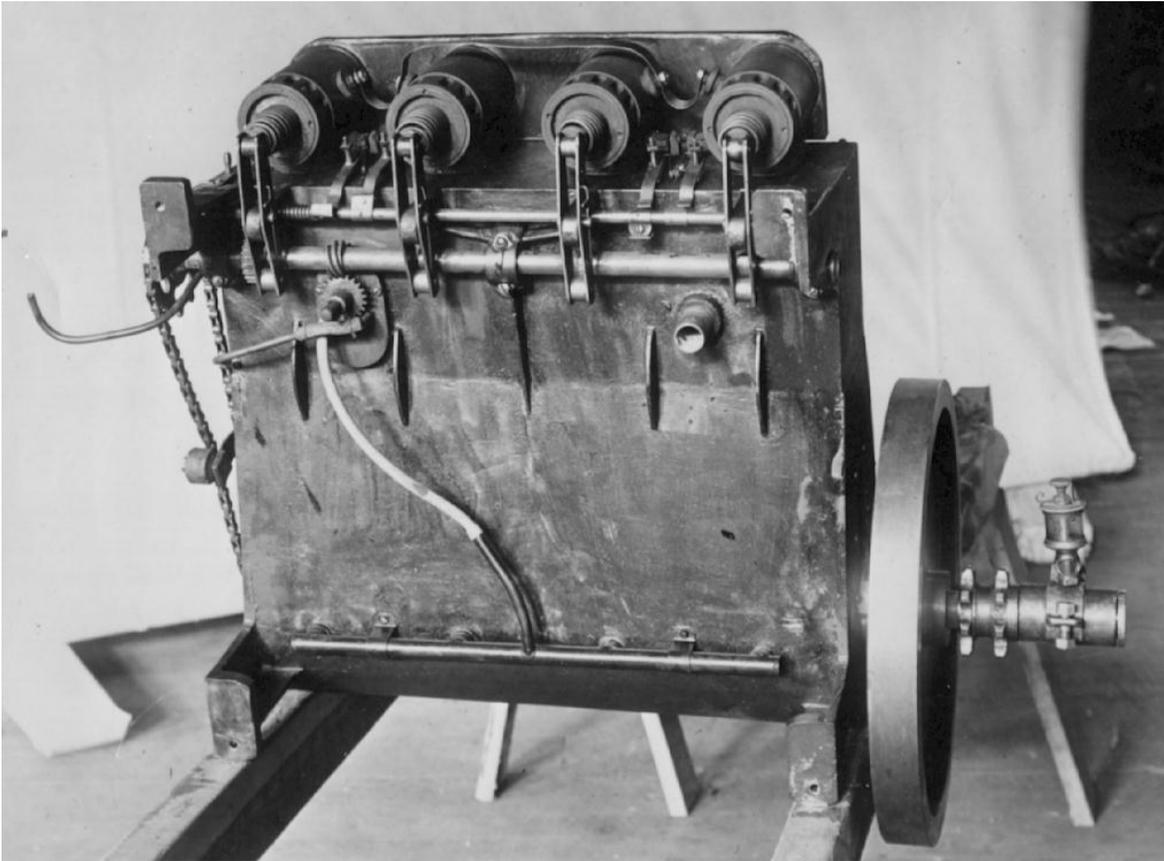
The idea of Missionary Aviation may have been conceived by a unknown retired Australian cleric in 1908 who envisioned flying his flying machine dubbed the "Pigeon" plane around and dropping scripture to those below. As far as we know, a prototype of his "Pigeon" plane was never built, but just a drafted design of a craft with a tail like a dove capable of reaching 60 mph. Regardless of whether it was built or not, the seed was planted.

The evolution of flight has always been marked by both triumphs and failures. Even before the Wright brothers' legendary success in Kitty Hawk, aviation enthusiasts and inventors had been experimenting with flight in various forms. Some sought inspiration from the natural world, studying birds' flight mechanics, while others turned to cutting-edge technology of their time. The late 1800s and early 1900s were particularly vibrant with experimentation.



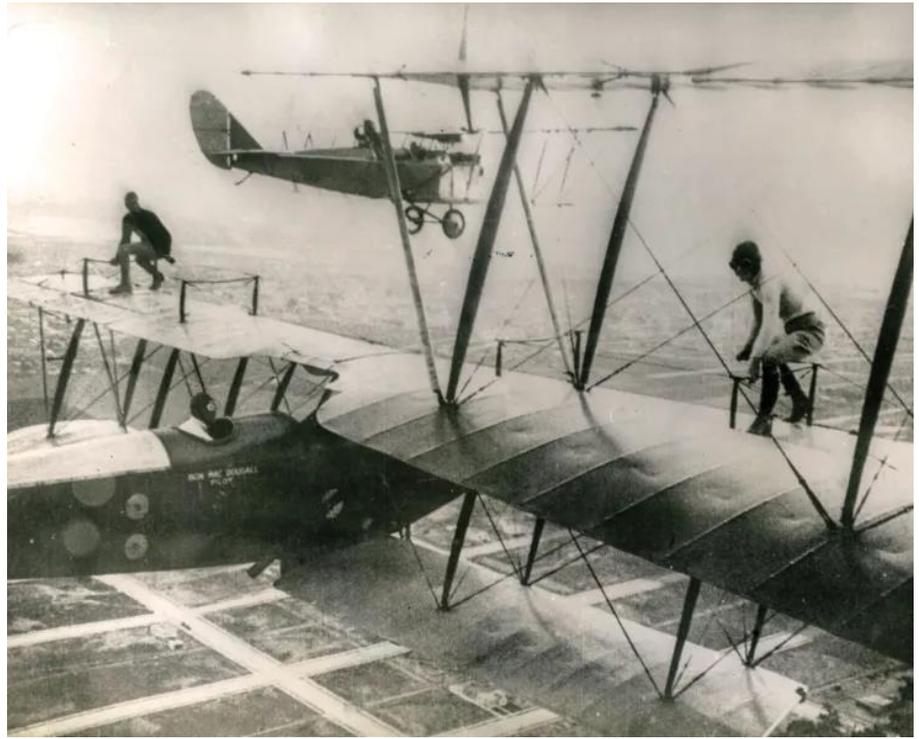
Possibly like this design

Over time, advancements in technology led to the reduction in size and weight of gas-powered engines, providing the necessary power for sustained flight, albeit with limited capacity initially. As with the development of the airplane itself, modifications were made based on accumulated knowledge, leading to the creation of more powerful engines. The Wright Flyer's engine in 1908 produced 20 horsepower, whereas by 1918, engines were capable of producing 90 horsepower, enabling airplanes to carry additional cargo beyond just the pilot. Consequently, certain ministries began to recognize the potential of using airplanes for asset transportation; however, issues related to reliability and safety remained significant concerns.



Wright Flyer Engine 20hp

Unfortunately, the reliability and safety of these airplanes may have been overshadowed by the way it was used, but the production of aircraft during WWI made airplanes conceivably safer and reliable. There weren't many jobs available for pilots when they came home from WWI and the use of airplanes to transport people was beginning to bud. Many of these pilots took to "Barn Storming" using surplus aircraft from the war. As a result, there were many fatal crashes associated with theatrical flying and daring stunts, so naturally people thought flying was a dangerous activity and balked at using it for ministry.



Barn Storming

There were surprisingly quite a few pastors that became pilots during WWI, and many had visions of using the airplane for ministry before the war and devised their plans before going overseas to fight but sadly were unable to carry out their ambitions since they never made it home. But some did, and they put their plans into action. As a result, there may have been about 20 ministries that utilized the airplane in the early 1900's with some success and with a few that survived many years to combine with other ministries later on.



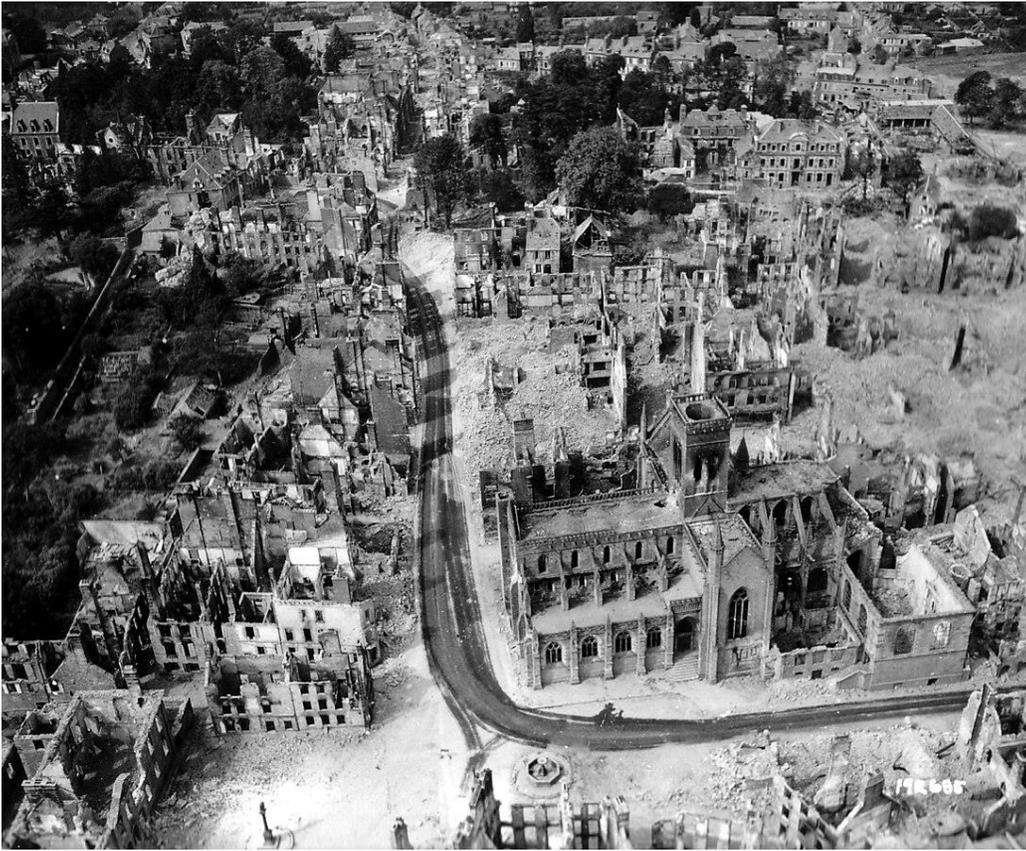
Belvin Maynard "The Flying Parson"

Belvin Maynard, known as "The Flying Parson," epitomized the innovative spirit of these early aviation ministers. Some of these "flying pastors" used the airplane to fly from one church to another, while others took a more dramatic approach. They broadcast sermons from loudspeakers as they circled crowds below, dropped leaflets with scripture over towns to draw attention, and then landed to preach to those who gathered. Even weddings were performed mid-air, highlighting the inventive and often theatrical nature of this trial-and-error period. However, the inherent dangers of early aviation and the mixed success of these methods meant that only a few practices were established.

Over time, ministries were certainly starting to see the usefulness of the airplane, but they also saw how dangerous they were to operate. Pilots that were successful using airplanes in ministry realized the concerns and hesitation of ministries to use the airplane and joined together to lay out plans to professionally train pilots to serve these ministries. As a result, the use of the airplane was expanding in ministries worldwide only to learn that the logistics of supporting these services was more complicated than planned. Aerial doctor services were taking flight in Australia.



AIR AMBULANCE CASE ARRIVES AT BRISBANE FROM CAMOOWEA
JANUARY 2nd 1931. *E.G. DONALDSON, Pilot.*



Bombing of France during World War II

As you would expect, stories of pilots flying for ministries were posted in local and national publications which probably made for good conversation in many Christian homes during dinner. Young men and women were inspired by these stories and became interested in learning to fly and help spread the gospel. Many did so, but the realization of a new war brewing in the late 30's put flight lessons on hold.

Men were now enlisting to fly combat missions and women were enlisting to fly support. Just like WWI, there were many that had ambition to fly serving ministries but ended up in a war. Some returned home, many didn't. They witnessed the carnage of bombing cities or the loss of friends who had been shot down. They figured there's got to be a way to use the airplane to help people and not destroy them. A lot of pilots had no intention of serving in ministries when they enlisted to fly but were moved to do so after the war.

After the war there was an abundance of pilots and mechanics looking for jobs. This time there were many jobs to be had since Commercial airlines were expanding operation and looking for employees. Those that wanted to serve in ministries did. There were jobs available in the ministry for those that wanted to fly in areas of the world where ministries were serving people. They would move



MAF Gemini Burundi's foothills

missionaries from one location to another, or move supplies as needed. Some of these pilots were even ministers, so they used the airplane to reach people themselves. Unfortunately flying in these remote areas brought about complications not typically encountered by pilots. Most significantly was the weather and terrain. Quite a few pilots crashed and died because of rapidly changing weather because of low laying clouds that hid mountains. As was mentioned earlier pilots were combining what they knew to improve conditions and eventually created organizations where they could get together and share their resources and information to make things safer.

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) continues to thrive, emphasizing the critical role that aviation plays in reaching isolated communities. The demand for skilled pilots and mechanics is ever-growing, with MAF facilitating the transportation of medical supplies, education materials, and providing emergency evacuation in times of crisis. This noble cause not only transforms the lives of those in need but also profoundly impacts the individuals who choose to serve.

The spirit of camaraderie among aviation ministry professionals fosters a sense of purpose and belonging, as they undertake the shared mission of bridging distances and delivering hope. The challenges faced in remote areas, such as unpredictable weather and difficult terrain, are met with



JAARS 1960's

resilience and ingenuity. Advanced training, comprehensive safety protocols, and constant innovation ensure that each mission is carried out with the utmost care and precision.

Embarking on a journey with MAF or similar organizations is not merely a career choice; it is a calling that resonates deeply with those passionate about both aviation and humanitarian service. The legacy of those early pioneers who saw potential in using airplanes for good continues to inspire new generations to take to the skies in service of others.

So, if you feel the call to merge your love for flying with a desire to make a meaningful difference, now is the time to act. The skies are vast, and the opportunities to serve are boundless. Join the ranks of those who have dedicated their skills and their hearts to an extraordinary mission and experience the unparalleled fulfillment that comes from making a positive impact on the world.