

Assemblies of God

# HERITAGE



## Black Heritage of the Assemblies of God

**2019-20**

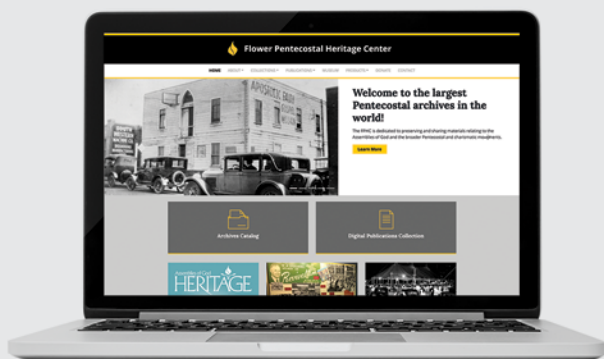
- National Black Fellowship
- Charles Shreve
- Blind Ministries
- O. W. Eubanks
- First Black Assemblies of God Minister and Missionaries

Volumes 39 & 40

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*Darrin J. Rodgers*  
EDITOR AND DIRECTOR

*Glenn W. Gohr*  
REFERENCE ARCHIVIST AND COPY EDITOR

*Robert E. Sears*  
ARCHIVIST

*Joyce E. Lee*  
ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST

*Meaghan Collier*  
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR/DIGITAL  
PROJECTS

*Joshua D. Thomassen*  
HERITAGE DESIGNER

*Wayne E. Warner*  
FOUNDING EDITOR

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FRONT COVER: Church leaders meet to discuss ways of reaching black Americans for Christ in December 1969. Seated (l-r): Bartlett Peterson, Bob Harrison, T. F. Zimmerman, C. W. H. Scott, Thurman Faison. Standing (l-r): T. E. Gannon, Wendell Wallace, J. Philip Hogan, Ralph Houston, M. B. Netzel, Donald Green, G. Raymond Carlson, Douglas Bass, and Kermit Reneau.



# From the Editor: History in Black and White

By Darrin J. Rodgers

**African Americans are featured in two important articles in this edition of *Assemblies of God Heritage*. One article shares the story of the National Black Fellowship and its predecessor, the Inner-City Workers Conference. The other article provides vignettes of the first black Assemblies of God minister and missionaries.**

Faithful and courageous black Assemblies of God ministers have labored, despite great obstacles, to follow God's call. But the black heritage of the Assemblies of God is not monochromatic. In many instances, people have worked across racial divides to build the church.

In one of my favorite examples of such interracial cooperation, O. W. Eubanks, a white, hard-nosed Mississippi Highway patrolman, planted a mostly-black Assemblies of God congregation in 1975.<sup>1</sup> His inspiring story is very memorable.

## **O. W. Eubanks**

Opal W. "Jack" Eubanks (1929- ) joined the Mississippi Highway Patrol during the race riots of 1964. A large, white, broad-shouldered man, he relished the opportunity to strike fear in the hearts of blacks who were in trouble with the law. By his own admission, he was a foul-mouthed sinner who liked

"rough stuff."<sup>2</sup> I spoke with a friend of Eubanks, who confirmed that he once held racist attitudes: "Eubanks was a hard man, he hated black people, and everyone knew it."<sup>3</sup>



**Patrolman O. W. Eubanks**

A radical conversion to Christ in the early 1970s altered the course of Eubanks' life, and his hardened heart became tender toward African Americans in his rural community. He and his wife, Thelma, ultimately pioneered an Assemblies of God congregation consisting mostly of African Americans, which they pastored for 21 years.

Eubanks' conversion occurred in the midst of deep personal suffering. His 20-year-old daughter had been killed in 1966 in an automobile accident,<sup>4</sup> and he had been experiencing excruciating back pain. He realized that he was far from God, and his father-in-law, a Pentecostal preacher, encouraged him to seek the Lord and repent of his sins.<sup>5</sup>

Eubanks began attending an Assemblies of God church, where he accepted Christ, was healed of his back pain, and was baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was a new man, and people around him could see the difference.<sup>6</sup>

After being filled with the Holy Spirit, he started witnessing to people. His Bible became his constant companion in his patrol car, and he never grew tired of sharing how the Lord changed his heart and life.<sup>7</sup>

One night, at a roadblock on Interstate 59, he stopped two black men who had beer in their car. He had to charge





**Congregation of Bay Springs Assembly of God in 1975.**

them with illegal possession of liquor, as it was a dry county. He also witnessed to them about the Lord, telling them that “liquor was a tool of the devil.”<sup>8</sup>

One of the men, Joe Pickens, came to see Eubanks several days later. He tearfully confessed that his life was messed up and accepted Christ. Before long, Pickens and his four daughters all had made decisions to follow the Lord and had experienced Spirit baptism.<sup>9</sup>

News of the conversions spread through the largely African American rural community of Bay Springs, Mississippi, where racial segregation still held sway. Patrolman Eubanks had been known for his tough ways, and people took note when he began ministering Christ’s love to African Americans as brothers in Christ.

In 1974, Eubanks started holding a Bible study, which developed into a thriving congregation. In the first two years, about 45 people accepted Christ under Eubanks’ ministry. The congregation, Bay Springs Assembly of God, was organized in 1975. The Sunday School superintendent was a redeemed bootlegger.<sup>10</sup>

At the time, it was unheard of in that community for a white man to pioneer or pastor a church of African Americans. Eubanks realized that he was breaking cultural mores. However, he insisted that God’s values must trump cultural values:

“If a man is a child of God, then he’s your brother. I don’t care what color he is, you have a duty to witness to him.”<sup>11</sup>

Eubanks recounted, “There has been some grumbling and opposition to the church,” but noted that it was “nothing that God couldn’t handle.”<sup>12</sup> Kenneth

town. But he lived through it and, as attitudes changed, he became highly respected in the Bay Springs area.<sup>13</sup>

Eubanks remained with the highway patrol for 18 years (retiring in 1982),<sup>14</sup> and he served as pastor of Bay Springs Assembly of God until 1996.

Sammy Amos followed Eubanks and is now in his 23rd year as pastor of Bay Springs Assembly of God. I recently spoke with Amos, who noted that the church continues to be an interracial lighthouse in the rural community, where most churches are still segregated. The congregation has about 75 adherents, mostly blacks but includes some whites, and is known for its outreach and children’s ministries. Amos echoed Eubanks’ vision for the church: “We only care about souls, we don’t judge people according to their color.”<sup>15</sup>

Eubanks, now 90 years old, is retired and lives in Ellisville, Mississippi. His story is a testament that God can indeed change hardened hearts, and that God calls people to work across the racial divides to build the church.



**Sammy and Debra Amos**

Morris, a close friend and an Assemblies of God pastor in nearby Ellisville, Mississippi, said that was an understatement:

Eubanks endured a lot of persecution in the 1970s. Those were turbulent times. Other highway patrol officers made his life difficult, and whites in the community tried to run him out of

### **This Edition**

In addition to the black heritage articles, this edition of *Assemblies of God Heritage* features the story of Assemblies

*Continued on page 49*

following testimony of the man, O. W. Eubanks.

Christian should not say what he is going to do or what he is not going to do, as far as the Lord's work is concerned. If a Christian obeys the Lord, he might find himself doing what he said he would never do.

What happened to me, I dreamed I would be a witness.

I've been a Mississippi patrolman for over 20 years. I worked the patrol in 1968 during the racial crisis in Mississippi. I was on detail a lot and most of the time I was involved in everything. I was a sinner, and I liked to live the high life.

I had a foul mouth and said things that came into my head. I had dealt with me, and if He can change me, He can change anyone.

I was sent out of the Army in 1950 and went to work in Memphis. I also met a woman there.

I saved a Baptist church in Memphis and was ordained a minister. Of course, I don't teach anything.

the one they were talking to.

God touched me, and the next day the doctor came and checked my back. He had me get up and bend over. He said he had never seen anyone with back trouble like mine. He asked if it hurt anymore, and I said *no*. He let me go home, and I went to church with my wife that Sunday.

My back began hurting again during the service. After the service, I went around the church and preached to the people. I told them that the Lord had touched me.

I started going to church again and living for the Lord. On January 30, 1971, God filled me with the Holy Spirit, and I really got down to business.

After I was filled I began to witness to people. I'd take my Bible with me in the patrol car. When an opportunity came I'd tell people about the Lord and about the Holy Spirit.

One night I was on patrol in Inglewood, California. I was driving a 59 Ford patrol car and I was on duty every day.

Patrolman O. W. Eubanks

A few days after the incident, Joe Pickens, came to me. He told me I had done something to him the other night. He told him God did something to me. He broke down and started crying. Before long he and his daughters were saved. I received the baptism in the water. The news soon spread. Pickens and I both talked to the black people who were coming by their houses when we had time to talk to them. They would get their friends and neighbors and we would pray.

A white minister from Memphis, Miss., told District Superintendent F. L. Langley that we were doing a Bible study. Brother Langley contacted us and told us he would give us district support. We hadn't been having a regular Bible study but we had started one.

In the summer of 1971, I was doing a Bible study in one of the churches in Memphis.



# National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies Of God



# History of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God

By Derrick R. Rosenior

In the present era of racial discord, the Assemblies of God USA (AG) has become one of the nation's most ethnically diverse major Christian denominations.<sup>1</sup> Blacks are the fastest growing major racial group in the AG, according to official denominational statistics from 2001 to 2018. During that period, the number of black adherents increased by 118%—from 164,071 (6.2% of AG adherents) to 357,967 (11% of AG adherents). Hispanics grew by 72%, Asian/Pacific Islanders grew by 60%, and Native Americans grew by 40%. The number of white adherents dropped by 3%. In 2018, blacks constituted the third largest racial group in the AG, following whites (1,802,260) and Hispanics (736,511).<sup>2</sup>

This unfolding demographic shift in the AG, in many ways, is rooted in the Fellowship's historic commitment to preach the gospel to all the world. This missional commitment led to the 1918 formation of the first organization for Hispanic churches and ministers in the AG.<sup>3</sup> By 2020, there were 24 ethnic/language fellowships and 20 language districts that meet the needs of distinct ethnic and language groups in the United States.

The National Black Fellowship (founded 1998) and its predecessor organization—the Inner-City Workers Conference (founded 1980)—have provided important platforms for the growing black constituency in the AG. However, the history of these two organizations is complex and very little has been published about their stories. This article seeks to document the development and impact of these two organizations on the AG over the past 40 years and to provide context with a brief history of early black ministers in the AG.<sup>4</sup>

## Early History of Black AG Ministers

One might think that the AG would have provided fertile soil for the development of early black churches and minis-

ters. The denomination did emerge, in part, from the interracial Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles (1906-1909), led by black Holiness preacher William Seymour. However, the early history of blacks in the AG is complicated at best.

Delegates to the 1914 organizational meeting of the AG were mostly white (at least two were Native American).<sup>5</sup> Bishop Charles H. Mason of the mostly black Church of God in Christ brought his gospel choir from Lexington, Mississippi, and preached at the first general council. E. N. Bell, founding chairman of the General Council of the AG, reported that Mason, “a real prophet of God,” blessed the formation of the Fellowship.<sup>6</sup>

A small number of black ministers soon cast their lot with the AG. The first black AG minister, Ellsworth S. Thomas of Binghamton, New York, received credentials in 1915.<sup>7</sup> The first female black AG minister, Pearl Hogan of Los Angeles, transferred her credentials from the Church of God in Christ to the AG in 1917.<sup>8</sup> Isaac and Martha Neeley of Illinois were ordained in 1920 and received appointment as the AG's first black missionaries in 1923. Isaac died just before they were set to leave for Liberia, and Martha proceeded alone. Several additional blacks held AG credentials in the Fellowship's first two decades. Most early black AG ministers were credentialed in California or in northern states.<sup>9</sup>

Social turmoil in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Movement impacted most denominations in America, including the AG. In the Great Migration (1916-1940), blacks began migrating in large numbers from the rural South to the North, Midwest, and West, seeking better economic conditions and an escape from segregation. Lynchings and race riots increased in number, and a palpable anxiety could be felt throughout American society. Jim Crow laws—state and local laws that enforced racial segregation—created challenges for both ethnic minori-

**Blacks are the fastest growing major racial group in the AG.**



ties and for whites who did not want to obey them.

During this tense era the general presbytery, in 1939, deliberated over how the AG's ministerial recognition of blacks might conflict with both Jim Crow laws and social attitudes in various regions. Some ministers in the South expressed concern that they would have difficulty reaching their unsaved neighbors who harbored racial prejudice, if the AG became known as an integrated denomination. Following an intense debate, the general presbytery went on record as disapproving the ordination of blacks at the national level, while affirming that blacks could still be licensed at

Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center reveals that some AG leaders and ministers viewed the 1939 policy as a temporary measure that should be rescinded once racial tensions died down, while others viewed it as an unacceptable moral compromise with the evil of racial prejudice. Some correspondence noted the irony that the AG championed missionary efforts in Africa, but seemingly neglected the evangelism of blacks in America.<sup>12</sup>

AG leaders attempted to address this inequity with repeated but unsuccessful attempts in the 1940s and 1950s to create a "colored branch." Branches already existed for German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Yugo-

Council passed a resolution, promoted by veteran black AG minister Bruce Gibson, supporting the creation of a colored branch, but the resolution was never implemented. In 1954, AG General Superintendent Ralph Riggs asked Nicholas B. H. Bhengu, a noted black evangelist from South Africa, if he would move to America and lead a colored branch. Bob Harrison later reported that Riggs also asked him if he would be open to organizing a colored branch.<sup>14</sup>

AG leaders were in an uncomfortable position. They did not want to condone segregation, yet they did not want to push integration, believing it would divide the Fellowship and impair evangelism. The Committee on Race Relations, appointed in 1956 by the general presbytery, presented a ten-page report in 1957 to the general presbytery entitled "Segregation vs. Integration."<sup>15</sup> The report outlined the current conditions of relations in America between blacks and whites, citing examples of racial violence against blacks and housing discrimination. The report stated: "If we will lay aside our prejudice and sentiments and not be too concerned about what outsiders may think or say, but consider principles from a Christian standpoint, we can come up with the correct answer as far as our churches are concerned."

The committee made a biblical case for the equality of all races, but also argued that full integration of local congregations would not be practical because it could hinder ministry. It noted, for instance, that "it is a known fact that unsaved Whites will not attend or allow their children to attend the Sunday School of a church where any number of Negroes are in attendance." Making the case that "you cannot win the unsaved by condemning him for his prejudice," the report argued that is not "the fault of the Assemblies of God that the white population of the United States is not ready for complete integration with the Negro. We must accept things as we find them and minister accordingly."

The committee also noted that whites



**Assemblies of God evangelist Bruce Gibson in Baker, Oregon, 1933. Front row, far right (l-r): John Spradley and Grace Settles. Middle row (l-r): David Spradley, Bruce Gibson, Nanette Spradley holding her son, Joe, and unidentified. Back row (l-r): unidentified, Mildred Settles holding her daughter, Glory, Pastor Francis W. Spradley holding his son, Andy, and unidentified.**

the district level.<sup>10</sup> The general presbytery resolved: "that when those of the colored race apply for ministerial recognition, license to preach only be granted to them with instructions that they operate within the bounds of the District in which they are licensed, and if they desire ordination, refer them to the colored organizations."<sup>11</sup>

Archived correspondence at the

slav immigrants to America. Branches functioned like districts and had general presbytery representation, but they were non-geographic and were "confined to ministry among certain races or language groups."<sup>13</sup>

Proposals for a colored branch were made at the 1943, 1945, and 1947 General Councils, as well in a 1946 general presbytery meeting. The 1945 General



**Bob Harrison with Billy Graham, about 1962.**

and blacks often had different cultural expectations and styles of ministry, arguing that one cannot expect blacks to conform to white culture and styles, or vice versa. The report posited: “If the churches are integrated thousands of Negro ministers will be left without a church. Thus, robbing the unsaved Negroes of a voice calling them to repentance and the Negro Christians themselves of a ministry whose expressions, mannerisms, and illustrations they understand and enjoy better than any other.”

The report offered a few recommendations, including creation of both a Home Missions program to evangelize blacks and a school for training black ministers. The general presbytery passed a motion to adopt the recommendations.

### **Inner City Outreach Efforts**

Starting in the 1960s, the AG began to make efforts to reverse some of the policies of the previous decades regarding black ministers. The 1939 policy against ordaining blacks was overturned in 1962. Bob Harrison, who was denied a license in 1951 on account of his race, was the catalyst to change the policy. Harrison had gone on to become a suc-

cessful evangelist and in 1957 received a license from the Northern California-Nevada District. In 1960, he began working with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in special crusades in Africa and applied for ordination. Harrison became a full-fledged member of the Billy Graham Team in 1962. Shortly afterward, AG leaders changed the policy and cleared the way for Harrison’s ordination. Harrison continued to serve on the Billy Graham Team for another five years.<sup>16</sup> According to historian Howard Kenyon, Harrison’s “high-visibility ordination and ministry effectively ended once and for all the ongoing ambiguities of the General Council on the matter of the inclusion of black ministers.”<sup>17</sup> In 1965, the General Council passed a resolution supporting civil rights for blacks and opposing racial discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, the AG began to make efforts to reach the black community, particularly those in the inner city. Much of this work was done under the umbrella of the “urban missions” focus of the Home Missions Department (now known as U.S. Missions).

The *Pentecostal Evangel* reported the launch of the first “Urban Missions”

church in inner city Chicago on July 10, 1965.<sup>19</sup> Additional inner city churches were planted, including two churches started by Thurman Faison.

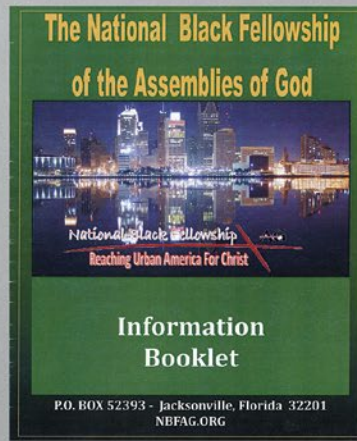
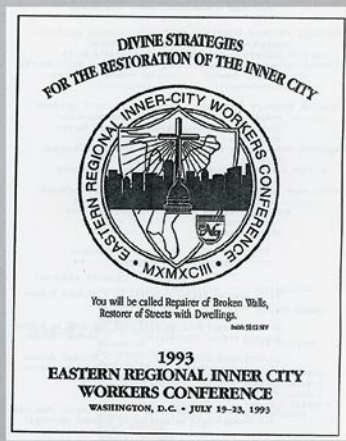
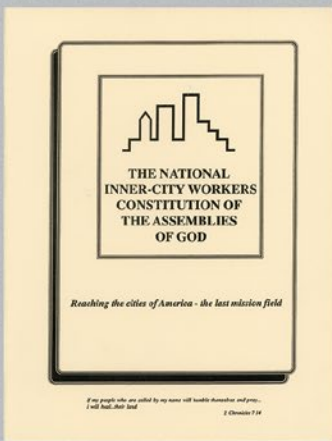
Faison accepted Christ at an AG church and graduated as valedictorian from Eastern Pentecostal Bible College in Canada. While serving on staff at Teen Challenge in New York City in the summer of 1960, he felt a burden to reach Harlem with the gospel and planted Harlem Revival Center (New York City).<sup>20</sup> Faison moved to Chicago in 1969 and planted Southside Tabernacle, which became the AG flagship church for inner city outreach.<sup>21</sup>

Faison tirelessly promoted the need for both inner city ministry and racial reconciliation. At a 1971 Pentecostal Fellowship of North America meeting, Faison gave a passionate plea for Pentecostals to reach the inner cities and the people of color who lived there.<sup>22</sup> Faison spoke of the “seething discontent and the constant confrontations in our cities [that] appear as handwriting on the wall, reminding us of an imbalance in social justice, of inequalities in our present system of democracy, and of strong prejudices in this nation.” Faison encouraged Pentecostals to “preach the truth, reveal the presence of God, maintain [their]



**Thurman Faison speaking at the 1965 General Council.**





**How can we reach Black Americans for Christ?**

*Brother Zimmerman, what is the responsibility of the Assemblies of God toward the black community in America?*

ZIMMERMAN: As I understand the Great Commission, it is a total mandate, and every part of the church must have the total vision of all who are lost. Being lost is not a matter of the color of a person's skin. It's a matter of alienation from God, and all who are alienated from God are within our responsibility. The Assemblies of God has an obligation to carry the gospel, the good news, to everyone and that, of course, includes black Americans.

*Brother Harrison, what do you as a black minister see as the basic problems that must be solved in order to reach the black community for Christ?*

HARRISON: One of the first things, of course, is a change of attitude. I think attitudes have a great bearing on some of the failures in reaching black people. In many instances we need to go to the Cross and die to certain aspects of a culture that has killed the concept of the black man himself. I think there has to be a sincere desire to reach blacks as people that the Lord loves and died for. We have to develop a real compassion of Jesus Christ which sees no color.

*If we really have the compassion of Jesus Christ, then we see man's needs, we feel man's needs, and we're willing to act for the alleviation of man's needs.*

And, of course, this all must be done without a paternalistic approach, because the black man will not respond to a paternalistic approach any longer. He wants to be treated as a person.

*Do you prefer to be called a black or would Negro be better?*

HARRISON: Negro is acceptable, but black is now. This is really the term that our people respond to.

*Can black people be reached only through black ministers, or can white ministers have a ministry to them?*

HARRISON: We can't generalize this answer. There are some cases where a black can best reach a black. But there are other cases where whites can have a very significant ministry, especially if they work side by side with their black brothers. In fact, the ideal situation is where blacks and whites work together. I do feel that in many situations our white brothers have to be willing to allow leadership to be in the hands of blacks and be willing to be associates with blacks in reaching black communities.

**Tracts, information booklet, and other publications related to the Inner-City Workers Conference and the National Black Fellowship.**

engagement to Christ, retard corruption, and dispel the darkness wherever [they] encounter it.”<sup>23</sup>

The AG, for its part, was making efforts to accomplish these goals in the inner cities. In the 1970s, the *Pentecostal Evangel* reported new church plants in predominantly black inner cities: Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Buffalo and the Bronx, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; and other places.<sup>24</sup>

Seeking to better understand how to reach black America, General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman called for a special “Conference on Ways and Means of Reaching the Black Community” on December 15-16, 1969.<sup>25</sup> Key black ministers met in Springfield to strategize on how the AG could better reach the black community. Bob Harrison and Thurman Faison were among

those in attendance. Attendees made a number of recommendations, including: 1) how to increase the number of black churches and ministers; 2) how AG colleges could reach the black community by establishing extension campuses in predominantly black communities and recruiting black students and faculty; 3) providing intercultural ministry training so ministers could better understand black culture; 4) using black authors for AG publications; 5) hiring blacks for positions at the AG national office; 6) establishing a church relations race council headed by a black at the AG national office; 7) sending black AG missionaries to the mission field, particularly to Africa; and 8) maintaining proper rapport with the black community.<sup>26</sup>

The small number of black AG ministers was an obstacle to achieving many

of these suggestions. In 1970, Zimmerman estimated there were “at least 25” black ministers in the AG.<sup>27</sup> Only 12 people were included on a 1971-1972 list of black AG ministers.<sup>28</sup> The 1969 conference was the first of many meetings between AG leadership and black pastors to strategize on how to increase the number of black AG ministers and members.

**Inner-City Workers Conference**

On December 15-17, 1978, the Assemblies of God held a National Church Growth Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Several black pastors who met during the convention discussed the possibility of the creation of a regularly scheduled Inner-City Workers Conference (ICWC), so that AG ministers who





**Inner-City Workers Conference officers in the lobby of the Assemblies of God national office, 1995. (L-r): Sydney Ramphal, secretary; Bob Harrison, treasurer; Edward Peecher, president; and John L. Harper, vice president.**

pastored inner city churches could discuss challenges, encourage each other, and strategize for ministry.

As a result of the discussions, the first ICWC was held on July 29-31, 1980, at Southside Tabernacle. The theme of the conference was: “Missions and Evangelism for the Inner-City.”<sup>29</sup> Host pastors for the conference were Spencer Jones, Michael McCullough, Otis Davis, Norvell Woolfolk, and Jesse Norwood.<sup>30</sup> About 75 pastors and their families attended.<sup>31</sup> The conference included workshops during the day for pastors and their spouses. Topics addressed included church finances, missions, youth and children’s ministries, and how to start a church. Evening speakers included Bob Harrison, Sydney Ramphal, and T. E. Gannon. Frank Reynolds, National Director of Teen Challenge, also attended. As a result of this conference, an Inner-City Fund was created by the AG for the purpose of financing new churches in inner cities. Attendees elected the following officers: Spencer Jones, president; Bob Harrison, vice president; Sydney Ramphal, secretary; and David Peoples, treasurer.

The second ICWC was scheduled for

July 27-29, 1982, at North Central Bible College (Minneapolis, Minnesota).<sup>32</sup> Meetings have occurred biennially on even numbered years with regional conferences held on alternating years. The tenth anniversary conference, held in 1990, was hosted by Living Word Tabernacle (Hampton, Virginia) on July 23-26. Speakers included Sydney Ramphal, Bob Harrison, Angelo Rosa, Charles Crabtree, Spencer Jones, and Louis Walton. In ten years, attendance had grown from approximately 75 pastors (1980) to 500 pastors and delegates (1990).<sup>33</sup> The last ICWC was held July 22-24, 2014, at Parklawn Assembly of God (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), which was pastored by Walter Harvey.

In 2016, the name was changed from Inner-City Workers Conference to R.E.A.C.H. Conference.<sup>34</sup> The first R.E.A.C.H. Conference was held July 19-21, 2016, at The Oaks Fellowship (Dallas, Texas).<sup>35</sup>

For many years, the biennial ICWC was the de facto black fellowship of the AG, where black ministers met to fellowship, strategize, cooperate, network, and address common concerns. The organization, structure, and leadership of

the ICWC also provided an opportunity for black AG ministers to have a collective voice in the denomination.

### **Formation of the National Black Fellowship**

The Inner-City Workers Conference gave birth to the National Black Fellowship (NBF) in July 1998, following a long and somewhat complicated process. It should be noted that the phrase “National Black Fellowship” was proposed or used in some of the meetings between AG leaders and black ministers in the 1980s and 1990s, but this was prior to the official formation of the NBF as it currently exists.

In October 1980, a delegation of leading black AG pastors met with denominational leaders for a Black Leadership Conference during the Home Missions Institute.<sup>36</sup> A similar conference, sponsored by the Division of Home Missions, was held in Springfield in November 1982.<sup>37</sup> By the late 1980s, the AG began to intensify its efforts to reach black America and held a series of meetings between denominational officials and leaders of the ICWC. These efforts to reach black America in the late 1980s

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ICCM Life Center



Malcolm Burleigh  
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national events, believing this would promote more dignity and respect for blacks among the constituency. They also requested that articles in AG publications address the issue of institutional racism. Additionally, they requested that blacks be included on the boards of AG colleges.<sup>40</sup> This meeting served as a foundation for subsequent meetings between black AG leaders and denominational leaders that would be held in the 1990s.

As the Decade of Harvest was being launched, Robert Pirtle (national director of the Division of Home Missions), Charles Crabtree (director of the Decade of Harvest), and James S. Kessler (secretary of the Intercultural Ministries Department) met in January 1990 with the board of the ICWC. At this meeting, black leaders proposed the following for consideration by the executive presbytery:

An Assemblies of God Black Fellowship be formed consisting of credentialed ministers in good standing who desire to meet periodically and/or communicate as Black ministers for the purposes of creating strategies to evangelize the unreached Black population of America, encourage and assist the establishing of Black congregations in cooperation with geographic districts, act as mentors to potential Black ministers, and to hold conferences for prayer, challenge, and fellowship.<sup>41</sup>

This was the first official proposal from black ministers to AG leadership for the formation of a "Black Fellowship." They proposed that the Black Fellowship be placed under the purview of the Intercultural Ministries Department and recommended that the five board members of the ICWC be appointed to serve as leaders of the new Fellowship for an initial term of two years.<sup>42</sup>

In a memorandum to the executive presbytery, Crabtree recommended approval of the proposal, stating that black

coincided with preparations for the Decade of Harvest (1990-2000), a denominational strategy to foster evangelism and growth.

Bob Harrison set up a meeting between AG leaders and a group of black ministers, which took place on December 16, 1988.<sup>38</sup> AG leaders G. Raymond Carlson, Everett Stenhouse, Thomas

Trask, Charles Crabtree, and Robert Pirtle met with the board of the ICWC, which consisted of Spencer Jones, Bob Harrison, Sydney Ramphal, Milton Clarke, and several regional representatives.<sup>39</sup> At this meeting, the black ministers requested greater visibility in the denomination. They suggested that black ministers be invited to preach at denomi-



leaders for many years had felt outside the mainstream, that they were becoming frustrated with “periodic dialogues,” and that they were looking for official action by AG leaders. He also noted that the black leaders did not intend to later form a black district.<sup>43</sup> On March 27, 1990, the executive presbytery approved, in principle, the proposal for a Black Fellowship.<sup>44</sup> On June 5, 1990, the executive presbytery approved the five board members of the ICWC to serve on the National Black Fellowship Committee with a two-year term ending on November 30, 1992. The committee was to be chaired by Robert Pirtle, with James Kessler serving in an ex-officio capacity. The committee included some of the leading black AG ministers: Spencer Jones (pastor of Southside Tabernacle and ICWC president); Milton Clarke (pastor of Living Faith Assembly, Tampa, Florida); Sydney Ramphal (pastor of Grace Assembly, Kansas City, Missouri); and John Harvey (pastor of Evangel Assembly, Youngtown, Ohio).

The new organization, a precursor to the current NBF, was created for the purpose of reaching Black America during the Decade of Harvest.<sup>45</sup> The 1991 Decade of Harvest report indicated that the “National Black Fellowship” was formed to reach the 30 million black Americans who were unreached with the gospel.<sup>46</sup> The report further highlighted that the purpose of this organization was “to provide fellowship [for black ministers within the Assemblies of God], to promote and encourage evangelism to the black communities of America, and to plant new churches among blacks, especially in the great metropolitan cities where the predominant black populace is centered.”<sup>47</sup>

The AG Intercultural Ministries department and the Office of Ethnic Relations both recognize the March 27, 1990, approval by the executive presbytery of the “National Black Fellowship” as the first instance of an approved ethnic fellowship in AG history.<sup>48</sup> The February 10, 1991 issue of the *Pentecostal*



**Assemblies of God and National Black Fellowship leaders, 2014. Front row (L-r): Darnell Williams, Michael Nelson, Walter Harvey, and Hank Mariner. Back row (l-r): Zollie Smith, James Bradford, George O. Wood, Alton Garrison, Douglas E. Clay, and Malcolm Burleigh.**

*Evangel* reported on the formation of this “National Black Fellowship” and its purposes.<sup>49</sup>

On July 24, 1990, the National Black Fellowship Committee met in Hampton, Virginia, at the invitation of Robert Pirtle and James Kessler. Black leaders present were Spencer Jones, Bob Harrison, Louis Walton, Milton Clarke, Sydney Ramphal, Michael Patterson, Wade Sutherland, and Victor Morgan.

At this meeting, Pirtle suggested that Harrison become the National Representative for Black Ministries at the AG national office, which would require that Harrison be appointed as a national home missionary and raise his own personal support.<sup>50</sup> In November 1990, the executive presbytery approved the appointment of Harrison to a two-year term as Black Ministries National Representative.

The next documented meeting related to black ministries, called the “National Black Ministers Caucus,” was held on December 14-16, 1993.<sup>51</sup> Twenty-two ministers and leaders gathered in Spring-

field to discuss a threefold strategy to reach the black community involving evangelism/church planting, education, and economic development. Attendees included people who were not previously involved in the discussions, reflecting growth in the number of black ministers. New names included: Jamal Alexander (Los Angeles, California), Darrell Geddes (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Zollie Smith, Jr. (Somerset, New Jersey) and St. Clair Mitchell (Director of Church Development/Home Missions for the Potomac District).<sup>52</sup>

At the meeting, ministers identified obstacles facing the AG in its efforts to reach the black community. The foremost concern was a perception among some blacks that the AG was racist. General Superintendent Thomas Trask asked how this perception could be changed. Several in attendance responded that it would help if blacks were in positions of visibility, including preaching, teaching and leading at General Council events, and not just relegated to speak about inner city problems. Geddes emphasized





**Charles E. Hackett (right), executive director of the Division of Home Missions, discusses urban church strategy with Edward Peecher (left), pastor of New Heritage Cathedral, Chicago, circa 1998.**

that three things should happen: 1) public acknowledgement of racist attitudes; 2) racial reconciliation must take place; and 3) specific actions to effect change must be adopted and promoted by the AG.<sup>53</sup>

At the conclusion of this Black Caucus meeting, Trask reflected, “The National Black Caucus was one of the most positive times of interaction with our inner-city workers, helping the Assemblies of God national office determine how we might be used of God to reach black communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>54</sup>

## Recent Events

At the 1989 General Council, the AG passed a resolution opposing “the sin of racism in any form.”<sup>55</sup> This resolution resulted in a series of actions that helped to create a more ethnically diverse fellowship. One of those actions was a provision for ethnic fellowships within the structure of the denomination. Since the ICWC had already been operating for a decade as the de facto black fellowship of the AG, it provided a ready-made foundation for the formation of the NBF.

An important catalyst toward further inclusion of blacks in the AG was the “Memphis Miracle,” a conference held October 17-19, 1994. It was likely

the most important racial reconciliation event in North American Pentecostal history. The event, officially called *Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for Twenty-first Century Ministry*, was sponsored by the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA), of which the AG was a founding member.

When the PFNA was formed in October 1948, black Pentecostal denominations were not invited to be a part of this new body. It has been noted that “this non-invitation to a fraternity dedicated



**Spencer Jones, pastor of Southside Tabernacle in Chicago, speaking at the 1989 General Council.**

to spiritual unity has stood as a symbolic racist offense between black and white Pentecostals.”<sup>56</sup>

The climactic moment of the 1994 conference came when white Pentecostal leaders repented for a history of prejudice and racism toward black Pentecostals. This act of repentance culminated in an on-stage, spontaneous “foot-washing,” when a white AG pastor, Donald Evans, washed the feet of Church of God in Christ Bishop Ithiel Clemmons. Evans explained that he had felt called of God to wash the feet of a black leader as a sign of repentance and humility and begged forgiveness for the sins of white Pentecostals against their black brothers and sisters. In an emotional speech, white Pentecostal leader Paul Walker called the event, “the Miracle in Memphis,” a name that stuck and made headlines around the world. It was called the “Memphis Miracle” by those gathered in Memphis as well as the press, which hailed the historic importance of the event.<sup>57</sup>

It was called a miracle because it ended decades of formal separation between the predominantly black and white Pentecostal churches. On October 19, 1994, delegates voted to dissolve the PFNA and to form a new, more racially inclusive organization, the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA). A constitution and a Racial Reconciliation Manifesto were adopted.

In the years following the “Memphis Miracle,” the AG passed a series of General Council resolutions to provide for more ethnically diverse leadership in the executive presbytery and general presbytery, and to incorporate the newly-formed ethnic fellowships into the leadership of the denomination.

The 1995 General Council passed a resolution to add one language area representative to the executive presbytery, noting that “the various language districts and ethnic constituency of the General Council continue to grow and now represent more than 20 percent of the Assemblies of God churches in the



**(L-r): Sam Huddleston, Walter Harvey, Malcolm Burleigh, and Darnell Williams.**

United States and Puerto Rico.”<sup>58</sup> As a result, a Hispanic minister was included in the executive presbytery for the first time in the denomination’s history.

The 1997 General Council went a step further, passing a resolution that added representation of ethnic fellowships to the executive presbytery and general presbytery.<sup>59</sup> The existing “National Black Fellowship,” which had been created in 1990 for the purpose of aiding the Decade of Harvest, did not meet the criteria for an ethnic fellowship. Therefore, it was determined that the ICWC should be replaced by a new national black ethnic fellowship.

Sixty-two ministers and delegates were present at the next meeting of the ICWC, held July 28-30, 1998, at the Oak Lawn Hilton Hotel in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>60</sup> On the first day of the conference, delegates voted to dissolve the ICWC and to form the National Black Fellowship. Delegates adopted articles of fellowship, which outlined a seven-fold reason: 1) the evangelization of blacks in America and abroad; 2) providing spiritual renewal, especially to those who have fallen from the faith; 3) providing fellowship among black AG ministers; 4) welcoming blacks into the AG; 5) training workers for ministry; 6) planting new churches in cooperation with

various district councils; and 7) assisting black churches’ transition from district to general council status.<sup>61</sup>

The next day, the following officers were elected: Zollie Smith, president; Spencer Jones, vice president; Sydney Ramphal, secretary; and Malcolm Burleigh, treasurer. Edward Peecher was elected to serve as Presbyter at Large and regional officers were also elected.<sup>62</sup>

Delegates to the 1999 General Council voted to elect the first executive presbyter representing the Ethnic Fellowship Area, a position created by the previous General Council. Spencer Jones, found-

ing president of the ICWC and the NBF nominee for the Ethnic Fellowship Area Executive Presbyter position, was elected on the second ballot.<sup>63</sup> This was possible because of the formation of the NBF the previous year. Jones became the first Black in AG history to serve on the executive presbytery. His election highlights the significant role that the ICWC and the NBF have played in creating a more diverse AG leadership.<sup>64</sup>

Zollie Smith followed Spencer Jones in the executive presbyter position, serving in that role from 2003 until his election as executive director of U.S.



**(L-r): Michael Nelson, Malcolm Burleigh, Zollie Smith, and Spencer Jones, who each served as president of the National Black Fellowship.**



Missions in 2007.<sup>65</sup> Smith's election, in many ways, was a fulfillment of decades of appeals by black AG ministers for better inclusion in the Fellowship.

General Superintendent George O. Wood had asked to meet with the NBF leadership in 2014 to come up with strategies to reach urban America. Out of that meeting came ten recommendations that could strengthen the AG's ministry among African Americans. First on that list was the appointment of an African American executive presbyter.<sup>66</sup>

The 2015 General Council voted unanimously to approve the creation of an executive presbyter position designated for an ordained African American minister. The vote came after much debate on the council floor regarding the resolution and the process by which the representative would be elected. Recognizing the historical significance of the moment, delegates and others in attendance responded with a lengthy applause and a standing ovation.<sup>67</sup>

Prior general councils passed similar resolutions creating positions on the executive presbytery for people from under-represented groups: Language Area-Spanish (1995); Language Area-Other and Ethnic Fellowship Area (1997); and Ordained Female Minister and Ordained Minister under 40 (2007). These additions to the executive presbytery helped to bring more diversity to the body, which previously consisted only of white males. While the first two executive presbyters representing the Ethnic Fellowship Area had been blacks, the 2015 action marked the first time a seat on the executive presbytery had been exclusively reserved for a black minister.<sup>68</sup>

## **NBF Leaders**

The NBF continues to grow and is now the largest of the twenty-four AG ethnic fellowships under the Office of Ethnic Relations. In its forty-year history, the ICWC and NBF have had six presidents: Spencer Jones (1980-1994); Ed Peecher (1994-1998); Zollie Smith (1998-2007); Malcolm Burleigh (2007-

2012); Michael Nelson (2012-2018); and Walter Harvey (2018- ). Harvey, who currently serves as president, has served as senior pastor of Parklawn Assembly of God (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) since 1992.

Several NBF leaders and members have served in AG leadership at national, district and regional levels. Malcolm Burleigh served as director of the Intercultural Ministries Department of U.S. Missions before his 2017 election as executive director of U.S. Missions, succeeding Zollie Smith.<sup>69</sup> The current vice president of the NBF, Darnell Williams, serves as the district secretary/treasurer of the German District/International Ministry Network and was elected at the 2019 General Council to serve on the national executive presbytery for the Language Area-Other position. Samuel Huddleston, assistant district superintendent of the Northern California-Nevada District was elected in 2017 as the first person to fill the Ordained African American position on the executive presbytery. Sullivan McGraw served as Washington Regional Executive Presbyter of the Potomac Ministry Network. Chris Delmadge serves as Executive Presbyter-At-Large, Ethnic Representative of the New York Ministry Network. Jamal Alexander serves as Intercultural Executive Presbyter of the Southern California Network.

The NBF is divided into five regions: Central, Eastern, Southern, Southwestern and Northwestern. Current regional directors are Kathy Jones of Chicago (Central); Chris White of Jacksonville, Florida (Eastern); Robert Burnside of New Orleans, Louisiana (Southern); and Joe Smotherman of Los Angeles, California (Southwestern). The position of Northwestern Regional Director is currently vacant.

## **Future of the NBF**

The AG has come a long way in its relationship with black America since its founding in 1914. While the AG credentialed its first black minister in 1915,

the number of black ministers remained small until the 1970s. In 1971, there were reportedly only 12 black AG ministers. In the past 50 years that number has increased significantly—to 294 in 2001, and 913 in 2017. In 2018, there were 357,967 black AG adherents (11% of AG adherents), which is just below the percentage of Americans who are black (13.4% in the 2010 U.S. census).

This growth of black AG ministers and adherents was due, in large part, to the courage and determination of the early pioneers of the Inner-City Workers Conference and the National Black Fellowship. They overcame racial prejudice in both society and the church. Their vision to bring the gospel to black Americans led not only to significant numerical growth of blacks in the AG, but also to better inclusion of blacks in leadership in the AG.

This focus on black ministries in the AG has occurred at an important crossroads in American history. Social structures, including families, schools, and local communities, are crumbling. This is particularly true in inner cities and in many black communities. Churches are among the last remaining structures that offer hope, safety, and Christian values.

When the ICWC was formed in 1980, the theme of the founding conference was "Missions and Evangelism for the Inner-City." Forty years later, the NBF continues the mission of the ICWC, with a remarkably consistent emphasis on missions and evangelistic work. The vision has been broadened to include all blacks, with leaders seeking to provide a spiritual answer to rampant social decay. Walter Harvey, along with the other current NBF leaders, have cast a vision "for the NBF to be a movement of hope, transforming communities by developing and deploying African-American leaders, planting and revitalizing churches, advancing biblical justice, and restoring families."<sup>70</sup> If the NBF can achieve this goal, it will help renew not only black communities, but also the Assemblies of God. ❖

# KEY NBF LEADERS



## Spencer Jones

Spencer Jones, the founding president of the ICWC, served as long-time pastor of Southside Tabernacle in Chicago. Born and raised on a farm in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, he felt the call of God on his life when he was just three years old and confessed Christ as his personal savior at the age of nine. In 1966, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. In Vietnam, a friend encouraged him to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jones relates that “the Holy Spirit made the difference” in his life.

Upon his return to the United States, he promptly enrolled at Central Bible College in January 1969. He was the school’s first African American student, which did not stop him from making an impact. Jones was elected to serve as vice president of the Student Government. The CBC college newspaper lauded him: “Everyone on campus knows Spencer Jones. He is one of the first to greet new students with a Christian smile, handshake, and ‘How are you, brother?’ His Christian love radiates as he recognizes all believers as his Christian brothers or sisters.”<sup>71</sup> While a student at CBC, Spencer Jones was actively involved in ministry at Tampa Assembly of God, a predominantly black church in Springfield, and eventually served as its pastor.<sup>72</sup>

Upon graduation from CBC in 1972, Jones moved to Chicago to pastor Southside Tabernacle. At the time, the church had an average attendance of 50. With a heart for winning the lost, Jones reached out to the community. Southside soon grew to over 600 in attendance on Sundays, making it one of the largest predominantly black AG churches. Jones organized the first ICWC in July 1980 and served as its first president.

Jones’ passion has always been inner city ministry. Even while a student at CBC, he was planning to enter inner city ministry upon graduation.<sup>73</sup> Under his leadership several churches have been planted in various inner cities throughout America. As pastor of Southside Tabernacle, his vision was to raise up young men and women who could effectively pioneer full gospel churches in every major inner city in America.



## Zollie Smith

Zollie Smith’s election as executive director of U.S. Missions at the 2007 General Council was a historic moment in AG history. He became the first African American to serve in a national executive position. Having previously served as first president of the NBF (1998-2007) and as executive presbyter representing ethnic fellowships, Smith achieved the necessary national visibility that enabled him to be elected. Smith had also served as the assistant superintendent (1998-2005) and executive secretary (2005-2007) of the New Jersey District.<sup>74</sup> It could be argued that the NBF helped to provide the necessary visibility and stepping stone for Smith to become the highest ranked African American in AG leadership. Smith retired as executive director of U.S. Missions in 2017.

He served in the Vietnam War as an airborne infantry soldier, was wounded in combat, and received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. After having served in the military, Smith accepted Christ at an independent

*Continued on page 16*



Pentecostal church in 1977. He worked as a federal agent with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service before becoming a pastor. He and his wife, Phyllis, started a church in 1980 in their home and attendance doubled within the first two years. In 1982, he resigned his position in law enforcement to become a full-time pastor, abandoning his dream of becoming a police chief. He felt the Lord speak to him: "I spared your life in Vietnam, that through you many might come to know ME [God]."<sup>75</sup>

That same year, while attending a Billy Graham pastor's school, some African American men gave him a prophetic word that he would serve the Lord in the Assemblies of God. Little did he know that the fulfillment of this prophecy would take him to the top level of AG leadership. Following this prophecy, he brought his church into the AG.<sup>76</sup> He attended his first ICWC at North Central Bible College in 1983 and served in regional leadership (Eastern Region ICWC), before eventually serving as the first president of the NBF.



## Michael Nelson

Michael Nelson was raised under the ministry of Spencer Jones at Southside Tabernacle in Chicago. He went on to fulfill Jones' vision of planting inner city churches and also served as president of the NBF. Nelson attended the first ICWC in 1980. He began ministry at Southside the following year as an intern. He attended North Central Bible College. Like Jones, he was elected to the student council. Upon graduating in 1984 with a degree in pastoral studies, he was licensed with the AG in 1985 and planted Peace Tabernacle Assembly of God (Jacksonville, Florida) in 1987.

Over the years, he served the NBF as Florida Representative and as secretary and director for the Eastern Region. He also served the NBF at a national level as executive secretary (2008-2010), vice president (2010-2012), and president (2012-2018). He also served as a general presbyter for the AG and a presbyter at large for the Peninsular Florida District. During his term as president, Nelson's vision was to bring the NBF family together, create synergy in the NBF, and to create relationships and networks to provide training and resources for workers to effectively reach the next generation.<sup>77</sup>



**Derrick R. Rosenior (Ph.D., Howard University) is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Vanguard University. He also serves as Assistant/**

**Teaching Pastor at Orange County First Assembly of God (Santa Ana, California) and as President of the Southern California chapter of the National Black Fellowship.**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>According to the 2014 Religious Landscape Study, the AG was the most racially diverse of the ten largest U.S. Protestant denominations. Pew Research Center, "The most and least racially diverse U.S. religious groups," July 27, 2015, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>

<sup>2</sup>"AG USA Adherents by Race, 2001 to 2018," accessed January 2, 2020, <https://ag.org/-/media/AGORG/Downloads/Statistics/Attendance-and-Adherents/Adherents-by-Race-2001-through-2018.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Darrin J. Rodgers, "Celebrating the Hispanic Assemblies of God Centennial," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 37/38 (2017-2018): 2-3.

<sup>4</sup>This article was written with research and editorial assistance from Darrin Rodgers. Several scholars have written about the early history of black AG ministers. AG scholar Howard N. Kenyon contributed the first significant research on the topic. See his 1988 Ph.D. dissertation from Baylor University, "An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God." Kenyon's work remains a benchmark study on the subject and was recently updated and published: *Ethics in the Age of the Spirit: Race, Women, War, and the Assemblies of God* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019). Other important secondary works include: Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism," paper delivered at the "Memphis Miracle," October 17-19, 1994, Memphis, TN, published in *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 14 (May 2005), accessed January 28 2020, <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj14/robeck.html>; Howard N. Kenyon, "Black Ministers in the Assemblies of God," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 7:1 (Spring 1987): 10-13, 20; Wayne Warner, "A Call for Love, Tolerance, and Cooperation," *Assemblies of God Heritage*

14:3 (Fall 1994): 3-4, 31; Erik J. Hjalmeby, "A Rhetorical History of Race Relations in the Early Pentecostal Movement, 1906-1916," M.A. thesis, Baylor University, 2007; Joe Newman, *Race and the Assemblies of God Church: The Journey from Azusa Street to the "Miracle of Memphis"* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2007); Byron Klaus, ed. *We've Come This Far: Reflections on the Pentecostal Tradition and Racial Reconciliation* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007); Darrin J. Rodgers, "The Assemblies of God and the Long Journey Toward Racial Reconciliation," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 28 (2008): 50-61, 66.

<sup>5</sup>William H. Boyles and Watt Walker, Cherokees from Oklahoma, attended the first General Council. Darrin Rodgers, "Fully Committed: 100 Years of the Assemblies of God," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 34 (2014): 11.

<sup>6</sup>"Hot Springs Assembly; God's Glory Present," *Word and Witness* 10:4 (April 20, 1914): 1. A persistent question exists about the relationship of AG founders to Charles H. Mason and his largely black Church of God in Christ. Howard Goss, one of the leaders who organized the founding meeting of the AG, previously led a largely white group that was also called Church of God in Christ. Some scholars argue that Goss's group was a white branch of Bishop's Mason's group, and that the formation of the AG was tantamount to a racial split. Other scholars point out that: 1) Goss's group originated with Charles Parham and not Mason; 2) little, if any, evidence shows an organizational connection to Mason; and 3) while Mason and AG founders knew and respected each other, it would be inaccurate to characterize it as an organizational split because they were in unconnected organizations. A lack of evidence makes it difficult to state with certainty the exact nature of the relationship of Bishop Mason to the founders of the AG. However, the historical record does demonstrate that in the earliest years of American Pentecostalism, the movement was loosely organized, and racial lines were blurred. When Pentecostals began to organize, they often created organizations whose leaders and members were primarily of one ethnic group. See Rodgers, "The Assemblies of God and the Long Journey Toward Racial Reconciliation," 53-58.

<sup>7</sup>Ellsworth S. Thomas, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>8</sup>Pearl Hogan, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>9</sup>For more information about these and other early black AG ministers, see: Kenyon, *Ethics in the Age of the Spirit*.

<sup>10</sup>Race Relations File, FPHC; Kenyon, *Ethics in the Age of the Spirit*, 74-76.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in Kenyon, *Ethics in the Age of the Spirit*, 75.

<sup>12</sup>Race Relations File, FPHC.

<sup>13</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 1945, 35.

<sup>14</sup>Kenyon, 76-78, 84-88.

<sup>15</sup>Kenyon, "An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God," 113.

<sup>16</sup>Bob Harrison, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>17</sup>Kenyon, *Ethics in the Age of the Spirit*, 89; Bob Harrison, *When God Was Black* (Canoga Park, CA: Bob Harrison Ministries International, 1978); Glenn Gohr, "For Such a Time as This: The Story of Evangelist Bob Harrison," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 24:3 (Fall 2004): 5-11; and Lois E. Olena, "From Paralysis to Action: Robert Harrison and the Assemblies of God," research paper, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2006.

<sup>18</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 1965, 60-61.

<sup>19</sup>"Urban Missions Project Launched," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 29, 1965, 22.

<sup>20</sup>"Revival Center to Open in Harlem," *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 14, 1967, 10-11.

<sup>21</sup>Long-time pastor of Southside Tabernacle, Spencer Jones, was instrumental in founding the Inner-City Workers Conference in 1980. Michael Nelson (former NBF president) and Darrell Geddes (current NBF executive secretary) are also products of this congregation.

<sup>22</sup>"What Are We Going to Do About Our Cities? How Are We Going to Reach the Blacks Who Live There?" *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 9, 1972, 8-9.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>"Inner-City Church Rises in Minneapolis," *Pentecostal Evangel*, October 25, 1970, 18-19; "Southern Missouri Opens Black Church," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 27, 1971, 16-17; Melford A. Olson, "The Minnesota District provides a witness for the inner city: Remembering the urban man," *Pentecostal Evangel*, September 17, 1972, 16-17; "Recapturing the Inner City," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 29, 1978, 19; Lois Johansson, "A 6-Year Prayer Is Answered in the Bronx," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 30, 1981, 6-7.

<sup>25</sup>"Church Leaders Meet to Discuss Ways of Reaching Black Americans for Christ," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 15, 1970, 29.

<sup>26</sup>Minutes of the Conference on Ways and Means of Reaching the Black Community, December 15-16, 1969.

<sup>27</sup>"How Can We Reach Black Americans for Christ," *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 26, 1970, 6-8, 20.

<sup>28</sup>List of Assemblies of God black ministers, 1971-72, in AG Further Involvement in Ministries to Blacks:1968-1982 file, FPHC.

<sup>29</sup>Report on "Inner-City Pastor's Conference, July 29-31, 1980," FPHC.

<sup>30</sup>"Schedule for Inner-City Minister's Conference, Southside Tabernacle Assembly of God," [1980], FPHC.

<sup>31</sup>"Second Inner-City Workers Conference

Scheduled," *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 15, 1981, 28.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>"Biennial Inner City Workers Conference held in Virginia," *Pentecostal Evangel*, October 14, 1990, 28.

<sup>34</sup>R.E.A.C.H. is an acronym for **R**ecruit, **d**evelop and **e**mpower urban ministers, **E**quipping the next generation, **A**lliance with strategic partners, **C**reativity and innovation in ministry, and **H**ealthy ministers, families and churches. National Black Fellowship website, accessed January 28, 2020, <http://nbfag.org/about-us/core-values>

<sup>35</sup>John W. Kennedy, "Evoking Sorrowful Remembrances," *PE News*, July 21, 2016, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://penews.org/news/evoking-sorrowful-remembrances>

<sup>36</sup>"Assemblies of God officials meet with Blacks in Leadership Conference," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 25, 1981, 28.

<sup>37</sup>"Seminar focuses on ministry to blacks," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 16, 1983, 13.

<sup>38</sup>David J. Moore, "Summary of Black Ministries Caucus Development," Race Relations File, FPHC.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>*Memorandum to Executive Presbytery from Charles T. Crabtree, March 27, 1990, RE: Proposed Black Fellowship*, Race Relations File, FPHC.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Moore, "Summary of Black Ministries Caucus Development."

<sup>45</sup>Pirtle, Robert, W., "National Black Fellowship: Reaching Black America in the Decade of Harvest," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 16, 1990, 17.

<sup>46</sup>Charles T. Crabtree, "Harvest Report," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 4, 1991, 14.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Assemblies of God Office of Ethnic Relations, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://ethnicrelations.ag.org/Fellowships/National-Black-Fellowship>.

<sup>49</sup>"National Black Fellowship formed," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 10, 1991, 29.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Minutes of the National Black Ministers Caucus, Springfield, MO, December 14-16, 1993.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>"Division of Home Missions hosts National

*Continued on page 49*



**SUNDAY NIGHTS**  
 AT  
**McKENDREE**  
**METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
 MASS. AVE. BET. NINTH AND TENTH STS. N. W.  
 (THE RED BRICK CHURCH)



CHAS. A. SHREVE, PASTOR

A series of Evangelistic Sermons on the theme  
 "Jesus Christ—the Same Yesterday, and Today,  
 and Forever."

- JUNE 5—"Jesus and a Sinner."
- JUNE 12—"Jesus and the Tempted."
- JUNE 19—"Jesus Among the Sick."
- JUNE 26—"Jesus on the Cross."
- JULY 3—"Jesus at Pentecost."
- JULY 10—"Jesus in Clouds of Glory."
- JULY 17—"Jesus on the Judgment Throne."

SERVICES AT 8 O'CLOCK P. M.  
 EVERYBODY WELCOME ALL THE TIME  
 KEEP THIS CARD

In appreciation of his work among us,  
 and with a desire to help in spreading  
 the gospel of Jesus Christ, I present the  
 enclosed.

**LOVE OFFERING**  
 to  
**Evangelist Chas. A. Shreve**

NAME .....

**A Revival Center**

- Sunday 10:30-2:30-7:30 Three Great Services
- Monday 7:30 P. M. - Evangelistic Service.
- Tuesday 7:30 - - Divine Healing Sermon and Prayer for the sick.
- Wednesday 7:30 - - A Heart Throb Service and Great Prayer Meeting.
- Thursday 7:30 - - Divine Healing Testimonies and Prayer for the sick.



**Ten Glorious Days of Revival**

OCT. 29TH — NOV. 8TH

**Bethel Pentecostal Church**

FOURTH AND DICKERSON STREETS  
 NEWARK, N. J.

**DR. CHARLES A. SHREVE**  
 of California  
*Nationally Famous Evangelist*

Formerly Pastor of McKendree M.E. Church  
 Washington, D. C.

— WILL PREACH —  
 Every Night at 7:45  
 Sundays at 10:45 A.M. and 7:30 P.M.  
 YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

**Crippled and Disabled  
 Claim 'Miracle Woman'  
 Healed Them by Prayer**

Twelve hundred heads were bowed in prayer in the McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church yesterday afternoon. In the front of the church stood the "Miracle Woman," Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson. At her knees kneeled Miss Emilie Kruger, an invalid since birth. The entire gathering united in praying to God to heal this woman. Suddenly a hush swept over the church. Praying stopped. The "Miracle Woman," with outstretched hands, was looking upward. The invalid, hopefully, with outstretched arms, was watching her. And then—

"In the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, you shall walk. Rise and you shall be healed."

**Walks Without Aid.**

The woman, hesitatingly, rose from her knees. She cast a swift glance about, as if bewildered and in a trance. She looked forward. Then she started out. She took one step, —two—three—four and walked on and on until she reached the end of the aisle. She turned and continued walking. Up the aisle once, back up, up again, back again and on and on until she, unassisted, had paced the narrow aisle, six times. Then over-come from weakness she took a seat. "It's wonderful," she mumbled, "I have never done this before. I could only walk a few steps without help. God has cured me. Let me try again." And the woman walked and walked. The crowd in the church, most of them sick, crippled or deformed looked on bewildered. The woman for the first time in her life they said had strength enough to walk more than a few steps.

**Crippled Turn Out.**

It was at the "healing service" in the church that took place yesterday afternoon. The "Miracle Woman" had invited the sick and crippled to come and be prayed for and if their faith in God was great enough they would be cured.

It was Miss Kruger's case that started the gathering. Miss Kruger, thirty years old, lives at 414 Tenth street southeast. Friends told her of the "Miracle Woman." Physicians had failed to heal her and she decided to attend the service and pray earnestly to God for her recovery.

Miss Kruger was not the only person kneeling at the altar. There were many others. And in other parts of the church more than five hundred men, women and children waited for their turn. Some were kneeling and praying while others attentively watched the scene at the altar.

**Invalids Fill Church.**

Long before the doors opened yesterday—in fact, as early as 10 o'clock—a crowd began gathering in the McKendree Church. And throughout the morning others came. At 1 o'clock the church was crowded. At 2 o'clock there were several hundred men and women who could not be cared for. The Rev. Charles A. Shreve then opened the lower hall of the church and the sick and crippled

Mrs. Mary Nash, of Anacostia. She said her sister was nearly deaf. "My sister has just told me this afternoon that her hearing is greatly improved," she said, "she can hear very distinctly. God is helping our family, and He will help all who pray to Him.

The sight in that church yesterday, once seen will never be forgotten. There were the young and the old. Deformed children, paralytic children and many persons with limbs bent and twisted. There were many deaf and blind. There were several with St. Vitus dance.

It was three o'clock when the preaching concluded. Mrs. McPherson left the pulpit and came down in front of the altar. She first called for the sinners. More than thirty men and women answered the call and gathered at the church rail. They were prayed for.

**Prayers of Thanks.**

And then the sick, the crippled and deformed were called to the altar rail. There was some confusion at first. More than 500 persons all wanted to go at once. An arrangement was made and some thirty persons gathered at the altar. To each one of them Mrs. McPherson spoke and prayed for individually. She anointed them with oil and then told them with faith in God their ills would be cured. For fifteen minutes she walked among those gathered at the rail. There were no cures then. Suddenly the "Miracle Woman" stopped. She asked for silence.

"A woman here has just told me her hearing has been regained," she said, "She has been stone deaf and now she hears every word that I am saying to her. The Lord is here with us today. Let us pray and give thanks to him for helping this woman."

And the men, women and children continued to gather at the altar. All were not helped. It was after the "healing" service" was in progress for more than fifteen minutes when a woman cried out: "My God! Look at my son. He walks. His limp is almost gone. I thank God." The woman began crying and she gathered her son in her arms and nearly smothered him with kisses. She put him down. The boy started out into the aisle. He heeled

Evangelist

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# Charles A. Shreve and the Pentecostal Revival at McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, DC

By P. Douglas Chapman

Crowds lined the street hours before the church service began. A police presence was necessary to maintain control of the excited throng of people. When the doors were opened, the 1,000-seat sanctuary was quickly filled, as was the overflow room in the lower level of the church. To avoid the crush of the crowds, the pastor and evangelist had to slip into the service from behind the auditorium, climbing through a window. The service began with congregational singing that was joyfully enthusiastic and lasted about an hour. The evangelist proclaimed a simple message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. When the invitation was given, crowds packed the altar — penitents weeping as salvation flowed, the sick seeking prayer for healing, and souls hungry for more of God lying prostrate on the floor under the power of the Holy Spirit, while echoes of holy laughter and speaking in other tongues reverberated throughout the church.

Doesn't this sound like a description of the revival meetings conducted at Toronto's Airport Vineyard or Pensacola's Brownsville Assembly? Actually, the year was 1920, and the place was McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church located in Washington, DC. The pastor was Charles A. Shreve; the evangelist was Aimee Semple McPherson, who held Assemblies of God credentials from 1919 to 1922. This revival had a dynamic impact in Washington, DC — one that lasted for many years. Unfortunately, this spiritual awakening has received only scant attention in the modern press.<sup>1</sup>

This article examines the life and ministry of Charles A. Shreve in three phases: first, a brief biography of Shreve's early years and ministry preparation will be presented; second, his ministry within the Methodist Episcopal Church, with a concentration on the revival at McKendree Church and its long-term consequences will be reviewed; and third, his proclamation of the Pentecostal message on a national stage will be explored.

## Early Years and Ministry Preparation, 1878-1902

Charles Alexander Shreve was born March 20, 1878, in Prince George's County, Maryland. He was the youngest of six children born to James Henry Shreve, Jr. (1837-1908) and Caroline "Carrie" Elizabeth Ray Shreve (1838-1920). Raised in an agrarian environment, his father made a living as a stableman, gardener and farmer.<sup>2</sup> Little is known of Charles' childhood and youth, particularly of any religious upbringing. However, his paternal grandfather's family "were members of the Methodist Church" and two second cousins, Richard Sothern Shreve (1839-1874) and John Wesley Shreve (1846-1925), were Methodist ministers.<sup>3</sup>

In 1896, Shreve enrolled in the Maryland Agricultural College (now known as the University of Maryland) where he majored in Classical Studies.<sup>4</sup> Around 1900, he attended the Dickinson School of Law, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, though he did not earn a law degree.<sup>5</sup>

**This revival had a dynamic impact in Washington, DC — one that lasted for many years.**



## Ministry in the Pentecostal Mission, 1902-1912

At the age of twenty-three, Charles Shreve committed his life to Christ and moved to Nashville, Tennessee in 1902, enrolling in the Literary and Bible Training School for Christian Workers (now known as Trevecca Nazarene University) founded by Rev. James O. McClurkan (1861-1914), where he pursued a two-year course of study in Bible and Church History.<sup>6</sup> While in school, Shreve was licensed as an “Evangelist” by the Pentecostal Mission.<sup>7</sup> In 1907, he was ordained at the Annual Convention of the Pentecostal Mission, where Rev. Nickels John Holmes, founder of Holmes Bible College, was the guest speaker.<sup>8</sup>

During his ten-year association with the Pentecostal Mission, Shreve served in a variety of capacities. He was the “assistant pastor,”<sup>9</sup> participated in the annual Fall conventions,<sup>10</sup> attended numerous leadership meetings,<sup>11</sup> officiated at funerals,<sup>12</sup> and ministered to men on death row.<sup>13</sup> For a season, he conducted revival meetings in the region surrounding Nashville, during which time he contracted Typhoid fever and nearly died.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, he spent a year conducting religious services and operating a school in Ward, West Virginia.<sup>15</sup>

While ministering in Tennessee, Shreve met Miss Leila May Johnson (1885–1966) in Maury County. They were married on October 1, 1907 in Kedron, Tennessee, by Rev. McClurkan.<sup>16</sup> To this union were born three children: Esther E. Shreve (1910–2004); Charles Alexander Shreve Jr. (1912–2005); and Ruth Evangeline Shreve (1921–).

## Ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1913-1925

In 1912, Shreve and his young family moved to Washington, DC. The following year, Shreve was admitted to the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter MEC) and

appointed pastor of the Bruen Mission, located at 1st and M streets, SE, in the District.<sup>17</sup> Regular church activities consisted of Sunday services at 11 am and 8 pm; Sunday School at 3 pm; and a Wednesday prayer meeting at 8 pm.<sup>18</sup> Over the next five and one-half years, he labored tirelessly to grow the church. One important feature of Shreve’s ministry was an emphasis on evangelistic services, which resulted in countless conversations to Christ and a doubling of the church membership.<sup>19</sup> He regularly preached at evangelistic services in area churches,<sup>20</sup> gospel missions,<sup>21</sup> and

lies, including a child care center and a tutoring program for students.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, he did committee work for the Associated Charities, an organization that provided care and financial assistance for nearly 600 families.<sup>26</sup> However, his most significant contributions while at Bruen MEC came as a result of the United States’ entrance into World War I.

In August 1917, Pastor Shreve used his annual summer vacation to participate in the construction of Camp Meade, an Army installation designed to accommodate 40,000 soldiers located in Admiral, Maryland.<sup>27</sup> This highly publicized



(L-r): Pastor Charles Shreve, Charles II, Esther, and Mrs. Leila Shreve. Taken in 1915, while pastoring Bruen Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, DC.

outdoor revival services in neighborhood parks.<sup>22</sup>

Pastor and Mrs. Shreve took an active role in community activities, as well. She was a member of the Sibley Memorial Hospital Guild and led a successful effort to enlist 1,000 new members of the guild.<sup>23</sup> He served as president of the Federation of Citizens Association, leading efforts to secure congressional authorization for police and firefighter pensions and to approve a constitutional amendment granting residents of Washington, DC congressional representation and the right to vote.<sup>24</sup> Rev. Shreve was a member of the board of managers of the Friendship House Association, which provided a variety of services for fami-

service resulted in Shreve’s appointment as the MEC’s “special director of military service for Washington,” while continuing to pastor the Bruen church in a reduced capacity.<sup>28</sup> Shreve coordinated ministry services for the troops,<sup>29</sup> worked with local police to eliminate vice, i.e., “prostitution, beer and ‘dives,’” that targeted soldiers,<sup>30</sup> participated in activities that honored the soldiers and their service to God and country,<sup>31</sup> and promoted the sale of War Savings Stamps.<sup>32</sup> Bishop Joseph F. Berry, observed that Shreve did “better work in the Washington Camp District than any other denominational representative in the city.”<sup>33</sup>

The wide-ranging success of Charles Shreve’s leadership at Bruen church and

in coordinating Methodist support for the war effort was evident and paved the way for greater ministry opportunities within the Baltimore Conference. In October 1918, Shreve was appointed pastor of McKendree Methodist Church. Within 18 months, his leadership there would catapult him to national prominence.

### **Revival Comes to McKendree Church, 1918-1924**

McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1844; within a year, a building was erected at 919-921 Massachusetts Avenue, NW. In 1872-3, a grand, new edifice was constructed at the same location.<sup>34</sup> However, the ensuing years had not been kind to this historic church. Upon arrival, Pastor Shreve found a declining, demoralized congregation worshipping in a large, aging building. Between 1913 and 1918, the church membership had declined by 57%, from 461 members to just 200 members; the Sunday School enrollment showed a similar drop of 35%, from 379 to 246.<sup>35</sup> Finances had declined and the congregation's attempt to sell its facility had failed. "My church was on the downgrade," Shreve said. "The spirit of defeat was abroad and the congregations [*sic*] had dwindled."<sup>36</sup> He observed that, for many years McKendree "had old time religion in it," but the congregation had not experienced revival for "some ten or fifteen years."<sup>37</sup>

Convinced that the people of McKendree needed a spiritual awakening, Shreve challenged "all the praying people of the church" to pray the prayer of Moses, found in Exodus 34:9: "Lord, go among us."<sup>38</sup> For many months, the people prayed; they did not tell God what to do, but trusted that He knew what the church needed. During that time, McKendree conducted two revival campaigns, with between 45 and 60 converts in each.<sup>39</sup> However, neither Shreve nor the congregation believed these results were what they had been praying for.

During this season of prayer, Pastor

Shreve sensed the Lord leading him to conduct healing services at McKendree. He had never led a healing meeting and was reluctant to do so because of his inexperience. Upon learning that Assemblies of God evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson was conducting a revival in Baltimore, Maryland and praying for the sick, Shreve decided to investigate.<sup>40</sup> He, and several of his leaders, traveled to Baltimore on a Sunday afternoon in December 1919, to participate in the revival service.<sup>41</sup> He managed to secure a seat on the platform and watched as 200 or 300 persons sought prayer for healing. As a result of this service, he declared, "That settles it, I am going back [to McKendree], we are going to have a service of this kind every week and pray the Lord to heal the sick."<sup>42</sup>

Shreve was so impressed with Sister Aimee's approach to ministry that he decided to stay overnight in Baltimore. He purchased her book, *This is That*, and read it late into the night. He attended the Monday service, where he heard a message on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Intrigued by what he had read the night before and what he had heard in that service, Shreve began tarrying for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. While seeking the Lord, he felt impressed to invite the evangelist to conduct a revival in Washington, DC.<sup>43</sup> She accepted the invitation.

"Sister Aimee" began a three-week revival campaign at McKendree Church on Sunday, March 21, 1920.<sup>44</sup> Pastor Shreve recalled that, on Saturday, a "little group came to meet and welcome her ... As we prayed the power of the Lord came upon the little group and God's blessing mightily came upon us, and *the revival started right there*" [emphasis added].<sup>45</sup>

Souls were saved at the very first service.<sup>46</sup> Pastor Shreve recalled multitudes of people "came seeking God" and "stampeded ... to the altar."<sup>47</sup> At every service the altar "was crowded again and again with earnest seekers after God" and by the close of the revival "about

three hundred persons" had been converted to Christ.<sup>48</sup>

Christians streamed to the altars as well, seeking more of the presence and power of God. "Great joy filled the hearts of the Christians as the big waves of God's glory rolled in. There was shouting, and singing, and weeping." Many fell prostrate to the floor as the power of God swept the sanctuary, while the sounds of holy laughter reverberated throughout. The prayer rooms were filled with scores of hungry souls who tarried for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Countless numbers of believers



**McKendree Methodist Church building when Charles Shreve pastored at this location. It was renovated in the 1930s when Full Gospel Tabernacle (AG) purchased the building. Photo courtesy the United Methodist Historical Society of the Baltimore-Washington Conference**

received a "real, Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Spirit" and spoke in other tongues.<sup>49</sup> During this revival, Shreve received the Pentecostal blessing after praying all night.<sup>50</sup>

Pastor Shreve said the reports of "the mighty working of God spread like



fire throughout the city and the people came flocking from North, East, South and West.”<sup>51</sup> The church was “stormed by the people,” which required a police presence to manage crowd control. It was standing room only in the sanctuary and a downstairs overflow room was also filled to capacity. Pastor Shreve said, “Many nights we had to climb in the back windows of the church. Visiting preachers sometimes would come and I would have to drag them in through the window and get them into the pulpit.”<sup>52</sup>

In the second week of services, Sister Aimee, now being referred to in the press as the “Miracle Woman,” conducted an afternoon prayer meeting for the healing of the sick on Thursday, April 1. *The Washington Times* reported more than 100 persons attended. “Some were carried in, others came on crutches, still others blind, were led to the church.” After forty minutes of singing and worship, McPherson began praying for the sick. While there were no testimonies of instantaneous healings,

according to all reports several women were cured out of sickness, a woman with rheumatic arms has regained the use of her limbs, a six year-old girl recovered from failing eyesight, a woman who had been confined to her bed for three months gradually became well, and a man paralyzed in his left side noted an improvement in his condition.<sup>53</sup>

On April 8, another healing service was conducted at McKendree. An unidentified reporter for *The Washington Times* attended the entire healing service, writing a lengthy and a remarkably favorable article about the meeting.<sup>54</sup> Twelve hundred persons packed the church; they began arriving four hours before the service began. The service was opened by singing “The Great Physician, Jesus, Is Here,” followed by several other hymns. The evangelist preached a message of faith in Jesus to heal. “I cannot perform miracles,” she

said. “I can only help you to get faith in the Lord. It is He who can heal you. As Jesus healed the multitudes while He was on earth, so He can and will heal those who place faith in Him. Let us bow our heads and pray to Him.”<sup>55</sup>

The healing service lasted for five hours, as the “sick, deformed, blind, deaf, dumb, paralytic, and all manner of sufferers thronged the altar in relays of thirty at a time.” Sister Aimee briefly spoke with each supplicant, anointed them with oil and prayed over each one. Many persons were healed that day; their



**Charles Shreve**

names, addresses, ages, and descriptions of their physical conditions were reported in the paper.

Several persons were healed of paralysis. Twelve-year old Nicholas Berzoski, of 453 C Street, NW, had been “stricken with infantile paralysis” as a two-year-old. Consequently, he wore a leg brace to walk. “In the name of Jesus, you shall be healed,” Sister Aimee declared.

Mrs. McPherson removed the boy’s brace. He ventured forward. And, unassisted, his hands at his side, standing upright the lad walked ... “Gee, I can walk without holding my knee,” the boy said, “and I feel fine Let me see how far I can walk.” And the boy walked back and forth

in the aisle, the brace laid to one side. “I don’t want to put that thing on again,” the lad declared, “and I think I am going to get all well. I have never been able to walk like this before.”<sup>56</sup>

Mrs. Fannie Wallace, of 1913 Vermont Avenue, had been paralyzed on her “entire left side” for fifteen years, leaving her “little use of either her hand or leg.” After being anointed and prayed for, Mrs. Wallace, began to walk, with some hesitation. “Then she hurried and then she danced. ‘Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,’ she cried out and for more than two minutes she danced and waved her hands in the air.” Mrs. Wallace was sixty-seven years of age.

In this article, eleven persons were identified by name who claimed to be helped through Sister Aimee’s prayers that day. “It was these persons that *The Times* reporter saw and talked to. The reporter watched the entire services . . . There were many more helped, but there was so much confusion in the church and there were several at a time helped, that it was impossible to keep track over everyone.”<sup>57</sup> It was estimated that more than 800 persons received prayer on that day.<sup>58</sup>

The McPherson revival at McKendree came to a conclusion on Sunday, April 11, 1920. On the last day of the revival, more than 60 persons were received into church membership and it was reported that the church experienced a “substantial increase in attendance and work in the Sunday school, a marked advance in missionary offering” and that “123 tithers [were] among its membership.”<sup>59</sup> The spirit of generosity rose up within the congregation as they said farewell to Sister Aimee. She received a love offering of about \$1,600 in grateful appreciation of her ministry at McKendree.<sup>60</sup>

Pastor Shreve said it was “the most remarkable revival ever seen in McKendree.” Many older residents of the city thought the revival was “the most

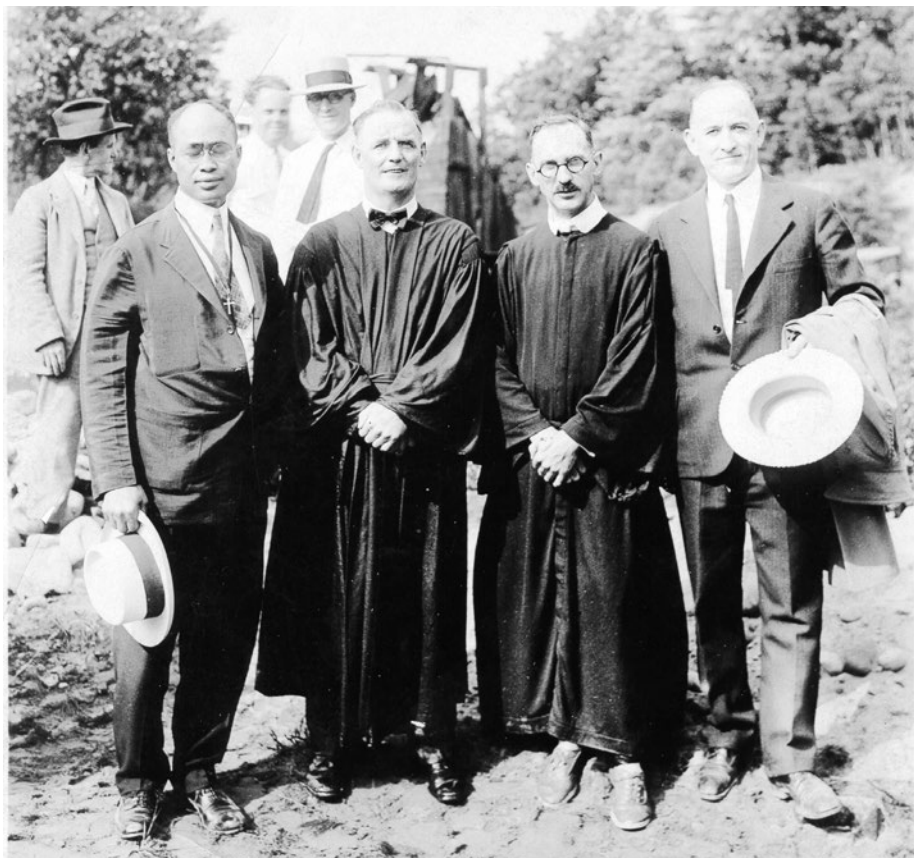
powerful outpouring of God’s Spirit ever known in the history of Washington. For three weeks the power of God swept the place. Christians were stirred as never before, and sinners came flocking home to God in penitence and tears.”<sup>61</sup>

More than 50,000 persons had attended the services; about three hundred persons were converted to Christ, and many Christians experienced “a real, Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>62</sup> Over 3,000 sick and infirm persons were prayed for during the revival and “many men and women declared their ills had been instantly cured after the ‘Miracle Woman’ had blessed them.”<sup>63</sup>

The revival fires ignited by Sister Aimee did not wane following her departure from McKendree. Throughout 1920, the revival spirit continued to burn.<sup>64</sup> Crowds continued to fill the church on Sundays, with conversions taking place in almost every Sunday evening service.<sup>65</sup> True to his calling, Pastor Shreve instituted a two and one-half hour healing service on Tuesday afternoons.<sup>66</sup> “The power of the Lord was invariably present in mighty manifestation,” he said, and “large numbers of people have been healed of various complaints and diseases.”<sup>67</sup>

A Friday evening “Pentecostal service” was established for the expressed “purpose of studying the Scriptures concerning the work of the Holy Spirit and furnishing special opportunity for persons interested in this line of truth and experience.” Large crowds of people, hungry for more of God, flocked to this meeting. Shreve said it was common to see as many as “thirty to fifty people at the altar,” seeking God. He added, “the Lord manifests His presence in many ways similar to that described as prevailing in the early Church.”<sup>68</sup>

Ten months after McPherson closed her revival, *The Washington Times* reported, “McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church has the unique distinction of having probably the longest ‘protracted meeting’ of any church in Washington. For more than a year there has been no



**A group of ministers at a baptismal service in Scranton, Pennsylvania, circa 1930. (L-r): Dr. W. McKinley Dawkins (African Methodist Episcopal Church), Thomas Twiss (AG), J. Roswell Flower (AG), and Dr. Charles Shreve.**

cessation in the revival movement which is sweeping the congregation.”<sup>69</sup> That revival spirit continued for three more years.<sup>70</sup> By April 1924, nearly nine hundred adults had made professions of faith in Jesus and about 450 new members were added to the church rolls.<sup>71</sup> Shreve described the revival’s impact on McKendree in the following manner:

a virtual resurrection took place. The very atmosphere seemed changed. The revival fires burned continually on the altars for four years. Finances boomed. Congregations increased, faith took the place of doubt and discouragement. Salvation flowed the year around, membership grew by leaps and bounds and the light of this Church spread to many other altars and lives.<sup>72</sup>

In June 1924, Taylor University, lo-

cated in Upland, Indiana conferred upon Rev. Charles A. Shreve, the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.<sup>73</sup> While the citation for this degree has been lost to history, it is reasonable to assume that Dr. Shreve was recognized for his role in cultivating a revival spirit at McKendree Church.<sup>74</sup>

The revival at McKendree propelled Pastor Shreve into the national spotlight, resulting in invitations from across the country to preach a Pentecostal message of salvation and divine healing. In the Fall of 1920, he ministered alongside Aimee Semple McPherson in her Philadelphia revival and in her Rochester, New York campaign, one year later.<sup>75</sup> In 1922, he preached a great revival in Scruggs Methodist Church in St. Louis, Missouri, and spoke at the Pentecostal conventions in Cleveland, Ohio and New York City.<sup>76</sup> The year 1923 began with Shreve preaching in Los Angeles,



at the dedication of McPherson's newly constructed Angelus Temple.<sup>77</sup> Later that year, he would minister at camp meetings in Elberon and Ocean Grove, New Jersey and Durant, Florida.<sup>78</sup> Somehow, he also found time to speak at two conventions in Chicago and Philadelphia.<sup>79</sup>

In March 1924, Pastor Shreve announced to the readers of the *Pentecostal Evangel* that he would be leaving McKendree to engage in full-time evangelistic ministry.<sup>80</sup> His bishop commended him for "five and a half years of indefatigable labors at McKendree"<sup>81</sup> and the leadership of his "heart-broken congregation" saluted him with the following testimonial:

Through extolling "Jesus, the same yesterday, today and forever," Brother Shreve has lifted McKendree Church out of the ranks of obscurity and into national prominence so that today the church . . . is known and loved across the continent . . .

By his beautiful presentation of Jesus as the Great Physician . . . Brother Shreve has endeared himself to hundreds of people who today are living monuments of the healing ministry of Christ, the feet of the weary and troubled have beaten a path to the door of McKendree, may God grant that path may never be overgrown.

By preaching the possibilities of a victorious Christian experience through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, many struggling Christians, inside and outside our church are praising and serving God on Higher Ground, and religion has become the vital factor in their lives and the Bible a new book.<sup>82</sup>

### **Pentecost Rejected at McKendree Church, 1924-1927**

In January 1920, Methodist Bishop Joseph F. Berry, wrote, "Every revival begins with Pentecost." He went on to say, "This is the era of Pentecost. It is

the dispensation of the Spirit. The promise of the Father has never been revoked nor modified. We have absolutely the same right to ask for the very presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our churches as the disciples had at the beginning." The key to obtaining and possessing the Spirit, he said, was to "Tarry. Tarry in honest self-examination. Tarry in frank confession. Tarry in earnest supplication, Tarry in personal surrender. Tarry until you have lost all trace of self-sufficiency. Tarry until the tongues appear. Tarry until the sound of a mighty rushing wind fills the place. *Tarry until ye are filled with the Holy Ghost*" [Italics original]<sup>83</sup> Those words must have warmed the heart of Charles Shreve as he led his congregation in prayer for a real move of the spirit of God.

But fifty-one months later, Shreve was on the evangelistic field and Rev. S. Carroll Coale (1885-1981) was the new pastor at McKendree. At the time of Coale's appointment, his District Superintendent gave him a mandate: "I want you to go to McKendree and salvage what you can for Methodism."<sup>84</sup> For Pastor Coale, it was an ominous assignment. He noted that "a storm-cloud had been gathering in the sky and the storm was about to break as the new pastor was about to assume his task."<sup>85</sup>

When Pastor Coale arrived at McKendree Church he found the congregation "hopelessly divided over certain religious practices which we have come to accept as thoroughly unmethodistic." In his opinion, "McKendree had become a sort of headquarters for the Pentecostals," and the congregation was bitterly divided into two opposing camps.<sup>86</sup>

Coale identified four "perplexing problems" within the church. First, there was "strife and contention" over the use of unknown tongues. "Fortunately," he wrote, "this was discontinued at the very beginning of my pastorate." Second, was the practice of anointing with oil. At his very first service, Coale declined the request of some of his officials to anoint a congregant. This action, he wrote, "did

not remove the unlovely feeling which had arisen among the membership." Third, there was an emphasis on divine healing. He replaced the prayer meetings for healing with a medical clinic housed within the church building. Fourth, a clash developed between the fundamentalists and modernists. Coale declared, "our chief business is to live the Christian life and not waste our days in wordy controversies. When the church is holy all unholy strife and contention will be at an end."<sup>87</sup>

Pastor Coale was quite successful in fulfilling his mandate to "salvage what [he could] for Methodism." Many persons drawn to McKendree by the revival meetings, the healing prayer meetings and the Pentecostal services, soon left the church. Countless numbers of former McKendree parishioners began worshipping at the Full Gospel Tabernacle.<sup>88</sup> This congregation and its pastors had enthusiastically participated in the McKendree revival, during Shreve's ministry.<sup>89</sup> Harry L. Collier, an Assemblies of God minister, was a long-serving pastor of this church, and the church soon affiliated with the Assemblies of God.<sup>90</sup> Ironically, in 1938, under Ben Mahan, the congregation of Full Gospel Tabernacle, having outgrown its building, purchased the McKendree building for the sum of \$62,500.<sup>91</sup> At the time of the sale, McKendree's congregation consisted of just "65 men, women and children." One writer from that period observed, "the Spirit had been put out."<sup>92</sup>

### **Evangelist Shreve, 1924-1941**

Within a few weeks of leaving McKendree, Dr. Shreve was in high-gear on the evangelistic field. Over the next seventeen years, he crisscrossed the United States, preaching in nearly every state in the nation, ministering in revival campaigns, summer camp meetings, church dedications, and providing pulpit supply.<sup>93</sup> Although he held no clergy credentials with any ecclesiastical organization, he was warmly welcomed within the



**The congregation standing inside McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, DC, March 28, 1924. This was Shreve's last service at McKendree.**

Pentecostal movement, where his ministry cut across denominational lines.<sup>94</sup> His activities were widely promoted in the Pentecostal press. More than 250 articles featuring reports of his revivals, announcements of upcoming meetings, personal testimonies from those helped by his ministry and reprints of his sermons filled the pages of the following publications: *Bridal Call Foursquare*, *Bridegroom's Messenger*, *Foursquare Crusader*, *Latter Rain Evangel*, *Pentecostal Evangel*, *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, and the *White Wing Messenger*.<sup>95</sup> In addition to his preaching ministry, he also served as a contributing editor to the *Pentecostal Evangel* in 1924 and 1925.<sup>96</sup>

Shreve preached in some of the leading Pentecostal churches in America, including New York City's famed Glad Tidings Tabernacle, pastored by Robert and Marie Brown;<sup>97</sup> Glad Tidings Temple, in San Francisco, pastored by Robert and Mary Craig, where he ministered with Smith Wigglesworth;<sup>98</sup> Philadelphia's Highway Tabernacle, pastored by E. S. Williams, future General Superin-

tendent of the Assemblies of God;<sup>99</sup> Sunnyside Church, in Chicago, Samuel A. Jamieson, pastor;<sup>100</sup> Atlanta's Apostolic Assembly, pastored by Paul and Hattie Barth;<sup>101</sup> Holmes Memorial Church, in Greenville, South Carolina, Paul F. Beacham, pastor;<sup>102</sup> and, of course, Angelus Temple, in Los Angeles, home of his dear friend and colleague, Aimee Semple McPherson.<sup>103</sup>

He spoke in at least seven Assemblies of God "district councils" and camp meetings, in Iowa, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska and Texas, where he ministered alongside J. Narver Gortner, J. Roswell Flower, Frank J. Lindquist, and Guy Shields, among others.<sup>104</sup> The International Pentecostal Holiness Church invited him to preach along with Paul F. Beacham at the Falcon Camp Meeting in 1934. He also spoke at the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Holmes Bible College in 1948.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, he spoke at several independent Pentecostal camp meetings, including those sponsored by Pastor Ivan Spencer and the Elim Fellowship in New York; the Campmeeting

Association, which held their services at the historic Old Orchard Campground in Maine, where he ministered with Sister Elizabeth Sisson; and the Florida State Campmeeting, conducted on the historic Methodist campground, known as Pleasant Grove, in Durant, Florida.<sup>106</sup>

In May 1926, while conducting a revival in Cleveland, Ohio, Pastor Shreve received word that his dear friend, Aimee Semple McPherson, had drowned while swimming at Venice Beach, California.<sup>107</sup> He was called to Los Angeles and asked to assist in providing leadership at Angelus Temple.<sup>108</sup> He ministered alongside Mrs. Minnie Kennedy, McPherson's mother (and business manager at the church) and Evangelist Watson Argue. On June 20, Kennedy, Shreve and Argue, participated in a memorial service for McPherson, at which it was estimated over 11,000 mourners attended.<sup>109</sup> Three days later, Mrs. McPherson was found alive in Arizona, the apparent victim of a kidnapping. She resumed her ministry and Pastor Shreve returned to the evangelistic field.<sup>110</sup>

A second call went out to Dr. Shreve



in the autumn of 1930, after Sister Aimee had suffered a physical and mental breakdown. He came at the request of Sister Aimee and the Temple Board to assume the role of “Evangelist-Associate Pastor” and was immediately embraced as “the adopted brother of the Bridal Call family.”<sup>111</sup> His arrival at Angelus Temple was celebrated as the homecoming of “our old friend, who came into our midst during the time that Angelus Temple was the target for every publicity seeker in the world, and who ministered so earnestly and devotedly,” a clear reference to his ministry there in 1926.<sup>112</sup>

Four-and-a-half years previous, Shreve had been a “staunch soldier of the Cross” who stood by the people of Angelus Temple “in the hour of need, lending his sympathy, speaking words of comfort, and upbuilding the faith of thousands.”<sup>113</sup> Over the next 18 months, Shreve faithfully led the congregation, preaching in weekend services, conducting revival campaigns, teaching in the Bible school, and speaking over the radio. The altars were full, conversions were recorded, divine healing services were conducted, and the people were blessed of the Lord.<sup>114</sup> When McPherson returned to the pulpit in September of 1932, Shreve resigned his position at the church and returned to the evangelistic field.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion, 1941-1959

At the age of 63, Pastor Shreve once again settled into the pastorate of a local church, this time at St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church, in Brentwood, Maryland.<sup>116</sup> For the next seventeen years he faithfully served this congregation until a few months before his death on June 6, 1959.<sup>117</sup>

The legacy of Dr. Charles A. Shreve is not inscribed on a majestic building, written out in a detailed publication, or documented in a video production. Instead, it is found in the heartbeat of every person he influenced and all who seek to know God in a sweeter, deeper and more personal way. It is at the core

of every congregation that desires the fullness of the Spirit and is willing to pursue God, no matter the personal cost. Speaking of the revival at McKendree Church, Pastor Shreve declared,

This gracious work should convince those who are seeking a plan by which to fill their churches, that the Gospel is still “the power of God unto salvation” — and that God hears and answers prayer. Revivals are still altogether possible, but they do not come via the fan-flare of worldly pomp and feathers, church entertainments, bazaars, ice cream festivals, chicken dinners and other make-shifts. Revivals attend the presence of God in the midst of the people and God comes into our midst when we thoroughly prepare the way by real consecration, faith and prayer. “Lord, Go Among Us,” is a good prayer for all the Churches of all denominations to pray, that Christ may dwell among them in great revival glory and spiritual power.<sup>118</sup> ✨



**P. Douglas Chapman (Ph.D., Michigan State University) serves as Family Care Pastor at Chapel Springs Assembly of God (Bristow, Virginia) and is an adjunct faculty member at University of Valley Forge.**

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<sup>41</sup>McPherson, *This Is That*, 176.

<sup>42</sup>Shreve, “Jesus the Same Yesterday, Today, Forever,” 9-10. Note: One month after deciding to preach divine healing, Shreve announces his sermon topics for January 25, 1920: 11am service – “Jesus Christ the Same Today” with special reference to **His Power to Heal the Sick** [Bold in original]; 8pm service – “A Certain Man Who Was Healed.” In March 1920, McKendree began conducting weekly prayer meetings for the sick. See “Church

Announcements,” *Washington Evening Star*, January 24, 1920, 17 and “Church Announcements,” *Washington Evening Star*, March 6, 1920, 11.

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<sup>44</sup>“Church Announcements,” *Washington Evening Star*, March 20, 1920, 11.

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<sup>46</sup>“Washington Letter,” *Christian Advocate*, April 1, 1920, 463.

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<sup>50</sup>Shreve, “Jesus the Same Yesterday, Today, Forever,” 11.

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<sup>62</sup>“Clamor for Healing As ‘Miracle Woman’ Prepares To Depart,” *Washington Times*, April 11, 1920, 13; “A Remarkable Revival,” in McPherson, *This Is That*, 197-198; “The McPherson Revival in Washington, D.C.,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 29, 1920, 9.

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<sup>64</sup>“Washington Letter,” *Christian Advocate*, September 30, 1920, 1319-1320; “Washington Letter,” *Christian Advocate*, November 4, 1920, 1478.

<sup>65</sup>Shreve, “Jesus the Same Yesterday, Today,

*Continued on page 54*





Mildred Whitney working at a Braille typewriter at her home in Pewaukee, Wisconsin in the early 1960s.

# Light in the Darkness: A History of Assemblies of God Ministries to the Blind

By Sarah Sykes Weingartner and Lynda E. Gage

**T**he National Federation for the Blind, in 2016, estimated that 7,675,600 Americans ages sixteen and above have a visual disability.<sup>1</sup> Over the past seventy years, the Assemblies of God (AG) has made significant efforts to minister to Americans with blindness. AG ministries to the blind originated when a housewife, Mildred Whitney, discovered that Pentecostal literature was not available in Braille.<sup>2</sup> She then responded to God's call to meet this need. What began as a ministry out of Whitney's home in 1949 emerged to become one of the largest ministries to the blind within the evangelical and Pentecostal movements in America.<sup>3</sup>

## A Miracle in Reverse

Living on a 100-acre farm near Ironton, Michigan, with her husband, Edward, and eight children, Mildred Whitney (1910-1994) was anything but idle. The first priority of her busy day was the hour she spent in "sweet communion with my Lord."<sup>4</sup> Early on her 39<sup>th</sup> birthday, however, she experienced something that would change the course of countless lives, including her own. That day, on Sunday, October 16, 1949, she suddenly became blind.

Although Whitney's eyesight had been weak since childhood, requiring her to wear thick lenses, she had never experienced total blindness until that moment.<sup>5</sup> Her blindness lasted for one hour and then disappeared as inexplicably as it had come. But this miraculous deprivation left an indelible mark on Mildred Whitney's life. "Jesus spoke to my heart concerning the need of blind people. He reminded me of the glorious change he had made in me when He filled me with His Holy Spirit. That was ten years after He had saved me. Surely those who are blind need to know of this gift He has for them."<sup>6</sup>

## God Provides Direction

Later that same Sunday afternoon, Whitney read an article, "Unexpected Answers" by Eleanor Samuelson, published in the weekly Assemblies of God devotional periodical, *Gospel Gleaners* (now *Live*). This article told of Gladys Carrington—a woman not unlike Whitney—who lived on a small farm in New York. One morning while making the beds, Carrington had asked God for a ministry she could do that would involve the use of her hands. He answered by giving her a burden for ministering to blind people. She learned Braille and began translating Christian literature in January 1943 using a slate and stylus—the Braille equivalent of pen and paper. By the time the article appeared in *Gospel Gleaners*, Carrington had transcribed and bound 96 volumes of various sizes.<sup>7</sup>

**What began as a ministry out of Whitney's home in 1949 emerged to become one of the largest ministries to the blind within the evangelical and Pentecostal movements in America.**

## Learning Braille

Whitney wrote to Carrington, expressing her desire to learn Braille and to take part in the work of sharing the gospel with blind people. Carrington forwarded Whitney's name to a Christian library for the blind for which she had transcribed. The secretary of that library sent Whitney the Library of Congress transcriber's course along with a print pamphlet listing all the Christian services for the blind available at that time. Once Whitney completed the course, she started transcribing assignments for the same library that sent her the Braille course. At the time Whitney began transcribing Pentecostal literature into Braille, she did not know anyone who was blind.

At first, Whitney, like Carrington, used a slate and stylus to write out the Braille.<sup>8</sup> Using this laborious method required her to place a piece of thick paper between two metal plates



hinged together. The plate on the back side of the page had small windows in it, one for each Braille character. The front plate contained groupings of six small dimples corresponding to the six possible Braille dots used to make up each Braille character.

Working from the back of the page, Whitney had to press the stylus through the window, forcing the paper into the small depression that corresponded to the Braille dot to be created. Writing Braille in this way was especially difficult. Because she was working from the back of the page, it required her to work from right to left and to form each character as a mirror image of itself so that, when the paper was flipped to the front after writing, the Braille could be read correctly.

Despite the exacting nature of this work, Whitney persevered for several months. However, she soon was confronted by a transcribing assignment that contained doctrine that conflicted with her Pentecostal beliefs. “I could not conscientiously do it,” she related in a letter. “The Lord was pressing His claim for the Pentecostal message. Now was the time to begin. But how?”<sup>9</sup>

## Braille Ministry

The Whitney family moved in 1950 to another 100-acre farm near Watertown, Wisconsin. They moved again in 1955 to Waukesha, Wisconsin, and then to Pewaukee, Wisconsin, in 1956. The ministry moved with the family. In a 1953 article, Whitney recalled, “In August 1951, I began to transcribe Pentecostal literature into Standard English Braille in my own home.” At the end of the article, she provided a list of articles from the *Pentecostal Evangel* that she had already transcribed.<sup>10</sup>

It is uncertain what prompted her to choose these particular articles. However, the wide variety of subject matter—including theology, baptism in the Holy Spirit, witnessing, stewardship, missions, and prayer, among others—indicates that she believed that people

with blindness ought to read a broader message of Christ’s power in their lives than merely salvation and healing. In her own words, “My heart is bursting with a desire to reach every last one with our glorious full gospel message.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1954, Whitney’s husband, Edward, bought her a Perkins six key Braille writer as a gift for their 24<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. What the gift lacked in romance



**Mildred Whitney (right) watching Delna Lawrence run the addressing machine given by the WMs of the Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District, which is in the Braille room in the basement of Mildred Whitney’s home at Pewaukee, Wisconsin, circa early 1960s.**

was made up for in efficiency. The new typewriter made the work of producing Braille literature much easier.<sup>12</sup>

The first person to receive Pentecostal materials in Braille from Whitney was a Mr. Carson from Mansfield, Ohio, a man who was both deaf and blind and who did not know the Lord. His daughter attended Sunday school, and her teacher wrote to Whitney. She wanted to have a way to reach out to Carson that would be more lasting than the messages spelled into his hand by his wife when the teacher visited the home.

When Carson received the Braille literature from Whitney, he, according to

his wife, “wept continually as he read the first Braille book . . . it was the first time he had wept in years.”<sup>13</sup> As a result, both Carson and his wife received Christ. He later said of himself and his wife, “We both read the Bible every day and pray every night. We have been asking God to help you [Whitney] in your Braille work. . . . God has been very good to us since I stopped drinking and we have been trying very hard to be what He wants us to be.”<sup>14</sup>

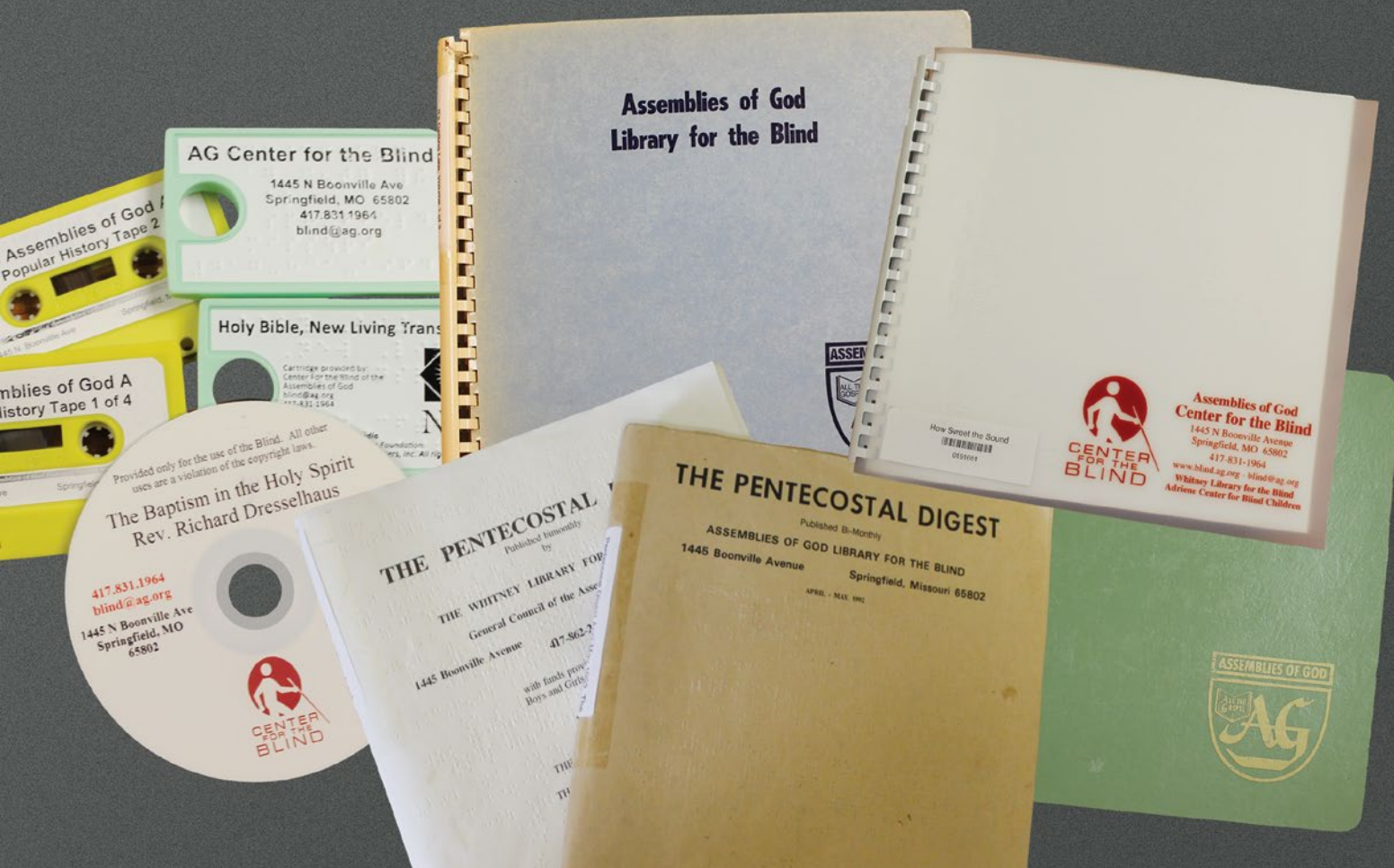
## Tape Ministry

Another Assemblies of God ministry to the blind emerged in Wisconsin. Fred and Edna Sweeney, a husband and wife who were both blind and living in Janesville, Wisconsin, came to know the Lord in 1953. They wanted to share their newfound faith with other people living with blindness, but they could find very few Pentecostal resources for the blind. The Sweeneys could read Braille, but many blind people could not. Educational and religious tapes were available for the blind, but none were from a Pentecostal perspective. For seven years the Sweeneys prayed for someone to help them start a Pentecostal gospel tape ministry to the blind.<sup>15</sup>

In 1960 the Lord answered their prayers. William Gockley, an AG minister to the deaf and blind, visited the Sweeneys and agreed to assist with a tape ministry. Fred built a high fidelity tape recorder, Edna managed the mailing list, and members of the Janesville Assembly of God spent countless hours reading articles from the *Pentecostal Evangel* into the tape recorder. Gockley contacted the Home Missions Department, which agreed to raise funds to help purchase tapes and to provide recordings of sermons and Christian music, including the *Revivaltime* choir, for inclusion in the Sweeneys’ circulating tape library for the blind.<sup>16</sup>

## Testimonies

Howard Boring, a blind man in Fontana, California, received tapes from the



## Various publications in Braille and in audio produced by the Center for the Blind.

Sweeneys and Braille literature from Whitney. He commended their work: "I am very thankful for the many things the Lord has done for me since I was saved on January 8, 1958. One wonderful thing He did for me was to heal me of cancer.... Because I am blind it is necessary for me to study about our Lord in a different way than sighted persons. There is very little Christian literature available in Braille or on tapes.... Much more [is] needed for the Blind."<sup>17</sup>

Although some people are healed of blindness, many are not.<sup>18</sup> The Assemblies of God encouraged people with persistent blindness to engage in ministry, as is evident in the lives of the Sweeneys and many others, including Bradley Shaw of Shellman, Georgia. Shaw wrote:

I had been blind in my right eye from birth, and iritis developed in the left

eye in 1949. Gradually my sight became more blurred.... On Easter Sunday in 1950 we attended services ... expecting to ask prayer for my healing. But there I realized my spiritual need was greater than my need for perfect sight. Both my wife and I were saved that night. Although there was no notable change in my eyes, we began to help in a home missions work in our home town.<sup>19</sup>

Shaw felt a call to ministry in 1954. Despite increasingly poor eyesight, he became an Assemblies of God pastor, was ordained in 1958, and served as a sectional presbyter. By 1960, his vision had become so poor that he could no longer read the Bible. Though he possessed other severe physical challenges, it was ultimately his worsening blindness that caused Shaw to resign his roles as pastor and presbyter and, though unspoken,

his involvement in ministry. He became severely depressed.

He then heard of the Sweeneys and their ministry. "I got in touch with them and on receiving my first tape I gave thanks to God that our Assemblies of God fellowship had not forgotten the blind." He wrote, "God would not accept my resignation from the ministry, but instead sent me the encouragement and help I needed. I am again serving as a presbyter and pastor, though now I am almost totally blind."<sup>20</sup>

## Braille Ministry Expands

As her Braille ministry expanded, Whitney realized that she needed to set it on proper legal footing. In 1955, she incorporated the ministry as Pentecostal Publications for the Blind, Incorporated.<sup>21</sup> Whitney's primary publication was the *Pentecostal Digest*, which was a monthly compilation of articles from the



*Pentecostal Evangel* and other sources. She also published AG Sunday school curriculum—*Primary Pupil*, *Junior Pupil*, and *Teen Student*. She received orders from across the United States and Canada.<sup>22</sup>

Whitney was working between 30 and 40 hours per week on the Braille ministry and underwriting most of the costs, in addition to caring for her large family. Home Missions Department leaders understood that the ministry was meeting an important need, yet they were concerned about the strain it was placing on the family. In 1957, in an effort to relieve Whitney of some of her workload, the Home Missions Department began paying a commercial press to publish the *Adult Student* quarterly. Within several years, additional publications were sent to the commercial press.<sup>23</sup>

Whitney received appointment as a home missionary on March 21, 1961.<sup>24</sup> Her husband, Edward, passed away on April 27, 1963, and she moved into Waukesha, Wisconsin, where her church, First Assembly of God, was located. In 1964, the church began providing a room for Whitney and her volunteer staff. They stapled and mailed more than 500 copies of the *Pentecostal Digest* each month.<sup>25</sup> By 1965, approximately 4,360 Sunday school quarterlies in Braille had been distributed, and literature was being mailed to 45 states and 16 foreign countries.<sup>26</sup>

## **Whitney's Move to Springfield**

In 1967, the Home Missions Department asked Whitney if she would oversee the development of a Braille circulating library. Whitney consented and, in 1968, she moved to Springfield, Missouri. She set up the first Pentecostal Braille circulating library in the three front rooms of her house, which was located just west of the AG national office. She had help from 27 students from Central Bible College who received college credit for their Christian service. This was the beginning of the Assemblies

of God Library for the Blind. An IBM Braille typewriter and a Brailon® Braille copy machine were soon purchased for the library. The Brailon® Braille form machine was used to publish the first Braille editions of various books, curriculum, and Royal Rangers and Missionette manuals.<sup>27</sup>

Derva Trower was one of Whitney's faithful volunteers. Trower read about Whitney's work for the blind in an article, only to discover that she and Whitney lived a mere six blocks from one another. It became Trower's habit to stroll with her baby down the street to help Whitney two or three mornings each week. Trower continued volunteering after retirement, eventually accruing more than 45 years of involvement with the ministry.<sup>28</sup>

The library, in conjunction with the Home Missions Department, published a number of Braille editions of Gospel Publishing House books, including the new Assemblies of God hymnal, *Hymns of Glorious Praise*.<sup>29</sup>

## **National Leadership**

While Whitney started what became the national Assemblies of God ministries to the blind, she did not serve in a national leadership position over the ministry. That function belonged to the National Representative for Deaf and Blind Ministries, a Home Missions Department position created in 1959. The first person to serve in this role, Maxine Strobridge, previously served as National Representative for Deaf Ministries, and blind ministries were added to her portfolio. The following people served in this role: Maxine Strobridge (1959-1967); Harry Brotzman, Jr. (1967-1971); Eldon M. Post (1972-1975); Paul R. Markstrom (1975); and James W. Banks (1976-1989).

In 1989, a separate Deaf Culture Ministries was created, and the position overseeing ministry to the blind was renamed Coordinator of Ministries to the Blind and Handicapped. Richard Marchand filled this role (1989-1994).<sup>30</sup> Char-

lie and Debbie Chivers began assisting Marchand in 1990, when they were appointed missionaries and affiliated their ministry to the handicapped, Special Touch Ministry, with the AG. Special Touch Ministry worked with handicapped, including the blind.<sup>31</sup>

The tape ministry to the blind, started by the Sweeneys in 1960, fell under the purview of the National Representative for Deaf and Blind Ministries. The Sweeneys were involved in the tape ministry until the mid-1960s. The tape ministry apparently became dormant for several years, but was revived in about 1968, shortly after Whitney arrived in Springfield.<sup>32</sup> Whitney continued coordinating the circulating library until 1976, when she retired and returned to Waukesha, Wisconsin. She continued to gather articles for the *Pentecostal Digest* until her death in June 1994.<sup>33</sup> According to James Banks, Whitney cast a long shadow:

As far as I'm concerned, she IS the Library for the Blind. She started the whole thing, and it would not exist without her input. This is a case where God moved on an individual to help out the entire denomination. Through her, the Assemblies of God ministry to the Blind came into being. And she did it out of sheer love and dedication and without a lot of remuneration.<sup>34</sup>

## **Growth Amid Challenges**

Despite a chronic lack of funding, outreach to the blind continued to grow. In 1990, the Assemblies of God was operating the second largest denominational library for the blind. The library served almost 1,000 people, and 550 people received the *Pentecostal Digest* and the *Adult Student* quarterly in Braille or on cassette.<sup>35</sup> By 1992 the library had increased the number of people it served to 1,500.<sup>36</sup>

In late December 1993, Paul and Caryl Weingartner moved from California to Springfield with their five children

to begin work as temporary missionary associates, assisting Richard Marchand. In 1994, the Division of Home Missions made Ministries to the Blind a separate entity within Intercultural Ministries, so that ministry to the blind would no longer be combined with other handicapped ministries. Along with this change, Paul Weingartner was appointed in June 1994 to serve as Librarian/Director of the Assemblies of God Library for the Blind.<sup>37</sup>

### The Weingartner Years

The Assemblies of God outreach to people with blindness underwent many changes during Weingartner's tenure (1994-2019). One of his first actions in his new role, in June 1994, was to rename the library in honor of its founder: Whitney Library for the Blind. The circulating library continued to grow, as did the number of people requesting materials. The library moved in 1996 into larger facilities in the Ashcroft Center, just west of the Assemblies of God national offices.<sup>38</sup> Numerous advancements were made, including: the creation of a volunteer chaplain position to meet the pastoral needs of the blind; the hiring of a full-time Braille transcriber; and the creation in 2005 of a quarterly magazine, *The Circle*, for those receiving services.

Because the ministry had grown to provide a wide range of services to the blind, in 1997 a new name was adopted—The National Center for the Blind. Whitney Library for the Blind continued to refer specifically to the circulating library. Over the next decade, another name was adopted—Assemblies of God Center for the Blind, which more clearly identified its religious identity and sponsoring organization. It was also referred to as the Center for the Blind (CFTB).<sup>39</sup>

CFTB offered a wide range of Assemblies of God publications in Braille and on cassette tapes, including books, ministry manuals, Berean curriculum, and periodicals such as *Assemblies of God Heritage*, *Caring*, *Club Connection*, *Enrichment*, *God's Word for Today*, *High Adventure*, *HonorBound*, *Live*, *On*

*Course*, *Pentecostal Evangel*, *Take 5*, and *Woman's Touch*, as well as graded Radiant Life Sunday school curriculum, both teacher and student editions, from Adult to Primary.<sup>40</sup> These materials not only provided lesson materials for the visually impaired, they also helped the blind to earn AG ministerial credentials.

CFTB adapted to rapid changes in technology. Cassettes and duplicators were replaced with digital cartridges compatible with the National Library Services for the Blind (NLS) digital players. CFTB began producing Sunday school literature and periodicals that

tion in national organizations, including the National Federation of the Blind and the National Association of the Blind in Communities of Faith; and 7) helping to create the New Living Translation Digital Audio Cartridge Bible (the first modern translation available on a NLS digital cartridge). Many CFTB projects were possible because of generous funding by AG missions ministries Light for the Lost and BGMC.<sup>41</sup>

Paul Weingartner expressed gratitude to CFTB volunteers, who served about 5,000 hours each year: "Much of the success of the ministry was because



**Paul Weingartner (left) receiving a plaque from General Superintendent Thomas Trask at the dedication service for the Whitney Library for the Blind, June 14, 1996.**

could be read on computers in large print, in Braille with refreshable Braille displays, and in audio with screen readers.

Numerous accomplishments occurred at the CFTB during Paul Weingartner's tenure, including: 1) publication of the *Book of Hope* in Braille and on cassette; 2) creation of a library database and tracking system; 3) partnering with the Jesus Film Project to create a descriptive format edition for blind audiences; 4) helping to form a fellowship of Christian ministries to the blind; 5) creation of children's resources for the library, including Braille, tactile graphics, and audio books and kits; 6) participa-

tion of a couple dozen dedicated and well-trained volunteers who served in the office and from their homes.<sup>742</sup> One of the volunteer positions was that of chaplain. Larry Rose, the CFTB's first chaplain, brought his personal pastoral experience to the ministry. While pastoring in Kansas, Rose suffered a worsening of his life-long visual disorder, retinitis pigmentosa. He went on to earn a master of divinity degree from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and, as chaplain for the Center for the Blind, was in daily pastoral leadership over more than 1,000 blind people—over half of whom reported having no home church, and





**Sarah Weingartner (right) reviewing Braille characters.**

thus no other pastor besides Rose.<sup>43</sup> He served in this capacity until his death on July 6, 2010. Rose was succeeded by Paul Bellinger (2010-2012) and Dale Bean (2012-2019).

### **New Opportunities**

After the death of Mildred Whitney, the remaining CFTB staff members and volunteers were not proficient in Braille. What Braille materials they were able to produce were simply washed through a computer transcription program that did not take into consideration Braille's many context sensitive rules. That would soon change with the addition to the staff of a young Central Bible College student named Sarah Sykes. Sykes, who was certified as a Literary Braille Transcriber from the Library of Congress, volunteered at the CFTB during college and was hired as a staff member in 2006.

Using Sykes's Braille expertise, the CFTB endeavored to produce current, quality Christian Braille literature, transcribed with skill and attention to detail at a time when most other libraries were only producing out-of-date books for their Braille readers. Another addition was the production of tactile graphics (illustrations in both print and raised dots) to accompany children's books offered by the library. In the spring of 2006, the

CFTB offered its first Braille and tactile graphic book available for sale, rather than to borrow, *The Very First Easter* by Paul Meier.<sup>44</sup> This significant accomplishment was soon followed by even bigger successes.

In July 2006, the CFTB added a Braille version of *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, a bestseller from Henry Blackaby and Claude King, to its offerings. The transcription was done by Judith Tunnell with the cooperation of the authors

and was embossed and assembled by Sarah.<sup>45</sup> This book made a significant impact on many within the blind community. Helen, a CFTB member living in Washington wrote, "I have taught *Experiencing God* with my husband several times now. Having it in Braille has made all the difference. It totally changes the way we teach it!"<sup>46</sup>

Most producers of Braille books are unable to release a Braille book on the same day it is released in print, forcing Braille readers to wait months or even years before gaining access to the books. On October 18, 2007, the CFTB made history by releasing *Called and Accountable: A 52 Week Devotional* by Henry Blackaby in Braille on the same day as its print release.

A unique contribution to the Braille library arose from Sarah's personal childhood love for C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. She began working on a transcription of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* during her first year volunteering at the CFTB in 2001. The project was completed in 2006.

Though this book had been available in Braille from other sources, Sarah's version was unique in that it also contained tactile illustrations paired with



**Paul and Caryl Weingartner**

labels and illustrative quotes to aid in their use by blind readers.<sup>47</sup> The remaining six books in this beloved children's series were transcribed over the course of the next 2 years, concluding with the release of *The Last Battle* in July 2008.<sup>48</sup> The Assemblies of God remains the only organization to have offered an illustrated version of *The Chronicles of Narnia* in Braille.

## Blind Ministries Today

Assemblies of God U.S. Missions, which provided oversight to and subsidized the CFTB, made the decision to recombine ministries to the blind with ministries to those with other disabilities. Paul Weingartner, who led the CFTB for 25 years, retired at 69 years of age. On February 1, 2019, the CFTB moved under the umbrella of Special Touch Ministry, headquartered in Waupaca, Wisconsin.

Special Touch Ministry previously had limited ministry to the blind until 1994, when Ministries to the Blind was made a separate entity within Intercultural Ministries. Blind and handicapped ministries, which were separated in 1994, came back together in 2019. Amazingly, the move also brought blind ministries back to Wisconsin, the state where Whitney and the Sweeneys both started their ministries. Equipment and supplies were moved to the Waupaca office and an administrator, Nettamara Doak, was hired to oversee the transition. Doak is a certified Braille transcriber.

The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center received a collection of 256 Braille books from the Mildred Whitney Library for the Blind. These Braille books, produced by the Assemblies of God or authored by Pentecostals, are an important part of the heritage of Assemblies of God. Many of the books in the collection were produced using the Braille form machine and are very large, heavy, and awkward to read. Newer Braille print and electronic technologies have replaced the utility of these older books. However, these books are a testa-

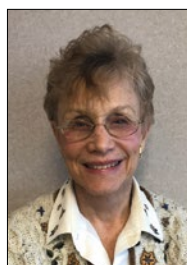
ment to seventy years of faithful Assemblies of God ministry to the blind.

Special Touch Ministry aims to continue many of the services formerly offered by the Center for the Blind, using new technologies to provide Braille and digital audio recordings. In January 2020, they began offering a daily audio version of *God's Word for Today* accessible via telephone, and in February 2020, they mailed the first audio recordings of current Sunday school literature for the blind.<sup>49</sup>

When Mildred Whitney lost her vision for an hour in 1949, she could not have anticipated how that one miraculous incident would result in countless thousands of people living with blindness being reached with the good news of the gospel. Whitney and her successors at the CFTB, significantly, taught that the power of the Holy Spirit is still healing and empowering men and women, regardless of physical abilities. This story, seventy years in the making, reminds us that there is more than one way for "the blind to see." ✨



**Sarah Sykes Weingartner (B.A., Central Bible College) is a certified Braille transcriber and was on staff at the Center for the Blind from 2006 until 2019. She and her husband, Joseph (Paul Weingartner's eldest son), live in Springfield, Missouri.**



**Lynda E. Gage (M.S., Western Oregon University) is a retired special education teacher and a former volunteer at the Center for the Blind.**

**She lives in Springfield, Missouri.**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>National Federation of the Blind, "Blindness Statistics," accessed February 16, 2020, <https://www.nfb.org/resources/blindness-statistics>.

<sup>2</sup>For the most complete historical account of AG ministries to the blind, see: Lynda E. Gage, "History of the Ministries to the Blind," unpublished manuscript, 2010, FPHC.

<sup>3</sup>John W. Kennedy, "Change of Scenery," AG-NEWS, February 12, 2019, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://news.ag.org/en/News/Change-of-Scenery>.

<sup>4</sup>Mildred Whitney, letter to James Banks, June 15, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>Norman Whitney, telephone interview by Lynda E. Gage, May 27, 2009.

<sup>6</sup>Mildred Whitney letter.

<sup>7</sup>Eleanor Samuelson, "Unexpected Answers," *Gospel Gleaners*, October 16, 1949, 3.

<sup>8</sup>Mildred Whitney letter.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Edward Whitney, "Evangel Articles in Braille," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 6, 1953, 5.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Gage, section I, 11.

<sup>13</sup>Elva Johnson, "Diligent Worker for the Blind," *World Challenge*, June 1958, 10-11.

<sup>14</sup>Elva M. Johnson, "The Blind Give Thanks," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 26, 1956, 24.

<sup>15</sup>William Gockley, "Blind Hear the Gospel Through Tapes," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 30, 1961, 13.

<sup>16</sup>Gockley, 13; Gage, section II, 1-3.

<sup>17</sup>Maxine Strobridge, "Blind Couple's Unique Ministry Expands," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 23, 1963, 19.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>19</sup>Bradley M. Shaw, "God Refused My Resignation," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 18, 1965, 21.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Elva M. Johnson, "The Blind Give Thanks," 24.

<sup>22</sup>Glenn Gohr, "Mildred Whitney: A Woman with a Vision," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 16:2,3 (Summer-Fall 1996): 37.

<sup>23</sup>Gage, section I, 14.

<sup>24</sup>Ruth A. Lyon, *A History of Home Missions of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: The Division of Home Missions, 1992), 83.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

*Continued on page 55*



Issued  
2-23-17

# APPLICATION BLANK

DECEASED FOR ORDINATION CERTIFICATE. (Card)  
Date 6-12-36  
Source 1054

What is your

- 1 Full Name? William Worth Shuman Thomas
- 2 Home or Headquarters Address? 77 Sheldon Street  
New York, New York
- 3 Present Address? As above
- 4 What Grade of Schooling? Common School
- 5 Race and Nationality? Colored
- 6 Age? 56 Male?  Female?  Single?  Deceased  
Divorced?  Remarried?  How many children? 3
- 7 Your Special Calling? None  
Pastor Evangelist or Missionary? None
- 8 Have you an experimental knowledge of salvation and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues? Yes
- 9 How much of your time is consecrated to your call? Yes

Issued 5/5/10 Card made

# APPLICATION BLANK

FOR ORDINATION CERTIFICATE.

What is your

- 1 Full Name? Martha A. Neely
- 2 Home or Headquarters Address? 3716  
Chicago, Ill.
- 3 Present Address? 3716 Langley  
Chicago, Ill.
- 4 What Grade of Schooling? High School
- 5 Race and Nationality? Colored
- 6 Age? 54 Male?  Female?  Single?  Married?  Divorced?  Remarried?  How many children? 3
- 7 Your Special Calling? Evangelist  
Pastor Evangelist or Missionary? Evangelist
- 8 Have you an experimental knowledge of salvation and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues? Yes
- 9 How much of your time is consecrated to your call? All
- 10 How long have you been in this ministry? Six years
- 11 Have you been ordained, and by whom? L.C. Hall

Issued 5/5/10 Card made - card 100

# APPLICATION BLANK

FOR ORDINATION CERTIFICATE.

What is your

- 1 Full Name? Isaac S. Neely
- 2 Home or Headquarters Address? 3716 Langley  
Chicago
- 3 Present Address? 3716 Langley  
Chicago, Ill.
- 4 What Grade of Schooling? Grammar
- 5 Race and Nationality? Colored
- 6 Age? 55 Male?  Female?  Single?  Married?  Divorced?  Remarried?  How many children? 3
- 7 Your Special Calling? Evangelist  
Pastor Evangelist or Missionary? Evangelist
- 8 Have you an experimental knowledge of salvation and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues? Yes
- 9 How much of your time is consecrated to your call? All
- 10 How long have you been in this ministry? Six years
- 11 Have you been ordained, and by whom? L.C. Hall

# The Untold Stories of Three Black Assemblies of God Pioneers

By Darrin J. Rodgers

**T**he Assemblies of God USA (AG) has a black heritage, but it has sometimes seemed invisible. The vast majority of the approximately 300 ministers who organized the AG in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in April 1914 were white. (At least two were Native American.<sup>1</sup>) However, African Americans have played important roles throughout the history of the AG—at early general council meetings<sup>2</sup> and as pastors, evangelists, and missionaries.<sup>3</sup>

The first black AG minister, Ellsworth S. Thomas, was credentialed in 1915. The first black AG missionaries, Isaac and Martha Neeley, were appointed in 1923. Historians have known little about these three pioneers, and little more than their names appeared in the history books.<sup>4</sup> New research, however, sheds light on these trailblazers.<sup>5</sup>

It should not be surprising that the stories of Thomas and the Neeleys had been largely forgotten. Historian Estrela Alexander has noted that relatively little has been written about the history of black Pentecostals, including those in historically black denominations. This is due to multiple factors, including: the tendency to focus on practical ministry instead of developing a written legacy; a sense of humility by leaders who avoided giving undue attention to specific people; limited availability of primary source materials in archives; social, economic, and educational disadvantages; and racism.<sup>6</sup>

“Whatever the reasons for previous oversights,” Alexander wrote, “the new generation has been spurred.... to produce a body of work but also to prod the elders and the academy to take seriously the need to preserve the artifacts from our heritage.”<sup>7</sup> The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center has, in recent years, become a leader in working with African Americans—in

the AG and in other Pentecostal churches—to archive invaluable materials and stories that previously had been neglected or inaccessible.<sup>8</sup>

The following vignettes of Ellsworth S. Thomas and Isaac and Martha Neeley offer a glimpse into the black heritage of the AG. Their stories are important and need to be heard by future generations. They overcame great obstacles, they led consecrated lives, and they helped to lay the foundation for the Fellowship. Their stories are our stories.

## Ellsworth S. Thomas

Ellsworth S. Thomas holds the distinction of being the first African American to hold AG ministerial credentials. His name was just a footnote in the history books until recently, when new information came to light.

Ellsworth S. Thomas was born in March 1866 in New York. His parents, Samuel and Mahala, were part of a free black community in Binghamton, New York, that pre-existed the Civil War. They overcame racism and societal restrictions, developed strong families, and carved out their own religious, economic, and social niche in the region.<sup>9</sup>

Samuel was born in Maryland in 1830 and worked as a laborer. He was also a Civil War veteran, serving for three years (1863-1865) as a private in the Massachusetts 54th Infantry. Ellsworth was born about nine months after his father returned home from the war.<sup>10</sup> Mahala was born in 1842 in Pennsylvania and worked as a laundress.<sup>11</sup> According to the 1880 census, Ellsworth was partially blind.<sup>12</sup> He attended common school,<sup>13</sup> which probably consisted of local blacks who joined together and made private arrangements to hire a teacher.<sup>14</sup> After Samuel passed away in

**The first black AG minister, Ellsworth S. Thomas, was credentialed in 1915. The first black AG missionaries, Isaac and Martha Neeley, were appointed in 1923.**



the early 1890s, Ellsworth lived with his mother and cared for her. She died on April 24, 1913.<sup>15</sup> Census records show that Ellsworth owned a modest house (valued at \$2,000 in 1930) and that most of his neighbors were white.<sup>16</sup> He never married.<sup>17</sup>

Binghamton city directories from 1888-1892 reveal that Ellsworth was a laundryman and a laborer. Beginning in 1899, though, they listed his occupation as a traveling evangelist.<sup>18</sup> His name first appeared in the AG ministers' directory in October 1915, which stated that he was a "colored" pastor in Binghamton.<sup>19</sup>

In 1917, AG leaders asked existing ministers to re-submit applications for credentials, apparently because paperwork had not been kept during the earliest years of the Fellowship. Robert Brown, influential pastor of Glad Tidings Tabernacle in New York City, endorsed Ellsworth's 1917 application. On the application, Ellsworth stated that he was originally ordained on December 7, 1913, by Robert E. Erdman, a Pentecostal pastor from Buffalo, New York.<sup>20</sup>

Records at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center show that Thomas pastored a congregation in Beaver Meadows, New York, from about 1917 until about 1922. He remained an AG evangelist for the remainder of his life. He held evangelistic meetings in the area around Binghamton, he held regular services in his home, and he pastored again briefly in about 1926.<sup>21</sup> He also was a regular speaker in the 1930s at two other black churches in Binghamton—Shiloh Baptist Church and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>22</sup>

A 1936 letter from Paul Westendorf informed the *Pentecostal Evangel* of Ellsworth's death on June 12, 1936. He was 70 years old and passed away in Binghamton after a serious illness. Westendorf wrote,

He has been in the Council Fellowship for many years and so will be remembered throughout the Eastern District. Brother Thomas

was faithful and true to the Lord in all kinds of circumstances, serving Him with gladness, therefore we feel that he had an abundant entrance in the presence of the Lord.<sup>23</sup>

Thomas's funeral was held in Christ Episcopal Church in Binghamton, the oldest Episcopal congregation in the city, with the church's pastor, Theodore J. Dewees, officiating. Thomas was buried in the Christ Episcopal Church plot in Spring Forest Cemetery.<sup>24</sup>

The newsletter of the Eastern District (which included Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey) noted Thomas's passing:

Brother Ellsworth S. Thomas has been taken home to glory, but very little has been learned about the details. His funeral was conducted by the rector of Christ Church, Episcopal, in Binghamton.... Many will remember Brother Ellsworth as a Bible teacher and some of the ministers will remember the fellowship we had with Brother Thomas one morning before meetings opened up, at the council in Rochester years ago, when we all sang "He's Coming in Power" and Brother Thomas got to dancing in the Spirit, while he held onto a nearby [sic] door because of his almost being blind. He is one more of our number who is on the other side!<sup>25</sup>

Ellsworth S. Thomas's passing was also briefly noted on page 13 of the July 25, 1936, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*.<sup>26</sup> A photograph of Thomas has not been located.

When Ellsworth S. Thomas transferred his ordination to the AG in 1915, the Fellowship was only one year old. He may not have known that he was the AG's first credentialed black minister. Thomas became known throughout the Eastern District for his Bible teaching and for his good cheer despite the obstacles he faced, including partial blindness.

He never pastored a large congregation, but he was faithful where God placed him. Over the years, memories of this pioneer dimmed. However, Ellsworth S. Thomas remains an example, not just for black ministers, but for all who desire to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

## **Isaac S. Neeley and Martha "Mattie" A. Board Neeley**

Isaac and Martha Neeley were the first African Americans to be appointed to serve as AG missionaries. Isaac S. Neeley was born on August 4, 1865 near Salisbury, North Carolina.<sup>27</sup> Martha A. Board was born on May 3, 1866 in Princeton, Indiana.<sup>28</sup> They married in their late thirties on April 25, 1905, in Chicago.<sup>29</sup> Martha had one child who died before the age of five.<sup>30</sup>

The Neeleys became very active at the Stone Church, an early Pentecostal revival center in Chicago, in about 1908. They were highly regarded at the church, which was mostly white. An article in the church's monthly magazine, the *Latter Rain Evangel*, called them "an indispensable adjunct of the Stone Church."<sup>31</sup>

Martha felt called to missions work at a young age. Her father was connected with the American Colonization Society, which encouraged free blacks in the United States to move to Liberia. As a child she heard stories about Liberia that "stirred her heart." After Isaac felt a call to missions at a Stone Church missions convention in about 1910, the couple began preparing themselves to serve in Liberia.<sup>32</sup>

L. C. Hall, a Pentecostal minister who lived in Zion City, Illinois, ordained the Neeleys as missionaries on November 30, 1913. The ordination was under the auspices of Howard A. Goss's largely-white Pentecostal fellowship, the Church of God in Christ (which was distinct from Charles H. Mason's group by the same name).<sup>33</sup>

The Neeleys set sail for Liberia, where they lived from January 25, 1914<sup>34</sup> until June 1, 1919.<sup>35</sup> They served

with the Liberia Interior Mission, which consisted of American and Canadian missionaries from various denominational backgrounds, all of whom had the Pentecostal experience. A history of the mission described the organization:

We represent Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Dunkard, Mennonite, Quakers, Pentecostal-Holiness, Mission People and Gospel Workers. So you see we are a sort of mixture, but no dispute has ever arisen in our ranks. We make the Bible the chief book, and strive to live simple and Christian lives. We baptize by immersion. All believe in the Pentecostal Experience, as received on the day of Pentecost.<sup>36</sup>

The Neeleys received financial support from the Stone Church, as well as

from donations mailed to the *Latter Rain Evangel*. The Neeleys kept their supporters informed of their missions activities through published missionary letters in the *Latter Rain Evangel*.<sup>37</sup>

The organization that ordained the Neeleys in 1913, the Church of God in Christ, dissolved when most of its leaders helped to organize the AG in April 1914. The Neeleys, however, did not transfer their ordination to the AG during their tenure in Liberia. They may have been following the example of the Stone Church, which remained independent even while becoming closely associated with the AG. The Stone Church hosted two general council meetings (November 1914 and September 1919) but did not formally affiliate with the AG until 1940.<sup>38</sup>

The Neeleys returned from Liberia to Chicago in the summer of 1919. Soon

after their return, the Neeleys attended the September 1919 general council, which was hosted by the Stone Church. The following year, in May 1920, the Neeleys received AG credentials as evangelists from the Illinois District, endorsed by Hardy Mitchell, pastor of the Stone Church.<sup>39</sup>

According to an article in the *Latter Rain Evangel*, the Neeleys became active in ministry at the “Colored Mission on Langley Avenue.”<sup>40</sup> This mission was probably the Pentecostal congregation started by Lucy Smith, a black Baptist woman who was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1914 at the Stone Church. Smith began her ministry in 1916 out of her apartment and a small flock developed, which incorporated in 1922 as Langley Avenue All Nations Pentecostal Church.<sup>41</sup> According to Isaac Neeley’s ministerial file, he served as an



Isaac and Martha Neeley passport photos, 1919.





**Isaac Neeley (standing, second from left) and Martha Neeley (seated, bottom right) with a group of missionaries at the 1923 General Council.**

associate pastor in 1923, presumably at Smith’s mission. When the Neeleys felt called to return to Liberia later in 1923, he directed correspondence to be sent to Lucy Smith.<sup>42</sup>

The Neeleys received AG missionary appointment to Liberia in 1923. They were among 58 “missionaries and prospective missionaries” who posed for a photograph during the September 1923 general council in St. Louis. The photograph was published on the front page of the October 13, 1923, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, making the Neeleys the first blacks to be pictured in the magazine.<sup>43</sup>

Isaac suffered a stroke on December 7, 1923, and died on the following day, shortly before their planned departure.<sup>44</sup> An article in the *Latter Rain Evangel* lauded the fallen missionary:

His funeral was one of the most blessed we have ever attended. It

seemed more like a celebration of his Coronation Day than a funeral. Ministerial brethren and others from all over the city gave fitting tributes to the noble life laid down in the service of God. One of the most striking tributes to his life was given by the barber in the neighborhood as he told of Brother Neeley’s life and its effect upon all with whom he came in contact. Brother Neeley lived the life of the Lord Jesus daily; whether on the platform or doing some menial task, his heart was always filled with praises.<sup>45</sup>

Martha proceeded alone in 1924 to Cape Palmas, Liberia, where she was in charge of Bethel Home, a rest home for missionaries founded in 1913. She took over the work from “Mr. and Mrs. Howard,” who had been granted furlough.<sup>46</sup> Her predecessors were probably Alexander and Margaret Howard, African

American Pentecostals from Chicago who had been sent as missionaries to Liberia in 1920 by the United Pentecostal Council of the Assemblies of God, an African American Pentecostal group with roots in the AG. The Howards had also served at Bethel Home.<sup>47</sup>

The *Latter Rain Evangel* and the *Pentecostal Evangel* published a number of articles by or about Martha between 1924 and 1928. The final note in her ministerial file states she returned to America from Liberia on July 1, 1930.<sup>48</sup> She apparently did not renew her AG credentials. She returned to Liberia again at some point between 1930 and 1935, as passenger lists in November 1935 state that she sailed from Liberia to New York.<sup>49</sup> She appeared in the 1940 census, living as a lodger at 5745 Perry Avenue in Chicago.<sup>50</sup> Martha A. Neeley seemingly disappeared from the historical record after 1940.

Missions has always been central to the identity of the AG. This focus on missions was probably why veteran missionaries Isaac and Martha Neeley became credentialed with the Fellowship in 1920. In 1923, when they became the first blacks appointed to serve as AG missionaries, they were helping to fulfill the resolution adopted at the November 1914 general council at the Stone Church, committing the AG to achieve “the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.”<sup>51</sup> People from all races and backgrounds were expected to participate in this commitment to world evangelization. May this same commitment continue to energize the Assemblies of God today! ✨



**Darrin J. Rodgers, M.A., J.D., is director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.**



**Elder Lucy Smith standing in the pulpit at All Nations Pentecostal Church in Chicago, Illinois.**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>William H. Boyles and Watt Walker, Cherokees from Oklahoma, attended the first General Council. Darrin Rodgers, “Fully Committed: 100 Years of the Assemblies of God,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 34 (2014): 11.

<sup>2</sup>Church of God in Christ founder Charles H. Mason spoke at and blessed the founding general council of the AG, and he also brought his black gospel choir from Lexington, Mississippi. E. N. Bell, the founding chairman of the AG, called Mason “a real prophet of God.” *Word and Witness* 10:4 (April 20, 1914): 1. G.T. Haywood, the African American pastor of the largest Pentecostal congregation in Indianapolis, was invited to speak on the

1915 general council floor to represent the Oneness position, even though he never held AG credentials. *General Council Minutes*, 1915, 4-5.

<sup>3</sup>Derrick Rosenior, “History of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 39/40 (2019/2020): 5.

<sup>4</sup>Howard Kenyon was the first scholar to write about Thomas and the Neeleys. He wrote a paragraph about each in: “Black Ministers in the Assemblies of God,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 7:1 (Spring 1987): 10. Edith Blumhofer’s 1989 AG history briefly mentioned Thomas and the Neeleys. Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism*, Vol. 2 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 174.

They were not mentioned in other AG histories published by Gospel Publishing House.

<sup>5</sup>The author published an earlier online version of the vignette of Thomas on the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center blog: Darrin J. Rodgers, “Uncovering the Assemblies of God’s Black Heritage: Ellsworth S. Thomas Ordained 100 Years Ago,” July 23, 2015, accessed January 21, 2020, <https://ifphc.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/uncovering-the-assemblies-of-gods-black-heritage-ellsworth-s-thomas-ordained-100-years-ago/>

<sup>6</sup>Estrela Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>8</sup>Since 2012, the following important African American collections have been deposited at the FPHC: Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. Collection (Church of God in Christ); Mother Lizzie Robinson/Rev. Elijah L. Hill Collection (Church of God in Christ); James L. Tyson Collection (Pentecostal Assemblies of the World); Alexander C. Stewart Collection (Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.); Robert James McGoings, Jr. Collection (African American Oneness Pentecostalism); Charles Price Jones/Anita Bingham Jefferson Collection (Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A.).

<sup>9</sup>Keisha N. Benjamin, “Free Blacks in Nineteenth Century Binghamton,” *Binghamton Journal of History* 6 (2006).

<sup>10</sup>U.S., *Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865*, Ancestry.com

<sup>11</sup>1870 U.S. Federal Census, Binghamton Ward 2, Broome Co., New York, 27.

<sup>12</sup>1880 U.S. Federal Census, District 38, Binghamton, Broome Co., New York, 22B.

<sup>13</sup>Ellsworth S. Thomas, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>14</sup>Benjamin, “Free Blacks in Nineteenth Century Binghamton.”

<sup>15</sup>*New York Death Index*, Ancestry.com.

<sup>16</sup>1900 U.S. Federal Census, District 0013, Binghamton Ward 05, Broome Co., New York, 12A-B; 1930 U.S. Federal Census, District 0023, Binghamton Ward 05, Broome Co., New York, 10A.

<sup>17</sup>Ellsworth S. Thomas, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>18</sup>Binghamton City Directories, Ancestry.com.

<sup>19</sup>Assemblies of God ministerial directory, 1915, 16.

<sup>20</sup>Ellsworth S. Thomas, ministerial file, FPHC.



<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>“Shiloh Baptist,” *Press and Sun Bulletin* (Binghamton, NY), June 17, 1933, 16; “Shiloh Baptist,” *Press and Sun Bulletin* (Binghamton, NY), September 16, 1933, 9; “A. M. E.,” *Binghamton Press* (Binghamton, NY), December 23, 1933, 9.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>*Eastern District Bulletin*, October 1936, 21; Obituary, “Ellsworth H. [sic] Thomas,” *Binghamton Press* (Binghamton, NY), June 15, 1936, 5.

<sup>25</sup>*Eastern District Bulletin*, October 1936, 21.

<sup>26</sup>“General Council Fellowship,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 25, 1936, 13.

<sup>27</sup>Isaac Neeley, U.S. Passport Application, May 15, 1919. Ancestry.com.

<sup>28</sup>Martha Neeley, U.S. Passport Application, March 31, 1924. Ancestry.com.

<sup>29</sup>Cook County, Illinois, Marriages Index, Ancestry.com.

<sup>30</sup>1910 U.S. Federal Census, District 0233, Chicago Ward 03, Cook Co., Illinois, 13B.

<sup>31</sup>Anna C. Reiff, “Leaving All For Jesus,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, November 1913, 3.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. Martha’s father may have been influenced by Washington Graham, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Princeton, Indiana, and a prominent supporter of missions work in Liberia. Alesia Elaine McFadden, *The*

*Artistry and Activism of Shirley Graham Du Bois: A Twentieth Century African American Torchbearer*. (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2009), 96, 139.

<sup>33</sup>Isaac and Martha Neeley, ministerial files, FPHC.

<sup>34</sup>Isaac Neeley, U.S. Passport Application, May 15, 1919, Ancestry.com.

<sup>35</sup>Martha Neeley, U.S. Passport Application, March 31, 1924, Ancestry.com.

<sup>36</sup>Liberia Interior Mission, *Report of the Liberia Interior Mission, 1908-1916*, 3, FPHC.

<sup>37</sup>“First Hardships as a Missionary,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, April 1914, 11-12; “Wonderful Outpouring of the Spirit in West Africa,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, April 1914, 22-24; Isaac and Martha Neeley, “Working with Christ in West Africa and the Results,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, March 1917, 21-22; Martha Neeley, “Blackest Night in the Dark Continent,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, March 1918, 22-24; Martha Neeley, “The Native African’s Ready Response to Divine Healing,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, August 1919, 8-10; Isaac Neeley, “Miraculous Deliverances from Demon Possession,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, August 1919, 10-11.

<sup>38</sup>*Stone Church: 100 Years, 1906-2006* (Palos Heights, IL: Stone Church, 2006), 6.

<sup>39</sup>Isaac and Martha Neeley, ministerial files, FPHC.

<sup>40</sup>“With the Lord,” *Latter Rain Evangel*,

February 1924, 14.

<sup>41</sup>*Pentecostal Herald*, September 1, 1922, 1. Glenn Gohr, “Elder Lucy Smith of Chicago,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 28 (2008): 63-64.

<sup>42</sup>Isaac Neeley, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>43</sup>*Pentecostal Evangel*, October 13, 1923, 1.

<sup>44</sup>“With the Lord,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, February 1924, 14.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>“Receiving Home in Liberia,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 6, 1924, 11; “Mission Study Course,” *Christ’s Ambassadors Monthly*, October 1929, 12.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander R. Howard, *The U.P.C. Mission Work in Liberia, West Africa and Striking Incidents in Mission Work Among Heathen Tribes* (New York, NY: the author, [1932?]), 4; Herman L. Greene, *UPCAG – The First 90 Years: Volume 1: 1919-1945* (Sussex, NJ: GEDA, 2005), 7-11; Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 51-53; Scott Harrup, “A Larger Family,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 16, 2011, 8.

<sup>48</sup>Martha Neeley, ministerial file, FPHC.

<sup>49</sup>Immigration and Emigration Records, Ancestry.com.

<sup>50</sup>1940 U.S. Federal Census, District 172, Chicago Ward 03, Cook Co., Illinois, 13B.

<sup>51</sup>*General Council Minutes*, November 1914, 12.

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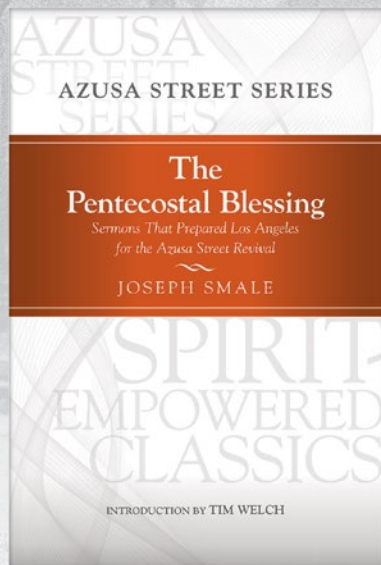
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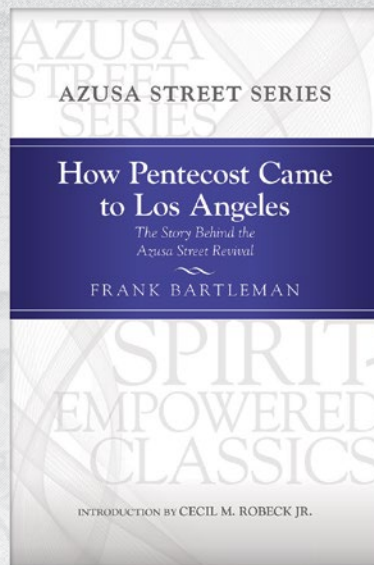
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# Recent Acquisitions

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The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC), by most standards, is the largest Pentecostal archives in the world. The FPHC holds materials in over 145 languages that document the history of the Assemblies of God (AG) and the broader Pentecostal and charismatic movements. Many scholars, church leaders, and students, when writing about Pentecostal history, first do their research at the FPHC. Its collection of printed materials, oral histories, photographs, artifacts, and other materials is unparalleled.

We are indebted to the countless people who have deposited materials—whether an individual tract or a large collection—at the FPHC in the past two years. Six of the collections received are featured below.

## Jack Hayford Collection



Jack Hayford

Jack W. Hayford, one of the most highly respected Pentecostals in the United States, has deposited his personal papers at the FPHC. Hayford is an author, educator, songwriter, former senior pastor of The Church On The Way (Van Nuys, California), and fifth president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

The Jack Hayford Collection consists of correspondence and travel files, 1976-2014 (25 linear feet); approximately 200 books and pamphlets authored by Hayford and published in 16 different languages; approximately 250 audio/visual recordings of Hayford; numerous publications and theses relating to the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; and a large framed piece of art depicting his best-known song, “Majesty.”

In his over sixty years of ministry, Jack Hayford has become known as one of the Pentecostal movement’s senior statesmen. A July 2005 article in *Christianity Today* called him “the Pentecostal gold standard.” Hayford has built bridges between Pentecostals and evangelicals and also across the racial divides. He has spoken to countless gatherings and has maintained a busy travel schedule. He was the only Pentecostal invited to be a plenary speaker at the Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelism in 1989, demonstrating the breadth of his influence.

## Charisma Media Collection



**Stephen and Joy Strang**

Stephen and Joy Strang have deposited the archives of Charisma Media at the FPHC. The Strangs founded *Charisma* in 1975, which has become the magazine of record of the charismatic movement in the United States. In 1981, they formed Strang Communications (now Charisma Media), which has published over 3,000 book titles, Christian education materials, and several notable periodicals. Charisma Media is one of the leading Christian publishers in the United States.

The Charisma Media Collection consists of approximately 75 boxes (94 linear feet), including: an extensive collection of Charisma Media publications in English and Spanish; correspondence with Pentecostal and charismatic leaders; notes and audio recordings from interviews; an important photograph archive; and an extensive collection of audio/visual recordings.

The Strangs have deep roots in the AG. Stephen was born in 1951 in Springfield, Missouri, where his father, A. Edward Strang, served as pastor of Lighthouse Assembly of God. Stephen Strang's maternal grandmother (Alice Kersey Farley) and grandfather (Amos Roy Farley) were ordained by the AG in 1914 and 1919, respectively.

Joy is also the daughter of AG pastors—Harvey and Rose Ferrell (ordained in 1938 and 1952 respectively), who ministered in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and the Philippines. Stephen and Joy married in 1972. Stephen graduated from the University of Florida College of Journalism in 1973 and won the prestigious William Randolph Hearst Foundation Journalism Award. The Strangs have two sons, Cameron and Chandler. Cam-

eron went on to found *Relevant* magazine in 2003.

After college, Stephen Strang landed a position as a reporter for the *Sentinel Star* (now the *Orlando Sentinel*). While working as a reporter, he envisioned starting a magazine that would provide a forum for sharing the Christian faith with those outside the church. He shared the idea with leaders at Calvary Assembly of God (Winter Park, FL), where the Strangs were members. The church agreed to underwrite the first six issues for \$15,000, and *Charisma* magazine was born.

## Opal Reddin Collection



**Dr. Opal Reddin**

Jewel van der Merwe Grewe, president of Discernment Ministries, has deposited the Opal Reddin Collection at the FPHC. Opal Reddin (1921-2005) was an AG minister and longtime educator at Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri.

The Opal Reddin Collection includes both Reddin's personal research collection and research materials collected by Discernment Ministries. The collection consists of about 30 boxes of books, booklets, periodical runs, files, audio and video recordings, and correspondence. Materials chiefly relate to the AG and contemporary re-



vival movements and issues affecting Pentecostalism. Discernment Ministries published a newsletter and several books and pamphlets, which extensively cite rare Pentecostal newsletters and recordings. These source materials, which are not found in other archives or libraries, have been placed in the Opal Reddin Collection.

Opal Reddin accepted Christ and was baptized in 1933, was called into full-time ministry in 1942, and married Thomas Reddin in 1943. They were ordained by the AG in 1946 and pastored several churches in Arkansas.

Reddin was known for her engaging personality, fiery preaching, and strong defense of Pentecostal faith and doctrine. From 1968 to 1996, she taught over 15,000 students at Central Bible College. In the classroom, she frequently shared stories of Pentecostal people (lay and clergy) and the powerful moves of God they experienced.

## Norwegian Pentecostal Collection

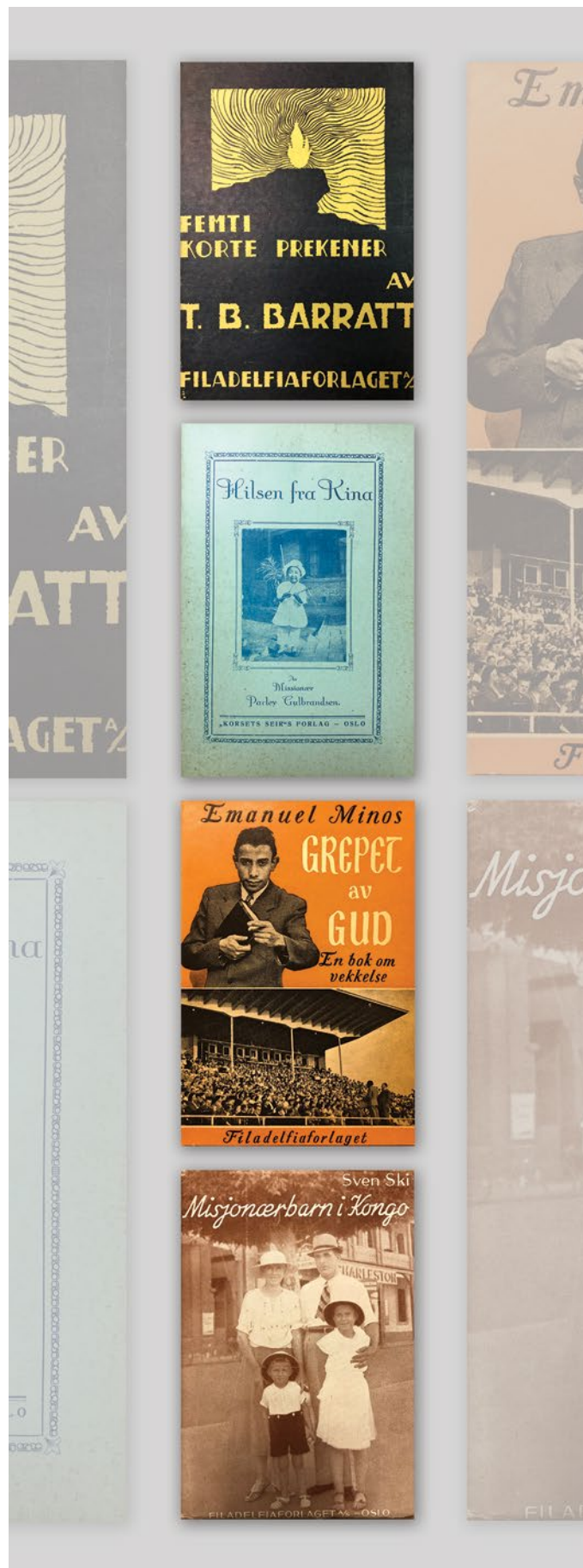
Norwegians have played an outsized role in the development of Pentecostalism, first in Europe, and then around the world. Thomas Ball Barratt, a British-born Methodist pastor in Oslo, brought the Pentecostal message from America to Norway in December 1906. The movement then spread to England, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. Barratt is widely regarded as the father of European Pentecostalism.

A distinct ecclesiology and missiology emerged among Pentecostals from Norway, Sweden and Finland. Scandinavian Pentecostals sent over a thousand missionaries who planted and nurtured the Pentecostal movement in many regions of the world. Today, global Pentecostalism cannot be understood apart from the influences of these Scandinavian missionaries.

Over the past 25 years, Norwegian Pentecostal historian Geir Lie has interviewed leaders, assembled an archival collection, and published several books, including an encyclopedia of the Norwegian Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

Lie placed his personal collection of publications and research materials at the FPHC and also encouraged other Norwegian church leaders and scholars to do likewise. FPHC director Darrin Rodgers traveled to Norway, met with church leaders, gathered materials, and shipped two pallets back to America. Donors continue to deposit additional Norwegian materials at the FPHC.

The FPHC catalog now includes 1,200 records of



Norwegian Pentecostal books, pamphlets, and periodical runs. The FPHC also holds sizable collections of Pentecostal publications in Swedish (786) and Finnish (724). The FPHC likely holds the largest collection of Scandinavian Pentecostal and charismatic materials outside of Europe.

The majority of the Norwegian collection at the FPHC consists of publications associated with Pinsebevegelsen, the largest segment of the Pentecostal movement in Norway. In 2011, Pinsebevegelsen affiliated with the World Assemblies of God Fellowship. Leaders in several smaller but historically important groups also deposited significant collections at the FPHC: Brunstad Christian Church; the Faith movement; Kristent Nettverk; Maran Ata; and Nardusmenighetene.

The FPHC is grateful to three churches from Norwegian immigrant communities that helped to underwrite the cost of shipping the collection: Freedom Church (Grand Forks, ND), River of Life AG (Stanley, ND), and Assembly of God (Tioga, ND).

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## **Charles Price Jones/Anita Bingham Jefferson Collection**

Charles Price Jones (1865-1949) was a prominent African American church leader, composer, educator, theologian, and poet. He founded the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A., an African American Holiness denomination that shares a common history with the Church of God in Christ. He composed over 1,000 songs, many of which continue to be sung in churches across the denominational and racial divides. The songs for which Price is possibly best known are “Deeper, Deeper” and “Come Unto Me.”

In 1895, Jones became pastor of Mt. Helm Missionary Baptist Church, the oldest African American church in Jackson, Mississippi. In the same year, Jones befriended another young Baptist minister, Charles Harrison Mason. A growing Holiness movement coalesced as Mason and like-minded ministerial colleagues joined Jones in a quest for holy living.

The emergence of the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909) resulted in a split within the Holiness association led by Jones. While Jones and Mason both acknowledged that the gift of speaking in tongues had not ceased, they differed on whether it was the evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Mason accepted the Pentecostal view of



**Charles Price Jones**



**Dr. Anita Bingham Jefferson**



evidentiary tongues, while Jones did not. That led to the 1907 organization of the Pentecostal group, over which Mason was selected as overseer. Both groups went by the name Church of God in Christ. After several years of legal battles over the use of the name, Mason's group won the right to call itself Church of God in Christ. Those who followed Jones incorporated in 1920 as Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A.

Dr. Anita Bingham Jefferson, Christian educator and women's leader in the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A., has sought to educate new generations about Jones and his legacy by preserving and promoting his writings and life story. Over the past forty years, she has gathered historical materials. Since 1981, she has written or published seventeen books about Jones and the history of the church he founded.

Jefferson has deposited copies of her books, as well as some of her research materials, at the FPHC. These materials shed important light on Jones and the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A., as well as more broadly on African American hymnody and the African American Holiness movement.

Pentecostal historians will find the collection indispensable in their efforts to better understand Charles Harrison Mason and the origins of the Church of God in Christ, which cannot be understood apart from the history of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A.

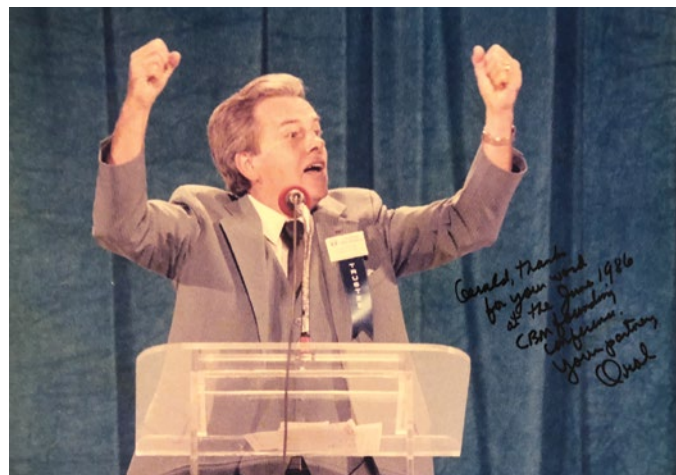
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## Gerald Derstine Collection

Gerald Derstine (1928- ), a Mennonite pastor who became a prominent early leader in the charismatic movement, has deposited materials relating to his life and ministry at the FPHC. Derstine is perhaps best known for his roles as former president of Gospel Crusade, Inc., founder of Christian Retreat in Bradenton, Florida, and founder of Gospel Crusade Ministerial Fellowship (now Global Christian Ministers Forum), a Pentecostal denomination.

The Gerald Derstine Collection includes books, tracts, periodicals, photographs, audio recordings, and unpublished materials documenting Derstine's life, ministry, and the organizations he led.

Derstine was ordained as a Mennonite pastor in 1953 and served as pastor of Strawberry Lake Mennonite Church (Ogema, MN). In late 1954, an unexpected outpouring of the Holy Spirit changed the trajectory of Derstine's ministry. He was leading a five-day Bible study



Gerald Derstine, 1986

retreat for 76 Mennonite youth, when a remarkable revival began. Thirteen unconverted youth accepted Christ, several children reported hearing angels singing, youth and adults began praying fervently for their unsaved family members and friends, and some experienced healings and gifts such as speaking in tongues.

After returning to his pastorate at Strawberry Lake Mennonite Church, similar charismatic phenomena began to happen. Word spread quickly and, in April 1955, Mennonite bishops and elders conducted a hearing that resulted in Derstine being "silenced" from the Mennonite ministry.

Later in 1955, Derstine met Henry Brunk, a Mennonite evangelist who had founded the Gospel Crusade, Inc., a non-denominational missions organization. Brunk encouraged Derstine to enter the evangelistic ministry and supplied him with a tent, a house trailer, and a car. Derstine began to receive invitations to preach and share his testimony. In 1965, Derstine became president of Gospel Crusade, Inc.

The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship offered Derstine his first national platform, and he became well known in Pentecostal and charismatic circles. The Mennonite church officially "restored" Derstine as an approved minister in 1977.

In 1968, Derstine purchased a 110-acre tract of land near Bradenton, Florida, where he built Christian Retreat, a conference and retirement center, that would serve as headquarters for Gospel Crusade. He organized well-attended charismatic conferences, featuring prominent Pentecostal and charismatic speakers. He also established retreat centers in Ogema, Minnesota (Strawberry Lake Christian Retreat, 1965-2017) and in Hermon, New York (North Country Christian Retreat, 1982-2014). ♣

of God ministries to the blind. Finally, an article about a 1920 Pentecostal revival that rocked a Methodist church shows how God used Aimee Semple McPherson, who at the time held Assemblies of God credentials, to bring a great move of the Holy Spirit to the nation's capital.

As you read the following pages, I hope you will be inspired by the stories of men and women who have labored to build the Kingdom of God through the Assemblies of God. They came from diverse backgrounds, but they shared a worldview which emphasized a transformative encounter with God, and they engaged in a common mission to win the world to Jesus. ✝

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**Darrin J. Rodgers, M.A., J.D., is director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and editor of *Assemblies of God Heritage* magazine.**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>O. W. Eubanks, "Highway Patrolman Pastors New Black Church in Mississippi," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 8, 1976, 8-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth Morris, telephone interview with the author, February 22, 2020.

<sup>4</sup>*Hattiesburg American* (Hattiesburg, MS), December 19, 1966, 1, 6.

<sup>5</sup>Eubanks, 8.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Morris telephone interview.

<sup>14</sup>O. W. Eubanks, telephone interview with the author, February 24, 2020.

<sup>15</sup>Sammy Amos, telephone interview with the author, February 22, 2020.

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## Continued from page 17 / **History of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God**

Black Caucus," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 20, 1994, 25.

<sup>55</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 1989, 117-118.

<sup>56</sup>R. W. West, "That His People May Be One: An Interpretive Study of the Pentecostal Leadership's Quest for Racial Unity," Ph.D. dissertation, Regent University, September 1997.

<sup>57</sup>Edith L. Blumhofer, "For Pentecostals, a Move Toward Racial Reconciliation," *Christian Century* April 17, 1994, 444-446; J. Lee Grady, "Pentecostals Renounce Racism: Memphis Gathering Begins Mending Historical Rift," *Christianity Today*, December 12, 1994, 58.

<sup>58</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 1995, 20-24.

<sup>59</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 1997, 23-28.

<sup>60</sup>Minutes of the National Inner-City Workers Conference and the National Black Fellowship, Chicago, IL, July 28-30, 1998.

<sup>61</sup>*The Articles of Fellowship of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God*, July 29, 1998, 2.

<sup>62</sup>Minutes of the National Inner-City Workers Conference and the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God, Chicago, IL, July 28-30, 1998.

<sup>63</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 1999, 63-64.

<sup>64</sup>"National Black Fellowship fortifies AG," *Pentecostal Evangel*, February 20, 2000, 23. This news article highlights the fact that "the creation of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God ... has paved the way

for total integration in the A/G according to Zollie Smith [former] president of the NBF."

<sup>65</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 2007, 36.

<sup>66</sup>The National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God, *Information Booklet* [2015?]. Other recommendations on the list included: 1) promote National Black Fellowship major events; 2) recruit African American authors/writers for AG publications/books; 3) use NBF resources for speaker referrals; 4) co-create a Healthy Church Tool Kit for reaching African Americans and urban America; 5) recruit potential African American faculty and provide scholarships for qualified students from our churches; 6) partner Church Multiplication Network (CMN) with the NBF in church planting in urban America; 7) partner with NBF leadership in equipping twenty African American coaches to help urban pastors and revitalize churches; 8) use national AG and district platforms to celebrate and recognize those districts that have successfully implemented resolutions to include black ministers and intentionally created ethnic diversity throughout their leadership; and 9) send greetings and an Executive Presbyter representative to major national and regional NBF events.

<sup>67</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 2015, 72-73.

<sup>68</sup>George O. Wood helped diversify AG leadership. He wrote, "From 1993 on, as an officer of the general council, I contended for inclusion of ethnic minorities, women

and younger representation on the executive presbytery and general presbytery, knowing that if this would happen, it would have a cascade effect on district governance also. In the early days of my efforts, I heard criticism, 'We don't want a quota.' My response was, 'We already have a quota: white, male and over 50. I'm trying to change the quota.' One of my greatest satisfactions of my 24 years in leadership as general secretary and general superintendent is to see today that the composition of leadership in the Assemblies of God mirrors our broad demographics." George O. Wood, e-mail to Darrin Rodgers, January 30, 2020.

<sup>69</sup>*General Council Minutes*, 2017, 28-30.

<sup>70</sup>Walter Harvey, e-mail to Derrick Rosenior, February 2, 2020.

<sup>71</sup>Harry Haight, "Spencer Jones Pastors Tampa St. Assembly," *The Centralite*, January 23, 1970, 1.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Rodgers, "The Assemblies of God and the Long Journey Toward Racial Reconciliation," 60.

<sup>75</sup>Zollie Smith, telephone interview with Derrick Rosenior, May 4, 2017.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>The National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God, *Information Booklet* [2013], 3.



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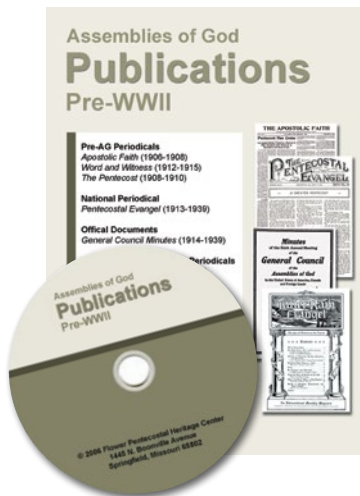
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Continued from page 27 / Charles A. Shreve and the Pentecostal Revival at McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, DC

Forever,” 8-13.

<sup>66</sup>“Church Announcements,” *Washington Evening Star*, April 24, 1920, 11; “Ministry May Adopt Healing,” 9.

<sup>67</sup>Charles A. Shreve, “McKendree M. E. Church, Washington, D. C.,” *Bridal Call*, September 1920, 16-17.

<sup>68</sup>“McKendree, Chas. A. Shreve, Pastor” *Methodist*, May 27, 1920, 15; Shreve, “McKendree M. E. Church, Washington, D. C.,” 16-17.

<sup>69</sup>“McKendree M.E. Holds Local Revival Record,” *Washington Times*, February 26, 1921, 3.

<sup>70</sup>“Church Announcements,” *Washington Evening Star*, November 27, 1920, 11; “Many ‘Get Religion’ at McKendree Revival,” *Washington Times*, March 12, 1921, 3; “A Noteworthy Religious Awakening,” *Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1921, 689; “Church Announcements,” *Washington Times*, October 22, 1921, 11; “Latest Announcements of Church News, Activities and Services,” *Washington Evening Star*, October 7, 1922, 12.

<sup>71</sup>Latham, 107.

<sup>72</sup>Shreve, “How to Have a Holy Ghost Revival,” 7-8.

<sup>73</sup>“Seventy-Eight Annual Commencement Exercises,” Taylor University, June 18, 1924, 2.

<sup>74</sup>“We searched the board of directors’ minutes and the honorary degree committee information, but we do not have a citation for Rev. Shreve’s degree nor do we have any documentation on his nomination or selection. We do have the commencement program and know that the degree was conferred on June 18, 1924.” Emily Magee, Taylor University, e-mail to Douglas Chapman, January 8, 2018.

<sup>75</sup>Aimee Semple McPherson, “Reports,” *Bridal Call*, December 1920, 19; Barfoot, 323.

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<sup>77</sup>Aimee Semple McPherson, “The Dedication of Angelus Temple,” *Bridal Call*, January 1923, 15.

<sup>78</sup>“Spend Your Vacation” *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 30, 1923: 14; “Crowds Increase at Campmeeting,” *Asbury Park (NJ) Press*, August 30, 1923: 1; “Reports from the Field—Durant, Fla.,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 24, 1923, 26.

<sup>79</sup>Charles A. Shreve, “To Preach the Gospel One Must Include Healing,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, November 1923, 2-5; “Pulpit and Pew—Pentecostal,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 17, 1923, 23.

<sup>80</sup>Charles A. Shreve, “A Word To ‘The Strangers Scattered Abroad,’” *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 22, 1924, 14.

<sup>81</sup>*Minutes of the One Hundred and Fortieth*

*Session of the Baltimore Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, April 2-7, 1924* (Baltimore, MD: Horn-Shafer, 1924), 491.

<sup>82</sup>Latham, 110-111.

<sup>83</sup>Joseph F. Berry, “First Steps in a Revival,” *Christian Advocate*, January 8, 1920, 56.

<sup>84</sup>Latham, 119.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 121, 123.

<sup>89</sup>Anna C. Reiff, “Notes,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, July 1922, 12-13.

<sup>90</sup>Glenn Gohr, “The Ministry of Ben Mahan: A Man of Prayer and Conviction,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 14:4 (Winter 1994-95): 9, 34.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 34; *Program of Consecration Services*, 1.

<sup>92</sup>Lillian Pearl Hargitt, “History of the First Pentecostal Meetings Held in Washington, D.C.” Unpublished manuscript, no date, 2.

<sup>93</sup>For specific documentation of all his travels, see my unabridged paper, “‘Lord, Go Among Us’: Charles A. Shreve and the Pentecostal Revival at McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.,” presented at the 48th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, March 2, 2019, 21-25.

<sup>94</sup>Shreve resigned from the M. E. Church in 1925. See the *Minutes of the One Hundred and Forty-first Session of the Baltimore Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Baltimore, MD: Horn-Shafer, 1925).

<sup>95</sup>Consortium of Pentecostal Archives, accessed September 3, 2018, <https://pentecostalarchives.org>.

<sup>96</sup>“Contributing Editors,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 19, 1924, 4; “Contributing Editors,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, September 19, 1925, 4.

<sup>97</sup>Robert Brown, “Forthcoming Meetings,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 19, 1924, 14.

<sup>98</sup>R. J. Craig, “International Pentecostal Camp Meeting,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 24, 1924, 14; “Glad Tidings Temple to Be Opened,” *Oakland (CA) Tribune*, November 21, 1925, 15; R. J. Craig, “Forthcoming Meetings,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 28, 1925, 14.

<sup>99</sup>“Revival at Mission Tabernacle,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 27, 1924, 21.

<sup>100</sup>S. A. Jamieson, “Date of Meeting Changed,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, March 14, 1925, 14.

<sup>101</sup>“Apostolic Assembly (Pentecostal),” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 28, 1930, 21.

<sup>102</sup>“Dr. C.A. Shreve, of Washington, to Conduct Nightly Services at Church,” *Greenville (SC) News*, June 24, 1935, 3.

<sup>103</sup>“Angelus Temple,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1926, 20.

<sup>104</sup>“Camp Revival Meeting Opens,” *Des Moines (IA) Registrar*, July 12, 1924, 2; Edwin C. Sikes, “Eastern District Council Camp Meeting,”

*Pentecostal Evangel*, July 19, 1924, 14; Peter C. Duborg, “Forthcoming Meetings,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 20, 1925, 15; “Pentacostal [sic] Camp To Open Wednesday,” *Allentown (PA) Morning Call*, August 7, 1927, 5; J. Roswell Flower, “Glorious Victory,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 8, 1928, 13; M. J. Hagli, “Forthcoming Meetings,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 28, 1927, 14; Edgar W. White, “Forthcoming Meetings,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 5, 1930, 14; Guy Shields, “Forthcoming Meetings,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 5, 1930, 15.

<sup>105</sup>J. A. Culbreth, “The Falcon Camp Meeting,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, August 2, 1934, 12; “Holmes Camp to Lead Annual Campaigns,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, March 14, 1948, 14.

<sup>106</sup>Ivan Spencer, “Pentecostal Campmeeting,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 12, 1924, 15; “Rev. Dr. Shreve Begins Revival,” *Binghamton (NY) Press and Sun-Bulletin*, August 12, 1924, 13; “A Day at the Old Orchard Pentecostal Campmeeting,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, October 1924, 10-11; “Pentecostal Revival at Old Orchard, Maine,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, October 18, 1924, 14; Perry Hadsock, “Florida State Campmeeting,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 9, 1928, 13.

<sup>107</sup>Charles A. Shreve, “We Never Saw it on This Fashion,” *Bridal Call Foursquare*, July 1926, 30.

<sup>108</sup>“Glass Boats Used on Sea in Body Hunt,” *Santa Ana (CA) Register*, May 21, 1926, 1; Women Tell of Hearing Mrs. McPherson Scream,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1926, 19.

<sup>109</sup>“Thousands Honor Aimee,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1926, 17.

<sup>110</sup>“O. G. Twilight Services,” *Asbury Park (NJ)*, July 21, 1926, 2.

<sup>111</sup>Charles A. Shreve, “From the Heart of An Evangelist,” *Bridal Call Foursquare*, April 1931, 2.

<sup>112</sup>“Drops from Ye Editorial Brow,” *Bridal Call Foursquare*, November 1930, 2.

<sup>113</sup>“Dr. Shreve Here Nov. 12,” *Foursquare Crusader*, November 5, 1930, 1.

<sup>114</sup>“This Week at Angelus Temple,” *Foursquare Crusader*, November 26, 1930, 1; “Come Worship the Risen King in Angelus Temple during Eastertide,” *Bridal Call Foursquare*, April 1931, 36; Charles A. Shreve, “From the Heart of An Evangelist,” *Bridal Call Foursquare*, May 1931, 2.

<sup>115</sup>“Bottom of Depression Has Been Reached—Aimee Goes Silent!,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1932, Part 2, 1, 2.

<sup>116</sup>Shreve, personal information, 4.

<sup>117</sup>“Father of Local Woman Succumbs,” *Newport News (VA) Free Press*, June 6, 1959, 11.

<sup>118</sup>Shreve, “How to Have a Holy Ghost Revival,” 7-8.

<sup>26</sup>Lyon, 83-84.

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<sup>28</sup>Caryl Weingartner, "My Tribute to Derva," *The Circle*, Summer 2014, 4-7; Lyon, 110-111.

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<sup>31</sup>Charlie Chivers, telephone interview by Darrin Rodgers, February 13, 2020.

<sup>32</sup>Gage, section II, 3.

<sup>33</sup>Norman Whitney, "Mom's Tribute" [eulogy], June 16, 1994.

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<sup>41</sup>Paul Weingartner, email to Darrin Rodgers, February 16, 2020.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>"Remembering Larry Rose," *The Circle*, July-September 2010, 2-6.

<sup>44</sup>Sarah Sykes, "The Very First Easter," *The Circle*, April-June 2006, 1-2.

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<sup>47</sup>Sarah Sykes, "Further Up, Further In," *The Circle*, October-December 2006, 7-8.

<sup>48</sup>"Fresh Leaves," *The Circle*, July-September 2008, 12.

<sup>49</sup>"Special Touch Ministry Blind Services," accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.specialtouch.org/blind>; John W. Kennedy, "Special Touch Blind Services," AG-NEWS, January 7, 2020, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://news.ag.org/en/News/Special-Touch-Blind-Services>; Charlie Chivers, telephone interview by Darrin Rodgers, February 13, 2020.

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Superintendent, Louisiana Network  
of the Assemblies of God

“Sunday night we (First Assembly of God, Dallas TX) hosted Ruthie Edgerly Oberg from the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. Sister Oberg brought a very inspiring and challenging message on the value of memorials and testimonies about our Pentecostal faith. I am confident in recommending this ministry to any pastor, it is thoroughly Pentecostal! My people are still talking about Sister Oberg’s ministry.”

**PASTOR DAN ENRIQUEZ**  
First Assembly of God, Dallas, TX

# HELP PRESERVE AND PROMOTE OUR PENTECOSTAL HERITAGE

The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center is the largest Pentecostal archives in the world. We collect, preserve, and make accessible historically-important materials that document the history of the Assemblies of God and the broader Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

Please consider helping the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center to preserve and share our Pentecostal heritage with the next generation by...

## 1 Entrusting us with materials from your life and ministry

The FPHC seeks materials relating to the Pentecostal movement, such as:

- Audiovisual resources
- Books
- College yearbooks
- Congregational histories
- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Interviews
- Magazines
- Memorabilia
- Newsletters
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Sermons
- Tracts

## 3 Supporting the Wayne Warner Research Fellowship

Wayne Warner served as long-time director of the FPHC (1980-2005) and as founding editor of *Assemblies of God Heritage* magazine (1981-2005). The Wayne Warner Research Fellowship was established in 2006 to provide small research grants to faculty and students whose research concerning Assemblies of God history is likely to be published and to benefit our Fellowship.



## 2 Donating your used books

Direct your used books back into ministry by donating them to the Assemblies of God Used Book Clearinghouse. While all materials are accepted, academic or religious books are of particular interest. Books not needed by the FPHC or the Evangel University library are given to 4 the World Resource Distributors, which provides books to overseas Bible college libraries.

## 4 Contributing to the FPHC endowment

Your financial contribution will help the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center to preserve and promote our Pentecostal heritage and identity.

**Please contact us if you have materials to donate, or if you would like to discuss how you can help the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center to preserve and share our Pentecostal heritage with future generations.**



# WAIT!

*Don't throw it away!*

**Do you have Pentecostal historical materials that should be preserved?**

**Do you know of someone with treasures in their attic or basement?**

**Please consider depositing these materials at the FPHC. We would like to preserve and make them accessible to those who write the history books.**

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**Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center**

**Call us toll free: 877-840-5200**

**Email us: [archives@ag.org](mailto:archives@ag.org)**

