

Assemblies of God



HERITAGE



Inside:
Southern Gospel's Preacher Boys
and other inspiring stories ...

2007
Volume 27

Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center



Come Explore Assemblies of God History

The above exhibit, displaying William J. Seymour and other leaders in the Azusa Street revival, is part of the inspiring Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center Museum.

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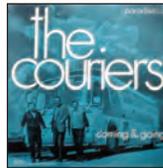
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Cover: The Couriers Quartet in the early 1960s. (L-r): Duane Nicholson, Don Baldwin, Dave Kyllonen, and Neil Enloe. They logged over 500,000 miles in this 1948 "Siversides" GM bus.

Preserving and Sharing our Pentecostal Heritage

By Darrin Rodgers

This issue of *Assemblies of God Heritage* marks a significant milestone. Since 1981, *Heritage* has faithfully shared the stories of the people who have helped make the Assemblies of God what it is today. Initially a slim quarterly publication, it grew and developed a loyal following. Starting with this issue, an expanded annual edition will replace the quarterly issues, and *Heritage* will be sent to all Assemblies of God ministers, in addition to subscribers.

Assemblies of God Heritage is published by the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC), which serves as the archives, museum, and research center of the Assemblies of God. Named in honor of the J. Roswell Flower family, the FPHC has become one of the largest

Pentecostal archives in the world. The FPHC is a repository for the treasures of the faith. Its extensive holdings document how God has worked, not only through the Assemblies of God in the United States, but through the broader Pentecostal movement, spanning the globe.

Learning from the Heroes of the Faith

One of our missionary heroes recently shared her story with me. Harriet Williams, raised in Missouri and North Dakota, attended North Central Bible Institute in Minneapolis. She assisted her brother, Ward, in gospel work across the sparsely populated, wind-swept northern plains.

She yielded to God's call to the mission field and, in 1944 at age 31 and unmarried, she pulled up stakes and went to India. Harriet arrived at the Assemblies of God mission station where she was to serve. With a twinkle in her eye, Harriet recalled, "I found two single male missionaries, and I married them both!" But not at the same time, she assured me.

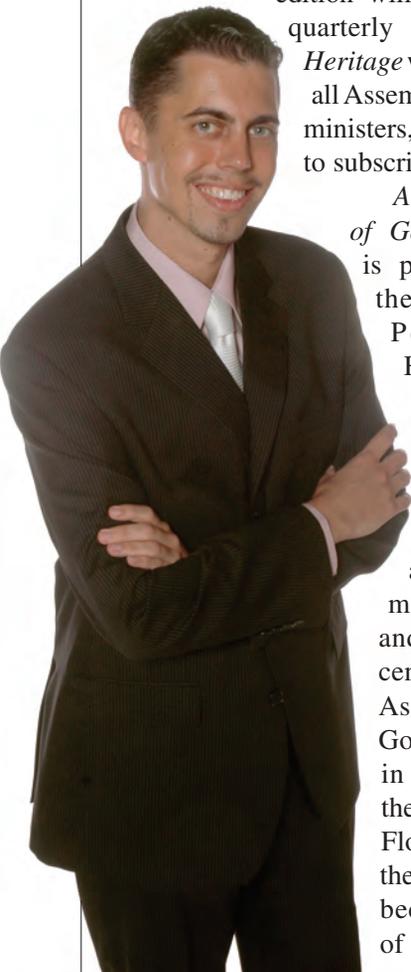
She married Paul Schoonmaker, one of the single missionaries, in 1945. They ministered in India for the next 26 years. In 1971, they returned from furlough in America, where Paul had successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation at Hartford Seminary. They flew to England, then began driving across two continents toward

India. En route to India, a pre-existing illness forced Paul to be hospitalized in Tehran, Iran, where he died in January 1972. Harriet matter-of-factly told me that she buried Paul in Iran and proceeded on to India, where she continued to serve at the mission station.

"Wait a minute," I asked, "you didn't go back to America after the funeral? Your husband died in a foreign land, you buried him, and you wanted to finish traveling to India, where you would continue to serve as a missionary?" "Yes," she answered.

As Harriet related her story, she didn't dwell on the trials and testing. In a very simple and unobtrusive, yet profound, manner, she gave witness to her persevering faith and to God's faithfulness. Harriet went on to marry Sydney Bryant, the second single missionary whom she had met at the mission station those many years ago. Sydney went to be with the Lord in 2001, and Harriet — now 92 years of age — continues to serve God at Maranatha Village, the Assemblies of God retirement community in Springfield, Missouri.

Harriet's story is important because it confronts those of us in the West with an uncomfortable truth: God does not necessarily call Christians to lives of wealth and health, but to obedience and sacrifice. In today's materialistic and selfish culture, this seems to be one of the most difficult lessons





Harriet (Williams) Bryant and her second husband, Sydney Bryant, in 1974.

to learn. The example of Harriet's sacrifice is not alone — the Assemblies of God was built by thousands of mostly unheralded men and women who forsook all to give their all to God. They are a part of what Tom Brokaw has called "The Greatest Generation." The debt we owe to these pioneers can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude, and we must never forget their sacrifices.

In This Issue

Toward this end, this issue of *Heritage* showcases several of the inspiring stories of people whose rock-ribbed faith and unyielding commitment to God helped to build our Fellowship. In the feature article, leading gospel music historian Jim Goff recounts the story of the Couriers — Assemblies of God boys who changed the world of gospel music by helping to shift its emphasis from entertainment toward ministry. Next, George O. Wood offers inspiring vignettes of several early missionary heroes: Ruth and Elizabeth Weidman, Paul and Virginia Weidman, Clarence and Dorothy Radley, Oren and Florence Munger, Carl and Frederike Juergensen, and Florence Steidel.

You will also read about: Robert L. Brandt, who served as superintendent

of two districts and National Home Missions Secretary; Alta Washburn, whose vision for Native American ministry birthed American Indian College; a history of Assemblies of God ministry to the Jewish people; Vinton Huffey, who went from the cornfields of Iowa to become a catalyst for the establishment of the Los Angeles Dream Center; a historical analysis by William Menzies of how the AG responded to four theological, ethical, and social challenges; and seven Assemblies of God congregations celebrating their centennials in 2006 or 2007.

Bringing History to You

Assemblies of God Heritage is just one of the ways the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center helps bring Pentecostal history into your home, school and church. The FPHC's online research center, already the world's largest Pentecostal history website, is about to become even better. Over the next year, the FPHC website will be redeveloped to include exciting new content, utilizing the latest popular technologies (see page 47). Our digital products (see pages 59-63) allow you to browse through thousands of pages of rare periodicals and books on your personal computer and to perform full-text searches. These digital products are incredible aids for writing sermons or school papers and for exploring family or church history.

At the core of the FPHC is its amazing collection of printed materials, oral histories, artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia — making it one of the largest Pentecostal archives in the world. Duke University professor Grant Wacker calls the collection "unparalleled." Many scholars and church leaders, when writing about the Pentecostal movement, first do their research at the FPHC.

If you plan to visit Springfield, please stop by the FPHC museum. A walk through this 3,000-square-foot exhibit has every newcomer reminiscing and commenting on photographs of

people they knew and which show up on the interactive video kiosks and wall images.

Have you ever wished that you could help people to better appreciate our heritage? Now you can do something about it! I am pleased to announce the establishment of the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship (see page 65). By making a donation to the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship, you will honor former FPHC director Wayne Warner's significant contribution to the preservation and understanding of Assemblies of God history, and you will encourage scholarship in the field of Pentecostal history.

Preserving Your Treasures

Do you have Pentecostal historical materials that should be preserved? Do you know of someone with treasures in their attic or basement? I would be honored if you would consider depositing these materials at the FPHC. We would like to preserve and make them accessible to those who write the history books. Are you uncertain whether the FPHC would be interested in your collection? I encourage you to contact the FPHC; I would be delighted to discuss whether your materials might fill in one of the many gaps in our collections.

As you read the following pages, I hope you will be struck by the fact that you are a part of something much larger than any one person. Our heritage testifies to God's faithfulness, across time and spanning cultures. The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center exists to gather these stories of God's faithfulness, so that we can have a better perspective on what it means to live out our Pentecostal faith today. Our job is to document what God has done through our Movement, and you are a part of that history!



Darrin Rodgers is director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and editor of *Heritage* magazine.

Southern Gospel's Preacher Boys

By James R. Goff, Jr.

Remembering the Couriers

The Couriers Quartet, Assemblies of God boys molded at Central Bible Institute in the mid-1950s, persevered to become one of the most successful gospel music groups of the late twentieth century — pioneering southern gospel music in the Northeast states and in parts of Canada. More importantly, they helped shift southern gospel toward an emphasis on ministry and evangelism. Their heartfelt singing and testimony continues to share the message of Jesus Christ even today.

“When we first got into southern gospel, they called us ‘the preachers.’ We’d hear them say, ‘Here come the holy boys.’”¹ This was one of the first stories I learned from the Couriers. It was from an interview with tenor singer Duane Nicholson under a tent set up to feed the hundred or so gospel singers invited to record one of the Bill Gaither videos in the mid-1990s.

Unfortunately at the time, Nicholson and the other members of the Couriers Quartet knew that the comments were not meant, directly at least, as compliments, and many years later the story still caused pain. Nicholson searched his heart wondering if his fellow singers really believed he and his comrades in the Couriers thought themselves spiritually superior.

Such was the depth to which “southern gospel” had sunk by the 1960s — if singers shunned the appearance of evil and demonstrated a Christian ethic in their private lives, they were accused of looking down on and, in effect, “judging” everyone else. This might seem strange to many raised in the church, where ministers and gospel singers are expected to live the life about which they preach and sing. But it was business as usual in the entertainment world of southern gospel a mere four decades ago.²

To its credit southern gospel has entered a new era. My own experience reveals that the overwhelming majority of those singers associated with the genre today do indeed try to live what they profess. None are perfect of course, but something remarkable changed over the past half century in this world of harmonious quartets, smooth-sounding trios, and talented soloists. Somewhere along the way, probably through a combination of the



The Couriers, about 1965. Back (l-r): Duane Nicholson and Dave Kyllonen. Front (l-r): Neil and Phil Enloe.



third-wave revival begun in the 1970s, intense media scrutiny, and competition from contemporary Christian singers, southern gospel artists reclaimed their spiritual devotion.

Most had “believed” all along. They came from evangelical families and churches, suffered the disillusionment of travel and bright lights, and endured the competition of a large number of performers struggling for the same slice of the economic pie. But, in the end, they came home. Artists like the Couriers — missionaries sent in haste — were no small part of the reason why.

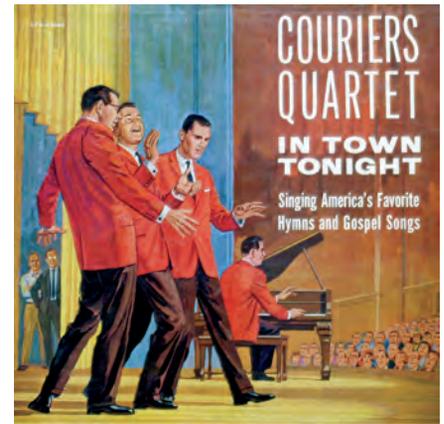
Beginnings

The dream started in Springfield, Missouri. In 1953, a small group of amateurs attending Central Bible Institute began singing on campus and in area churches using the name “Couriers,” literally “messengers,” members “of a diplomatic service entrusted with bearing messages.”³ After a year of inactivity, the name was reclaimed by a new quartet of students for the 1955-56 school term. The reorganization of the group was prompted in part by the excitement generated by the visit of one of southern gospel’s most heralded

quartets, the Blackwood Brothers, who appeared for a concert in 1955 at a downtown auditorium owned and operated by the local Shrine Club.

Themselves members of First Assembly of God in Memphis, Tennessee, the Blackwoods easily swayed aspiring young singers with the smooth sound that had taken them literally to the top of the entertainment industry. From humble beginnings in northern Mississippi in 1934, the group had risen to unprecedented heights for a gospel quartet. With an exclusive contract with RCA, in the summer of 1954, the troupe had been the featured winners on CBS’s *Arthur Godfrey’s Talent Scouts* television program in New York City. Literally less than a month from this lofty perch, the Blackwoods had then endured the tragedy of a plane crash that killed two prominent members of the group. Though initially distraught, group leader James Blackwood had pressed on, hiring new bass and baritone singers to continue touring as one of the pinnacle quartets in the industry.

The group that appeared in Springfield in 1955 would comprise a litany of household names — James Blackwood singing lead, Bill Shaw singing tenor, Cecil Blackwood on



baritone, J. D. Sumner on bass, and renowned pianist Jackie Marshall providing accompaniment. In September 1956 the quartet would once again compete in and win the Arthur Godfrey contest and, despite the tragedy of 1954, remained one of the headlining gospel groups in the nation through the next decade. Little wonder that the young CBI students were inspired to tap the ivories in search of their own harmonious blend.⁴

Over the next few years, personnel in the Couriers varied as students graduated or left school and were replaced by other eager singers. By 1957, the group had achieved some local notoriety, appearing in the school yearbook, *The Cup*. Members by that time included Dave Kyllonen, a bass singer and a young Assemblies of God preacher from Pennsylvania; Don Baldwin, a baritone singer from Illinois and the quartet’s manager; Duane Nicholson, the group’s lead singer and an Assemblies of God preacher’s kid who had grown up in Iowa and Oklahoma; Lemuel Boyles, the tenor singer; and Bob Casebeer, group pianist.

During the 1957-58 academic year, Boyles and Casebeer were replaced as the Couriers Quartet took on the personnel that would chart the group’s future for most of the next decade. Nicholson switched to the tenor part,

Eddie Reece (piano accompanist, far left) with the Couriers (l-r) Duane Nicholson, Neil Enloe, Don Baldwin, and Dave Kyllonen in the recording studio, about 1958.



making room for the addition of Neil Enloe, an introspective young Illinois boy from a staunch AG home who took over the responsibilities as lead singer. Also joining the group that fall was Eddie Reece, a Tennessean who took the spot as the group's piano accompanist.⁵

This coterie of energetic students even made a recording at the school of their most popular songs. Using the studio of the *Revivaltime* radio show, an evangelistic program broadcast over the ABC network by Reverend C. M. Ward, the quartet recorded enough material to ship off to the West Coast in order to have a number of inexpensive 33 1/3 records pressed. Once the product, collectively titled *Beyond the Sunset*, was returned to campus, the five young men lovingly hand-packaged each long-play record into their own homemade album sleeves.⁶

Beyond Springfield

With this inauspicious beginning, in the summer of 1958, the five young Couriers ventured out from Springfield to seek their fortune in the world of southern gospel. The logical choice would have been a move toward the Southeast — the hotbed of southern gospel radio and concert promotions. But the young men were apprehensive of what such a move might bring. In 1996 Enloe recalled it this way: “We were so bad and we knew it ... so we said, ‘Let’s settle somewhere where the people haven’t heard much and they don’t know the difference.’” Similarly Nicholson remembered sizing their situation up with the analysis, “We’re amateurs ... we’ll only get lost in the South.”⁷

Ultimately the key to this youthful insecurity was the ministry contacts of bass singer Dave Kyllonen. Choosing Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as a base, the group ministered in churches and began to slowly carve out their own niche. The boys literally walked into the studios of radio station WCMB and asked for an audition. After duly

Assemblies of God

Debate on the Merits of Gospel Quartet Music



Though *Billboard* magazine in the 1950s separated the music of white and black Americans by designating “sacred” for white music and “spiritual” for black music, the question of entertainment raised equal concerns for churches in both white and black communities. Early on, Assemblies of God leaders took a stand against some of the aspects of the southern gospel quartet industry. Apprehensions tended to boil down to two basic concerns: 1) How relevant is “entertainment” to a music that is focused on the gospel message? Does it demean and trivialize the message? Generations of Pentecostals expressed the concern with the words, “That music just sounds too worldly.” 2) Even more problematic was the lifestyle, the personal witness and example, of the singers. Shouldn’t gospel singers live the Christian life about which they sang? If so, many judged them and found them wanting.

As early as 1937, Robert A. Brown, the pastor of the heralded Glad Tidings Tabernacle in New York City, complained that “in many Pentecostal meetings ... sacred songs are now put to ragtime music, and ... people work themselves into a frenzy playing and singing in the effort to please their listeners.” Pointedly he went on to argue that gospel tunes put to modern secular sounds reflected on the spiritual condition of those caught up in its intoxicating pull.

Jazzy music and singing is merely a *substitute*, and instead of appealing to deep spirituality it caters to the natural man, and bespeaks two things. First, that the person who thus entertains has largely lost the deep touch of God they once possessed. Second, that their audience, who applauds, have [*sic*] drifted in the same direction.¹

By 1955, the *Pentecostal Evangel* was criticizing the very industry that the Couriers would soon leave Springfield to pursue. In a news brief entitled “Shallow-Pan Christianity,” the *Evangel* warned:

A tropical hurricane of a different but equally devastating character is moving northward. *The Prairie Overcomer* calls

Continued on next page

Continued from page 7

it a “musical monster.” It says: “Capacity crowds come to be entertained and, occasionally converted during an ‘All-nite Sing,’ colloquially called ‘gospel boogie’ or ‘jumping for Jesus.’ Admission charges in one city, where 6,500 attended, were \$1.25 to \$1.60, children half price. We warn God’s people not to be swept into supporting the gospel show business ... May God make us as serious as the days in which we live. Fun, froth, and religious frolic are indicative of shallow-pan Christianity.”²



Ultimately, most criticism from Assemblies of God members focused on the need for a commitment on the part of those who sang gospel music, giving at least a greater degree of latitude on musical style than did most mainline denominations. Among the severest critics was the pastor of the Blackwood Brothers’ home church. Reverend James Hamill of the First Assembly of God, Memphis, who was also the father of Jim Hamill, lead

singer for a number of southern gospel quartets beginning in 1953.

In an address entitled “Praising the Lord in Song,” Hamill first gave support to the unusual style of gospel singing that the quartets offered. Though opining “I do not believe there is any place in the church for rock and roll, or jazz, in the name of religion,” Hamill went on to embrace quartet singing as a legitimate vehicle for Christian worship.

I grow a little tired of people who have appreciation for only one type of religious music, whether it be what we commonly refer to as quartet singing or whether it be anthems or classics. I believe there is a place for simple songs that carry a message, done well and done under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I also believe there is a place for anthems and the great psalms of praise and adoration to God.³

Even so, Hamill was convinced that quartet music, or any other type of religious music must of necessity be backed by a solid Christian life:

We have disgusting examples of ungodly persons singing hymns and religious songs on radio, television, and elsewhere across this country, which must be nauseating to a holy God.

We also have the sad state where men and women sing in choirs professionally who know nothing about Jesus Christ. They have good and well-trained voices. They will sing rock and roll, pop tunes, the classics, or hymns. It means nothing to them other than the money or fame received for their services. God surely will bring such people into judgment. This same indictment must also apply to those who sing in so-called gospel quartets who do not live for the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴

More than others in the evangelical community, Pentecostals persisted in their support for the legitimacy of gospel quartet music. Profoundly, they recognized in gospel music an effective evangelistic outreach tool. Despite occasional misgivings, they opted to use the power of the music rather than surrender it to purely secular forces.

Notes

¹ Robert Brown, “Jazz,” *Glad Tidings Herald* (February 1937): 3.

² “Shallow-Pan Christianity,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 20, 1955): 2.

³ James E. Hamill, “Praising the Lord in Song,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 24, 1963): 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

impressing the station manager, they explained that they had no money but would sing for free in order to advertise their availability for local concerts. The gamble paid off and, for the next twelve years, the Couriers were a mainstay on the station’s Sunday morning programming. Eventually they were able to farm the program out to ten additional northeastern radio outlets.⁸

The connection with local AG congregations also proved fortuitous. The Pennsylvania-area Youth Director was engaged in an effort to build a strong denominational summer youth camp and youth convention program and asked the Couriers to help advertise and promote this effort. Slowly but surely, the radio and church exposure paid off. Located strategically within a couple hours drive from the major population centers of the nation in the late 1950s, the quartet found that they could sing to a different crowd literally every night — even when churches were located only a few miles or even blocks apart.

The promotion also took the group beyond the comfortable quarters of Assemblies of God churches. They found their services and unique brand of ministry requested by Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and even Catholic congregations. In the process, the Couriers provided a vital service to the spread of southern gospel — “pioneering” in the Northeast and, increasingly as the years rolled on, in parts of Canada.⁹

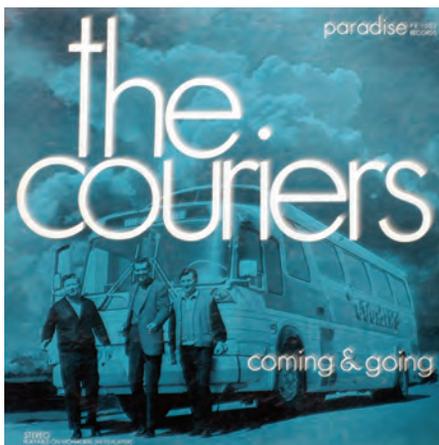
Early in 1964, the group’s success landed them a spot on one of southern gospel’s most important new venues. On the strength of a local television show, *The Gospel Song Shop*, run in selective markets beginning in 1961, the Florida Boys from Pensacola were chosen to headline a new hour-long, color program on Sunday mornings. Produced by Showbiz, Incorporated, a subsidiary of Noble Dury and Associates of Nashville, the *Gospel Singing Jubilee* became a phenomenal success for a syndicated music program, ultimately appearing in more than ninety markets

across the country for the next two decades.

Chosen to co-host with the Florida Boys during that initial 1964 season were the Happy Goodmans, the Dixie Echoes, and the young group from Pennsylvania, the Couriers Quartet. In addition to the syndicated broadcasts, the connection with the show created increased opportunities to travel alongside the industry's established groups.¹⁰

In November 1964, the quartet was spotlighted in the pages of *Billboard* on the strength of their album *Nothing But ... The Gospel Truth*, which ranked as the second most popular gospel album on the Warner Brothers label.¹¹ Though well-respected by the other quartets, the young Pennsylvanians scored lowest in fan response to the new program and, as a result, were not picked up for the second season of programming. Duane Nicholson remembers that the southern audiences expected a bigger, more hyped-up sound, which, despite their efforts, the Couriers simply could not perfect. Southern audiences oftentimes produced remarks like “You don’t sound too bad for Yankees” and the group members smiled, though the remarks hurt a bit more than they let on.¹²

Even so, the broader connection to southern gospel had proven invaluable. Early on the Couriers had started a local monthly concert in a firehouse in Harrisburg. In the beginning, attendance barely topped a hundred listeners but, each month, the crowd grew larger.



Building on their knowledge of other groups in the industry, the boys brought in other talent — first the White Sisters, then Ira Stanphill, and finally more well-known southern gospel talent including the Sons of Song and the Harvesters Quartet from Charlotte, North Carolina. As interest grew, so did the concert venues — moving to a junior high school auditorium and then larger concert halls in Chambersburg, Lancaster, and Harrisburg.

Pretty soon, the biggest names in southern gospel — the Speer Family, the Oak Ridge Boys, the Blackwood Brothers, and the Statesmen Quartet — were all appearing in Pennsylvania and other northeastern states singing alongside the young quartet from CBI. By the late 1960s, Hershey Sports Park in Hershey, Pennsylvania, with a seating capacity of 6000 had become the site of a semi-annual event sponsored by the Couriers — only to be replaced a few years later by the 10,000-seat Farm Show Arena back in Harrisburg. Through the 1970s the Couriers’ events in western Pennsylvania remained one of the major stops on the southern gospel circuit.¹³

Changes

During these crucial foundation

years, the Couriers were blessed by few personnel changes. Nevertheless, change did come. Around 1961, Jerry Evans, a pianist from California, replaced Eddie Reece but then left the group himself a couple of years later to be replaced by Little David Young, a talented accompanist from Georgia. Young stayed until 1965 when he departed, handing the keyboard duties over to Eddie Hawks of West Virginia. That same year, Don Baldwin, the group’s mentor since the days at CBI, also left to pursue a career in music recording. Neil’s brother Phil succeeded Baldwin on the baritone part. But these changes ultimately failed to replicate the stability of the earlier members that had come out of Springfield almost a decade earlier.

In 1968, after Hawks and Phil Enloe had both left the group to pursue local ministry efforts, Neil, Dave, and Duane made a momentous decision. Concerned both about musical chemistry and a shared vision for missions, the three decided to break tradition and become a trio. As a result, Kyllonen assumed the baritone part and the Couriers Quartet became simply the Couriers.¹⁴

Though the group often relied on

the Couriers



The Couriers — Neil Enloe, Duane Nicholson, and Dave Kyllonen — and their families in 1978.

Neil Enloe's ability on the keyboard in introducing new material — he had often filled in when they lacked a regular pianist — the Couriers soon became known for a technological addition. As a trio they began using recorded tracks as backup music, a daring move given the industry's commitment to live musicians. Though criticized by some, the decision proved important in launching a new direction and establishing them as one of the groups at the forefront of southern gospel's new emphasis on ministry. Ultimately purchasing the services of the London Symphony Orchestra, the tactic did not deter the quality of the Couriers' sound and, if anything, enhanced the group's ability to sing in churches and to conduct mission trips abroad.

Combined with Enloe's unique songwriting ability — his *Statue of Liberty* won the Gospel Music Association's Dove Award in 1976 — the Couriers became as a trio what they could not as a quartet and the decade of the 1970s propelled them to further

heights within the gospel music world, treading the line between ministry and entertainment and gaining from many a new-found respect for the role of gospel music in the church.¹⁵ They also branched out into their own television ministry by the 1970s, appearing on a weekly program entitled simply *Couriers* and ultimately dominating the local ratings for their time slot.¹⁶

Ministry and Southern Gospel

The evangelistic direction that came from the Couriers was complemented by other artists who found the big quartet sound of many southern gospel groups awkward as an avenue of worship. The success of the Bill Gaither Trio in the late 1960s and the emergence of contemporary Christian music both emphasized what the members of the Couriers had been trying to articulate all along — gospel music should first and foremost be about the message.

Duane Nicholson remembered this new direction for the trio as something

bred into the group from its earliest days at CBI: “We felt an obligation because of our background. All three of us were ministers. In the early years of the Couriers, we did the concerts. We tried to sing higher than everybody else. But with the trio, we felt that wasn't enough for us. We felt an obligation to go to the mission field. We had an obligation to share Jesus Christ.”¹⁷

As a trio, the Couriers passionately pursued their vision for music

“The Assemblies of God has enjoyed the rich ministry of the Couriers down through the years. Their music has been Christ exalting.”

Thomas E. Trask
General Superintendent

flickr™

To view more photos of the Couriers, visit FPHC's photo group on Flickr™ at the following web address:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/couriers/>

Feel free to leave comments or — even better — join the photo group and upload your own photos of the Couriers and share them with other readers.



ministry. By the mid-1970s, the group had traveled to more than forty-five countries and was donating a month of each year to travel at their own expense to work with missionaries in the field. When the Gospel Music Association authorized the publication of the *Gospel Music Encyclopedia* in 1979, the authors noted, “if it were possible to describe the Couriers in one word, it would surely be ‘ministry.’”¹⁸

The disconnect between the world of the quartets and the mindset of the church had been around almost from the beginning of commercial gospel music. Early on, church leaders — particularly those from the Assemblies of God — had taken a stand against some of the aspects of the industry (see sidebar on page 7).

Christians of all denominations were comfortable with hymn singing and choral numbers but small groups, especially when such music doubled as entertainment, raised serious questions. Primarily church leaders were concerned with exactly how to mix entertainment with the serious dissemination of the gospel message. Even more troublesome was the issue of “worldliness” in the lives of some of the singers.

If singing gospel was seen as another popular way of spreading God’s message, didn’t the singers become de facto evangelists and shouldn’t their lives be expected to aptly represent that gospel in the same way that a minister’s should? If this was the case, many church members surveyed the landscape of gospel singing entertainers and were distressed at what they found. In short, many judged them and found them wanting.

Even so, much more than others in the evangelical community, Pentecostals oftentimes looked the other way. One reason was simply because so many Pentecostal believers genuinely liked the music and fit it into their overall religious worldview, even if they occasionally questioned individual styles or frowned at the lack of spirituality in the lives of gospel

singers. More profound is the fact that Pentecostals recognized in gospel music an evangelistic outreach tool and, despite their occasional misgivings, opted to use the music rather than dismiss it.¹⁹

Despite occasional reservations by their fellow AG constituents about their chosen vocation, Neil Enloe, Duane Nicholson, and Dave Kyllonen — the Couriers who would make the most lasting contribution to the group’s legacy — persisted in consciously mixing a Christ-centered message with the excitement and passion of southern gospel harmony. And, along the way, they took great pains to ensure that the testimony of their personal lives remained intact. The reason was clear. From their unique beginnings at CBI, the Couriers had always been at ease in an evangelical church setting complete with an altar call. Both in the Northeast and in southern Canada, evangelical Christians unfamiliar with the southern tradition of all-night sings responded

to their combination of music and ministry.

Duane Nicholson remembered the shift to a trio as solidifying this commitment to fervent Christian evangelism: “We shared from the Word. This is not to put anyone else down. This was just us. We felt we had to give out the Word ... We felt a tremendous responsibility that what we said, although we had a lot of fun, we wanted to make sure that those people knew where we were coming from, that we had an obligation to share Jesus Christ with them. And they had to make some kind of decision in our services whether to accept Christ or reject Him again.”²⁰

In a group promotional published in the mid-1970s, Enloe echoed the evangelical emphasis that drove the group: “We live for the altar call each evening. We judge the success of our program only by the response of that altar call. We might have sung well and received standing ovations, but this



50 Years Later

Dave, Duane, and Neil



By the late 1990s, the Couriers — by then a trio consisting of Neil and Phil Enloe along with tenor singer Duane Nicholson — worked toward preserving the ministry legacy of the Couriers by passing the baton to a younger generation. From 1997 to 2000, Scot Womble, Larry More, and Kristian Walker were incorporated into the group — making the Couriers for a brief time an ensemble of voices young and old.

After that initial period, the name and traveling were turned completely over to the younger trio. Walker left to pursue his own ministry in 2002 and was replaced by Tim Beitzel. Similarly

Womble left the group for a solo ministry in 2005 and was replaced by Brett Scarem. Today, the trio made up of More, Beitzel, and Scarem continue the strong ministry tradition of the Couriers. You can learn more about the modern-day Couriers by visiting www.thecouriers.com.

Due to the excitement of a reunion concert in 2001 and at the request of a number of churches, the most famous and longest-serving of the Couriers — Neil Enloe, Duane Nicholson, and Dave Kyllonen — formed a new part-time ministry trio. Traveling a limited schedule as Dave, Duane, & Neil, the magnificent sound of the older Couriers along with their genuine Christian testimony remains available both to a new generation of Christians and to those who fondly recall the music of yesteryear.

The group's recent release of the project entitled *One Nation Over God* mixes new material with older Courier favorites. If you're interested in scheduling Dave, Duane, & Neil to minister at your church, you can reach them at 45 Tannery Road, Dillsburg, PA 17019, by calling 717-432-7244, or by e-mailing Nicholson@igateway.com. You can also access their schedule by consulting www.daveduaneandneil.com.

means nothing if we do not see people come to Christ. This is the whole message of our music."²¹

Consistent with the evangelical emphasis of the Couriers was a decided effort to personify a Christian life and avoid anything that would harm their witness. Nicholson remembered that the group members discussed the biblical injunction "to abstain from all appearance of evil."²² As a result, members made it a policy that there would be no smoking and no drinking.²³

There was also concern about the perils of life on the road. In an industry dominated by both bus travel and male performers, gospel quartet members faced the same temptations, complicated by increased

opportunity, as their parallels in the secular music industry. In fact, gospel music insiders had colorfully dubbed female groupies who followed popular quartets to and from their concerts as "diesel sniffers."²⁴

But the Couriers knew how quickly a rumor of infidelity, even if untrue, could kill a Christian witness. The result was rules, firm and fast rules: 1) No woman could ride the bus unless she had a husband also on the bus or she were accompanied by the wives of the Couriers themselves. 2) Absolutely no woman, even a group member's wife, was ever to be behind the Courier table. 3) At every concert, group members made a point to talk openly to the audience about their wives.²⁵

At the height of their ministerial success, the Couriers suddenly headed in new directions. In 1979, Duane Nicholson was forced to have throat surgery due to the presence of nodules on his vocal chords. Though Neil and Dave stood unequivocally by him during the trying time, the medical crisis temporarily interrupted the group's ministry efforts as Nicholson continued to have persistent problems that restricted his ability to tour. Dave Kyllonen continued his preaching ministry and ultimately began traveling and singing with his family. Likewise Neil Enloe continued to write music and also began to sing as a soloist and with his own family group. Temporarily off the road, Nicholson contented himself by working as host of the group's television ministry and in local concert promotions.

During the early 1980s, however, little by little, Neil and Duane began to sing together again, getting a number of individuals to fill in on Kyllonen's part. By the mid-80s, Phil Enloe joined the group on a permanent basis and the Couriers returned to full operation until their formal retirement in 2000, when they turned the group name over to a younger group of family members. A Couriers reunion concert in 2001, however, renewed the interest in the three men, Neil Enloe, Duane Nicholson, and Dave Kyllonen, who traced their roots all the way back to Springfield, Missouri in 1958. The result has been a rekindling of those marvelous voices and testimonies (See



sidebar on page 12). Today traveling a limited schedule as Dave, Duane, and Neil, the spirit of Springfield 1958 lives on.²⁶

Conclusion

So it was into an ambivalent world of entertainment and ministry that five young men from an Assemblies of God background forged on in the summer of 1958 to make their mark in the world of southern gospel. Along the way, they clearly found success — producing more than fifty albums and traveling more than four million miles. They were also honored with three Dove awards, the gospel music industry's highest honor.²⁷

But, to their credit and much more impressive than awards and longevity, they never let go of their dedication to Christ and their understanding that gospel must be lived if the singing is to have any effect. The mission of every evangelical church is to win souls for Christ and then to turn those souls into soul-winners. The Assemblies of God can be duly proud of the fact that the background, training, and influence provided by the church made a lasting impact on the lives of the young men who established themselves as Couriers — messengers sent in haste to share a message of hope and marvelous grace.



James R. Goff, Jr., Ph.D., is professor of history at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. He served as the chief historical consultant for the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Pigeon Forge,

Tennessee, which opened in 1999. His publications include *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of American Pentecostalism* (Univ. of Arkansas, 1988); *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel* (Univ. of NC, 2002); and *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders* (co-edited with Grant Wacker, Univ. of Arkansas, 2002). He has also published widely in academic journals and popular magazines.

Notes

¹ Personal interview with Duane Nicholson, Alexandria, Indiana, April 3, 1996.

² The term southern gospel was not routinely used until the early 1980s. With the expansion of musical styles in the gospel music field, the term has come to describe traditional, and mostly white, multi-harmony gospel music. For a discussion of the evolution of the term, see James R. Goff, Jr., *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 274-82.

³ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1998), 266.

⁴ On the career of the Blackwoods, see Goff, *Close Harmony*, 135-39, 172-74. See also Kree Jack Racine, *Above All: The Fascinating and True Story of the Lives and Careers of the Famous Blackwood Brothers Quartet* (Memphis: Jarodoco Publications, 1967) and James Blackwood and Dan Martin, *The James Blackwood Story* (Monroeville, PA: Whitaker House, 1975).

⁵ See "That's Life," *Concert Life* 5 (July-August 1977): 34.

⁶ For early information on the Couriers see Charles R. Hembree, *They Sing the Mighty Power: The Unique and Inspiring Story of the Couriers* (Stow, OH: New Hope Press, 1975), 11-30 and Goff, *Close Harmony*, 185-86.

⁷ Personal interview with Neil Enloe, Alexandria, Indiana, April 3, 1996 and Nicholson interview.

⁸ Hembree, *Mighty Power*, 20-21 and Nicholson interview.

⁹ Goff, *Close Harmony*, 186, 250.

¹⁰ Hembree, *Mighty Power*, 22-23 and Goff, *Close Harmony*, 228-29.

¹¹ *Billboard* (November 7, 1964): 33.

¹² Nicholson interview.

¹³ Nicholson interview. See also Hembree,

Mighty Power, 23-24.

¹⁴ Sources vary on the precise dates of personnel changes. I have pieced this chronology together from a variety of Courier sources. See "History," *The Couriers: Purpose, Passion, & Praise* www.thecouriers.com (accessed September 28, 2006); John Crenshaw, "Southern Gospel NewsHistory 101" www.daveduaneandneil.com (accessed September 28, 2006); and John Crenshaw, "SG History 101—Don Baldwin" www.sogospelnews.com/index/history/comments/5968/ (accessed September 20, 2006).

¹⁵ Enloe interview, April 3, 1996, and in Birmingham, Alabama, August 14, 1999.

¹⁶ Hembree, *Mighty Power*, 20-23 and Goff, *Close Harmony*, 230.

¹⁷ Nicholson interview. On the Couriers' role in southern gospel ministry, see Goff, *Close Harmony*, 249-51.

¹⁸ Robert Anderson and Gail North, *Gospel Music Encyclopedia* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 51.

¹⁹ In his study of Pentecostals, historian Grant Wacker recognizes this trend as a unique ability to blend the primitivist impulse with a strong pragmatic one. Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁰ Nicholson interview.

²¹ "Two Decades of Music Ministry," *The Couriers* (Mechanicsburg, PA, ca. 1974): 2.

²² The biblical reference is to I Thessalonians 5:22.

²³ For an early reflection on this, see Hembree, *Mighty Power*, 84.

²⁴ The term was revealed to me in a number of interviews with older quartet singers recalling the bus travel of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.

²⁵ Nicholson interview.

²⁶ For information on the current arrangement and schedule of the group, see "Dave, Duane, & Neil" at www.daveduaneandneil.com. For information on the younger set of Couriers, see www.thecouriers.com.

²⁷ The Couriers' Dove Awards included a 1975 Associate Membership Award for the song *Statue of Liberty's* overall contribution to gospel music; Song of the Year in 1976 (also for *Statue of Liberty*); and Inspirational Album of the Year in 1977 (for *Ovation*). "Awards History," *GMA 38th Music Awards* www.gmamusicawards.com/history/ (accessed September 29, 2006).

Missionary Legacies

By George O. Wood

M

Missions has always been central to the identity of the Assemblies of God. No one knows this better than General Secretary George O. Wood. In this article, Dr. Wood, himself the son of missionary parents to Tibet and China, recounts the sacrifices and inspiring legacies of his family and other heroes of the faith who helped lay the groundwork for the spread of the gospel through the Assemblies of God to the nations of the world.



Elizabeth (Weidman) Wood

China

Ruth and Elizabeth Weidman

My mother Elizabeth and her sister, Ruth Weidman, arrived in Shanghai on October 10, 1924. Mom was 26 years of age and Aunt Ruth was 28.

Mom had actually intended to be in China two years earlier, but her 56-year-old father, Oliver (my middle name is his) had suddenly died of a stroke. He believed so completely in the soon return of the Lord that he felt it would be an act of faithlessness to take out life insurance. Mom delayed her call to China for two years so she could pay off his funeral expenses by working in a bank. Mom would always say wryly, “After that, I believed in life insurance.”

Mom and Aunt Ruth studied language in Beijing and in the mountains outside Beijing in the summer months. On arriving at the summer location they were told that the only place available for them was a vacant room on a temple grounds. The room was very small with two huge idols. The women threw a sheet over the idols, but in the middle of the night Mom’s cot began to jerk from head to foot. She finally managed to say “Jesus” and the jerking stopped. Next day they found a room without idols, but full of bedbugs. They said, “We’ll take it.” They prayed to the Lord to keep the bedbugs away and never saw one the rest of the whole summer.

After Aunt Ruth married Victor Plymire, Mom made her way with them in the fall of 1928 to the great northwest of China. During this trip they had to travel one day in an open freight car, going through one tunnel after another, holding their breath at times since so many tunnels were



The Plymire and Wood families and other AG missionaries ready to set sail on the S. S. Marine Lynx for China and the Far East, February 14, 1947.

filled with gas fumes. Suddenly, three railroad cars caught on fire. Only another car and a gasoline tanker car separated them from the burning cars. The train sped downhill through many tunnels where they were exposed to lots of coal gas, but mother reported that the Lord “safely took us through.”

When the rail tracks ended they hired two-wheel wooden oxcarts with no springs and traveled 30 miles daily for the next month — sleeping in smoke-filled Chinese inns. Mom left the Plymires at Anting and rode horseback to the town where W. W. Simpson and his wife labored. She was from Cleveland, Ohio, and had never ridden a horse before. At one point she came to a narrow passage with high banks on one side and a deep precipice on the other. One of horses, with trunks strapped on him, spooked. They were able to save him, but Mother then walked her horse across the danger point. Four days later she reached Anting.

A year later she rode two weeks on horseback to Huangyuan where the Plymires lived. Famine starved people were all along the route, eating barks from trees and anything they could get their hands on. One little girl had chewed off all her fingers. Mother gave the starving the food she had. Things got worse when she arrived in Huangyuan. An 18,000-strong bandit army stormed the city, breached the walls, killed 3,000 in an hour’s time and left many wounded. Mother’s first days there were caring for the dying and wounded, and feeding the famine starved.

Her first missionary journey ended in 1930 because Uncle Victor’s health was failing. They put him on a shantza — a mule in front and another behind joined by 2 large poles, interwoven with rope; and bedding and a covering of matting tied over the framework for shelter. Aunt Ruth and

Mom accompanied the shantza on horseback for 7 days, and then rode a raft made of 140 inflated sheepskins until they got to a town where they could catch the train to Beijing, and from there — the U.S.A.

Throughout those six years of her first missionary term, Mom faithfully witnessed and served. She returned to China 2 years later. Upon arriving in Shanghai to begin her second term in 1932, she married my Dad, George R. Wood. Together they served in China until 1940. After the Second World War, they served again from 1947 to 1949. One of Mother’s favorite phrases was: “It won’t matter 100 years from now.” That’s how she dealt with life’s difficulties.

I was up in Huangyuan several years ago and an old man approached me. He was a boy of twelve when the 18,000 bandits had swarmed Huangyuan. He told me, “The missionaries saved my life, and I just want to thank you that I was able to grow up having a father.” What Mother had done mattered to him 70 years later!

Burkina Faso

Paul and Virginia Weidman

My uncle and aunt, Paul and Virginia Weidman, felt the call to go to Africa as missionaries. In 1937, they traveled to Upper Volta (renamed Burkina Faso in 1984) with their two little boys, Paul, Jr. and John, where they would work with the Mossi people. Paul, Jr. quickly learned the language of the Mossi and began interpreting for his missionary dad. The Mossi loved this little boy who stood beside his father and translated the strange words into a tongue they could understand. On February 5, 1938, Paul, Jr., who was almost

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest." Luke 10:2.



MR. AND MRS. PAUL R. WEIDMAN,
PAUL JR. AND JOHN LINDSEY
MISSIONARIES TO AFRICA

Home Address:

c/o R. D. LINDSEY, R. 3, Box 50
CHERRYVALE, KANSAS

Foreign Address:

OUAGADOUGOU, COTE D'IVOIRE,
VIA DAKAR, FRENCH WEST AFRICA

Weidman family missionary prayer card, about 1936.

seven years of age, became suddenly ill with blackwater fever and died three days later. He is buried in a grassless brown dirt cemetery just outside the town of Tenkodogo. The *Pentecostal Evangel* published my aunt's account of his death:

Saturday afternoon he lay in his bed and sang with all his heart (in the More language) "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus." Then he preached, as he so often did, saying, "Do not follow Satan's road but follow God's road, for it alone leads to heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord." In a short time extreme pain started. How we did call unto God for deliverance; yet He gave us grace to say, "Not my will but Thine be done." What a ray of sunshine he has been in our home! Only God can fill the vacancy. In times like this we are made to know that our Redeemer liveth."¹

Little Paul's death was the first in a series of tragedies that hit the young missionary family. Uncle Paul next became ill with malarial dysentery and then the roof on their home collapsed during the rain. They traveled to Ouagadougou, the capital, because Aunt Virginia was expecting a child and required bed rest. These personal problems were



Paul Weidman, Sr. on a motorcycle with son Paul, Jr., standing next to him, in Upper Volta about 1937.

compounded by uncertainties over the Second World War. Upper Volta was a French colony, so when France fell to Nazi Germany, a Nazi-leaning Vichy government was set up in Upper Volta. In the midst of this political and personal turbulence, the Weidmans decided that all they had left was their faith. So they named their little girl TAY-BOW (which means Faith in More).

My uncle told the story of a young man who came to the little mud and thatch church for a service in Tenkodogo in the late 1930s. At the close of the meeting he approached Uncle Paul and said that he wanted to accept Christ as his Savior. As was the "custom" for new converts, he immediately went into a class to learn to read. Each prospective convert received a little pamphlet called the "Bi te" sheet. It read, "Bi te Zousoba Jesus Christ la nyam na pam fagere," which meant in English, "Believe (Bi te) on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Believers spent the first week memorizing that verse, and the second week they came back and they received a second reading sheet.

This young man, however, did not come back the second week, or the third week. Time went by and he was not heard of again. Nobody knew where he had gone, church members lost track of him and said they had no idea where he went. Then a long time later, months in fact, according to my uncle, in a testimony meeting he stood up and shared. He said he had been serving the Lord ever since that day many months before when he made his decision. Despite being a long way from Tenkodogo in the bush country, he told how God had been with him, and how he still remained a Christian. Later, a local deacon came up to him and asked him, "How could you stay saved all that time back in the bush? We have a missionary, we have a church, we have Christians around us, but how could you stay a Christian all alone?" The deacon added, "In fact, you don't even have a Bible."

The young convert replied, "Well it's true I didn't have a missionary, I didn't have a pastor, I don't have a church, but

I have a Bible!” And he pulled out that one scripture, Acts 16:31, on a piece of paper, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” It was well-worn from carrying it around for many months. He held it up and said, “That’s the Word of God, isn’t it? When I would get discouraged I would pray ‘Jesus, save me from discouragement’ and He did. When I got sick or my family was suffering, I prayed ‘Jesus, save me from sickness, save my family.’ And He did. Every temptation, every trial, every oppression, I would pray ‘Jesus, save me,’ and He would save me. Jesus just kept saving me, and saving me, and that is why I am still **SAVED.**”

Forty years later the Weidmans, then retired, visited this part of Burkina Faso. An old Mossi pastor in his 70s who had witnessed the Weidmans suffer the loss of their son decades earlier came in from hoeing a field. He was startled when he saw Uncle Paul, and threw his arms around him. They sang, smiled, laughed aloud, and rejoiced. Then the old man, Dakoega, said, “It was not in vain, missionary. There are now churches everywhere.”

Today, the Assemblies of God is the largest Protestant Fellowship in Burkina Faso, with over 6,000 churches and preaching points serving almost one million believers.

Nicaragua

Clarence and Dorothy Radley

Across the ocean, on another continent, another young Assemblies of God missionary couple went to Nicaragua in 1926. Their names were Clarence and Dorothy Radley. They were not there long before Brother Radley came down with malaria. On February 21, 1927 he died of an infection



Clarence , Dorothy, and daughter Evangeline Radley, about 1926.

thought to be from blood poisoning. Before he died, his wife overheard him repeat very slowly the words, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.” B. A. Schoenich, a fellow missionary, who crossed enemy lines in the Nicaraguan civil war to reach him — only too late — wrote in the *Pentecostal Evangel*:

There are happenings in the course of our lives and in our work that we fail to understand; we know not why God allows such things to take place, but one thing is sure, He knows and “He doeth all things well.”²

His widow found herself isolated in the village of Esteli, Nicaragua because of the ongoing civil war, and therefore was without help for burial preparations. She built the casket herself with the help of some national Christians, held the service herself, and sang the solo at the burial. The fighting stopped long enough so she could bury the body. Their daughter, Evangeline, was four years old.

Sister Radley came home with her little girl. When Clarence Radley died, they would not let her bury him in the graveyard, so she had to bury him in a field, named “The Dung Heap,” about two blocks from the graveyard. Believers erected a 10-foot-high marker adjacent to the Pan American highway, which read in Spanish, “He sowed the word at the cost of his life.” Years later, when the highway was widened, they moved his bones and the marker, giving him a preeminent place at the entrance to the graveyard where his burial had first been denied.

Evangeline told me years later, “My mother empowered me to believe, ‘What a wonderful privilege to do the work of the Lord. What a powerful thing that He chooses us.’”

Nicaragua

Oren and Florence Munger

In 1943, sixteen years after Clarence Radley’s death, a young couple by the name of Oren and Florence Munger arrived in Nicaragua. Oren was 23 years of age, and fresh out of Central Bible Institute (Springfield, Missouri), where he had collaborated with Harold C. McKinney on a missionary song, called “The Vision,” known well in the yesteryear of our Fellowship:

I have seen the heathen in their darkness,
I have heard their cry of grim despair;
All my heart is burning with the passion,
To bring to them the light of Jesus there.

Take me, Master, break me, use me,
I am leaning on Thy breast,
All ambitions fast are dying,
From their pain now give me rest;
On the altar I have lain them,

Now to Thee I give my heart,
Fill me with the fire of vision,
Let my passion ne'er depart.

All my life I've longed to catch a vision,
That would lift me to the Christ of love;
And I found it in the dying millions,
Reaching for the message from above.

Every dream and every burning longing,
I surrender to their crying need;
I am leaving every hope behind me,
To follow anywhere my Lord may lead.

Men may sneer and even friends deride me,
But I'll follow Jesus all the way;
He will safely lead thro' storm-tossed waters,
And dry my every tear at close of day.³

In Nicaragua, Oren and Florence gave themselves unreservedly to spread the gospel. Oren, noted for his praying, covenanted with God to pray for revival.

He taught in the Bible school at Leon where he spent nights and days in prayer, interceding for a cleansing,



Oren, Florence and son
Marcus Munger,
about 1943.

healing outpouring of the Holy Spirit not only for the school, but for all of Nicaragua. His body weakened from such strenuous labor, and he came down with malaria. Even then, from his sickbed, the prayers continued.

Florence became ill just after the birth of their son on August 24, 1943. Although it looked serious, God healed her. At the close of the school term, the Mungers went to Matagalpa. Oren placed a cot in his prayer room. Praying until he was exhausted, he would lie down and rest, and then continue his battle against the powers of darkness. This he would do for days at a time. His wife wrote:

I feared to venture near the prayer room lest somehow I would disturb such holy communion. He sought to have the unction of the Spirit always.... While in the Spirit, he was given several beautiful songs — their melodies as well as words expressing Christ's undying love for the Church.⁴

Revival did come. When Oren had first arrived in Nicaragua, only two of twelve Assemblies of God pastors had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. His passion for God sparked the beginnings of revival in that land.

Loren Triplett, himself a missionary to Nicaragua, told me how loved Oren was by the people. He would ride out into the rain forest on muleback to proclaim the gospel. In Spanish, the infinitive, "to pray," is orar; but, the command, "pray," is oren. On one of his mule trips to a rural area, some believing women came up to Oren, and asked, "What is your name?" When he said, "Oren," they went away to pray. They kept coming back, and then leaving to pray. Finally, they said, "What is your real name?"

On November 22, 1944, their second child, Marcia Alice, was born. Five months later, on March 28, 1945, Oren was stricken with typhoid while ministering in a remote area. He hurried home (a 2-day journey) and fell into bed, never to make another missionary trip. A week later he got out of bed, sat at the piano and played. His wife did not recognize the melody so she asked him, "What are you playing?" Oren responded, "I am going to call it The Love Call of Christ for His Bride." Oren never wrote the words. He went back to bed, and his fingers never swept over the keyboard again. Malaria and other complications developed.

In the months of his illness, Oren received reports of the growing revival in Nicaragua. Shortly before Oren passed away, Marcelino Davila, a national evangelist, returned from a visit to every church in the district. Oren rejoiced with him over the good reports. Then, as he prayed with Oren, the Spirit of God gave him a special message: "Rest," he said, "Do not struggle any longer to fight the battle. Consider the victory won. You came to Nicaragua, saw the need of revival, prayed, and God has answered. Now rest and praise the Lord. Rejoice." From that time on

The Juergensens conducting a meeting at the Pentecostal Church in Tokyo in 1921. Front (l-r): John Juergensen (2nd from left), Esther Juergensen, Grace Marie Juergensen (held by Japanese girl), Marie and Agnes Juergensen. Carl Juergensen is standing in the back row with a group of Japanese men.



Oren was at peace.

His last morning, Oren called his wife to his side. She was just writing a letter to his parents. “What shall I write home to the folks?” she asked. He whispered, “Tell them I am passing through deep waters, but that the Lord is the Lord even of the deep waters.”

He died on Saturday evening, August 25, 1945, at the age of 25 — the fourth Assemblies of God missionary in those early years, and not the last, to give his life for the cause of the gospel in Nicaragua. He had served only three years as a missionary — but, his legacy has stretched far longer. In a letter home, Oren had written, “It is not in the great numbers of missionaries that the evangelism of the world lies, but in the intense glow with which the firebrands burn.” Oren Munger was God’s firebrand.

In 2005, over 1,500 AG churches and preaching points existed in Nicaragua, serving 445,375 members and adherents.

Japan

Carl and Frederike Juergensen

Carl F. Juergensen owned a business in Cleveland, Ohio, and closed it for six months to tarry until he had received the baptism of the Spirit. After receiving, he said, “Lord, if You can use me, I will go anywhere You wish to send me to carry Your Word.” He thought God would perhaps send him to the land of his birth, Germany, as he had command of the German language. But, he sensed God say to him, “I want you to go to Japan.”

“Japan? Oh no! Not Japan! A land of a strange language and strange customs! What can I do there?” he responded.

He talked it over with his wife, hoping she would not be included and God would thus let him off the hook. She responded that several weeks earlier God had given her a vision of a little girl with black hair and eyes, holding out her hands as though pleading for help. She had not understood the vision and thought the Lord might want her to pray for China. Based on what her husband told her, she determined that the little girl must have been Japanese. So, she said to him, “If God has told you to go to Japan, we must obey Him.”

So they set out from Ohio to Los Angeles. They had no promised support. In Los Angeles, they prayed, “Lord give us another six months.” When the six months was over, the burden to go to Japan returned in double measure. Carl reasoned with God, “I am not a young man. I will not be able to learn that difficult language. What can I do for You in Japan?” While riding a streetcar shortly afterward, one day in Los Angeles, the Lord gently spoke to him: “When I called Moses, he also said he could not speak and I gave him Aaron as his mouthpiece. So I am sending you, and your daughter will be your mouthpiece.” He was 50 years old.

They arrived as faith missionaries in Japan in 1913. Two and a half years later, the 14-year-old daughter, Marie, became his interpreter. He would stand on the street corner in Tokyo, and his voice, carried by the breeze, would ring out for several blocks. Several hundred Japanese would gather to hear the older man speak in a language they could not understand, but whose words were interpreted by the young teenage girl into fluent Japanese.

For the next 28 years, Carl Juergensen with his wife would lay the foundation for the Assemblies of God in Japan. All three of their children: John, who died at 41 years of age — two years before his father; Marie (the



Missionary Florence Steidel welcomes Liberian President William Tubman to the New Hope Leprosy Mission, which she founded in 1947.

girl who translated); and Agnes would themselves serve as appointed Assemblies of God missionaries to Japan. After Carl died in August 1940, at almost 78 years of age, his family continued their ministry to the Japanese. Agnes and her mother returned home to the US where they ministered in the Japanese “relocation centers.” Marie remained in Japan through the Second World War. When the war was over and General MacArthur issued his call for a thousand missionaries to come to Japan to help fill the spiritual vacuum of the Japanese people, Frederike Juergensen crossed the ocean alone at the age of 81 to join her daughter in the work. She would serve for seven more years in the land of her calling before coming back to the US where after five years, at the age of 93, she went to be with the Lord.

Marie Juergensen, now herself with the Lord, wrote:

Foundation stones are chosen stones. They are carefully shaped and placed according to a definite plan. They are made to bear heavy weight. Among God’s foundation stones are those I have loved so dearly and know so well. They proved their calling by their works. They prepared the way for others and bore the weight of testings, sorrow, and responsibility. Their joy and reward are the souls they won for Christ and His glory. On these chosen stones was built a permanent structure — the Assemblies of God of Japan.⁵

Liberia

Florence Steidel

Born in Illinois and raised in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas and Missouri, Florence Steidel spent her childhood working to help her widowed mother support her

younger brothers and sisters. With her sisters and brothers, she learned the dairy business, how to plant corn, to plow, to work in a garden, to ride horseback and to drive cattle. She learned how to fix a fence, to feed the cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats in the winter, and how to shear some 600 sheep and nearly 1,000 goats every spring. She learned to pick and can fruit and vegetables, run farm machinery, sow crops and gather the harvest.

At the age of 27, while she was praying, the Holy Spirit showed her a strange country where dark-skinned people were needy and helpless, crying and in agony. “Why is nothing being done to help them?” she asked. She sensed the answer — no one was available. Then she said, “Not me Lord! You know I am timid and uneducated. I have only an 8th grade education. You can’t mean me!” But, as the vision continued to unfold, she finally admitted, “I know I could help those people and bind up their sores.”

She fell asleep with the wonder of this call filling her heart. In a dream she saw a house in Africa that would be hers. She saw woven mats on the floor, the arrangements of the rooms, and the stairway that led to the attic.

She knew that the vision meant she would minister to the sick. In preparation, she finished her high school education by attending night school and spent four years receiving nurse’s training at Missouri Baptist Hospital. She then enrolled in Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and, three years later, finished her Biblical studies in 1932, at the age of 35.

While waiting for her ship to sail to Africa, she stayed at the Mizpah Missionary Rest Home in New York City. She discovered that all the missionaries staying there belonged to the Assemblies of God. As she befriended these

Pentecostals, her heart grew hungry for a deeper experience of God. On November 6, 1934, she was baptized in the Holy Spirit. With a drastically changed outlook, she immediately applied for and received appointment to serve as a missionary with the Assemblies of God.

In 1935, she arrived in Palipo, Liberia, West Africa, to work with missionary Ada Gollan at a girl's school. Ada took her to the house where they would be living and working together. Amazement came over Florence. "I have seen this house before. Years ago I saw it in a dream. There is an attic, isn't there?" From the mats on the floor, to the arrangement of the rooms, to the attic, the house was exactly what the Lord had shown her nine years earlier.

Word spread about her work with the girls and, in particular, her training as a nurse. Lepers began to seek out Florence's medical assistance. She treated Africans with claw-like hands, paralyzed facial muscles, impaired eyesight, ulcerated feet, and infected sores. She learned that many children became lepers before reaching 15 years of age.

After two missionary terms, a vision began to form in her to build a town where lepers could live, receive treatment, and hear about the gospel.⁶

While home on furlough in 1942, she learned she was suffering from an active tuberculosis infection. She spent the next fifteen months in recovery at the Mt. Vernon (MO) Sanitarium. Upon her release from Mt. Vernon, she came to Central Bible Institute for the sole purpose of taking a course in elementary building construction so that she could teach the lepers to build a town for themselves.

In 1947, at the age of 50, she began New Hope Town with \$100 and the labor of lepers. Tribal chiefs gave her 350 acres of land in the jungle where she could build a brand new town. To clear away the trees and brush would have been a stupendous task for a strong man. But God chose a woman instead! She appealed to the lepers and they were willing to do the work. In spite of their crippled hands and feet, they slowly accomplished the task of cutting jungle trees and digging stumps. They had the most primitive tools in those early days. Not a single leper knew how to mix cement, plane a door, or raise the framework of a house — but Florence did, and she taught them. On April 24, 1947, construction was started on the first house and, when it was completed, 68 grateful, happy patients moved in.

She never stopped building. Over the next 15 years, she oversaw construction of 70 permanent buildings and the development of a well laid out town with six main streets. She directed the planting of 2,500 rubber trees, which helped the colony to become self-sufficient. To help the town of lepers overcome its isolation, in 1956 she superintended construction of a road — 18 miles long and including 25 bridges — connecting the town to the nearest government highway.

To most people, the obstacles to the success of New Hope Town might have seemed insurmountable. The region received 380 inches of rain each year, it was inaccessible, and residents spoke more than 50 tribal languages. However, Steidel poured her life into the town of lepers, whom she trained to become carpenters, weavers, tailors, brick makers, and clinic workers. All the furniture used in the buildings was designed and built by the patients. She taught the town to be self-sufficient.

New Hope Town came to house and treat more than 800 lepers at a time. It also provided separate housing and educational facilities for the children of the lepers who had not contracted leprosy. With the treatment of drugs, it took an average of about four years for a leper to be cured of the disease. Each year about 100 people received "symptom free certificates" — indicating they had been symptom free for one year.

Before people left New Hope Town, 90% had been saved and had received the baptism in the Spirit. At the age of 64, she built a Bible school and at her death one year later, 71 students were preparing for the ministry.

Liberia has been ravaged by political unrest and civil war for several decades. With the development of modern medicines, lepers have been able to receive treatment without having to journey to a central treatment facility. Still, New Hope Town has remained right in the heart of the war-torn region of Liberia. Florence Steidel's work gave credibility to the Assemblies of God in Liberia and in Africa. Her work helped make the Assemblies of God church strong in Liberia today.



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Notes

- ¹ "Little One Called Home," *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 26, 1938): 7.
- ² Noel Perkin, "Missionary News," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 2, 1927): 10.
- ³ H. C. McKinney, "The Vision," in *Sing His Praise* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1991), 388.
- ⁴ Elva Johnson, "Oren Munger: Through Deepest Waters," *Heroes of the Conquest Series*, no. 17 (Springfield, MO: Foreign Missions Department, Assemblies of God, 196?), 14.
- ⁵ Marie Juergensen, "Foundation Stones: Carl F. Juergensen," *Heroes of the Conquest Series*, no. 11 (Springfield, MO: Foreign Missions Department, Assemblies of God, 196?), 14.
- ⁶ Inez Spence, "These Are My People: Florence Steidel," *Heroes of the Conquest Series*, no. 4 (Springfield, MO: Foreign Missions Department of the Assemblies of God, 196?), 8.



R. L. Brandt

A Faithful Servant

By Julie R. Neidlinger

Simple farm roots are no indicator of a person's potential or scope of influence. Although R. L. Brandt was raised on a farm in north central North Dakota, he has become a preacher, teacher, evangelist, well-published author, world traveler, and leader in the Assemblies of God. Brandt's ministry has had an effect on our Movement far beyond his seemingly humble beginnings. His life is one of listening to and

following the leading of the Spirit into the paths of ministry that have made his life one of faithful servanthood and obedience.

Robert Louis Brandt was born on May 29, 1917 to Alfred and Henrietta Brandt on a farm near Tower City, North Dakota. Prayer meetings in homes and a blossoming Pentecostal movement in the region would not leave Brandt, or his family, untouched. The decision to believe and follow in the Pentecostal ways was by no means a simple one.

During the Depression years, Pentecostalism was viewed with suspicion by many and sometimes seen as a cult. Merely associating with Pentecostals was a costly thing, as Brandt's future father-in-law, Bruce S. Williams, could have attested.¹ Williams was forced from the pastorate

of a small Church of the Brethren in Egeland, North Dakota, after his wife experienced Spirit baptism in 1926. Yet the call was strong, and Brandt chose to follow. Where God would lead him in ministry he could not have imagined.

► Conversion

Brandt's conversion experience occurred at the Lake Geneva Bible Camp near Alexandria, Minnesota in the summer of 1933. Donald Gee, a minister from England, was the guest speaker. Following one of Gee's evening services, Brandt found himself in the prayer room, surrendering his life to Jesus Christ.²

Upon returning home, Brandt began attending Friday night prayer meetings in private homes in the



R. L. and Marian Brandt on their wedding day, May 19, 1940.

Egeland area. It was during a meeting held in the home of George and Ethel Brown that Brandt received the infilling of the Holy Spirit. George Brown had been an ungodly man prior to his own conversion, but the gospel had gotten hold of him, and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Brandt took note of Brown's changed witness for Christ, and this motivated him to want all that God had in store for him.³

The prayer meetings at Brown's

house weren't large; only four or five families were in attendance. No one was assigned the position of being the leader, letting all participate as they chose. The small group discussed the Scriptures and sang "with great enthusiasm ... until the rafters rang."⁴ When the singing was done, the praying began with everyone on their knees, praying and praising God. Brandt later reported that the presence of God was profound.

Two elderly women laid their hands upon Brandt and began praying, encouraging him to open up and praise the Lord; it was not long before R. L. Brandt was speaking in a language he was unfamiliar with, and it was not long – almost simultaneously – that he felt a strong calling to the ministry. Those small home meetings proved invaluable for Brandt.

"I vividly recall one such meeting ... during which there was a supernatural utterance which I somehow sensed was meant for me," Brandt said, describing the meetings. "Nearly everyone present indicated they felt it was for me. I sensed that it was intended to alert me to difficult times I would face in the ministry, and I confess it couldn't have been more accurate."⁵

As soon as he finished high school, he headed to North Central Bible Institute (NCBI) in Minneapolis to prepare for ministry, not knowing what lay ahead.

► College

During his time at NCBI, Brandt experienced the normal struggles one might expect. During one particular personal crisis, it seemed that the more Brandt prayed for a specific need in his life, the further away the answer seemed to be. His formerly care-free spirit was experiencing a crisis, and his hopes for entering into the ministry seemed to be at stake. It was during this time of struggle that Brandt felt a strong urge to open the Bible and read, and when he simply obeyed, his eyes fell upon a few verses in Isaiah 49,



Ordination candidates at Lakewood Park, North Dakota, July 1941. (L-r): Kenneth McIntyre, Jack Grothaus, R. L. Brandt, and Elmer Trygg.

and he read, "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

No other words in the whole Bible could have comforted him as those words did. They proved to be exactly what he needed to hear, and the burden he'd been feeling was removed. His path seemed clear.

► Mother's Healing

While in college, his mother, Henrietta Brandt, was diagnosed with a particularly devastating cancer. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic determined she had between six months to two years to live. R. L. Brandt, at the request of his father, Alfred, drove to the Mayo Clinic to visit his mother, not knowing if this would be the last time he would

see her. He prayed for her, feeling an unusual "sort of travail in prayer ... more than sorrow over my anticipated loss."⁶

In the coming months, Henrietta was prayed for wherever she went, and although she never felt a specific moment of healing, she was, indeed, healed. The doctors at the Mayo Clinic were astounded; she lived 35 more years instead of the two the doctors had said she might achieve. Her healing had a great impact on Brandt's life: "It taught me that what doctors might not be able to do, God in a moment of time can do, providing he can find an instrument to be His agent."⁷

► Staying in the Assemblies of God

In the spring of 1938, Brandt graduated from NCBI and returned home only to find Pentecostals in Cando and Egeland in disarray. An independent preacher from Chicago, Joseph V. Trankina,⁸ had come into the church and caused a split, taking some of the church members with him when he left.

This left Brandt with a dilemma, wanting to begin his ministry but not

sure which direction he should go. The North Dakota District gave him a license to preach in 1938, and he decided to join with David Kensinger from his home church in pioneering efforts in Havana, North Dakota. Brandt also preached in special meetings in an independent church in Adams, North Dakota, pastored by Trankina, but no full-time ministry opportunities arose. Trankina invited Brandt to join him in his ministry, one that included a radio broadcast. Though his parents encouraged him to step through this open door, Brandt desired to stay within the Assemblies of God.

He had an unsettled feeling that continued to grow, up until the district council meeting. Through a night of prayer with a fellow man of God, Brandt felt, in the early hours of the morning, that God had heard his prayer and would answer. The next day, the opportunity to begin his ministry in Stanley, North Dakota was offered to him, and he agreed. The independent preacher who had offered him the ministry opportunity later had a disagreement with some of his followers and abandoned his churches. Brandt believes his decision to stay within the Assemblies of God fellowship was pivotal – the result of divine intervention.⁹



Morris Williams and R. L. Brandt (right), about 1938.



The parsonage and church at Stanley where Brandt pastored from 1939-1945.

► Stanley, ND 1939-1945

Brandt began his pioneering ministry in Stanley in 1939. In May of 1940, he married Marian Williams, a young woman from Egeland who had been part of the prayer group and meetings he had attended in the years earlier. One month later, on June 28, 1940, Brandt was ordained by Assistant General Superintendent Fred Vogler in Devils Lake, North Dakota.

Brandt's work in Stanley was a time of growth and excitement. The first church was a former print shop, but in a few years, a former Mennonite church was purchased and moved into town. Another building was moved in and made into a parsonage. The congregation grew under Brandt's ministry, with the Sunday school being such a vital part that, at one time, the Stanley church had the largest Sunday school attendance in the state.

After six years of ministry in Stanley, however, Brandt began sensing that he and Marian would soon be leaving. Though he did not have anything to back up that belief except a sense in his spirit, he felt a change was coming. Six months later, a surprise phone call asked the Brandts to consider the pastorate of First Assembly of God in Grand Forks, North Dakota. They indicated their interest, and although other candidates

were also being considered for the post, the Brandts felt that God was leading them there. They presented their ministry to the Grand Forks church, and shortly after returning home to Stanley they received confirmation that they had been elected. A missionary from Ceylon visited the Stanley church and prophesied during morning family devotions that the Brandts would be selected for the pastorate.

At that time, the Brandts decided not to tell anyone about what the missionary had said, not wanting to influence the election. Shortly after, however, the Brandts were elected by a strong vote to fill the open position in the Grand Forks church. They left Stanley in 1945, having planted a strong church on property that was virtually debt-free, and moved to Grand Forks.¹⁰

► Grand Forks, ND 1945-1951

Soon after arriving in Grand Forks the Brandts were faced with two dilemmas: a difficult decision about staying, and an inadequate church building for a growing congregation.

Six months into serving as pastor in the Grand Forks church, Brandt's brother-in-law, P. T. Emmett, was killed in an airplane accident in June 1946. Emmett was the pastor in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and that open position

was soon offered to R. L. Brandt. The Brandts allowed their name to be submitted for consideration, and though they were elected with a strong vote, the matter was not settled. Brandt did not feel peace in his spirit about the move and struggled over what to do. Praying about the matter, he decided to remain in Grand Forks.

“The moment I did that, a peace flooded my soul and my spirit was no longer troubled,” he later recalled. “If I had accepted the invitation and moved, I am confident my life would have gone an entirely different direction.”¹¹

The church building in Grand Forks proved inadequate for the soon-growing congregation.¹² The simple, wooden structure was 30’ by 80’ and, when originally constructed, did not even have a floor built into it, though a floor was in place by the time the Brandts arrived. The parsonage was built into the rear end of the church, and every room in the house became a Sunday school classroom on Sunday morning. A coal furnace, which Brandt had to fire up each Sunday morning, sat at the rear. Sometimes called “the sheep shed,” the building was not a very inviting place.

However, the Brandts began their ministry in this building in earnest, again promoting Sunday school. Attendance began increasing, extra chairs were often brought in for services, and space began to become a premium commodity in the small, cramped building. It soon became clear another building was necessary. The Augustana Lutheran Church was considered, but deemed



Grand Forks Assembly of God, built in 1949, during R. L. Brandt’s pastorate.

not to be a great improvement over the current building. Because World War II had just ended, building supplies were high-priced and hard to come by.

The congregation and board decided, during a business meeting, to hold off for a year, some reluctant to become involved in a building program. During a February prayer meeting, Brandt asked the board to pray about the urgent need for a larger building. A moving prayer offered up by a board member was the beginning of a change in direction from the decision to wait. Within a year, a new building was dedicated on the site of the old church, seating 250 people with a full basement and balcony.

During his time in Grand Forks, Brandt also served as Sunday school director and as sectional presbyter in the North Dakota District. In the late 1940s he came into contact with the “Latter Rain” teachings that started in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. He and some other North Dakota pastors visited the revival to see what it was all about and determined that prophecy and supposed spiritual gifts were emphasized excessively in the meetings.¹³ He confronted the leaders about some of the problems, but his words of exhortation fell on deaf ears. The Latter Rain movement spilled over into parts of North Dakota and Montana, where Brandt ministered in later years. He was able to handle some of the problems through firsthand knowledge of the beginnings of that movement.

After six years of ministry in Grand Forks, and in the midst of constructing a new parsonage, Brandt felt the Spirit tell him that he would be the next superintendent for the North Dakota District of the Assemblies of God. The man who was in the position at that time, Herman G. Johnson, was the first superintendent for the North Dakota District and had remained in office for 17 years. Brandt felt embarrassed for even thinking that, at only 33 years of age, he would even be considering



Herman Kesler and R. L. Brandt (right) in North Dakota about 1945.

such things; he did not tell anyone – not even Marian.¹⁴

In the following months changes began to take place. Brandt was not reelected to serve as sectional presbyter during sectional council, but returned to his church feeling very much that God had control of whatever was happening. It wasn’t long before district council, where, after a series of about eight votes, Brandt was elected to the position of North Dakota district superintendent. He would serve in this position for seven years, from 1951 to 1958.

▶ ND District Superintendent 1951-1958

Shortly before Brandt became district superintendent, Pastor Lloyd Englar began promoting the idea of starting a Bible school within the district. Brandt felt that the district was too small to support such a school, not to mention too close to NCBI in Minneapolis. At district council, the discussion continued. To Brandt’s dismay at the time, the issue was voted on and approved.

Brandt wrestled with his convictions and disapproval on the matter until God seemed to speak to him directly, telling him that he was wrong in his spirit. It was then that Brandt saw the issue in a whole new light, with a new attitude that gave him a sense of liberty when preaching in Grand Forks the following Sunday.¹⁵

Having a change of view on the matter — now supporting the decision to establish the new school — proved crucial: when Brandt became district superintendent, he found himself in the unique position of being president of the school, known then as Lakewood Park Bible School (LPBS), and now known as Trinity Bible College.

► National Home Missions Secretary 1958-1965

Marian had been battling persistent cough and asthma since their pastorate in Grand Forks. It required constant medication and made her life difficult for nearly ten years, sometimes barely being able to function for a month at a time. Doctors recommended that the Brandts find a different climate to help alleviate the problem and so they looked into moving to Colorado. However, Gayle Lewis, head of the National Home Missions Department at the time, asked Brandt if he'd be interested in filling the position of National Home Missions Secretary recently left open by Victor Trimmer.

Doctors discouraged the Brandts from moving to Missouri, which the position would require, because of the high humidity and the likelihood of it making Marian's condition worse. Brandt, however, felt that taking the position was what they should do. After much prayer, they decided to take the position and trust God. Upon arrival in Springfield, in 1958, Marian's asthma left her never to return.

During his time as National Home Missions Secretary, Brandt oversaw the creation of the "Breakthrough—8000" program, a program launched in 1961 that focused on opening new churches within the Assemblies of God. There was also the "Sites for Souls" program, started in 1963, which focused on raising funds for the purchase of sites for new churches.

R. L. Brandt also put his faith to the test, following God's leading, to help plant a new church in Tooele,



R. L. and Marian Brandt with their children, Linnea, Jean, and Bryce, in 1957.

Utah, during a tour of the Rocky Mountain District. It was a small miracle, if there are such things, how the events worked out. The amount of money raised during the tour meetings was unusually large, particularly for the early 1960s. Brandt had been told he had better be "prayed up" before starting such a project, and he was. He had received a "word of faith" and met it with a "work of faith."¹⁶ The church is still there today.

It was during this time in Missouri that Brandt began to see a need for a closer relationship with God, which developed into spending his noon hour in prayer. Paul's prayers in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians weighed on his mind, and he began praying them daily. It was not long before he found himself writing a book on this topic — *Praying with Paul* — the first of many books and articles to come. Gleaning the endorsement of Norman Vincent Peale for *Praying with Paul*, which was published in 1966, helped to popularize the book.

"Every book I have written was, at that time, my favorite," Brandt later said. "But now, at the end of my ministry ... I would have to say *Praying with Paul* is my favorite. It is one of the best sellers and the impact of its truth still bears down on me."¹⁷

Writing has become a vital part of Brandt's ministry that has lasted into

retirement. In the late 1980s Brandt saw a need for a course on prayer in Assemblies of God colleges. With the help of Dr. Zenas Bicket, president of Berean College at the time, Brandt wrote *The Spirit Helps Us Pray*, a textbook on prayer used by many Assemblies of God colleges in the U.S. as well as by ministers in Brazil. The book was in its fourth printing by 2002.

Brandt would go on to write eleven books and numerous articles that have been published in magazines such as the *Pentecostal Evangel*, *Pulpit*, and *Enrichment*. He also contributed writing for several quarterlies used by the Church School Literature Department (now Radiant Life Curriculum).

► First AG, Billings, MT 1965-1970

In 1965, Brandt took the pastorate of First Assembly of God in Billings, Montana. He had been sensing that his time in Springfield was coming to an end, and when invited to present his ministry to the church in Billings, found himself elected to become their pastor.

After four years as pastor of Billings First Assembly, Brandt felt an uneasiness in his spirit and tendered his resignation.¹⁸ He also advised his district superintendent, Earl Goodman, that he would tender his resignation as assistant district superintendent at camp time.



R. L. Brandt, National Home Missions Secretary, presents "Parade of Progress" at the General Council Home Missions service in 1963.

He was scheduled to serve on a committee in Springfield, Missouri, but before he left he went to the local newspaper office to place an ad for a visiting missionary. As he left the Gazette office and walked toward his car, within his spirit he heard God speaking and saying, "You are not leaving Montana."

He went home and shared that word with his wife, and she didn't know what to make of it.

In a few days they left for Springfield and had been there only 24 hours when the phone rang and he was advised that Earl Goodman had died in a boating accident. Thus he became Montana's District Superintendent, a position he held for thirteen years.

▶ Montana District Superintendent 1970-1983

As district superintendent, Brandt experienced the joys and challenges one would expect. He found peace during the difficult time when his father passed away and later, when his brother Durward suddenly died. The Brandt's eldest daughter, Jean, fell ill with cancer during this time, but God reassured the Brandts, to leave her in His hands. She passed away amidst a knowledge that the situation was as it should be, the Brandts given peace of mind in the matter. R. L. Brandt was also called in more than once to deal with difficulties in churches, relying upon the Spirit to lead in the best way to resolve challenging situations.

During his first year as superintendent, Don Heindricks helped in giving Brandt the vision for the Montanans United Caring Harvesting (MUCH) program. This program resulted in a number of new Montana churches.¹⁹

In 1981 Brandt was elected executive presbyter of the Northwest Region. He continued to be reelected and remained in that office until he retired from that post twenty years later in 2001.

▶ Teacher, Evangelist, Writer 1983-

Throughout their ministry, the Brandts traveled to many countries, from Puerto Rico to Thailand to Java and beyond, encouraging missionaries and observing the work being done for God. One of the countries that received a regular blessing from Brandt's ministry was Canada, a country not so far from where he grew up and first heard the call of God on his life. For fifteen years, Brandt spoke at the annual men's retreat in Banff, Alberta, Canada. He only missed one session because of a trip to Africa. On one trip overseas, Brandt had the opportunity to speak at Pastor Yonggi Cho's church in Seoul, South Korea.

After retiring as superintendent of the Montana District in 1983, Brandt began traveling as a teacher and evangelist.

Though at first retirement seemed to bring a definite slow-down in activity, God would soon show Brandt that he was by no means done in the ministry. While he was a speaker at camp in the Oregon District, Brandt was given a word from the Lord by Ingemar Pethrus, son of Lewi Pethrus, a key Pentecostal figure in Sweden. The message God wanted Brandt to hear was simple, yet vital to all Christians: "Your work is not yet done."

▶ Conclusion

Brandt's ministry seems to defy a chronological listing; he rarely limited himself to one singular aspect. Instead, God used Brandt in overlapping leadership roles, teaching, preaching and writing. He has served on many boards and in many church leadership positions, working closely with Bible colleges both as president (LPBS, Central Indian Bible College) and on committees (board of directors for NCBC, Central Indian Bible College, Northwest University). The broad scope encompassed by Brandt's ministry shows a heart willing to hear God and to follow where the Spirit might lead.



Julie R. Neidlinger was raised in the Cando (ND) Assembly of God, where she serves as pianist. She attended North Central University prior to graduating from Moorhead State University with a degree in art. She works as an artist, graphic designer and freelance writer out of her North Dakota home. View her award-winning blog at: www.loneprairie.net

Notes

¹ R. L. Brandt, *Attitudes of the Beatitudes* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1993), 98.

² R. L. Brandt, interview with Julie R. Neidlinger, July 13, 2006.

³ R. L. Brandt, *On Dreaming Dreams* (Chula Vista, CA: Black Forest Press, 2004), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R. L. Brandt, interview with Julie R. Neidlinger.

⁶ R. L. Brandt, *On Dreaming Dreams*, 9-10.

⁷ R. L. Brandt, interview with Julie R. Neidlinger.

⁸ R. L. Brandt, *On Dreaming Dreams*, 11.

⁹ R. L. Brandt, interview with Julie R. Neidlinger.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ R. L. Brandt, *On Dreaming Dreams*, 22.

¹² Ibid., 23.

¹³ Robert L. Brandt, telephone interview with Darrin J. Rodgers, July 21, 1995.

¹⁴ R. L. Brandt, *On Dreaming Dreams*, 31.

¹⁵ Ibid., 28.

¹⁶ R. L. Brandt, *Another Look* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 2001), 59.

¹⁷ R. L. Brandt, interview with Julie R. Neidlinger.

¹⁸ R. L. Brandt, *On Dreaming Dreams*, 49.

¹⁹ R. L. Brandt, interview with Julie R. Neidlinger.





“Trails, trails, trails, no, they will never end until we hear the clarion call to every kindred, tribe and nation; the call to come up higher into His Holy Presence. Oh, how I would love to step over on some cloud and watch them go in, especially those with whom we had the great honor to share the gospel. All glory and praise to our Savior, Lord and soon coming King! Maranatha!”
 — Alta M. Washburn, *Trail to the Tribes*, p. 101

Alta M. Washburn “Trailblazer” to the Tribes

By Joseph J. Saggio

Salvation and Deliverance from Scarlet Fever

In 1931, a young itinerant preacher set up his gospel tent in the small coal-mining town of Clarksburg, West Virginia. Just a few years prior, this unnamed evangelist had returned from serving his country as a soldier in far away Europe during the First World War. Like many others, he found Christ on the battlefield overseas, and sensing God’s hand in sparing his life during the war, he committed himself to serving his newfound Savior.

In the course of the tent meetings that reached Clarksburg and the surrounding communities, scores of people came to Christ, including many

of the family members of Clarence and Alta Washburn. At that time Alta Washburn was a twenty-five-year-old mother stricken with a severe case of scarlet fever that had paralyzed and crippled her. As she lay dying, Alta’s “newly-saved” Aunt Elva eloquently bore witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ by caring non-stop for her gravely ill niece during this time. As she lay dying, Alta had a vision of God’s impending judgment if she refused to accept Christ’s salvation:

Sometime after midnight I went into the jaws of death. I was suspended over the abyss of hell on a narrow slippery path, struggling to climb and escape

the creatures who reached to drag me in.¹

After stubbornly refusing God’s grace for so long, Alta finally surrendered her life to Christ and was healed completely from the devastating effects of scarlet fever. (This was no doubt in part because of the all-night prayerful intercession of her aunt’s church in Fairmont, West Virginia!) In her own words, Alta describes her salvation and deliverance from infirmity:

What a day to be remembered when I arose from the bed that had long held me prisoner. More glorious was my deliverance from



Alta Washburn, saved, healed and called into the ministry, 1931.

the bondage of sin. Not only does that day in 1931 mark the date of my salvation and healing, but it was the day I heard God call me to be a missionary. Little did I know what the future held for me.²

The Beginning of the Call

Indeed, the Lord had a great calling upon the life of young Alta Washburn. She developed a significant ministry among the American Indians of the southwestern United States and established the first Assemblies of God Bible institute for Native Americans (today known as American Indian College, located in Phoenix, Arizona). First, however, she served as a youth leader in her church, and subsequently as a tent evangelist, leading scores of people to Christ. Alta believed that her ability to be effective in ministry was directly related to having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit six months after her salvation.

Taking seriously her responsibilities as a wife and mother of two sons, she did not want to neglect her family in order to fulfill her calling. As a result, Alta took correspondence courses that helped her to gain the Bible knowledge she needed in order to qualify for ministry. She also held steadfast to a prophetic word given in

church by her pastor that she believed was directed to her: “There is someone in our midst called of God to minister for Him. This person will be in active work for the Lord in a short time.”³

At a time when few women were involved in full-time ministry, Alta Washburn is to be commended for remaining committed to that calling while still keeping a firm grasp on her responsibilities as a wife and mother. Indeed, her husband Clarence Washburn must also be recognized in that while he never had an “up front” ministry like that of his wife, he fully validated her work and calling by working tirelessly alongside her “behind the scenes.”

The Trail Leads to the Tribes

In 1946, Alta Washburn was serving as pastor of the Assembly of God in Salineville, Ohio. Pioneered years earlier as a storefront mission, by 1946 it had moved to a fine facility on the main street of town. The Salineville Assembly of God had a vibrant history of raising up and sending out missionaries throughout the United States and abroad.

In 1936, the church sent out missionaries Ernest and Ethel Marshall, along with the Dewey Beadles, who established the first Assemblies of God

church among the San Carlos Apache Indians in San Carlos, Arizona. In 1942, after several years of patiently “plowing the ground,” the San Carlos church experienced a tremendous revival characterized by overflowing crowds, salvations, and reports of “signs and wonders.”⁴ In 1948, the *Pentecostal Evangel* reported the congregation in San Carlos had become the first AG Indian church to be fully “self-supporting” and that it had been so for several years!⁵

It was against this backdrop that the Washburns experienced their own call to Native ministry to the tribes located in the southwestern United States. Deeply impressed by the dedication of the Beadles, Sister Washburn in prayer received a direct call to evangelize and serve the American Indians, reporting:

With this commission from the Lord, an intense love for American Indians flooded my soul. Now that I had a confirmation of my call from God, I knew I must take the next step — a step of faith.⁶

Thus began the ministry of the Washburns among the Apache Indians at the San Carlos Reservation in San Carlos, Arizona in 1946. The Marshalls and Beadles had already laid a tremendous foundation in their



The San Carlos church, first Indian Assemblies of God established in Arizona.

ministry among the Apaches, leaving over one hundred converts as the “fruit of their labors” to greet the Washburns upon their arrival — a vibrant Pentecostal church plant!⁷

Perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that Dick Boni, a local Apache preacher, had become an evangelist to his own people — a rarity in that day, since the concept of indigenous ministry among Native Americans was just beginning to emerge.⁸ The Washburns thought they had found their home! Pleased with the foundation that had already been laid, Alta and Clarence Washburn began to engage themselves in the work of this fertile mission field.

Alta Washburn’s ministry in San Carlos was characterized by both harrowing trials and triumphant victories. The Washburns’ close relationships with two other missionary couples — the Dewey Beadles and Imogene and Ted Johnson (Alta’s sister and brother-in-law) — sustained them throughout the most trying circumstances, including shocking outbursts of violence on the reservation.

On one occasion, a man searching for his wife and child burst into the church service brandishing a gun, which he pointed directly at Sister Washburn! Spying his wife and baby, he physically attacked them, causing the baby to be thrown into the middle

of the church aisle. Just as he was beating his wife, two tribal police burst into the service and took the man into custody. The mother and child, though injured, soon recovered. Of those times Alta remarked, “Numerous times we travailed together in prayer in the midst of the hardest times, and each time God always confirmed His call and Word.”⁹

In spite of the difficulties of missionary life on the Apache reservation, the occasional miracles confirmed God’s call many times. Alta recalled when an Apache woman rushed into church with the stiff corpse of her recently deceased child begging Alta to “heal” the child. Alta realized that she was faced with the need to trust God like never before:

As I prayed, I began to feel warmth return to that little body and the rigid little limbs become limp and movable. I handed that baby restored to life into its mother’s arms. All of us in that Sunday service were overcome with the knowledge that we had actually beheld the resurrection power of the Lord.¹⁰

The Trail Leads to Phoenix, Arizona

The Washburns greatly loved their ministry among the Apache Indians, but by 1947 it became necessary for

them to consider relocating because as an “Anglo,” Clarence had difficulty obtaining any type of employment on the San Carlos Reservation. After securing a job in Phoenix, Clarence moved his family to their new home. Although the Washburns were reluctant to move at first, they quickly realized that the Lord had just opened up many new opportunities for them to minister to the various Phoenix-area tribes, including the Pima, Maricopa, Yaqui, and the Papago.¹¹

They initially based their outreach ministry out of First Assembly of God in Phoenix; but in 1948 the Washburns established All Tribes Assembly of God to minister to Indians residing throughout the greater Phoenix area. Over the years, a number of other churches were “birthed” through the church-planting vision of All Tribes Assembly including churches at Laveen, Co-Op, and Casa Blanca, located on the Gila River Indian Reservation near Phoenix, as well as the Guadalupe church in a Yaqui Indian community near Phoenix.

The Washburns were also involved in establishing the Salt River Indian Assembly of God on the Salt River Indian Reservation near Scottsdale, which began as an outreach of All Tribes Assembly.¹² When opportunities arose for further ministry, Sister Washburn never questioned them — she just accepted the challenge!



Above: All Tribes Assembly of God, Phoenix, Arizona, 1948.
Right: All Tribes Assembly at new location on McKinley Street.





Alta Washburn teaching at All Tribes Bible School (now American Indian College) in Phoenix.

Establishing All Tribes Bible School

By 1956 Sister Washburn had come to recognize the urgent need to develop Native leadership so that Indians could continue to be reached for Christ. She believed passionately in the “indigenous principle” detailed in Acts 14:23 which called for equipping local ethnic leaders who are best qualified to minister to their own people. Believing that God had called them to establish a ministerial training school as a ministry of All Tribes Assembly of God, the Washburns began construction and renovation. They advertised this bold new venture throughout Assemblies of God Native American circles to enlist students.

On September 23, 1957 the All Tribes Indian Bible Training School (ATBS) opened its doors at 4123 E. Washington Street in Phoenix, Arizona. The stated purpose of the Bible school was:

to train the native Indian worker in sound Bible doctrines that they may in turn go out to reach their own tribes in the native language, thereby spreading the Gospel

quickly to every kindred tribe and tongue.¹³

Tuition was assessed at twenty dollars per year, and room and board was five dollars a week!¹⁴ ATBS established historical precedent by becoming the first American Indian Bible school established under the auspices of the Assemblies of God.¹⁵

Longtime U.S. missionary to Native Americans, Alma F. Thomas, remembered the early days of the Bible school as “very small, very primitive.” Still, there was great unity among the faculty, staff, and students who had gathered together for the common purpose of developing Native Christian leaders. Food was also very limited, with beans being a common menu item in the early days. Thomas also recounted a remarkable absence of murmuring or complaining, because those who studied and worked at the Bible school knew that great sacrifices were needed to establish the ministry.¹⁶

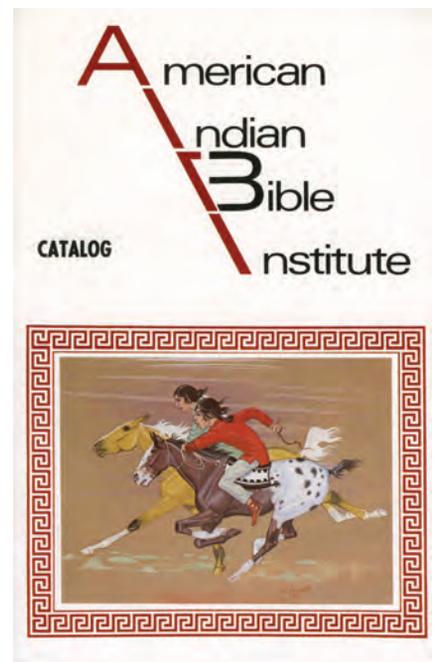
Fortunately, God provided fish, mutton, beef, chicken, elk, and other food through the generosity of various college supporters.¹⁷ God never failed to supply every need at just the

opportune time!

One early graduate of the school, Jacob Escalante worked a day job while enrolled in order to support his family while taking night classes at ATBS. By graduation he had not yet received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, so with a strong sense of determination he continued to attend chapel services at the Bible school until he did so. His perseverance was suitably rewarded as Sister Washburn reported, “His knees had hardly touched the floor when he began to speak in a beautiful heavenly language. It was a glorious experience of the Spirit’s infilling.”¹⁸

Escalante went on to pastor in the region around Yuma, Arizona and ministered to his own tribe (the Tohono O’odham Nation). His ministry has included successful pastoral and evangelistic work and he also served as an elected tribal leader.¹⁹

The Washburns remained at ATBS until 1965, when Alta resigned due to health concerns. Alta and Clarence Washburn had accomplished a remarkable task — establishing and developing a Bible school — with very limited resources. Don Ramsey, who succeeded Alta as principal (later



AIBI catalog and student handbook, 1976-1977.



Alta and Clarence Washburn, about 1985.

president), recounted that when he asked about regular monthly support toward the Bible school that he could “count on,” Sister Washburn told him that regular support did not exist and that it was a “total faith venture.” Although shocked to find this out, Ramsey grew to greatly admire what the Washburns had accomplished under incredibly challenging conditions!²⁰

After she recuperated from her illness, Alta Washburn resumed her ministry. She returned as pastor of All Tribes Assembly of God and moved the church to a larger facility on East McKinley Street in downtown Phoenix. The church grew and prospered under her ministry. Gay Keeter, who along with her late husband Donald Keeter served as associate pastors under Sister Washburn, remembered that the Washburns still found time to serve as foster parents to over twenty-five Native American foster children over the years! Alta Washburn had a deep and profound love for the Native American people:

I remember sitting in the little Sunday school office that we had at All Tribes [Assembly of God] — something had happened with a couple of the Indian people in

the church and I can remember her just weeping, and the thought came to me at the time that [Sister Washburn] has a real “missionary heart.”²¹

Other Trails

Alta and Clarence Washburn remained as pastors at All Tribes AG in Phoenix until 1972, when they moved to nearby Prescott to work among the Yavapai Apaches, and then on to the Salt River Indian Reservation. Finally in 1985, at age seventy-nine, Sister Washburn accepted her last pastorate — the Yaqui church in Guadalupe which she had started years earlier while pastoring at All Tribes in Phoenix. Initially reticent at taking the church at such an advanced age, Alta felt God’s confirmation to accept what was to be her last pastoral assignment:

I could never close a door that God had opened for me, nor could I close this one. Had I not proved many times that God’s strength and grace sustained me in spite of obstacles to fulfilling His will? Yes, I would accept the pastorate.²²

Although there for less than one year, the Washburns were able to bring a measure of healing and unity to a congregation that was fragmented by conflict. The church experienced a measure of growth and restoration during that time period.²³

Over the years, the Washburns’ ministry was deeply appreciated wherever they served, but no more so than among the Pima and Maricopa Indians of the Salt River Indian Reservation. Cherie Sampson, a Pima Indian whose father and uncles were saved and called into the ministry under the ministry of Alta Washburn, remembered her as a woman of great vision for Native ministry. “I would say that she was a woman that was ahead of her time. She forged ahead when it wasn’t popular for a woman to be in this kind of ministry.” Sampson

recalled stories from her parents and other relatives about how the Washburns tenaciously and persistently reached out to the residents of the Salt River Indian Reservation, enduring a great deal of persecution before they became widely accepted.²⁴ Their lasting legacy at Salt River includes many who were saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, and called into ministry.

In 1990, Alta Washburn completed her memoirs, *Trail to the Tribes*, with the assistance of her longtime friend and colleague Alma Thomas. Soon afterward, Sister Washburn went home to be with the Lord after a lengthy illness. Near the close of her book, perhaps sensing her impending home-going, Alta penned these words describing the legacy that she and Clarence could rightfully claim:

I have spent so much time reflecting over these forty-two years that God has given us to minister the Gospel to Native Americans. We feel no regrets, only wish we could have many more years to work in this great Harvest for the Lord. Clarence and I are consoled by the knowledge that our vision is perpetuated by those whom our lives have touched.²⁵



The Alta Washburn multi-purpose building at American Indian College, Phoenix, Arizona.

Without question, the Washburns have had an impact on Native American ministry that only eternity will be able to measure. Their sacrificial lives and willingness to take on bold new ventures helped them to establish a reputation that was “fleshed out” through their tenacity and integrity. Indeed, Sister Washburn was an iconoclastic leader — dedicated to radically reshaping the concept of missionary work by Anglos to Native Americans, to a more indigenous approach of ministry by Native Americans to their own people. Today, a number of indigenous churches, successful Native leaders, and American Indian College — the only regionally-accredited Bible college for Native American students in the United States — all stand as an enduring tribute to this outstanding “trailblazer” to the tribes.



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Notes

¹ Alta M. Washburn, undated correspondence, 1.

² Alta M. Washburn, *Trail to the Tribes*

(Prescott, AZ, 1990), 4-5.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴ “Revival Among the Apache Indians,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 8, 1942, 7. See also Joseph J. Saggio, “Towards an Indigenous Model of Native American Ministry in the Assemblies of God,” in *Memories of the Azusa Street Revival: Interrogations and Interpretations* (35th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies held at Fuller Theological Seminary, March 23-25, 2006): 336-343.

⁵ “First Indian Convention,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 10, 1948, 10-11.

⁶ Washburn, 1990, 13.

⁷ Carolyn D. Baker, *Indian Harvest: A History of the American Indian Bible College* (Phoenix, American Indian Bible College, 1988), 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6. See also “First Indian Convention,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 10, 1948, 11. For a more complete discussion of the historical development of indigenous ministry among Native Americans in the Assemblies of God, please see Saggio, 336-343. Herein I discuss the progressive development of this shift from a “missions-driven” model to an “indigenous-driven” model.

⁹ Washburn, 1990, 20-21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹ Today the Papago Indians are known as the Tohono O’odham Nation.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30. The Salt River Indian Assembly of God has for many years had indigenous Native leadership including its current Native pastor, Dennis Hodges, who also serves as the presbyter of the Phoenix Metro Indian Section and was also recently elected as one of three general presbyters representing Native American concerns to the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God.

¹³ Information gleaned from an unpublished flyer written in 1957. In the early days, the school was often referred to as “All Tribes Bible School” or ATBS. Over the years this institution has had a number of name changes reflecting its growth and development beginning with American Indian Bible Institute, American Indian Bible College, and now the present name since 1993 — American Indian College of the Assemblies of God.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See for example Jim Dempsey, “Part 1: Assemblies of God Ministry to Native

Americans,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 22:2 (Summer 2002): 4-11. Subsequent institutions for Native Americans include Native American Bible College founded in 1968 by Pauline Mastries, Charles Hadden, and Hubert Boese and now located in Shannon, North Carolina. Good Shepherd Indian Bible Institute in Mobridge, South Dakota was founded in 1970 by Leo and Mildred Bankson (later renamed Black Hills Indian Bible College in Rapid City, South Dakota). Its successor is the Institute for Ministry Development, an intercultural distance-education program for Native Americans. Far North Bible College in Anchorage, Alaska was established in 1973 through the efforts of Arvin and Luana Glandon along with Kenneth Andrus.

¹⁶ Alma F. Thomas, Professor Emeritus, American Indian College and nationally appointed U.S. missionary to Native Americans, interview by author, Scottsdale, AZ, May 19, 2006.

¹⁷ Pauline Dunn, *A Trail of Beauty: A Short History of American Indian Bible College* (Phoenix, AZ, 1984), 6-8. Dunn, in addition to giving a thoughtful account of the first thirty or so years of the college’s history, also provides an amusing story of how even “road kill” helped supply student needs when the cupboards were bare.

¹⁸ Washburn, 1990, 59.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59. See also Joseph J. Saggio, “Assemblies of God Higher Educational Institutions: A Means to Develop the Indigenous Church Model Among Native Americans,” in *Encounter: A Journal for Pentecostal Ministry* 1:2 (Fall 2004). [E-journal] Available at: http://encounterjournal.com/articles/2004_fall/saggio.htm

²⁰ Don Ramsey, former principal (later president) of All Tribes Indian Bible School and nationally appointed U.S. missionary to Native Americans, correspondence to author, April 4, 2006.

²¹ Gay Keeter, nationally appointed U.S. missionary to Native Americans, interview by author, Phoenix, AZ, May 18, 2006.

²² Washburn, 1990, 99.

²³ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁴ Cherie Sampson, telephone interview by author, 14 July, 2006. On at least one occasion Cherie’s father, the late Virgil Sampson (before his conversion and call to the ministry) tried to chase off Clarence Washburn with a bicycle chain!

²⁵ Washburn, 1990, 100.

Israel's Redemption

Jewish Ministry and the Assemblies of God

By Raymond L. Gannon



Myer Pearlman was one of the most influential systematic theologians in the Assemblies of God during the 1930s and 1940s.

From the earliest days of the twentieth-century outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals recognized their responsibility to share the gospel with “all Israel.” While Pentecostals sought to evangelize all peoples, the identification of Jews as God’s “chosen people” carried missiological implications for Jewish ministry. Many early Pentecostals, anticipating Christ’s soon return, were convinced that

a restored Jewish nation in Zion would function as Messiah’s millennial throne. They felt a special bond with the Jewish people because of early Pentecostalism’s dual restorationist theology: that the end-times would be ushered in by the restoration of the biblical spiritual gifts to the Church and that Israel would be restored as a nation in anticipation of her “national salvation.”

While a careful study reveals four distinct periods in Pentecostal perceptions of relationship with “all Israel,”¹ this article aims to provide a

historical overview of the philosophies and practices of Assemblies of God Jewish missions.

Early Theological Moorings

Early Pentecostals generally embraced the Reformation tilt toward biblical literalism, rather than allegorization of Scripture as practiced by many medieval Christians and modern theological liberals. According to this literal reading of the Bible, God’s covenant promises to Israel continue to be in effect today. Early Pentecostals’ strong

identification with apostolic faith and practice as found in the Acts of the Apostles resulted in a healthy disposition toward the role of Israel in the divine scheme. This was in stark contrast to the often hostile attitudes toward the Jews that had developed since the second-century within much of the Christian tradition.

Pentecostals were particularly motivated to recognize new stirrings within the Jewish world, including the potential restoration of the state of Israel, as a fraternal twin restoration work of God alongside Pentecostalism. This fraternity supported Pentecostal legitimacy in a religiously hostile world and suggested unique Pentecostal responsibilities for Israel’s pending national salvation. Various early Pentecostal theologians, including David Wesley Myland, F. A. Bright, George Floyd Taylor and others, developed “latter rain” theologies that linked the two movements. In their thinking, prophecies in Joel 2:23, 28 and James 5:7 had a dual meaning: restoration for physical Israel and restoration for the present-day church.²

Among evangelicals there was broad interest in missions to the Jews

An early photo of the New York Gospel Mission to the Jews.



at the turn of the twentieth century. Christian and Missionary Alliance leader William T. MacArthur testified in 1904 that gospel light had been penetrating the Jewish world “during the past half century,” and “many noble examples” of the “brightest minds of Israel’s race” had become leading proponents of a Jewish communal embrace of Jesus. Early Pentecostals could draw from this “every encouragement to be faithful to our great commission to give the Gospel to ‘the Jew first.’”³

Pentecostals viewed their efforts to win Jewish people to Christ as being foundational to blessing Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 12:3). Israel’s spiritual transformation, in turn, was perceived as a prerequisite to the successful evangelization of the heathen, a notion shared by non-Pentecostal dispensationalists. To many early Pentecostals, scripture seemed clear: the divinely orchestrated restoration of the Jewish state would be a step toward the spiritual regeneration of the Jewish people.⁴

W. H. Cossum, in a series of lectures delivered at the Stone Church, a prominent early Pentecostal congregation in Chicago, encouraged evangelism among the Jews. Cossum argued that upon Israel’s ultimate repentance and messianic faith, Jesus



Cloth Torah scroll of Myer Pearlman donated by Rollin Burns.

would come to regather Israel from the four corners of the earth and establish his Davidic throne in Zion. According to Cossum, a Spirit-filled national Israel would be birthed, resulting in an anointing so rich that successful global evangelization would be virtually assured.⁵ Meanwhile, Cossum made it clear that Christians should maintain loving hearts for the salvation of Israel in anticipation of Israel’s national redemption⁶ “because [God] loves them, for they are really his people.”⁷

With Signs Following

Pentecostal missionaries to Jewish people found unique success because their proclamation of the

gospel was accompanied by spiritual manifestations confirming the gospel. J. Roswell Flower, in his periodical *The Pentecost*, regularly expressed support for Jewish evangelism and for the salvation of national Israel. He believed their national salvation was directly related to Jewish group submission to the King of Israel. In 1909, he called upon Pentecostals to believe for the miraculous in conjunction with the salvation of Jewish people:

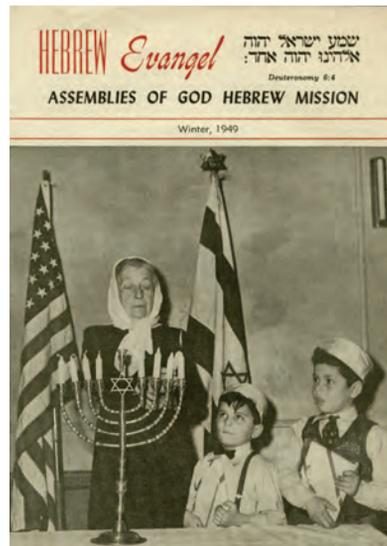
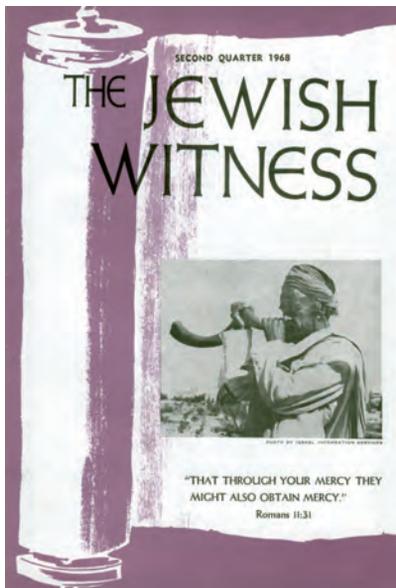
How can the Jew be reached unless he sees the healing of the sick in the name of Jesus? How can he be reached unless he hears the speaking in tongues in his own language by people who never learned the language? How can he know that Jesus is the Christ unless he sees something supernatural wrought in His name? Miracles must be wrought, the sick must be healed, men must be led into the light of the Gospel of Christ before Jesus comes. We must believe God.⁸

Missions in the Promised Land

Early AG missionaries developed strategies to reach Jewish people with the gospel in Palestine. Anna Elizabeth



Dan and Susie Gruber, pastors of Lion of Judah Messianic Synagogue in Hanover, New Hampshire.



The Jewish Witness and The Hebrew Evangel were early periodicals that reported on Jewish ministry in the AG.

Pentecostal missionaries to the Jews¹⁸ and suggested that Christians needed to “give these millions of Jews the pure gospel, so the remnant may be saved.”¹⁹

By 1916 Florence Bush’s new Jewish missionary work among Cleveland, Ohio’s 65,000 Jews²⁰ had witnessed seven Jews rejoicing in Jesus, preparing for water baptism and seeking Spirit baptism.²¹ Bush insisted, “the outlook for the Jewish work was as bright as his promises.”²² Such reports dramatically encouraged Pentecostals to engage in Jewish evangelism and confirmed their conviction in their mission “to the Jew first.”²³ Likewise, Charles Spellman announced in 1917 his move from Jerusalem to Los Angeles where “a department for the Jewish work has been opened at Bethel Temple.” He characterized his Pentecostal work as “Where the full Gospel is being preached as it was on the day of Pentecost to the Jews of our city.”²⁴

In a 1917 article in the *Weekly Evangel*, Phillip Sidersky contended that the largest Jewish communities in the world were in America, while lamenting that the Jews remained the least-evangelized people group. The answer to this imbalance, he maintained, was for Spirit-filled believers to present the pure gospel to bring Jews to embrace their long awaited Messiah, Jesus. According to Sidersky, the proclamation of Jesus was the greatest Jewish need since all Jewish aspirations would find their ultimate fulfillment in their Messiah. God’s blessings were yet in store for “All Israel” and simply awaiting corporate Jewish faith in their coming King Jesus.²⁵

Response to Anti-Semitism

As the result of Nazi propaganda in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, America witnessed a period of intensified anti-Semitism.²⁶ In contrast, when the AG constitution and bylaws were adopted in 1927, the salvation of “national Israel” was included as part of the

Brown, who served beginning in 1917 as one of the first AG missionaries to Jerusalem, reported facing basic shortages, medical hardships, and restrictions upon missionaries, yet proved eager to share the gospel with Jerusalemites.⁹ In 1921 an article in the *Latter Rain Evangel* claimed that Palestinian Jews were putting up resistance to the gospel, and that some resentful Jerusalemites even advocated an anti-missionary campaign. Pentecostals remained confident that what they viewed as prophecy would continue to unfold, particularly after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, wherein Great Britain declared its support for the establishment of a Jewish state.¹⁰

In 1924 two AG missionaries to Jerusalem, Laura Radford and Vida Baer, stated their belief that a new outpouring of the Latter Rain in Jerusalem would bring the prerequisite Jewish revival to prepare Jerusalem for the Second Coming.¹¹ The *Pentecostal Evangel* reported that Jewish attitudes toward Jesus and his teachings were changing, and that Jews were keen to read the New Testament.¹² The *Pentecostal Evangel* further noted that

large numbers of Jerusalem’s Jews had confessed faith in Christ, were river-baptized and were ready to read the Hebrew New Testament by 1925. In the same year, a messianic congregation of 70 souls had formed in Tiberias.¹³ Radford reported in 1928 that upon seeing the real Jesus, many Jews believed.¹⁴ Similarly, William J. Fuchs, an AG missionary to Tel Aviv, recounted Jewish responsiveness to the healing gospel in 1928.¹⁵

Missions in the U.S.

Reports poured into early Pentecostal periodicals of success at Christian Hebrew missions in the United States. In 1910, Maurice Ruben claimed over 200 converts in his Hebrew mission in Pittsburgh.¹⁶ Phillip Sidersky’s Pentecostal Jewish mission in Baltimore attracted over one thousand Jewish adults to its 1911 Yom Kippur services.¹⁷ E. N. Bell, who in 1914 became the first general superintendent of the AG, also promoted the spiritual renewal and restoration of the Jewish nation. In 1913 and 1914, in *Word and Witness*, he published newsletters from

Statement of Fundamental Truths (See Article V, Section 14: “The Millennial Reign of Christ”). During this same period, some Pentecostal leaders recognized a duty to confront the common use of belligerent language so as to not foolishly offend Jewish people. Charles Elmo Robinson, in the *Christ’s Ambassadors Monthly*, warned the church in 1930 that it had too thoughtlessly followed the world’s lead in general neglect and abuse of the Jewish people.²⁷

Many Pentecostals viewed the attack upon Jews as part of humanity’s attack upon God since God’s program for the ages still centered around the Jewish people. Pentecostals believed that western Christians and governments were duty bound to keep their faith and political promises to enable the children of Israel to dwell in security and rest.²⁸

Pentecostals maintained that

the entire Bible testified to God’s eternal love for his “chosen people,” which committed Pentecostals to exhibit God’s love toward Israel rather than the hateful spirit of the world.²⁹ As members of the New Covenant, Pentecostals had a biblical relationship and obligation to the Jewish people. While the Jews were not faultless, it was their destiny to become a regenerated Israel.³⁰ Pentecostals were indebted to provide the Jewish community a hearing of the gospel, for “they certainly have as much right to it as we have.”³¹ Since God’s love for Israel was everlasting, Christians were to likewise love the Jewish people.³²

Responsibility to Evangelize “All Israel”

It is significant that the most influential systematic theologian in the Assemblies of God in the 1930s

and 1940s — Myer Pearlman — was a Jew. Pearlman continues to be, perhaps, the best-known AG leader from a Jewish background. Pearlman admonished believers in 1935 that, since God intended a glorious future for Israel, Pentecostal interest in Jewish people should be intense. He even predicted that the Jewish people, whom he deemed spiritually backslidden, would soon become “Israel, the prince of God.”³³

In his undated *The Synagogue of the Nazarenes*, Pearlman insisted that Christians should not lose sight of the fact that Jesus was the legal King of Israel and, in a profound sense, belonged to the Jewish people. Jewish believers who embraced Christ, then, were re-grafted into Israel’s own olive tree. Pearlman noted that Paul had clearly forewarned Gentile Christians about misapprehending God’s design for Israel.³⁴ He taught that Jesus

Myer Pearlman (1898-1943)

Myer Pearlman was undoubtedly the foremost systematic theologian in the AG during the 1930s and 1940s. The oldest son of a Jewish family, he received his common school training at the Birmingham Hebrew School in England. He mastered the French language on his own and later used this knowledge to act as an interpreter for the United States Army in France during World War I. Being a lover of books, he accepted a New Testament while in the military, and this got him started searching the Scriptures.

After the war, he moved to California. One day, while passing by Glad Tidings Mission (now Glad Tidings Church) in San Francisco, he noticed a sign that said “Pentecostal Mission” and felt drawn inside, where the people were singing “Honey in the Rock,” composed by F. A. Graves. Based on Deuteronomy 32:13 (“he nourished [Israel] with honey from

the rock”), it tells of God’s grace and provision from an unexpected source. After several months of attending meetings at the church, he confessed his sins, was converted to Christianity, and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He graduated from Central Bible Institute, Springfield, Missouri, in 1925 and was asked to join the faculty. In 1927 he married one of his pupils, Irene Graves, daughter of F. A. Graves.

He was best known for his synthesis classes on the Old and New Testament, although he taught a variety of courses. For many years, Pearlman also prepared the *Adult Teacher’s Quarterly*, as well as the *Adult Student’s Quarterly* for the Gospel Publishing House. During World War II he edited *Reveille*, a devotional publication geared to American servicemen. A prolific writer, he is best remembered for his monumental outline of theology called



Myer Pearlman dressed as a Jewish high priest, about 1933.

Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible (1937). Overwork caused his health to break at a comparatively early age, and Pearlman died in 1943.

— Glenn Gohr



Hal Bund parading the Torah at his son Scott's Bar Mitzvah at Beth Emanuel Fellowship (AG), Holbrook, New York, 1985.

approach would "capture the hearts and minds of the Jews."⁴⁴

Jews who had been touched by the Pentecostal experience, or who had practiced or benefited from the *charismata*, were profiled in Pentecostal literature. For example, Stanley H. Frodsham, in order to illustrate the Jewish connection to the Pentecostal restoration, recounted stories of Jewish people who accepted Christ after hearing "Hebrew tongues." Frodsham called upon Pentecostals to pray for Israel to experience signs and wonders at the close of Israel's historical cycle, just as God had given miraculous signs and wonders at the beginning of the cycle.⁴⁵

Prior to the end of World War II, Ralph Riggs called for extensive missionary "work among the Jews everywhere." Riggs stated that since Jews represented three percent of the American population, a full three percent of AG ministers should be preaching to Jews, and three percent of AG churches should consist of Jewish believers.⁴⁶

1945 Resolution on Anti-Semitism

A resolution condemning anti-Semitism was adopted on the General Council floor in 1945. The resolution stated, "the General Council hereby declares its opposition to anti-Semitism and that it disapproves of the ministers of the Assemblies of God identifying themselves with those who are engaged in this propaganda." *Pentecostal Evangel* editor Stanley Frodsham, in explaining the resolution to *Evangel* readers, took great care to defend Israel's centrality to salvation history on biblical grounds.⁴⁷

Jewish Missions: 1946-1972

The establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948 fueled the imaginations of many Pentecostals who believed the event was of prophetic significance. To Pentecostals who disputed or resented the biblical

would yet lead Israel into her destiny to be a holy nation and kingdom of priests, memorably writing that "Jesus never said an eternal farewell to His people."³⁵

Pentecostal periodicals published the stories of Jewish believers who entered Christian ministry, often as missionaries to the Jews. In 1937, an article in the *Pentecostal Evangel* lauded Claude and Ferne Gregg of Chicago as "our first missionaries to the Jewish people of the United States." The article challenged Pentecostals to evangelize the Jews in larger American cities.³⁶

Pearlman reiterated in 1937 that awareness of their spiritual debt to Israel should compel all Christians to personally engage in reaching Jewish people with the gospel.³⁷ Another AG author suggested that proper methods could be used by local churches to impact their respective Jewish communities by demonstrating the harmony between Old and New Testaments and exhibiting Pentecostal friendliness with its egalitarian spirit.³⁸ In 1942, Pearlman identified anti-Jewish misinterpretations of the New Testament and called for

ideological change to improve Christian disposition toward the Jewish people.³⁹

General Superintendent E. S. Williams emphasized the Pentecostal duty to evangelize the Jews in a 1944 Sunday school manual in which he indicated that evangelistic efforts should follow the biblical precedent "to the Jew first."⁴⁰ Ralph M. Riggs, at that time assistant superintendent of the AG, in 1945 propounded that Pentecostals needed to engage in Jewish evangelism out of regard for Jesus' love for his own Jewish people. He wrote that Pentecostals must carefully and painstakingly study their approach to Jewish ministry, in order to appreciate the continuing Jewish place in God's design.⁴¹

Published reports of thousands of European Jews coming to Christ in the pre-World War II years inspired Pentecostal faith that Jewish people would embrace Jesus given fair opportunity to hear the gospel.⁴² The answer to the problem of Jewish gospel resistance was perceived to be a stronger dose of Pentecostalism.⁴³ Many AG proponents of Jewish evangelism believed the Spirit-manifestation

emphasis on “the Jew first,” a 1948 article in the *Pentecostal Evangel* offered an apologetic justifying God’s choice. The article claimed that scriptures made clear the Jew was *first* as the object of God’s choice, as the guardian of God’s Word, as proof of God’s faithfulness, as channel of God’s gift, as recipient of God’s salvation, as the clue to God’s plans, and as fulfillment of God’s purposes. Pentecostals needed to join with Paul in preaching the gospel “to the Jew first.”⁴⁸ According to Pearlman, the proper Christian attitude toward the Jews was one of love as exercised by the ministry of reconciliation.⁴⁹

The AG National Home Missions Department announced the appointment of Jewish believers Charles and Jeannette Apton in 1952 as Jewish Field Representatives to travel among AG churches to encourage Jewish evangelism in local communities across the United States.⁵⁰ In 1955 the *Pentecostal Evangel* reported that even with 100,000 Hebrew Christians living in North America, sixty times as many remained gospel-deprived.⁵¹ The handful of appointed AG missionaries to the Jews largely went door-to-door in tract distribution and personal street witnessing, but also encouraged Christians to believe for the salvation of Israel.⁵²

AG educator Ruth Specter complained that Pentecostals too often considered Israel and Jewish people merely as “subjects of prophecy” rather than as people needing Christ. Any suggestions that Jews were beyond redemptive faith were from extra-biblical and errant sources. It remained the Pentecostal obligation to evangelize Jewish people so that they could fulfill their divine destiny.⁵³ Curtis Ringness, national secretary for Home Missions, protested that rather than preaching “to the Jew first,” many churches made Jews last which had resulted in the AG losing much of God’s blessing.⁵⁴ In 1972, however, the *Pentecostal Evangel* reported a new Jewish openness to the gospel, largely resulting from para-

church ministries such as Jews for Jesus. Traditional Jewish opposition was lessening and more Jewish people were coming to Christ.⁵⁵

Jewish Missions: 1973-present

New realities compelled the AG to birth new Jewish mission strategies by 1973. Through the charismatic and Jesus movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, thousands of Jewish people entered Pentecostal circles. Jewish missionary efforts in Los Angeles, St. Louis, Fort Lauderdale and elsewhere yielded hundreds of new believers,

messianic Jewish gathering at Columbia University, Phillip Goble’s draft of his new book, *Everything You Need to Grow a Messianic Synagogue*, was introduced as a manual for establishing indigenous Jewish congregations. Goble’s book was birthed out of Temple Beth Emanuel, an AG messianic congregation in Los Angeles that had been recently pioneered by Ray and Kassiani Gannon.⁵⁷

The new Jewish openness to the gospel was attributed to the fresh moving of God’s Spirit upon the Jewish people. But a secondary cause was credited to growing respect for



Ray Gannon at the Mount of Olives looking down on the Eastern Gate entrance to the Temple Mount, December 2002.

results so impressive it seemed Israel’s redemption could be at hand.

At the annual Home Missions Jewish evangelism seminar in November 1973, a National Jewish Committee was formed to raise and coordinate a national image for AG missionary evangelism, to publish useful Jewish evangelism and discipling materials, and to train students for Jewish ministry.⁵⁶

But the most significant outcome of the new AG openness to Jewish ministry in 1973 was the license proffered to establish Pentecostal messianic synagogues. Prior policies of “no Jewish churches” were shelved by executive decree. At *Shechinah* ’74, a

Jewish culture, aggressive Pentecostal worship in Jewish outreaches, and the AG’s newfound openness to messianic synagogues.⁵⁸ Rather than imperialistically “gentilizing” new Jewish believers as in centuries past, Jews were now encouraged to fully enjoy their Jewish heritage while in total allegiance to Jesus and in submission to God’s spirit. This objective was not limited to rare Jewish converts, but was intended to generate an international Jewish popular movement toward Jesus.⁵⁹

Between 1973 and 1976, hundreds of new Jewish believers accepted the messianic faith and 200 were immersed in water at Temple Beth Emanuel in

Los Angeles, the pilot project for the AG messianic synagogue. Miraculous physical healings, including from cancer, attracted sign-seeking Jewish people from across Los Angeles to evangelistic Jewish home Bible studies and congregational services. The full operation of the spiritual gifts provided a Mount Sinai atmosphere where Jewish people could encounter the *Shechinah* once again. Strong Bible-based teaching fed the spiritually starving Jewish crowds so eager to eat the Word of God.

Phil Goble left for Florida where he founded Temple Aron Kodesh in Fort Lauderdale. Harvey Koelner was soon called to lead the congregation who then took to it a membership of 400 Jewish believers. Goble went on to pioneer other new works in Florida and New York and to publish extensively.

Missionaries in California and Florida multiplied their works while other new Messianic congregations soon manifested Jesus to the Jewish communities in Brooklyn, Queens, Long Island, St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City, and Philadelphia. Newly-established AG messianic synagogues celebrated the biblical feasts, held Hebrew language and Bar Mitzvah classes, and performed Jewish weddings, all to service the ongoing cultural needs of new Jewish believers and their families.⁶⁰ In addition, cooperating parachurch Jewish ministries developed in New Hampshire, Cincinnati and New York. Several indigenous messianic congregations in the AG have since affiliated with the Assemblies of God.

Since the late 1960s, AG missionary work in the nation of Israel primarily has focused on Palestinians who are nominal Christians. However, David and Mary Newman have operated the Torch Bookstore in Jewish Jerusalem since the 1980s. Ray and Kassiani Gannon, under AG World Missions appointment from 1989 to 2003, pioneered the Israel College of the Bible in Jerusalem and helped establish congregations among Russian Jewish and Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to

Israel College of the Bible in Jerusalem, June 2006.



Israel prior to their assuming the new post of National Representative for Jewish Ministries with U.S. Missions.

Conclusion

The Jewish people and national Israel have occupied a special position in Pentecostal theology from the early twentieth-century outpouring to the present time. Many early Pentecostals held to an eschatology that predicted a dual restoration of Israel and of biblical spiritual gifts to the church. While many Pentecostals' understanding of this eschatological relationship may have changed over time, the AG continues to present Christ as the hope of Israel and of the Jewish people in the U.S. and abroad.



Ray Gannon, Ph.D. (available at RayGannon@allisrael2020.org) was appointed to serve as the AG national representative for Jewish ministries in October 2003. Gannon has led the AG in seeking to establish successful Pentecostal Jewish evangelistic outreaches to 101 U.S. Jewish-populated cities by offering local assemblies a series of seminars, ongoing mentoring and expertise.

Notes

¹ For a full study of this topic, see: Raymond Gannon, "The Shifting Romance with Israel: American Pentecostal Ideology of Zionism and the Jewish State" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003).

² The latter rain theologies embraced by many early Pentecostals had no relation to the New Order of the Latter Rain, a restoration movement that originated in Saskatchewan in 1948.

³ William T. MacArthur, "Israel in the Light of Prophecy and Providence," *Living Truths* 4:8 (Aug. 1904), 437.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁵ W. H. Cossum, *Mountain Peaks of Prophecy and Sacred History* (Chicago: Evangel Publishing Company, 1911), 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸ J. R. Flower, editorial, *The Pentecost* 1:7 (June 1909): 6.

⁹ A. Elizabeth Brown, "Back to Jerusalem," *Weekly Evangel (WE)* (22 February 1919): 13. See also A. Elizabeth Brown, "Safe Return from Jerusalem of a Veteran Missionary," *Latter Rain Evangel (LRE)* (October 1917): 20-24; "Jerusalem, Palestine," *WE* (28 June 1919): 11; and "In the Regions Beyond," *WE* (9 August 1919): 10.

¹⁰ "Palestine and the Jew," *LRE* (February 1921): 22. See also "Missionary Department," the *Pentecostal Evangel (PE)* (23 July 1921): 13. Brown reported in the *PE* that a Pastor Samuel was now leading their Jerusalem congregation of nine souls.

¹¹ Laura Radford, "A Word from Jerusalem," *PE* (21 June 1924): 5. See also Vida B. Baer, "A Letter from Palestine,"

PE (15 March 1924): 7.

¹² “Jews Turning to Christ,” PE (6 September 1924): 7.

¹³ “Jewish Notes,” PE (25 April 1925): 7.

¹⁴ Laura Radford, “When They Know That Jesus is the Messiah They Will Believe,” PE (1 September 1928): 6.

¹⁵ W. J. Fuchs, “News from Many Lands,” PE (9 March 1929): 11.

¹⁶ Maurice Ruben, “How a Jew Became a Christian,” LRE (January 1910): 13-19.

¹⁷ “Work Among the Jews,” LRE (1 November 1911): 13.

¹⁸ These missionaries to Jerusalem included Sarah A. Smith, Charles S. Leonard, Mary Smithson, Florence Bush and Anna Elizabeth Brown.

¹⁹ A. J. Benson, “God and the Jews,” *Word and Witness* 9:6 (20 June 1913): 8.

²⁰ Florence I. Bush, “A New Jewish Mission in Cleveland, Ohio,” WE (2 December 1916): 16.

²¹ “Fellowship in Christ,” WE (11 August 1917): 14.

²² Florence Bush, “To the Jew First,” WE (15 December 1917): 13.

²³ Florence Bush, “To the Jew First,” LRE (March 1917): 11.

²⁴ Charles Spellman, “Announcement,” WE (17 February 1917): 15.

²⁵ Phillip Sidersky, “I Am Only a Jew, But!...” WE (11 August 1917): 11.

²⁶ Astonishingly, even the PE published articles in 1920 in support of the forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, to warn Pentecostals against Jewish conspiracies to take over the world. The editor of the PE, Stanley Frodsham, publicly apologized a decade later. He became a great friend to the Zionist cause.

²⁷ Charles E. Robinson, “What is the Proper Christian Attitude Toward the Jew?” *Christ’s Ambassadors Monthly* 5:10 (October 1930): 15.

²⁸ Louis S. Bauman, “When Russia’s Bear Meets Judah’s Lion,” LRE (May 1932): 16.

²⁹ Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Sunday School Lesson,” PE (19 June 1937): 10.

³⁰ Myer Pearlman, “Daniel Speaks Today,” *Christ’s Ambassadors Herald* 14:11 (November 1941): 15.

³¹ “The Jew — A Paradox,” PE (24 July 1943): 5.

³² Charles E. Robinson, “What of the Jew?” PE (12 December 1925): 11.

Here the author offered a stern warning to AG youth that Satan would try to get Pentecostal youth to “speak and think slightly of the Jew” in order to “get God’s wrath stirred toward such young people.”

³³ Myer Pearlman, *Through the Bible Book by Book* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1935), Part II, 89.

³⁴ Myer Pearlman, *The Synagogue of the Nazarenes* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), 57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

³⁶ “To the Jew First,” PE (30 October 1937): 7. See also, Zella Reynolds Mussen, “The Jew First,” LRE (September 1935): 10-11. This was a testimony by a missionary to Shanghai who illustrated her strong belief that systematic giving toward Jewish evangelism would be signally blessed of God.

³⁷ Myer Pearlman, “The Restoration of Israel,” *Adult and Young People’s Teachers’ Quarterly* (24 October 1937): 24-31.

³⁸ Alexander Marks, “Our Debt to Israel,” PE (16 August 1941): 3.

³⁹ Myer Pearlman, “Those Strange People — the Jews!” PE (4 July 1942): 2-3.

⁴⁰ E. S. Williams, “God’s Chosen People, the Jews,” *Adult and Young People’s Teachers’ Quarterly* (10 December 1944): 60.

⁴¹ Ralph M. Riggs, “The Jew,” PE (15 September 1945): 2.

⁴² Myer Pearlman, “Jewish Notes,” PE (17 August 1929): 5.

⁴³ “A Visit With our Missionaries in Palestine,” PE (17 April 1937): 8, 11. A “Missionary Review” of AG statistics for Zion was provided in the 1936 *Christ’s Ambassadors Herald*. Some seven missionaries and two AG missions were in Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ Alexander Marks, “Evangelizing the Jewish People,” PE (16 March 1940): 7.

⁴⁵ Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1926), 14. Stanley H. Frodsham, “Editor’s Notebook,” PE (April 30, 1932): 4. According to this 1932 PE article, when the historical cycle of Israel would be completed, Israel would be back in the land of promise enjoying the reign of her King Jesus in peace and prosperity. Israel in submission to Jesus would luxuriate in blessings far exceeding anything Israel had known in all Jewish

history.

⁴⁶ Ralph M. Riggs, “Attitudes Toward Jews,” *Hebrew Evangel* 3:4 (July-August 1944): 3-4. The *Hebrew Evangel* was a missions periodical issued by the AG Hebrew Mission in Chicago. Riggs believed that both Gentiles and Jews needed to take on new identities upon coming to Christian faith. An angry and jealous God would slaughter those who abused the Jews, but proclaimers of the gospel to the Jews could be confident of the Lord’s gratefulness.

⁴⁷ *General Council Minutes*, 1945, 38-39; “The Editor’s Notebook,” PE (20 October 1945): 4-5.

⁴⁸ C. K. Mowll, “The Jew First,” PE (25 September 1948): 3.

⁴⁹ Myer Pearlman, “Those Strange People, the Jews!” PE (20 August 1949): 2, 15. This reprint, published after Pearlman’s death, originally appeared in the July 4, 1942 issue of the PE. Pearlman celebrated Jewish distinctives as useful to both God and mankind.

⁵⁰ “The Time Has Come!” PE (26 October 1952): 11.

⁵¹ “Passing and Permanent,” PE (20 March 1955): 2.

⁵² Monty Garfield, “Seeking the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel,” PE (28 August 1955): 10-11. Garfield here offered a number of stories of sharing the Christian faith with Jews, several of whom had become believers.

⁵³ Ruth Specter, “Are We Doing Our Duty?” PE (28 July 1957): 3, 21.

⁵⁴ Curtis W. Ringness, “The Jew, the Bible and You,” PE (18 May 1969): 24-25. Replicating a ten-pointed suggestion list for Jewish evangelism, the article ended with, “Jewish evangelism is an important ministry in which all local churches and individual believers should become involved.”

⁵⁵ “Jews for Jesus’ Leader Cites Reasons Why Jewish Youth Turn to Christ,” PE (19 March 1972): 25.

⁵⁶ Ruth Lyon, “A New Look at Jewish Ministry,” PE (30 December 1973): 21.

⁵⁷ “Optimism in Jewish Missions,” PE (29 December 1974): 22-23.

⁵⁸ Ray Gannon, “Pentecost is Jewish,” PE (18 March 1975): 18-19.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁰ Melanie Burg, “He Is Among Us,” PE (26 March 1978): 14. This Jewish testimony reports on the ministry of Temple Beth Emanuel, Los Angeles.

From the Cornfields of Iowa to Urban Ministry Pioneer

The Life and Ministry of Vinton Huffey

As told to Augustus Cerillo, Jr.

Vinton Huffey grew up in rural America, but later in life he championed urban ministry within the Assemblies of God. After entering the ministry, he pastored several churches in Iowa and then moved to southern California where he pastored for twenty years. Upon retirement Rev. Huffey developed a passion for the lost in the inner cities, which served as

an impetus to the Southern California District to more systematically engage in inner-city ministry.

Boyhood

Vinton Huffey was born July 7, 1915 on a farm in Allamakee County, in the corn state of Iowa. He was the second to the oldest of ten children born to Walter Angus Huffey, of Scottish descent, and Tilda Boletta Olson, of Norwegian descent. The family was very poor, the children going barefoot most of the year. Vinton had chores to do on the farm, including milking the cows, which he hated. What he loved was hunting and fishing! Often he would run away from home after school to visit neighborhood boys. His parents would call around to find out where he was to get him to come home. Sometimes he would get a licking, sometimes just a scolding.

Vinton attended a county grade school of about 30 students. One

teacher taught all eight grades. Vinton recalls that he was a poor student in grade school, but did win a certificate of citation from the county superintendent commending him for completing a certain number of hours of homework. He did have to take the exam more than once to get into high school.

Young Adulthood

High school was a different story. Vinton did quite well, including receiving A's in algebra. During the fall, Vinton did farmwork before and after school. He got room and board for doing the chores and milking the cows. At the high school, which was rather small, Vinton took manual training doing woodworking. This knowledge stood him well years later when he pastored churches. In one of his early pastorates, he built a garage near the church to park his car. Vinton played on the basketball team in high school. Unfortunately, he began smoking



Vinton Huffey, about 1945.

between his junior and senior years.

There were 13 students in Vinton's class when he graduated in 1933 at the age of 17. The superintendent of students visited the class and told them about a scholarship to Luther College. Vinton immediately spoke up that he was interested and received the scholarship for his first year of college.

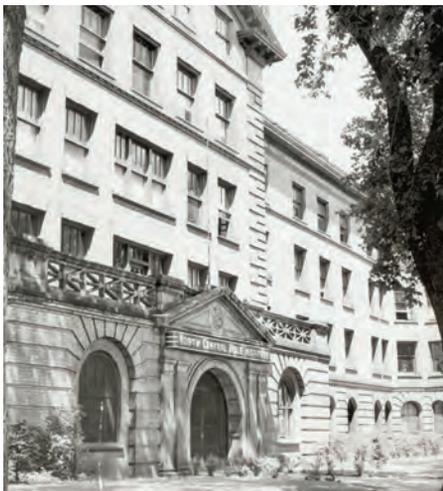
Vinton's family was not religious and so Vinton did not attend church while growing up. He did, however, attend the Daily Vacation Bible Schools offered by the local Lutheran church and learned enough catechism to get confirmed in the Lutheran church.

Vinton attended Luther College for a semester, but then dropped out. He and his buddy, who also dropped out of Luther College, decided to go to

Alaska to seek jobs. They first headed South, riding freight trains. "This was our first experience of being real bums," Vinton recalls. "We even got to where we would beg food from meat markets ... and going to the bakeries to get their day-old bread and rolls." When they ran out of money both boys got jobs on a farm in Louisiana. In Louisiana Vinton saw segregation for the first time.

After several months on the farm, Vinton decided to go north again, and went to Kansas City, where his brother was living, to get a better job. It was 1934; Vinton's brother had just gotten "saved" (found Christ) and took Vinton to an Assemblies of God revival meeting. The next Sunday they attended A. A. Wilson's church. "He had a big board tabernacle that was only boards, just bare boards everywhere," Vinton recalls, "board benches with a sawdust floor, and I guess around the front there were rugs spread around, but it was a very humble place."

At the end of the service, after some coaxing from his brother, Vinton went to the altar to pray. "We knelt around the altar, and I saw everybody else praying there so I thought," Vinton recalls, "I'll pray a little bit myself. And when I did, something happened to me. Something came down over me, just a warm something that made me start to cry, and I just wept for joy. And



Administration building of North Central Bible Institute from which Vinton Huffey graduated in 1940.

for sorrow for my sins." Vinton further relates how he "could never forget what actually took place at that altar."

Shortly after getting saved, Vinton moved back to his hometown of Decorah, Iowa, and began attending the Assemblies of God church pastored by Leroy Williams. A year or two after being saved Vinton received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Getting saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit resulted in some changes in Vinton's behavior. He stopped swearing and cussing, lying and stealing. He relates how in a number of situations he made restitution years after events happened.

Bible School

In 1936, Vinton decided to attend Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri. He had \$80, enough for one semester, and hitchhiked to Springfield. He thoroughly enjoyed his studies, especially Old Testament with Myer Pearlman. Unfortunately, due to the economic depression, Vinton could not find work in Springfield and therefore didn't have money for the second semester. The following year he and his brother Vernon switched schools to North Central Bible Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They had heard it was easier to find work in Minneapolis than in Springfield. Vinton graduated from there in 1940.

Ministry in Iowa and Marriage

After Vinton graduated, his pastor, Stanley Clark, started a work in Oelwein, Iowa, and asked the Huffey brothers to become the pastors of the new church. There was no church building in Oelwein, and Vinton, his brother, pastor Clark, and another man built a portable tabernacle, about 25 feet wide by 40 feet long. It would seat somewhere between 50 and 75 people.

At a fellowship meeting soon after starting the church, Vinton and his brother met two traveling lady evangelists, Lillian Crouse and Karleen Burt. Being shy, the two

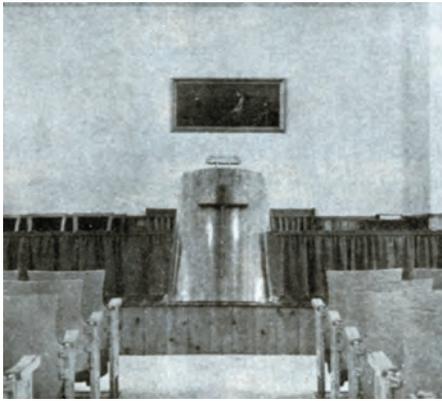


Vinton and Lillian Huffey standing in front of the AG church at Le Mars, Iowa, where they pastored from 1943-1947.

boys never even shook hands with the ladies (Lillian was later to become Mrs. Vinton Huffey!). That fall when the cold weather came, Vernon left the church to get married and Vinton rented an Episcopal church for the winter months. When spring came again, the congregation hoped to build their own church. One man, Harry Bright, whose wife was attending the services, offered to donate some land next to his home, on which to build a church. Since the congregation had no money, Vinton made all the concrete blocks for the building.

On a trip to his home church in Decorah, Iowa, to return a trailer that had been loaned to him, Vinton decided to attend a revival meeting being held by Miss Crouse and Miss Burt. He planned to invite Miss Crouse to go with him for a ride in the country to return the trailer, but after the service, he became tongue-tied. "I just couldn't get it done. I couldn't get the words out of my mouth," he recalls. Only after the pastor took him aside and encouraged him to ask her, did he have the nerve. Lillian Crouse immediately said, "Well, yes, I would like to do that."

Later at a fellowship meeting of the church, Vinton and Lillian rode around together during the day and got better acquainted. Vinton asked her if



**Sanctuary of the AG church
in Le Mars, Iowa.**

he could write to her, and she agreed. When Lillian held a revival service in Rock Island, Illinois, where Vinton had a sister, he drove there and further visited with Lillian. Vinton recalls how he finally proposed to Lillian:

Well, anyhow, we got better acquainted there, and I remember one night when I took her home, I asked her if I could kiss her, and she told me, "No." And that gave me kind of a setback. Well, anyhow, I didn't kiss her and I didn't ask her again at that time. Now, sometime later in the fall, we had a convention in Trenton, Missouri, and she and her coworker made plans to attend the convention. I decided to go to the convention, too, so I'd get to see her again. So we sat together in the convention services, and this was kind of a surprise to people, but they were pleased with it, I think, that they saw us being friendly to one another. Well, anyway, I had made up my mind that when I was at the convention, I would get her by herself and I was going to propose to her. Well, this took some courage, but I got to her place where she was staying one night and sat there a few minutes, and I asked — I said — I didn't ask her to marry me, but I said, "Lillian, will you go with me any place in the whole wide world?" And she said, "Yes." And we both boohooed. So that was the story of my proposal to her.

Shortly after the proposal, in the fall of 1939, Lillian returned to California, and the courtship was confined to letter writing. In April 1940 Vinton sent Lillian an engagement ring he bought through a catalog. The young couple decided to get married at Lillian's home church in Inglewood, California. The wedding took place on June 22, 1942. Reverend William Roberts, pastor of the Inglewood Assembly of God, officiated at the ceremony.

After a few days in California, the young couple started the drive back to Iowa. Back in Oelwein, Iowa, Vinton rented an apartment for \$15 a month. It wasn't much; they had orange crates for shelves. "It was on the second floor," Vinton recalls, "and we had to go through the owner's living quarters to get to the second floor."

A short time later Vinton received an invitation to pastor in Le Mars, Iowa. The Huffeys were at Le Mars seven years and had a good ministry. When they took the pastorate they received \$30 a week in salary; when they left they were getting \$60 a week. Their first child, Naomi, was born while they pastored in Le Mars. "She was a delight for us," he recalls, but Lillian and Vinton had to learn about taking care of a baby.

After leaving Le Mars, the Huffeys went into evangelistic work for a year. Vinton then spent four years as president of the youth organization and of the Christian Education Department of the Iowa District of the Assemblies of God. He also served as editor of the district newspaper, *The West Central News*, and traveled throughout the district promoting Sunday school and youth meetings. Their second child, Rhoda, was born during this evangelistic year in the city of Marshalltown, Iowa. At this time the family was living in very tight quarters — a house trailer only 19 feet long.

After four years of hard work serving the district, Vinton decided to go back into pastoring. He heard about an open church in Ames, Iowa.

Talking to a board member, Vinton was told he didn't need to try out, but just to consider himself the pastor. He took a considerable cut in salary at Ames and the parsonage was very small. Nevertheless he stayed at Ames 7 years and had "a very wonderful time" there.

When Vinton was getting close to 50 years old, he began thinking about retirement. The United States government had announced that ministers could now join Social Security. But Vinton did not join as he didn't have sufficient income to pay the whole social security payment required of the self-employed. Instead, he borrowed \$1500 on his automobile and insurance policy to invest in real estate.

A Christian real estate man, whom Vinton knew, convinced him not to buy a house, but to invest in an older apartment building. He found an old place that had been converted into 6 apartments and the income from it was quite a bit. It was for sale for \$10,500. The owner was willing to take \$1500 as a down payment. Vinton eventually bought three additional houses, doing all the repair work himself. Unfortunately, the houses turned out to be poor investments. Later when the Huffeys moved to California, they sold all their property and had money to invest in California.

Pastoring in Monrovia, California

In 1958 Vinton had an invitation to come to Monrovia, California, where he had preached previously when on vacation. He tried out on a Sunday and was convinced he ought to come to Monrovia, and the church thought likewise. Lillian Huffey was very happy about the move as she was from California and her widowed mother was living there.

On their trip out from Iowa, Vinton drove an old furniture truck and Lillian, pregnant with their fourth child, drove their 1957 Pontiac, pulling

a trailer. They arrived late Saturday evening, and Vinton had to preach the next day. The pastor who was leaving sold Vinton his home over the phone, carrying the mortgage because Vinton had no money.

It turned out to be a great investment. "It was a three story building," Vinton recalls, "and the basement came out at ground level, and I put an apartment in that area. In addition I was able to put four two-bedroom houses on the rear lot. And so there are six units on this lot; it's probably worth close to \$1 million now."

In time Vinton bought other properties, owning 75 units of real estate, eventually worth somewhere between three and four million dollars. He did all of this while working full-time as a pastor. Their property ownership provided the Huffeys with a retirement income.

The church in Monrovia, which had affiliated with the Assemblies of God in 1923, had its roots in the Azusa Street revival of 1906 in Los Angeles. Before Vinton came, the church had a lot of friction, with frequent pastoral changes. Vinton had to contend with that troublesome situation. One important project he started at the church was a nursery school licensed for over 40 children. The nursery

school "was a delightful [sic] change, and it made money for us," remembers Vinton. At the time Vinton resigned as pastor, Monrovia Assembly of God had \$28,000 in the treasury, some of it produced from the operation of the nursery.

Pastor Vinton had staff help in ministering at the church. He had a minister of music, Alphonso Marsella, who was a schoolteacher and very capable person. Alphonso led the song service and directed the choir. The church also had an orchestra, which played on Sunday evenings. The lady who directed the orchestra was a retired Assemblies of God minister. Lillian occasionally preached.

To help with the youth, Vinton would get some young Bible school graduate to come on staff. He gave the youth directors opportunity to preach about once a month, allowing the young ministers to gain experience.

Vinton also had a personal secretary, an excellent and faithful worker. At first she worked without pay. When the church decided to pay her something, she refused to cash the checks. An unmarried retired Sears worker, she just refused to accept pay from the church.

Vinton Huffey was pastor at the church in Monrovia for 20 years. The church is now called New Life Assembly, located in nearby Duarte, California.

Urban Ministry

Following his retirement, Vinton became very interested in the inner city; he read about the crime, poverty and other ills plaguing downtown Los Angeles. That struck a note in his heart. About that time he read an article in the *Herald Tribune*, "Where have all the churches gone?" The article told about several Methodist churches that were being demolished.

Vinton then reflected on the Assemblies of God. He was concerned about the talk of getting out of the inner cities and going to the suburbs.

Vinton Huffey and his late wife Lillian, to use Tom Brokaw's words, were part of "The Greatest Generation." They and their kind

were the builders of the Assemblies of God — demonstrating great hearts for the Lord, fervency to fulfill the Great Commission, and willingness to take the place of a servant in small places and to pioneer and blaze the trail. We are standing, as a Movement, on the shoulders of the Huffeys and their compatriots. Even with the loss of his dear wife, Lillian, Vinton Huffey — despite infirmities, advanced age, and physical struggles — maintains a heart of passion for the lost in the inner cities of America. And, his astute real estate investments made while receiving a miniscule minister's salary have been dedicated to building the work of the Lord in the inner cities until Jesus comes.

— *Dr. George O. Wood, General Secretary of the Assemblies of God*

He knew of situations where inner-city Assemblies of God churches were sold and the money transplanted to a suburban location. "This I think was a detestable thing that had happened," noted Huffey. To sell the church and move to the suburbs was just plain "dirty robbery." "The suburban churches that benefited," stated Vinton, "ought to be required to pay the money back to the inner city." Building churches in the suburbs was fine, thought Vinton, but not with money taken from the inner city. That was "absolutely wrong."

Vinton pondered the problem. After getting the "cold shoulder" from his fellow Assemblies of God ministers who were not interested in the inner city, he toyed with leaving the Fellowship but decided against that. He decided instead to stir up interest within the Assemblies of God. Putting his money where his mouth was, Vinton and his wife donated \$25,000 of their



Vinton and Lillian Huffey in 1949.



Vinton Huffey (left) and Southern California District Superintendent T. Ray Rachels in about 1990.

work. As a result of conversations between Wood and District Superintendent T. Ray Rachels, they met with Tommy Barnett, pastor of the large Phoenix (AZ) First Assembly of God, about an opportunity for inner-city missions work in Los Angeles. Barnett was persuaded to come to Los Angeles and pastor Bethel Temple, while remaining pastor in Phoenix.

Eventually the Queen of Angels Hospital was purchased, renovated and renamed The Dream Center. It was developed as a multi-faceted Assemblies of God ministry center in Los Angeles. Tommy's son, Matthew Barnett, became the hands-on pastor of the center. "Just shows you what speaking to George Wood in his office, and George Wood becoming motivated, truly motivated, for the inner city," could do, states Vinton. "He took my words and put them in his own, talked to Tommy Barnett ... and out of it all has come The Dream Center."

And the Dream Center is being replicated in other cities. "So things multiply," states Vinton, "and we never know how far it will go if we speak up for God and do some praying along with it. The Lord will bless those words."

Vinton Huffey began his life and ministry in the cornfields of Iowa, but in his retirement he became a pioneer in promoting inner-city ministry in the Southern California District.



Augustus Cerillo, Jr., Ph.D., an AG minister, is professor emeritus of history at California State University, Long Beach, where he taught for 33 years before retiring in 2000. He also served at Vanguard University as an adjunct professor and as provost.

own money to the Southern California District of the Assemblies of God to start a revolving loan fund to finance inner-city churches. In addition, Vinton developed a slide show with a typed message about the inner city and used it to talk up the cause of inner-city church work in meetings he secured in area churches. Any offerings he received he put in the revolving fund, plus an equivalent amount of money that he personally donated.

Everett Stenhouse, superintendent at that time of the Southern California District, invited Vinton to speak to the district missions board about his vision for the inner city. Vinton recommended to the missions board that it appoint an inner cities ministries advisory committee. The missions board agreed and appointed ministers that had an interest in the inner city to the 5-person committee. The committee met for about 3 years and made recommendations to the district board. At the same time Vinton had many opportunities to speak at fellowship meetings and further aroused interest in inner city work.

Vinton also received a great opportunity to promote inner-city ministries when he was invited by George Wood, then district assistant superintendent, to give a five-minute talk about the inner city at a ministers'

retreat. The talk was very favorably received.

The Huffeys traveled extensively by automobile, visiting the downtowns of many big cities and noting the plight of the people. These travels became the basis of an article he wrote on the church in America's inner cities. He submitted it to the Assemblies of God headquarters for publication, but was rejected. Wayne Kraiss, president of Southern California College (now Vanguard University), agreed to run the essay in the college magazine that went to all of the alumni and other friends of the college.

With the help of Spencer Jones, an African-American Assemblies of God minister in Chicago, Vinton received an invitation to speak at an inner-city missions convention at North Central Bible College. He was such a "hit" with the students that he was invited back for the next year, and then for the following several years. This opened the door for Vinton to speak at eight other Assemblies of God colleges. He also put his essay from the Southern California College magazine into pamphlet form. It was printed five different times.

Vinton met regularly with George Wood, whose portfolio included missions. According to Vinton, Wood also became a champion for inner-city

► Used Book Clearinghouse

Bibliophiles — those who love books — know how easy it is to accumulate a large library. The difficulty comes when it is time to dispose of and find homes for those treasured books.

The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center has always accepted donations of archival materials, including books, but sometimes people offer collections of books outside of the FPHC's collecting interests. Now, in conjunction with other AG schools in Springfield, the FPHC is able to accept donations of libraries for the benefit of AG ministries.

In January 2006, the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and the libraries of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Central Bible College, and Evangel University formed the Assemblies of God Used Book Clearinghouse, which helps direct used books back into ministry. The archives or library which directs a donation to the Clearinghouse shall have first choice of materials from that donation. Remaining books will be made available by 4WRD Resource



Debbie Irwin, wife of missionary David Irwin (1931-1984) donated her husband's expansive collection of missions books to the Clearinghouse in July. Pictured (l-r) are Joe Marics (AGTS librarian), Debbie Irwin, Darrin Rodgers, and Byron Klaus (AGTS president).

Distributors to missionaries, overseas Bible schools, individuals outside the U.S., and stateside non-profit organizations.

While all materials are accepted, the following are of particular interest:

1) Anything related to the Assemblies of God or the broader Pentecostal and charismatic movements, including books, tracts, pamphlets, magazines, unpublished manuscripts, audio recordings, video recordings, correspondence, scrapbooks, local church histories, and artifacts.

2) Any books religious in nature

(including theology, church history, missions, biographies, commentaries, etc.).

3) Any academic books (in general, books with numerous footnotes or endnotes, or those published by university presses).

Please contact the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center if you have materials to donate.

In 2006, three major donations were made to the Clearinghouse: the Dr. David K. Irwin library; the Rev. Glenn and Lucille Green collection; and the Rev. Reuben Hartwick library.

► New Website

Did you know that the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center website is the largest portal on the internet for Pentecostal history? The FPHC website, which debuted in 2000, contains an online catalog (listing over 50,000 items in its collection), over 14,000 digitized photographs, and free access to over 200,000 pages of digitized periodicals.

The FPHC website is about to become even better! On January 15, 2007, a new website will be unveiled, containing a fresh new look and feel, easier navigation, new search tools, and additional content. The website

will also have a new address: www.iFPHC.org. The current address (www.AGHeritage.org) will continue to work indefinitely.

The changes, slated to be implemented in several phases over the next year, will include:

1) Removal of website registration requirement for viewing most content. Free registration currently is required.

2) A new online Pentecostal history encyclopedia employing technology similar to Wikipedia®. Users may upload their own articles, such as congregational histories, obituaries of ministers, and college research papers. Unlike Wikipedia®, only the article's

author or FPHC staff will be able to make changes to an entry.

3) New photo, audio, and video collections created using Flickr.com, Odeo.com, and Youtube.com. Using the latest popular technology, you will be able to view photo slideshows, listen to historic sermons and interviews, or view a film, and even paste these audiovisual experiences into your own personal blog or church website.

4) Moving certain features from *Heritage* magazine to the website. The following features are now on www.iFPHC.org: Archives Activities (recent acquisitions and photos of visitors to the FPHC); Letters; and Seen in Print.



Defending the Faith

How the Assemblies of God Responded to Four Challenges to its Beliefs and Practices

By William W. Menzies

Since the publication of his benchmark history of the Assemblies of God, *Anointed to Serve* (Gospel Publishing House, 1971), Dr. William W. Menzies has burnished his reputation as a respected scholar and educator. From this vantage point, he has had the opportunity to reflect upon many of the challenges faced by the AG throughout its history. In this article, Dr. Menzies describes the AG's response to four theological, ethical, and social challenges. Studying these issues — which continue to raise questions from pulpit and pew — offers insight into how the AG has developed its ethos and identity. — Darrin Rodgers

Over the years the Assemblies of God has gone through considerable change. It is not possible to stereotype a group as diverse as the AG, particularly because of the high value placed on the autonomy of the local church. In a given city with several AG churches, each will have its own identity marked by differing socio-economic profiles, ethnic origins, or tastes in music and worship style. Nonetheless, there are common values that are deeply shared and to some degree will be recognized in nearly all local AG churches.

To capture how the evolving structure of the national AG organization has related to the cascade

of theological challenges over the years, I will review selected doctrinal issues with the intention of showing how a variety of organizational mechanisms have been employed to address perceived needs. Each of the following issues has a story of its own. From this tapestry, I will then draw several conclusions.

Pacifism

It may surprise some readers to learn that most early Assemblies of God leaders were pacifists. In 1917, the Executive Presbytery adopted a resolution declaring the AG to be pacifist, in order to secure conscientious objector status for its members. The resolution read, "we cannot conscientiously participate

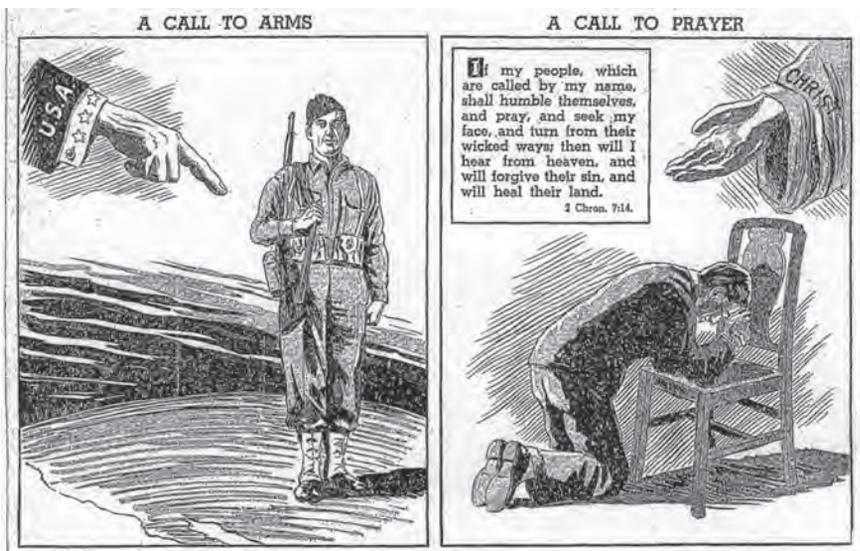


A tract (ca. 1939-1942) written by a Central Bible Institute professor in support of conscientious objectors.

in war and armed resistance which involves the actual destruction of human life, since this is contrary to our view of the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God, which is the sole basis of our faith."¹

Why did they take this position? Some scholars view the pacifist posture of the emerging church as an authentic reflection of an other-worldly outlook. Preoccupied with reaching the lost before the cataclysmic end of the age, Pentecostals were little concerned with secular endeavors to reform a doomed world. Participation in war, even for a noble cause, as some portrayed the contours of the First World War, was not an option.

The AG did not make its pacifist position a requirement for fellowship.



A Charles Ramsay cartoon during World War II, published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 27, 1941.

The Statement of Fundamental Truths, adopted in 1916, was formulated in the midst of uncertainties about war. However, the pacifist position did not make it into the document, and the issue apparently was not even raised.²

When the United States was plunged into war in 1941, the situation was totally different. Pearl Harbor impacted the constituency of the AG very much like the rest of the nation. During World War II, fifty thousand AG young men served in the United States military. Only thirty-five served in camps for those asking for exemption as conscientious objectors.³ This was a glaring cognitive dissonance for a denomination officially classified as pacifist!

During the Vietnam War, action was taken to address this problem. It was quite evident that the AG had acculturated to the point that its earlier pacifist position was no longer held by more than a handful of constituents. At the 1965 General Council held in Des Moines, Iowa, a decision was made to appoint a committee to study the matter with a view to making a recommendation for action at the next General Council convening two years later in Long Beach, California. What is significant about this issue is that

never before had a major ideological issue been re-examined on the basis of a year-long assessment by a theological committee.

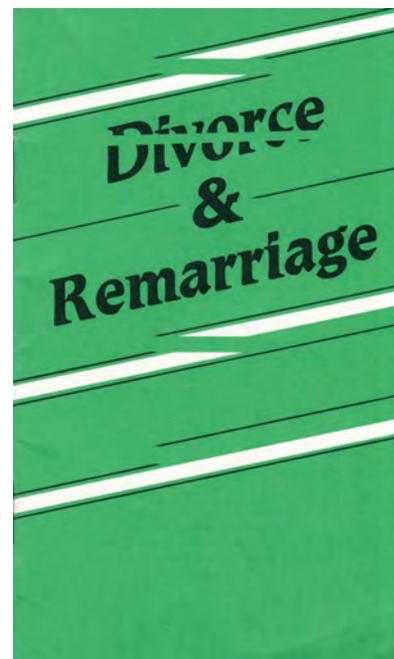
At the 1967 General Council, the committee's recommendation was that the AG withdraw from its previous pacifist posture to the more realistic posture of honoring the right of individual members to adopt a position of conscientious objection to military service, of non-combatant military service, or of serving as a combatant. The committee's recommendation was adopted by the General Council, the first time such a decision was reached through the advice of a theological study commission.⁴

Scholars identify various reasons for the decline of pacifism in the AG. Support for pacifism, never a chief identifying-mark of Pentecostals, eroded before first generation Pentecostals could develop a pacifist theological tradition for succeeding generations. Upward social mobility and participation in mainstream social and political activities tended to mute the early idealism of Pentecostals like Stanley Frodsham, the *Pentecostal Evangel* editor (1921-1949) whose pacifism was derived from a general withdrawal from worldly affairs.

By the time the AG joined the National Association of Evangelicals in 1943, the AG had already become, in many ways, much like the majority of white, non-Pentecostal evangelicals in America: politically conservative. When the anti-war movement during the 1960s was characterized by youthful rebellion and activities traditionally deemed sinful, that further alienated Pentecostals from pacifism. The 1967 change in the AG's position on pacifism reflected not only a shift that had already occurred in Pentecostal sensibilities toward war, but it also was a reaction against what pacifism had come to symbolize in American culture.

Divorce and Remarriage

No issue has resurfaced as frequently as the Assemblies of God position on divorce and remarriage. From the beginning of the AG, the official position was essentially the same as that of the Roman Catholic Church: a virtual denial of the legitimacy of divorce. Under no circumstances other than by recognition of the annulment of a marriage could a married person with a living companion be remarried



AG position paper on divorce and remarriage.



D. V. Hurst (left) and his brother Wesley Hurst listen to delegate T. C. Cunningham at the 1973 General Council, when the “Divorce and Remarriage” position paper was first debated and adopted.

remarriage resurfaced in 1999 at the Orlando General Council, this time with the issue of same-sex marriages. A resolution was presented that added to the previous language on the divorce-remarriage issue by explicitly forbidding ministers to perform same-sex marriages. The motion was adopted.⁵ At the General Council in 2001, a resolution was adopted permitting the credentialing of ministers if the divorce in question transpired prior to conversion.

Another way theological controversies have been addressed by the AG since 1970 has been the publication of occasional position papers. These documents are not part of the Statement of Fundamental Truths, being the product of a committee of scholars and churchmen, although each position paper has been approved as an official statement by the General Presbytery, the broadly representative ruling body of the AG. At the 1991 General Council meeting in Portland, the authority of such documents was clarified to insure that only those position papers recommended by the Executive Presbytery and approved by the General Council could be understood to have authority for credentialing purposes.⁶

The publication of such documents tends to carry with it a kind of implicit influence, however, being perceived by the general public as the “official” position of the AG. In the years since the writing of the first position paper in 1970, only one has gained the approval of the General Council, thus becoming truly an official representation of AG belief. This was the “Divorce and Remarriage” paper, which was debated and adopted at the 1973 General Council.⁷

From 1970 to 2006, twenty-four position papers have been promulgated.⁸ All these have been approved by the General Presbytery, a broadly representative body. Many of the early papers are a product of the standing General Council commission on Doctrines and Practices Disapproved, brought into being in 1968. This

by an AG minister. An AG minister performing an unauthorized marriage did so at the risk of losing his credentials.

In the years following World War II, more and more members of AG churches encountered the problem of divorce. In fact, the AG came increasingly to reflect the culture of which it was a part. By the 1960s, serious tension existed at this point, with larger urban churches more clearly reflecting the pressures of prevailing culture while the rural and small-town churches tended to appeal for sustaining traditional positions on the issue of divorce and remarriage.

A standing committee of the General Council which dealt with “Doctrines and Practices Disapproved” was charged by the 1971 General Council with the responsibility of making a thorough study of this issue. This committee, comprised of pastors, schoolmen, and church executives, spent more than a year studying the biblical foundations for marriage, for divorce, and the conditions for possible remarriage.

At the 1973 General Council in Miami, the recommendation of the committee was adopted with only slight

revision. The decision effectively ratified the typical Protestant evangelical position on marriage and divorce, acknowledging that although divorce is not encouraged, it may be permitted for biblical reasons: adultery (Matt. 5:31-32 and 19:9) and abandonment (I Cor. 7:15). Although affirming that divorce is therefore more than legal separation, the church recognized that when conditions fell within biblical parameters, divorced persons could be allowed to remarry. Pastors of local churches were given the authority to perform such marriages, contingent on their being satisfied that the parties met the necessary qualifications.

The committee recommended, however, that the AG retain its previous standard for ministers and lay leaders in the local church. No minister could be ordained if he or she had been divorced and then remarried with the previous companion still living. One standard was therefore adopted for ordinary laypersons and another for clergy and local lay leadership. Not all have been satisfied with this position, even though it is a substantial change from the earlier position.

The matter of divorce and

commission would review a variety of issues referred to it by the Executive Presbytery which were perceived to be of sufficient magnitude to warrant response. An official study committee on positional papers was established in 1975 and called "Committee to Advance Our Pentecostal Witness."⁹ This commission was reconstituted in 1979 as the Doctrinal Purity Commission.¹⁰

Sanctification

From the beginning of the AG, the doctrine of sanctification has been a matter of some ambiguity. The intention of the language employed on this point in the 1916 Statement of Fundamental Truths was purposely somewhat vague. This was done so that exponents of the Wesleyan Holiness crisis experience theology would not be overly offended, while the majority in the infant AG preferred the Keswickian, or Reformed, model of progressive sanctification. The terminology of "entire sanctification" was used, although it was generally defined to mean something less than the "second blessing" teaching of the Wesleyans.

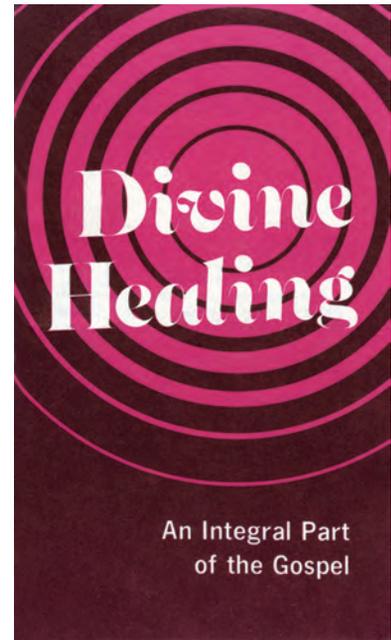
Over the years this term "entire sanctification" created sufficient ambiguity that a decision was made to drop the term from the Statement of Fundamental Truths. Consequently, by

action of the General Council in 1961, a clarification was supplied by amending the article in the Statement of Fundamental Truths and changing the title to just "Sanctification."

Divine Healing

From the earliest days of the Pentecostal revival, it was nearly universal belief that God's intervention occurred in concrete, physical ways. This included a belief in God's willingness to heal people. Borrowing from the slogan expressing core beliefs of evangelicals like A. J. Gordon and A. B. Simpson, AG people heralded confidence in the "fourfold gospel" (what Pentecostals tended to call the "full gospel"), which meant: "Jesus Christ the Savior, the Healer, the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and the Coming King." Of course, these themes were borrowed from their evangelical predecessors.

Praying for the sick was a fairly common practice among a wide range of evangelicals in the late nineteenth century.¹² Implicit in the "full gospel" was the belief that Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), heals those who ask in faith. It was not uncommon for zealous advocates of this dimension of Pentecostalism to scorn those who employed the

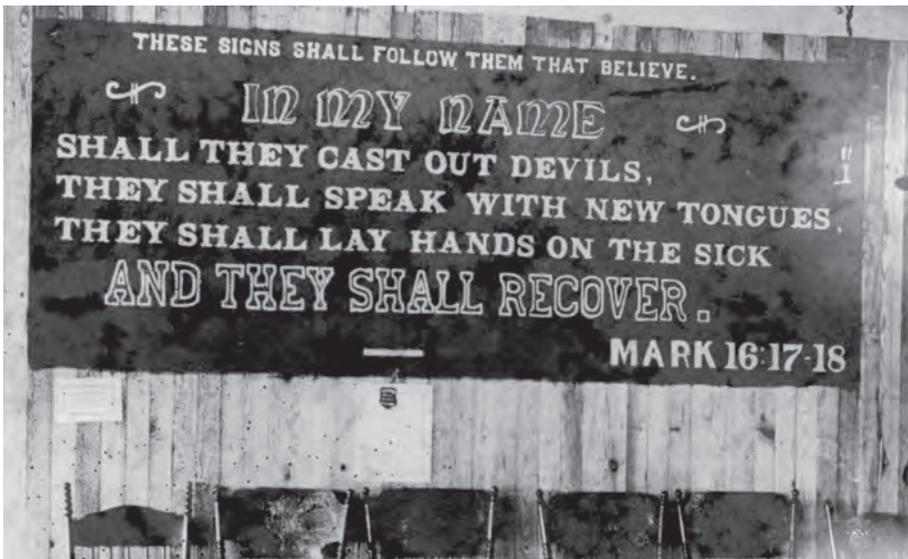


AG position paper on divine healing.

services of physicians. Over the years, it became apparent that, although many did testify to remarkable healings, not all for whom prayer was offered were in fact healed. A strain appeared in the fabric of healing theology. How was one to report that healing is for all when common experience discloses that many are not healed?

The cognitive dissonance evident in the teaching on healing led to the promulgation of a position paper in 1974. This document is a clear retreat from the simplistic expectation of earlier years, with a clear acknowledgement that there remains a mystery in healing, and that we must frankly report that all are not healed. In spite of this frank recognition of limitations, the reader is enjoined to "preach the Word and expect the signs to follow."¹³ AG ministers cooperate fully with professional medical people today, accepting that healing is from God whether it comes in the form of special divine interventions or in the form of scientific medical skill.

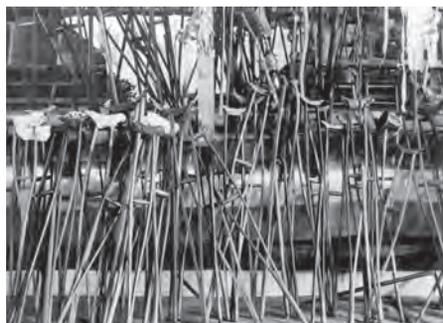
Reaching a peak in the 1950s, the "Salvation-Healing" crusades often featured tent evangelism and citywide interdenominational support, but quickly waned in popularity when many of the traveling evangelists came under severe criticism for moral or



A church banner promoting divine healing, possibly in Indianapolis, about 1910. From the Alice Reynolds Flower collection

financial shortcomings. The General Presbytery considered the problem of lack of accountability of these marginal ministers, many of whom were independent. Eventually, in 1965, the General Council adopted a resolution entitled “Criteria for Independent Corporations,” which was aimed principally at AG ministers who had set up their own organizations in an effort to avoid the scrutiny of the denominational leadership.¹⁴

The abuses of the Salvation-Healing evangelists quickly led to the virtual demise of this kind of ministry in the United States. The failure of these largely independent Pentecostal preachers, often making extravagant and unsubstantiated claims, led to considerable disillusionment among AG people regarding the ministry of divine healing, so that prayer for the sick diminished in local churches for a time.



Crutches, canes, braces, etc., discarded by those healed during the first Raymond T. Richey revival in Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 1923.

Gradually, however, a sustained level of local church healing practice was recovered and continues today. A significant number of individuals report marking commitments to Christ as a result of a physical healing of either themselves or a family member.

It does appear that remarkable healings are a significant factor in reaching people at the frontiers of Christianity. Evidently, supernatural interventions are more common in such situations. On the mission fields of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, as well as those of Europe, AG missionaries find a good response to the message that

God delivers from sin, sickness, and the demonic. This seems to be particularly true among animist tribal peoples.¹⁵

Conclusion

In keeping with the original intention of the founding body, the Assemblies of God is considered a cooperative fellowship instead of a denomination. As a result the national headquarters operation exists primarily as a service organization with various levels of decision-making — National officers, various committees, Executive Presbytery, General Presbytery, proposals decided through voting at General Council meetings, district-level decisions, and local church decisions.

In spite of a slate of continuing theological, ethical, and social challenges, the net result appears to be that the AG is poised for continued growth in the near and foreseeable future. Ministers and laypeople seem to be satisfied with the variety of services provided by the national structure for facilitating their local church ministries.

One of the factors that may help to explain the well-being of the AG is the continued evidence of a reasonable balance between charisma and organization. There appears to be sufficient elasticity in the denomination to sustain the inevitable ideological challenges it confronts. A variety of structural mechanisms are available to address the theological tensions provided by the rapidly changing religious environment. As the AG moves forward in the twenty-first century, the present balance between charisma and structure, as long as it can be sustained, bodes well for the future.



Adapted from William W. Menzies, “The Challenges of Organization and Spirit in the Implementation of Theology in the Assemblies of God,” in *Church, Identity, and Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, © 2005). Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.



William W. Menzies, Ph.D., a former professor at Central Bible College, Evangel University, and Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, has written extensively and now is president-emeritus and chancellor of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines.

Notes

- ¹ *Weekly Evangel*, August 4, 1917, 6.
- ² Paul Alexander, “An Analysis of the Emergence and Decline of Pacifism in the History of the Assemblies of God” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2000).
- ³ William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), 327, 328.
- ⁴ *General Council Minutes*, 1967, 35.
- ⁵ *General Council Minutes*, 1999, 80.
- ⁶ *General Council Minutes*, 1991, 60.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.
- ⁸ *Where We Stand: The Official Position Papers of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2003), contains all 24 papers.
- ⁹ “Resolution 7. Committee on Positional Papers,” *General Council Minutes*, 1975, 68-69.
- ¹⁰ “Resolution 4. Commission on Doctrinal Purity,” *General Council Minutes*, 1979, 26-27. This permanent Commission on Doctrinal Purity is now authorized in the *General Council Bylaws*, Article IX, Section A.
- ¹¹ *General Council Minutes*, 1961, 92.
- ¹² Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis & Taylor Press, 1987), 115-142.
- ¹³ *Where We Stand: The Official Position Papers of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2003), 51.
- ¹⁴ *General Council Minutes*, 1965, 54-58.
- ¹⁵ For an excellent case study of healing among tribal animists in the mountains of Luzon, Philippines, see Julie C. Ma. *When the Spirit Meets the Spirit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

HERITAGE:

A Place to Dig Deep

By Paul E. Grabill



Orchestra group at a camp meeting at Wescosville, near Green Lane, Pennsylvania, in the late 1920s. Identified: Clyde Pierce (leader, in front, sitting at xylophone); Joseph R. Flower (standing far back, holding trombone); Alfred Westerman (far right, standing by pole in background, holding violin); Adele Flower (1st row, sitting 3rd from left); Rev. W. M. Dawkins (standing in back, far left).

would like to suggest that the value of heritage is far richer than what one might find at the surface. To learn from our heritage, one needs to dig deeply, because there are great riches far below the surface. How does one mine that wealth?

I'd like to offer a few guiding principles:

1. Risk Transparency. There is so much to be said for those senior ministers who have run the race and are finishing well. They have avoided the destructive landmines of life to which some of their peers sadly fell prey. It is only natural that we should honor those who have finished well, but, unfortunately, if only honor is given, then we fail to learn from the mistakes of those who have gone before. My challenge to senior ministers is this: please risk much by telling the young ministers where you messed up and what you learned from those experiences. We know you have earned a crown, but tell us more about your missteps during the race so the young ones can avoid doing the same. If you do that, we will actually honor you all the more.

2. Explore Anomalies. By researching our history thoroughly, one finds things that should generate deep questions. I'll give just two forgotten examples: First, within just the past forty years, the Assemblies of God went from being one of the largest pacifist denominations in America to now being one of the strongest pro-military denominations in America. Why is that? What was the spiritual understanding of our founders concerning the shedding of blood? What was their understanding of the kingdoms of this world? Why do we now see this issue differently? Second, our founders used the term, "voluntary cooperative fellowship," to be as loose a term as possible to describe the Assemblies of God. We now define it in a way that is quite different than what our founders meant. When did we start to do that and why? Which definition has proven to be better?

3. Be Humble. In America, we are big on progress, but sometimes real progress can be an illusion. Just because we have more information than previous generations doesn't necessarily mean we have more

wisdom. Do we really know more about God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, the world, holiness, marriage, child rearing, etc. than our forefathers? Maybe we do in some areas, but maybe we don't in others. Maybe, just maybe, we are not "all that." Maybe we really do need revival. And maybe those before us got more right than they got wrong. May the same be said about us some day. I pray that we don't lose more than we gain, or unravel two things for every one thing that we fix.

Should Jesus tarry, we, too, will leave a legacy. Hopefully, it will be a rich one.

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Paul E. Grabill, D.Min., is pastor of State College (PA) Assembly of God and is assistant superintendent of the Pennsylvania-Delaware District.

View his blog at:
<http://scassembly.blogspot.com>



Exterior view of the historic Stone Church of Chicago in 1908.

Centennial Churches

A Survey

By Glenn Gohr

Having just celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Azusa Street revival, it is logical to expect that a number of Pentecostal churches — planted in that first year of fervent witnessing and outreach — would also be celebrating their centennials. For the purposes of this survey, the treatment will cover a sampling of those congregations which either started in 1906 or 1907 (during the first year of the Azusa Street outpouring) or else became Pentecostal during that period of

time. Studying these histories aids the understanding of how the Pentecostal message spread across North America just after the Azusa Street outpouring. No doubt many more churches could be included.

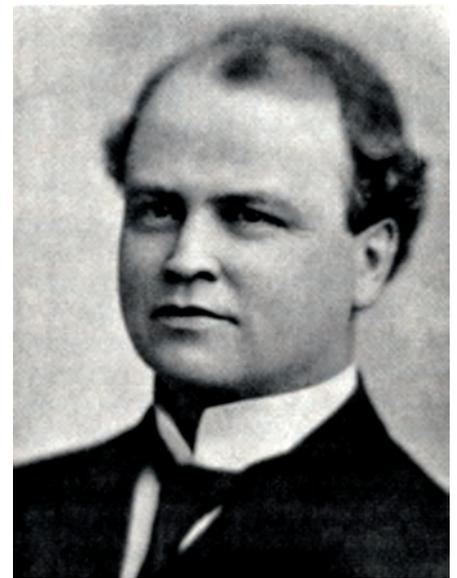
The Stone Church Palos Heights, IL

During 1906 William Hamner Piper rented a large stone building in downtown Chicago to start a new congregation. On a bitter cold Sunday, December 9th, about 150 people gathered for the first service. This was a key church in the Assemblies of God, and the Stone Church hosted the second General Council of the AG in October 1914 as well as the 1919

General Council.

After meeting in several locations through the years, in 1968 the congregation built a new church in suburban Palos Heights. The Stone Church became a focal point for the charismatic renewal of the late 60s and early 70s. In the 1970s, under the leadership of Owen Carr, the church started a Christian television station, WCFC-TV38, which now broadcasts nationwide as the independent Total Living Network. Over the years, the Stone Church has planted several new congregations and launched many ministers and missionaries.

On December 3, 2006, the church kicked off a year-long anniversary celebration with Owen Carr as guest speaker for its three Sunday services.



William Hamner Piper, founder of the Stone Church in Chicago.

The church is hosting the musical “It’s Pentecost” with a 100-voice choir on December 10, 2006. The musical will recapture the mood of the first worship service held in the Stone Church in 1906. Additional events are planned throughout 2007.¹

“We’re thankful for the past, but we’re also looking to the future,” says Senior Pastor Robert Maddox. “This church has always been led by the Spirit and we want to continue that tradition.”²

First Assembly of God

Eureka Springs, AR

First Assembly of God was formed in the spring of 1907 through the evangelistic efforts of Charles Parham's Apostolic Faith group. The church first met at the corner of White and Mountain Street with John H. James as the pastor.

In later years an annual Tri-State Camp Meeting was held in Eureka Springs, drawing hundreds and even thousands of people. Speakers for this event included such notables as Smith Wigglesworth, Donald Gee, J. W. Welch, and W. T. Gaston. These meetings were so successful that in 1926 the Commercial Club of the city pledged itself to build a huge auditorium to accommodate these crowds, and it was completed in 1927.³ Eureka Springs also hosted the 1925 General Council.

The band of believers in Eureka Springs met in various downtown locations through the years. A new sanctuary was dedicated at the church's present location on Highway 23 South in August 1979.⁴ Gene Gilmore is the pastor. The church will be celebrating its centennial March 30, 2007 through April 1, 2007.



The Opp Saloon, 406 E. Sandusky Street, in Findlay, Ohio, March 1907, which T. K. Leonard and his congregation converted into the Findlay Assembly of God. T. K. Leonard (front, left); Mary Leonard (back, center); Mr. Norris (in front of Mary Leonard); Eugene McCleary with daughter Althea (at barstool on far right).

First Assembly of God

Findlay, OH

A revival meeting conducted by C. A. McKinney in 1906 was the starting point for this church. Thomas K. Leonard attended the meetings and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. A short time later Leonard sold his farm and with the help of two other men bought an old two-story brick tavern. After considerable renovation the saloon was transformed into a mission church and meetings began in 1907. Old-timers recall that nothing

in the old tavern was wasted. A card table became the communion table, a slot machine was converted into a pulpit, and the tavern bar rail was converted into an altar rail for the new mission. Originally called "The Apostolic Temple," Leonard renamed the church "Assembly of God" in 1912 — he also recommended this name for the new fellowship that formed two years later at Hot Springs in April 1914.⁵

First Assembly served as a Bible training school from 1911 until 1928. It also served as the first headquarters and printing facilities for the Assemblies



Tri-State Camp Meeting held at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, July 1912 which included many key leaders of the future Assemblies of God.

of God. T. K. Leonard remained as pastor until 1941. The church moved to facilities on Ash Avenue in 1947,⁶ and its current building was dedicated in 1964 with an educational wing completed in 1971. An updated history is planned for the centennial along with special anniversary services in the fall of 2007.

Assembly of God Keene, NH

In 1907, during the pastorate of Rev. Willis A. Hadley of the Court Street Congregational Church, Oscar H. Thayer, a local owner of a carpentry business, was disturbed when he realized that his minister was not a "fundamentalist preacher." As a result, Thayer withdrew from Court Street Church and organized an independent mission to serve those who shared his beliefs.⁷

There have been a number of fine pastors over the 100-year history of the church. In recent years, under the leadership of Pastor Raymond Hodgerney the church has spearheaded an annual Interdenominational Prayer Rally which now includes ten pastors from evangelical denominations. The group prays for the local churches, the city of Keene, and the nation.

The church is celebrating its anniversary October 5-7, 2007, beginning with a Friday night youth



The front of Keene Assembly of God, during renovations, 1987.



Above: Central Assembly's first building also housed Central Bible Institute for two years.

Left: Amanda Benedict, who prayed and fasted for Central Assembly and the city of Springfield.

outreach with help from Master's Commission. An open house and banquet are scheduled for Saturday with District Superintendent Dennis Marquardt as speaker. General Superintendent Thomas Trask is the featured speaker for the Sunday morning service. Former pastors of the church will be invited to speak at various times during the year.

Central Assembly of God Springfield, MO

Many are familiar with the story how Evangelist Rachel Sizelove, after participating in the Azusa Street revival, traveled to Springfield, Missouri, to visit her sister, Lillie Corum in 1907. Together they prayed, and Mrs. Corum received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the early morning hours of June 1, 1907.⁸ From this spark, the Corum family held cottage prayer meetings and nurtured a small band of Christians which grew to become Central Assembly of God.

One unsung hero in Central's history is Amanda Benedict. According to a write-up in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, she is credited as the reason for Central Assembly's existence, as well as for the Assemblies of God Headquarters being located in Springfield. For one year she lived on bread and water,

praying and fasting for the church and for the city of Springfield.⁹

During the 1910s the church used rented facilities and tents at various locations. After affiliating with the Assemblies of God in 1916, the congregation erected its first permanent building in 1920 at the corner of Campbell and Calhoun. Central Bible Institute started in the basement of this structure before moving to its own campus in 1924. During the 1930s Central planted several other congregations in Springfield and the church continued to grow.

The current 2,300-seat sanctuary was dedicated in March of 1992 while Philip Wannemacher was pastor.

An all-church banquet is planned for the evening of June 1, 2007 (marking 100 years from when Lillie Corum was spirit-baptized). The Sunday services on June 3rd will also be devoted to celebrating the anniversary. Other special events are planned throughout the year. Dr. James T. Bradford is the senior pastor.

Central Assembly Tulsa, OK

This congregation traces its history to Bible studies and prayer meetings that Mrs. Vandalia Fry conducted in her home beginning in 1907. She had been healed of cancer and received the baptism of the Holy

**An early photo of Glad Tidings
Tabernacle (New York, NY).**

Spirit during Charles Parham's 1903 meetings in Galena, Kansas. She later moved to Tulsa and invited Parham to hold a tent meeting in August 1908. With more than 100 converts of that revival, a permanent church was soon established.¹⁰ The church met in various rented facilities until in 1915 the church found an ideal location at the corner of Fifth and Peoria during the pastorate of W. T. Gaston. It was known as the Full Gospel Tabernacle and later as Central Assembly.

The church has a rich history with many notable pastors and assistant pastors, including W. T. Gaston, S. A. Jamieson, Harry Bowley, G. W. Hardcastle, Sr., Glenn Millard, U. S. Grant, D. V. and Wesley Hurst, and others.¹¹

The church property at Fifth and Peoria was sold in 1992, and the congregation moved to temporary quarters in a shopping center, changing its name to Heritage Assembly. In 1996, under Pastor Clarence Lambert, the congregation purchased the former Bates Elementary School situated on nine acres on S. 72nd East Ave. Since the property is almost in the center of the city, the congregation voted to change its name back to Central Assembly.¹²

The current pastor is Phillip Rogers. The church is planning a celebration service in June 2007 and will be inviting some of the former pastors to speak.



**Glad Tidings
Tabernacle
New York, NY**

In January 1907 Marie Burgess (later Mrs. Robert Brown) and Jessie Brown took the Pentecostal message to a Holiness mission in New York. A few months later they opened their own mission at 454 West 42nd Street, which became known as Glad Tidings Hall. Marie Burgess married Robert A. Brown in 1909, and together they ministered in New York for 38 years. Mrs. Brown continued her ministry at Glad Tidings after her husband's death

in 1948, serving the same church for 64 years. Her nephew, R. Stanley Berg, assisted her in the work and followed her as pastor in 1971.¹³

The congregation purchased a large former Baptist church building on 33rd Street in 1921 which they named Glad Tidings Tabernacle. They have been meeting there ever since. The church has demonstrated a strong missionary vision, and during the 1920s through the 1940s the congregation usually led all AG congregations in missionary giving. Before World War II, the church was a hub for Pentecostals in the northeastern U.S. and became one of the most influential Pentecostal churches in the United States. The church broadcast a weekly radio program for many years and hosted a number of large evangelistic rallies. The congregation has commissioned many missionaries and ministers from among its ranks.

Carl and Donna Keyes have pastored the church since 1998. Located in the heart of mid-town Manhattan, just one half block from Madison Square

**Full Gospel Tabernacle (Tulsa, OK) at
Fifth and Peoria as looked in the 1930s.**





Marie Burgess about the time of her marriage to Robert A. Brown in 1909.

Garden and Penn Station, the church helped with relief efforts after the 9/11 tragedy, providing counseling and over 100,000 meals to the Ground Zero site workers. The church ministers to people from all cultural backgrounds and is reaching inner-city New York.

Other Centennial Anniversaries

Christian Assembly (Zion, IL) was founded after Charles F. Parham was invited to hold a revival at Zion in September 1906. The church sponsored a week-long celebration beginning with a Great Lakes Bible Institute reunion and men's prayer service on September 16, 2006. General Superintendent Thomas Trask spoke on Sunday, followed by a banquet. Former pastors and missionaries spoke during the following week, and the anniversary concluded with a special youth rally on September 22nd.

Other congregations who celebrated 100 years in 2006 are El Bethel Assembly of God (New Brockton, AL), First Assembly of God (Cincinnati, OH) and Calvary Assembly of God (Waynesboro, PA).

First Assembly of Memphis (Cordova, TN) is celebrating its centennial February 23-25, 2007, with the theme, "Celebrate the Legacy — Look to the Future." The church is 2500 members strong, and it has numerous outreach and ministry programs as it seeks to evangelize the neighboring areas of east Memphis. Dr. Thomas H. Lindberg is the pastor.¹⁴ Christ Church International (formerly Minneapolis Gospel Tabernacle) and First Assembly of God (Austin, TX) are also observing centennials in 2007.

These are just a sampling of the many congregations which were planted and sprouted in the U.S. just after the first evangelistic thrust inspired by the Azusa Street outpouring of 1906. And if a tally were made of mission fields and churches in countries outside the U.S. which were launched 100 years ago, no doubt the list would be almost endless.

A few Assemblies of God churches have the distinction of being older than the Azusa Street revival. Some churches left their denominations after the majority of the people accepted the Pentecostal message. Others were independent or joined the ranks of Pentecostalism under Charles Parham's ministry. Some of these include First Christian Assembly, Youngstown, OH (1890), Highway Tabernacle, Philadelphia, PA (1894), First Assembly, Akron, OH (1899), Dallas Assembly of God, Dallas, WI (1900), Galena Assembly of God, Galena, KS (1903), Bethel Assembly of God, Chambersburg, PA (1903), First Assembly of God, Joplin, MO (1904), and Bethany Assembly of God, Agawam, MA (1905).

It is a fitting tribute to honor some of the original Pentecostal church planters and the congregations they established. Other congregations which are 100 years or older should contact the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center <archives@ag.org> to be included in an online listing of centennial churches.



Glenn Gohr is assistant archivist and copy editor for the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

Notes

¹ "100th Anniversary News," The Stone Church website: <http://www.thestonechurch.org> (accessed November 14, 2006).

² "The Stone Church Marks 100 Years," *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, August 27, 2006, 11.

³ "Inter-State Camp Meeting at Eureka Springs, Ark.," *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 8, 1926, 8.

⁴ First Assembly of God (Eureka Springs, AR) dedication folder, August 26, 1979.

⁵ "Findlay's First Pentecostal Church Celebrates Its 75th Anniversary," 1982, 6.

⁶ "On The Cover Page," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 6, 1952, 10.

⁷ "A History of Keene Assembly of God" [brochure], 2006.

⁸ Fred T. Corum and Hazel E. Bakewell, *The Sparkling Fountain* (Windsor, OH: Corum & Associates, Inc., 1983), 2.

⁹ A woman at Amanda Benedict's funeral said, "I believe this present assembly, the Gospel Publishing and the Central Bible Institute, are all here as a result of that praying in the Holy Ghost on the part of Sister Benedict." Stanley Frodsham, "The Romance of the Gospel Publishing House," *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 9, 1927, 3.

¹⁰ Bob Burke, *Like a Prairie Fire: A History of the Assemblies of God in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma District Council, 1994), 23.

¹¹ Central Assembly of God (Tulsa, OK), 75th anniversary booklet, 1982.

¹² Gerald S. Pope, "Central Assembly of God, Fifth and Peoria, Tulsa," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 17:1 (Spring 1997), 21.

¹³ E. L. Blumhofer, "Glad Tidings Tabernacle." In *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds. Rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 669.

¹⁴ First Assembly of God of Memphis website: <http://www.firstassemblymemphis.org> (accessed November 14, 2006).



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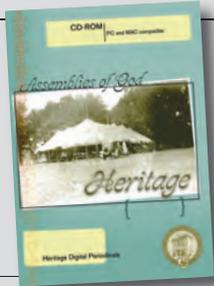


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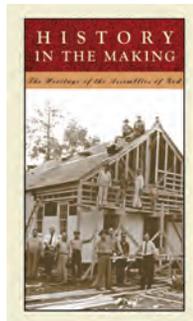
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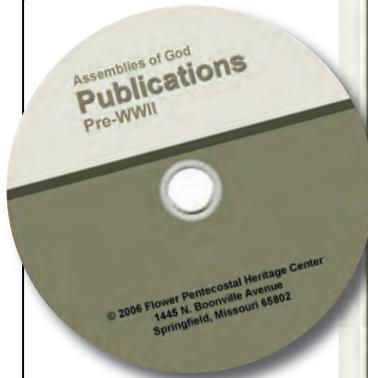
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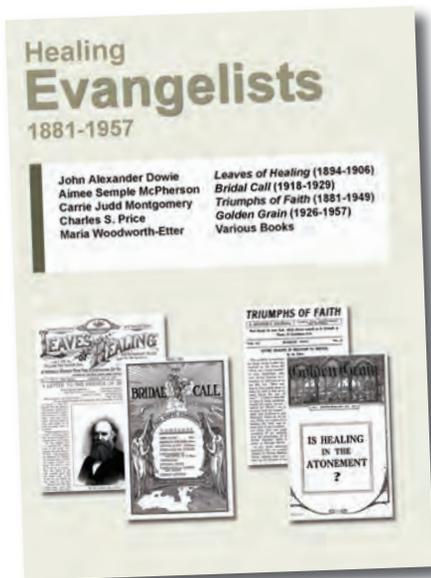


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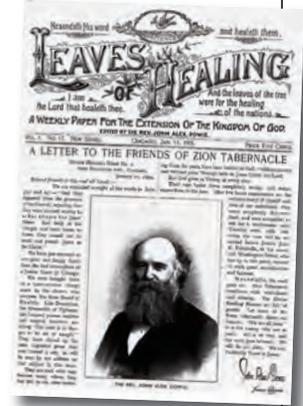


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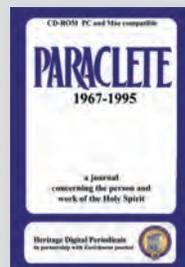
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Samuel G. Otis published *Word and Work* to promote Pentecostal meetings and churches in the New England area, including meetings with Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Smith Wigglesworth. The issues are filled with sermons, articles, and news items pertaining to the early Pentecostal movement.

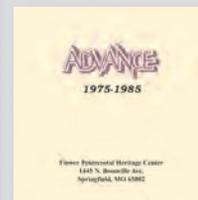
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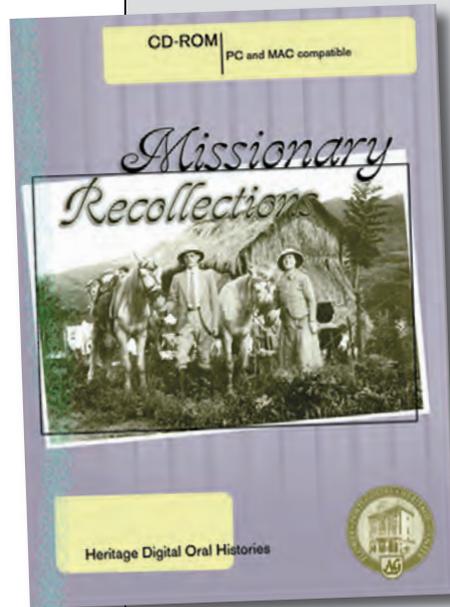
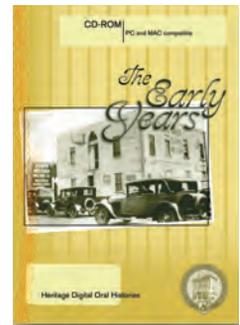
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- › Order interview collections on MP3-CDs

Early Years

The interviews in this collection focus on the early years of the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal movement. Various pastors, evangelists, and leaders reflect on memories of the Azusa Street revival, the founding convention of the Assemblies of God in 1914, and evangelizing in the early years of our history. Alice Reynolds Flower, Joseph Wannemacher, C. M. Ward, and Ernest Williams are among the many personalities that can be found on this MP3-CD.

EY MP3-CD **750430** \$ 20.00



Missionary Recollections

This collection of missionary oral history interviews is a sample of 16 hours of interviews drawn from the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center's rich collection. You can learn more about the background history and be able to understand firsthand some of the hardships, dangers, joys and sorrows of several of our key missionaries on foreign fields from places like Africa, India, China and Latin America.

Missionary interviews on this MP3-CD:

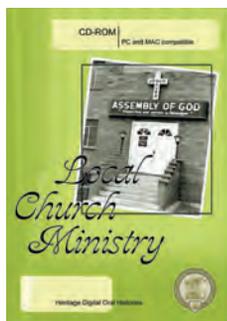
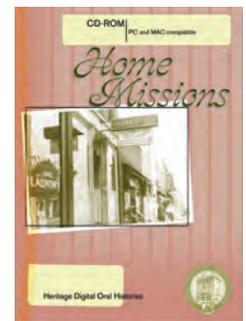
Hugh and Betty Baker, H. C. Ball, Ada Bolton Bard, Eva Bloom, Murray N. Brown, Sr., John H. Burgess, Alfred and Elizabeth Cawston, Charles Greenaway, Melvin L. Hodges, J. Philip Hogan, Maynard L. Ketcham, Howard C. Osgood, Everett L. Phillips, Harriet Williams Schoonmaker, Anna Stafsholt, Esther Harvey, Loren O. Triplett, Jr., Arthur Berg, Louise Jeter Walker, Anna Tomaseck, Valborg Frandsen, Adele Flower Dalton, Grace Walther and Marjorie Brown.

MR MP3-CD **750431** \$ 20.00

Home Missions

Here is a 28-hour oral history collection focusing on Assemblies of God home missions in interviews with 14 men and women whose ministry turf included prisons, the Kentucky Mountains, Alaska, Native American reservations, Teen Challenge centers, and other needy areas. You'll hear the actual voices of Ann Ahlf, David Hogan, Andrew Maracle, Paul Markstrom, Lula Morton, Frank Reynolds, Curtis Ringness, and seven others.

HM MP3-CD **750437** \$ 20.00



Local Church Ministry

Today it is impossible to sit down and chat with Bond Bowman, James Hamill, Mary Ramsey Woodbury, and other early 20th century Pentecostal pastors. But it is possible to go with the interviewees and listen in on more than 10 hours of rare conversations with 12 leaders — representing ministries from coast to coast and border to border. You'll hear for the first time on MP3-CD how they were able to help build the Kingdom through their important roles within the Assemblies of God.

LCM MP3-CD **750474** \$ 20.00

iFPHC.org
REVIVALTIME

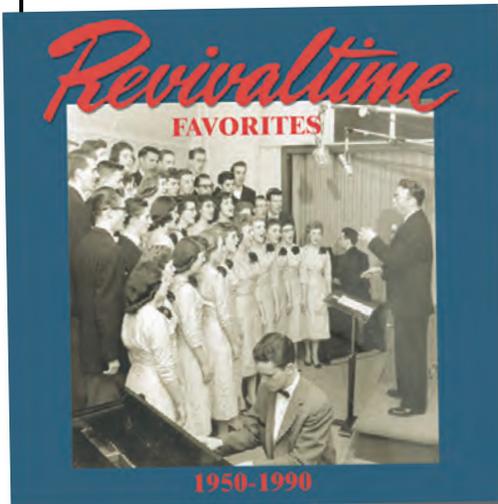
Who can forget C. M. Ward, Dan Betzer, and the *Revivaltime* choir? For forty years, their voices were

heard around the world on *Revivaltime* – the Assemblies of God radio program. Through our *Revivaltime* products, you can listen to C. M. Ward’s warmth and wit once again as he tackled the difficult

questions of life, and hear the *Revivaltime* choir performing your favorite songs.



C. M. Ward



Revivaltime Favorites

21 songs selected from radio broadcasts and *Revivaltime* choir albums from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

RTF CD **750473** \$ 14.95

Songs on this CD:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Blessed Assurance | Let Us Praise the Almighty | Arise, My Soul, Arise |
| Written in Red | In the Name of the Lord | I've Just Seen Jesus |
| Symphony of Praise | Name Above All Names | Moving Up to Gloryland |
| You are My Hiding Place | In One Accord | The Holy City |
| Look for Me Around the Throne | Yes, He Did | The Lord's Prayer |
| My Life is in You, Lord | Rise and Be Healed | Yes, It is Mine |
| He Came to Me | He is Jehovah | I Will Bless the Lord |



Revivaltime Classics

Collection of 14 classic sermons by C. M. Ward with introductions and interviews by Dan Betzer, his successor.

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|----------------------|---------------|---------|
| Revivaltime Classics | | |
| 7 CD Set | 750463 | \$59.95 |
| Revivaltime Classics | | |
| 7 Tape Set | 750455 | \$39.95 |
| Revivaltime Classics | | |
| 1 MP3-CD | 750470 | \$29.95 |



Revivaltime Reenactment 2005

Songs and a sermon from the 2005 Denver, Colorado General Council.

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|-------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| CD | 750484 | \$14.95 |
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| Tape | 750485 | \$ 9.95 |
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| DVD | 750482 | \$24.95 |
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| VHS | 750483 | \$19.95 |



Revivaltime Reenactment 2003

Held in conjunction with the 2003 Washington, D.C. General Council.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| Tape | 750469 | \$ 9.95 |
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| DVD | 750472 | \$24.95 |
| Revivaltime Reenactment | | |
| VHS | 750471 | \$19.95 |

Meet the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center staff



► Darrin Rodgers - Director

Darrin has served as director since September 2005. His portfolio includes public relations, acquisitions, editing *Heritage* magazine, conducting oral history interviews and, he notes, leading “a talented team of people who are passionate about Pentecostal history.” A fourth-generation Pentecostal, Darrin earned his B.A. (Hillsdale College), M.A. (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary), and J.D. (University of North Dakota School of Law). He is author

of *Northern Harvest*, a history of Pentecostalism in North Dakota (his home state), as well as numerous articles in journals and reference books. Darrin came to the FPHC from Fuller Theological Seminary, where he served at the David du Plessis Archive and the McAlister Library. When asked about his legal training, he quips that he “moved from law to grace.”

► Joyce Lee - Archivist

Joyce has served at the FPHC since May 1986. Born and raised in New Jersey, she is a third-generation Pentecostal. She moved to Springfield in 1976 to attend the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, from which she graduated in 1979. She previously worked as the cataloger and coordinator of technical services at the AGTS library for nine years. As archivist, she is responsible for cataloging or supervising the cataloging of printed materials, occasionally creating puzzles for *Heritage* magazine, and assisting researchers. In 1999 she assisted then FPHC director, Wayne Warner, in the compilation of *The Essential Smith Wigglesworth*. Joyce and her husband Jay live in Springfield.



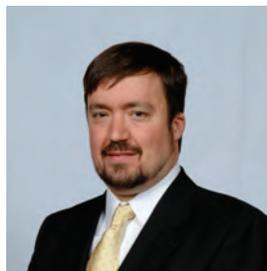
► Glenn Gohr - Assistant Archivist

Originally from Wichita Falls, Texas, Glenn has served as assistant archivist at the FPHC for 19 years. After earning a B.A. in English from Midwestern State University, he moved to Springfield and completed an M.Div. from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in 1984. He is an ordained AG minister, is married, and has two children. Glenn’s duties at the FPHC include cataloging and maintaining the photograph collection and the audio and video files. He regularly contributes articles and is also the copy editor for *Heritage*. He has written articles for various publications, including the *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. His broad knowledge of early Pentecostal history is a definite asset to the FPHC.

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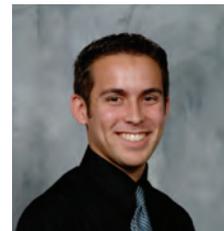
► Brett Pavia - Coordinator of Special Projects

Born and raised in Wisconsin, Brett completed his undergraduate education at North Central University. He married his college sweetheart, Sina, in 1995. He earned his master’s degree, which he began at Wheaton College and completed at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in 2000. He joined the FPHC in 1998 and, as coordinator of special projects, he designs *Heritage* magazine and spearheads the FPHC’s digitization efforts.



► Sharon Rasnake - Administrative Coordinator

Sharon has served as administrative coordinator since September 2001. A fifth-generation Pentecostal, she was born and raised in Springfield, Missouri. At age six, she was saved, Spirit-baptized, and called into the ministry. At age fifteen, she began traveling as the pianist for the Anchors Quartet. She ministered in churches in various capacities for over 40 years. She has two sons, a daughter and a wonderful husband, Burt.



► William Molenaar - Archives Specialist

William, a California native, is a senior at Evangel University, where he is completing his B.A. in Biblical Studies. He works part-time and assists FPHC staff by helping researchers, processing materials, and working on special tasks. William and his beautiful wife, Alicia, were married in 2005.



► Catherine McGee - Archives Specialist

Catherine, the daughter of prominent AG historian Gary McGee, is a junior at Evangel University, where she is an English major. She inherited her father’s humor and attention to detail. She works part-time and assists FPHC staff by helping researchers, fulfilling orders, and processing materials.

Introducing...



Endorsements

Having worked on early Pentecostal history for more than a decade, I found the resources of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center—which Wayne Warner helped bring into existence—to be unparalleled. A contribution to the Warner Research Fellowship will contribute to the Center's unique role in making Pentecostalism's historical heritage available to coming generations, and also honor the work of a man whose respect for the tradition's past grew from an abiding love for its future.

Grant Wacker
Professor of Christian History
Duke University

Researchers of all stripes from across North America and around the world have benefited from the resources and services of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. I am among the many who owe a debt of gratitude to Wayne Warner. The Wayne Warner Research Fellowship is a fitting tribute to his labors and will help deserving students explore the history of the Assemblies of God and modern Pentecostalism. The fruit of their endeavors will further enrich our insights into the people and institutions that have shaped this remarkable movement of the Holy Spirit.

Gary McGee
Distinguished Professor of Church
History and Pentecostal Studies
Assemblies of God Theological
Seminary

the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship

Wayne Warner, former director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (1980-2005), is a familiar name across the Assemblies of God. Under his leadership, the Center became a leading Christian archives and developed one of the largest and most accessible collections of Pentecostal historical materials in the world. He was the founding editor of *Assemblies of God Heritage* and has authored or compiled eleven books and countless articles.

In October 2006, the leadership of the Assemblies of God established the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship, an endowed program designed to encourage faculty, independent researchers, and students to use and publish from the Center's rich holdings. The program will award research and travel grants to a limited number of researchers each year whose research concerning Assemblies of God history is likely to be published and to benefit our Fellowship.

Have you been encouraged by Wayne's writings or friendship? Do you appreciate our Assemblies of God heritage? By making a donation to the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship, you will honor Wayne's significant contribution to the preservation and understanding of Assemblies of God history, and you will encourage scholarship in the field of Pentecostal history.

Many people do not realize what a tremendous heritage we have in the Assemblies of God. **Have you ever wished that you could help people to better appreciate our heritage? Now you can do something about it!** Supporting the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship is a tangible way to affirm our inspiring heritage and to help others to learn from the wisdom of those who came before.



Please mail contributions to: Wayne Warner Research Fellowship
Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center
1445 N. Boonville Ave.
Springfield, MO 65802

**Contributions are
tax-deductible.**

What has Wayne been doing?

Wayne has not slowed down since his retirement in September 2005. He is active as a volunteer at his church, Central Assembly in Springfield, Missouri, where he leads a Pentecostal history small group. During the last year he has traveled with his wife, Pat; he played golf weekly with seniors at his church; and he enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren. Wayne and Pat traveled to Los Angeles in April to participate in the Azusa Centennial, and he was one of the speakers. The denomination in which Wayne was reared, the Open Bible Standard Churches, has tapped Wayne's archival expertise, and he is serving as an adviser as the OBSC builds an archives and museum in Eugene, Oregon.





1445 N. Boonville Avenue
Springfield, Missouri 65802-1894

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