

PENTECOSTAL EDUCATION

A JOURNAL OF WAPTE
the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education

A Century of The Foursquare Gospel

Gary Matsdorf, Guest Editor

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Pentecostal Education (formerly The Pentecostal Educator) semiannually e-publishes scholarly and practical articles related to theological education within the Pentecostal tradition to encourage the continuing maturation of Pentecostal theological education. It is intentionally practical, applied, and international.

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The Pentecostal Educator: Editorial

Some years ago, the Board of Directors of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE) took the decision to broaden the scope of the organization's journal. At that time, the focus was very much on the *educator* and the sentiment was that we should create the opportunity to embrace the concept of Pentecostal education more broadly. This has proved to be a good decision, and recent journal issues will attest to the value of this broader approach.

This version is an outstanding example of why the scope was widened. One of our primary members, The Foursquare Church, is able to make a unique contribution in the form of scholarly writing as it celebrates its 100-year anniversary. As more and more Pentecostal Fellowships around the world pass significant milestones, it is most reassuring to discover that the aspirations of the founders of these movements have not been compromised by the passing of years. In fact, a careful and critical approach to both the history of movements and their current operations thoroughly reinforces the dynamic of the Pentecostal faith that we share.

The wide range of articles offered by Foursquare scholars provides both fascinating reading and valuable lessons. Regardless of the fellowship to which we might belong, the Foursquare story is helpful and insightful. From a helpful overview of the history of the Foursquare Church through to its contemporary attempts to navigate the challenges of reconciliation in the twenty-first century, there is valuable material for both church people and scholars. With these subjects all written from within a single group, we can discern a cohesion providing insight into any other Pentecostal (or, for that matter, broadly evangelical) fellowship of churches.

It is my hope that this journal will enjoy a wide readership and provoke similar discussions in all the constituent churches of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Join me in congratulating the leaders, pastors, and members of the Foursquare Church as they celebrate 100 years of faithful service to Jesus and His Kingdom.

As with each of these journals, I invite continued and wider participation in the work of WAPTE. A recent annual meeting of the Board of Directors, which took place in London, reinforced the valuable work being undertaken. Discussions continue regarding endorsement

standards for Pentecostal theological education globally. We continue to respond to the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) as we serve this worldwide body in the capacity of its theological commission. Continued dialogue with the World Mission Commission of the PWF is proving fruitful.

I heartily commend this edition to you and, in doing so, extend my thanks to Gary Matsdorf for his guest editorial and the team that he assembled to produce the stimulating articles.

Paul R Alexander
Senior Editor, WAPTE Chair

Celebrating One Hundred Years of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel: Guest Editorial

The Fall 2023 issue of *Pentecostal Education* celebrates 100 years of The Foursquare Church. Foursquare's yearlong centennial celebration began on January 1, 2023, at 2PM—the same time as Foursquare's flagship church, Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, California, held its first service with evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson in 1923.

Foursquare is deeply grateful to WAPTE for dedicating this edition to understanding its history and key aspects of its life and ministry. As Foursquare's representative to the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education and a member of the *Pentecostal Education* editorial team, I am honored to have been asked to be the guest editor. Together with key leaders of The Foursquare Church U.S., we selected aspects of Foursquare's ministries and guiding theologies that we feel highlight who we are as a “family” within Christ's Church. It is our hope that it will give insight into our movement and perhaps provide help and inspiration to those outside of Foursquare.

Because of Foursquare's government, the 100 years of Foursquare is technically that of Foursquare United States. Other nations mark their own celebrations according to their founding, with Foursquare Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, celebrating 95 years in 2023. However, much of the “flavor, values, and guiding theologies” found in these articles reflect Foursquare in all the 150+ nations where God has graciously granted us ministry.

I wish to express my gratitude to U.S. President Randy Remington, Ted Vail, U.S. Vice President of Global Mission, and Wendy Nolasco, General Supervisor, for their support as we crafted and prepared this edition. I also want to express my highest gratitude to those who wrote the articles. They are cherished brothers, sisters, and colleagues in the Lord who continuously enrich my life and journey as His disciple.

Gary Matsdorf
Guest Editor



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The Foursquare Church: Yesterday, Today, and....

S. David Moore

Abstract

On January 1, 1923, Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson opened Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, California. With the dedication of the massive 5300 seat building, The Foursquare Church was effectively born that day. The denomination's story is inextricably tied to its gifted, enigmatic, and controversial founder and her evangelistic and divine healing ministry. The Canadian-born evangelist with Salvation Army roots became a Pentecostal in 1908 and married Robert Semple, the two briefly served as missionaries in China until Robert's death from Malaria in 1910. After a brief marriage to Harold McPherson, Aimee barnstormed the US as an Evangelist from 1915 through 1922. McPherson's skill as a communicator, her dramatic flair, and her media savvy gave her enormous influence and reach. Within weeks of the Temple's opening, McPherson started an evangelistic training school, and branch churches were soon opened in Southern California. McPherson's "middle of the road" expression of the Pentecostal faith, with its emphasis on a restoration of a "Bible Christianity" found in the New Testament, distinguished her ministry from much of the Pentecostalism of her day. Her moderation won her an interdenominational following. From the multifaceted ministries and social services at Angelus Temple in the 1920s and 1930s, and despite missteps and supposed scandals associated with McPherson's ministry, the Foursquare Church grew into a worldwide movement by its centennial year in 2023 with over 85,000 churches in 156 nations. Today, the growing edge of the movement is found in its international expressions.

Keywords: Aimee Semple McPherson, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Foursquare Church, Angelus Temple, Pentecostalism

The Founding of Angelus Temple

By 1921, itinerant evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson was weary.¹ Since 1915, she had crisscrossed America multiple times and traveled up and down the East Coast twice, holding her evangelistic meetings. Several of her trips were in her “Gospel car,” traveling at a time when roads were crude at best. Often, her young children accompanied her, and the family frequently “camped” along the roads as she moved from one series of meetings to another.² Her first meetings were held in various meeting halls, missions, and churches, but with so many flocking to hear her preach, tent meetings became more common. In some places, McPherson had to put up her own tent, recruiting impromptu help from locals. Sometimes, her meetings would last for weeks.

As her popularity grew, she traveled more by rail, but still the schedule was demanding. The evangelistic meetings, and especially the meetings that focused on praying for the sick and diseased, grew to meetings drawing thousands that filled auditoriums, arenas, and large outside venues. One meeting in San Diego’s Balboa Park in 1921 was attended by an estimated 30,000 people. Life on the road was wearing on her.

The frenzied pace was not sustainable, and so in early 1919, Aimee decided to base herself in Los Angeles when the land was donated, and a contractor volunteered to build a house with the express purpose of

¹ At present I am writing a new narrative history of the global Foursquare Church. Portions of this essay are adapted and edited from the manuscript. The sketch of Aimee Semple McPherson’s life relies heavily on biographies on McPherson as well as the various versions of her autobiography. See Edith Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Daniel Epstein, *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1993); Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Of note also is Chas H. Barfoot, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Making of Modern Pentecostalism, 1890-1926* (New York: Routledge, 2014). Barfoot’s biography was originally published by Equinox in 2011. Earlier works include: Aimee Semple McPherson, *The Story of My Life* (Hollywood: International Correspondents’ Publication, 1951); Raymond Cox, *The Verdict Is In* (Los Angeles: Research Publications, 1983); Lately Thomas, *The Vanishing Evangelist* (New York: Viking Press, 1959).

² McPherson biographer Edith Blumhofer has noted that McPherson “may have been one of the first females to drive all the way across the United States without a man.” Blumhofer, *Everybody’s Sister*, 135.

providing her children a home so they wouldn't have to always be on the road with her. While she seldom was in Los Angeles after the house was built, at least she had a place to come back to whenever possible and a place for her kids to call home.

It would soon be more than building a house. In 1921, she announced in her monthly periodical *The Bridal Call*,³ that plans were underway to build “a great revival center to which thousands may come to find salvation, divine healing, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, encouragement, rest, refreshing, and enduement of power for service; and where the prospective evangelist and worker may come for practical training in winning souls for Jesus.”⁴

Over the next two years, McPherson raised the money for the revival center through her evangelistic campaigns and appeals in *The Bridal Call*. Along with donated labor, “Angelus Temple,” as she named it, was constructed debt-free. It was no small task. Angelus Temple “was an enormous concrete structure seating 5300, with an unsupported dome (by some estimates the largest such dome in the country) painted azure blue, with fleecy clouds...”⁵ On January 1, 1923, Angelus Temple's doors were opened, and it was quickly filled to capacity, with hundreds turned away that afternoon. With celebration and fanfare, the building was dedicated to God's glory.

Just before the doors opened, McPherson had laid the dedicatory cornerstones, one emblazoned with the words “Dedicated Unto the Cause of Inter-denominational and World Wide Evangelism.” Although it would not formally incorporate as the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel until December 1927, that January day the Foursquare Church was born.⁶ The roots of the Foursquare Church were in the soil of McPherson's years of itinerant ministry, where she barnstormed a Pentecostal message across America (and, along the way, began to mainstream the still young Pentecostal movement in America). But it was the founding Angelus Temple that made Foursquare a movement.

The original plan was for a revival center in Los Angeles and not a traditional church. “Sister” Aimee saw Angelus Temple as a place where

³ Aimee started publishing *The Bridal Call* in 1917. The periodical helped greatly to expand her ministry audience.

⁴ Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 238.

⁵ Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 245.

⁶ Throughout this essay I refer to the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel as the Foursquare Church or simply Foursquare.

she could hold her evangelistic meetings when not on the road and a place for other evangelists to preach while she was away. Whatever her intention for Angelus Temple, McPherson found herself overseeing what today would be called a megachurch. In the Temple's early days, it was filled to capacity nightly and several times on Sunday, with Aimee preaching more than twenty times a week. In the first six months following the dedication, there were over 8,000 conversions, with testimonies of thousands being filled with the Holy Spirit and hundreds healed. Her popularity and preaching had quickly gathered congregations of devoted followers caught up in her winsome, dramatic, and plain-spoken message of salvation for the body, soul, and spirit through Jesus Christ.

Things began to move quickly for Aimee. Within five weeks after the Temple's initial dedication, McPherson opened a school to train young evangelists and missionaries, and in the months that followed, students at the institute were holding tent crusades in the greater Los Angeles area. Some of those meetings led to the establishment of new congregations ("branches" as they were called then) in association with Angelus Temple.⁷ The majority of the churches were pastored by women. When the Foursquare Church was incorporated in 1927, it had grown to 128 churches in twenty-five states, necessitating greater legal and organizational infrastructure.⁸ That same year, the nascent Foursquare Church sent out its first missionaries, and in October, McPherson made the vision clear.

Angelus Temple is opening one of the mightiest missionary enterprises that has ever been started. Nothing short of establishing missionaries and mission stations in every land and among every kindred, tribe and tongue will satisfy these earnest, enthusiastic and consecrated followers of the Foursquare Gospel. "The field is the world" is their motto, and

⁷ Originally named the Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute, it later became the denomination's primary ministry training institution, L.I.F.E. Bible College, formally incorporated in 1924.

⁸ Nathaniel Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles: The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992), 34. From the Temple's founding through much of 1927, "Articles in *The Bridal Call* disavow any intention of starting a new denomination." The history of the Foursquare Church by Van Cleave is a valuable insider view of the denomination but is a poorly written narrative with long lists of names and facts. In fairness to Van Cleave, it apparently was edited by a committee.

"Around the world with the Foursquare Gospel" is their slogan. The spirit of the Foursquare Gospel is that of the true pioneer.⁹

Whether she intended it or not McPherson was now pastoring a burgeoning church and leading a denomination.

A Worldwide Movement

Throughout 2023, the United States Foursquare Church has celebrated its centennial year with various events that started on January 1st with a commemorating event at Angelus Temple. The 2023 annual convention of Foursquare U.S., now called "Connection," was themed around the centennial celebration and began with a Global Summit held at the Temple that brought together Foursquare leaders, workers, and members from around the globe. In celebrating its first 100 years, the aim was not to take a nostalgic tour through "the good ole days," but a reminder of the vision and vitality that forged a global movement. The focus has been foremost on rediscovering foundational lessons that might invigorate the Foursquare Church's next 100 years.

The Foursquare Church has indeed come a long way since 1923, and its roots are in the U.S. Today, Foursquare is present in 156 nations, with over 85,000 churches and over 6,625,000 million people attending Foursquare churches globally. In fact, the Foursquare Church outside the U.S. is approximately fifty times larger than the Foursquare U.S., with a number of national expressions dwarfing the U.S. national church. Most of the global Foursquare expressions are independent of the U.S. church and are led by national leaders. Many national Foursquare churches are not only self-governing and self-supporting but have become self-propagating with their own mission enterprises reaching beyond their own national borders. International Foursquare churches are now the vibrant cutting edge of the denomination.

As we have seen, the Foursquare story is inextricably tied to its enigmatic and controversial founder. In what follows, I will expand on and give greater detail to McPherson's life and ministry, as well as how Foursquare went from a single church to a worldwide movement.

⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Foursquare Gospel World-Wide Missions," *Foursquare Bridal Call* 11 (October 1927) 15. In the early 1930s the "Branches" (new churches) began being called "Lighthouses" of Foursquare Evangelism, hence the L.I.F.E in the Bible College's name.

“Sister Aimee”

Born in 1890 to James Kennedy and Mildred (Minnie) Pearce, Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy grew up on a farm near Ingersoll, Ontario, Canada. The family attended Methodist and Salvation Army congregations—her mother Minnie was especially active in the local Army. While attending high school, Aimee struggled with her faith, longing for a freer social life among her friends at the Methodist Church. This created tension between Aimee and her mother, who saw Aimee’s interests as worldly. The tension broke in December 1907 when Aimee fully surrendered her life to Christ through the preaching of a handsome, young Pentecostal evangelist and Irish immigrant, Robert Semple. Semple was holding storefront meetings in Ingersoll after embracing the Pentecostal message earlier that year. Seeking God earnestly for the next month, she was baptized with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and, at last, had the definite empowering experience so central to Pentecostalism. With her dramatic encounter with God, she sensed a call to ministry as a “soul-winner for Jesus.”

Aimee was impressed by Semple’s preaching. But his “Irish lilt” and, no doubt, his good looks caught her attention in other ways. The two soon fell in love and married in August 1908, in a Salvation Army ceremony on the family farm. With Aimee’s new sense of calling, the couple began their ministry together in Canada, and late in 1908, they traveled to William Durham’s North Avenue Mission in Chicago, where Durham ordained both Robert and Aimee. Durham had embraced Pentecostalism after attending meetings at Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles and had become an important leader in the new movement. It was during her time with Durham that Aimee, although raised in churches that understood sanctification as a crisis, second experience, was introduced to Durham’s view that sanctification was progressive and not a “second blessing,” as those associated with the Holiness movement contended. In fact, it was Durham’s position on sanctification that would become the view the Foursquare church would later adopt.

While serving in Chicago with Durham, the couple believed God had called them to evangelize China. After time at the Hebden Pentecostal Mission in Toronto and saying goodbye to Aimee’s family, they began their long journey, taking them through Northern Ireland and England, eventually arriving in Hong Kong in June 1910. They settled in with a small group of Pentecostal missionaries, but soon after, both Aimee and

Robert contracted severe cases of malaria, requiring hospitalization. Robert died on August 19 from dysentery and malaria.

Aimee, still ill and hospitalized, slowly recovered. She was just nineteen years old, eight months pregnant, heartbroken, and alone. Daughter Roberta was born in September, and Aimee soon returned to the U.S., settling in New York City that winter with her infant child. Her mother, just months before, had moved there to serve in a Salvation Army rescue mission. Aimee began serving at the Army mission herself. In New York, she also attended a thriving Pentecostal church founded by a woman. After the female pastor married, Aimee witnessed her fully sharing in the preaching role at the church. Already convinced that women could preach from her experience in the Salvation Army, Aimee's conviction of her own call as a woman in ministry grew.

While living in New York City with her mother, Aimee met businessman Harold McPherson, and after moving to Chicago, Aimee and McPherson were married in February 1912. The couple had gone to Chicago out of concern over Minnie's disapproval of the marriage. Harold settled his new family in Providence, Rhode Island. Their son, Rolf Potter McPherson, was born in March 1913. Domestic life did not fit Aimee McPherson well, and after a health crisis that nearly took her life, she resolved to answer God's call to evangelize immediately; she left her husband in 1915, returning to the childhood farm in Canada. Soon, she was on the road preaching.

Harold McPherson reluctantly joined his wife in her itinerant ministry but, by 1918, decided it was not the life he wanted and filed for divorce, charging his wife with abandonment (the divorce was finalized in 1921).¹⁰ Aimee enlisted the help of her mother, whose organizational and administrative skills proved invaluable in assisting Aimee with her thriving ministry. Her crusades from 1919-1922 were wildly successful, overflowing venues coast to coast from Baltimore to St Louis to Denver to Oakland. Aimee and Minnie proved to be a skilled team in handling it

¹⁰ Harold McPherson served as Aimee's front person but was never comfortable living in her shadow. His time on the road was punctuated with side work he would do, and he finally tired of it. For a brief season he tried to hold evangelistic meetings on his own. Aimee always insisted that when McPherson proposed she had accepted his proposal only if he promised to never keep her from fulfilling God's call on her life. According to her story, Harold had agreed to her condition but later reneged on his promise. Despite the pain of the marriage's dissolution, she was simply obeying God's call on her life. Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 98-106; 124-127.

all. The mother-daughter partnership would be a key part of McPherson's success for the next ten years.

Aimee's preaching in her earliest evangelistic campaigns was "emphatically Pentecostal" and emphasized familiar themes characteristic of early 20th century Pentecostalism, foremost a dynamic experience of salvation through Jesus Christ and the call to receive a "mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit," evidenced by speaking in tongues. Her emphasis was centrally on Jesus Christ as the great "I am," not the great "I was." Her preaching frequently centered on the promise of Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."¹¹ Jesus healed people in the New Testament Gospels and is still healing people today. Her evangelistic campaigns became known especially for her healing services. Though she averred being called a "faith healer" and always saw herself first as an evangelist, the testimonies of physical healings more than anything, caught the attention of the press and made her a sensation. She consistently told her audience that Jesus Christ alone was doing the healing.

In the summer of 1922, McPherson began calling her own version of the Christocentric four-fold gospel of the nineteenth-century Holiness movement, the "Foursquare Gospel."¹² The change coincided with her July crusade in Oakland, California, where in one of the meetings, she preached on the text of Ezekiel 1:4-10. As she spoke of the four living creatures the prophet describes, she said the four faces of each creature, a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle, typified the full-orbed ministry of Jesus: namely, Christ the Savior, Christ the Baptizer with the Spirit, Christ the Healer, and Christ the Soon Coming King. In a version of her autobiography, Aimee described what happened.

Here is a perfect gospel, a complete gospel, for body, for soul, for spirit and for eternity, a gospel facing squarely in every direction.... I stood still for a moment and listened, gripping the pulpit, almost shaking with wonder and joy. Then there burst from the white heat of my heart the words: "Why—why, it's the Foursquare Gospel. The Foursquare

¹¹ The passage was frequently used by Robert Semple in his preaching. Blumhofer has observed that Aimee utilized Hebrews 13:8 more than she did the Acts narrative perhaps to distinguish herself from Pentecostal distinctives that were center stage in most Pentecostal preaching.

¹² The term Foursquare was in common usage at the time and carried with it ideas like "firm, forthright, thoroughgoing, complete." To her understanding the "Foursquare Gospel" phrase was synonymous with "Full Gospel."

Gospel!” Instantly, the Spirit bore witness. Waves, billows, oceans of praises rocked the audience, which was borne aloft on the rushing winds of Holy Spirit revival.¹³

The essence of her message remained Pentecostal, but as biographer Edith Blumhofer has said, Aimee “came to uphold Pentecostalism not as a religious movement but as an expression of Bible Christianity....”¹⁴ It was a “restoration of New Testament Power and practice.”¹⁵ As her evangelistic campaigns grew larger and with the healing meetings featured in the press, her less stridently Pentecostal message drew support from pastors and church leaders across the spectrum of the Christian tradition, particularly among Methodists and Baptists. She wanted to avoid the often-critical partisan rhetoric common among many Pentecostals of her day.

I had not been completely content with the designations “Pentecostal” or “Full Gospel,” though I had used both on the masthead of the Bridal Call magazine.... For some time, I had used the phrase “the middle of the road” to describe my position. On one side of the road stands the cold, worldly church. On the other side loomed, at that time, the frenzied fanaticism boasting manifestations that brought discredit to the precious Holy Spirit. I stand in the middle, however, for a sane, wholesome power of the Holy Spirit that brings honor and souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.... But for me, the phrase “Foursquare Gospel” better describes the ministry of Jesus Christ that I am thrilled to proclaim.¹⁶

McPherson was ordained with the Assemblies of God (AOG) as an evangelist in 1919 but surrendered her credentials with the denomination in early 1922, likely due to criticism she received in the denomination’s publication *The Pentecostal Evangel*, questioning if she was fully Pentecostal, something she mentions in her autobiography.¹⁷ McPherson was moderating her message by avoiding some language

¹³ *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1979), 112. This odd volume is valuable in that it updates McPherson’s story to the end of her life. It was compiled by Raymond Cox from thousands of pages written by McPherson. Cox is not named as editor nor is Aimee ascribed as its author with Cox asserting in the book’s *Introduction*, “the book is largely McPherson’s own words.” Functionally, Cox served as both a compiler and editor.

¹⁴ Blumhofer, *Everybody’s Sister*, 114.

¹⁵ Blumhofer *Everybody’s Sister*, 205.

¹⁶ *Aimee: Life Story*, 111.

¹⁷ “Is Mrs. McPherson Pentecostal?” *Pentecostal Evangel* (January 10, 1922), 9.

common among Pentecostals and, at times, by publicly silencing Pentecostal manifestations in her meetings she deemed out of order or even fanatical. The article in the *Evangel* addressed a time McPherson had done so in a service in Wichita.

The same year she surrendered her AOG credential, Aimee began writing what became the Foursquare Church's *Declaration of Faith*, a document not formally published until 1925. When it was published, its reference to Spirit baptism is of note since there is no explicit mention of tongues as initial evidence. In regard to the reception of "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit," a key section reads simply, "... the believer may have every reason to expect His incoming to be after the same manner as that recorded in the Word (Acts 2:4)."¹⁸ There is no explicit mention of evidential tongues which seems significant given the stated positions other Classical Pentecostal denominations at the time made that *glossolalia* is expected to accompany Spirit baptism, serving as evidence of the experience.

This omission fits into Blumhofer's assessment that McPherson, still committed to her fundamental Pentecostal beliefs, began to "...modify her understanding of Pentecostalism, distancing her from contemporary classical Pentecostals who were forming their denominations during the early years of her ministry. She did not fit the trends that institutionalization brought to the surface, especially the trends in the largest and most national Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God."¹⁹

¹⁸ https://s3.amazonaws.com/foursquare.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/28143224/Declaration_of_Faith_2023.pdf
Accessed on August 9, 2023. The quoted statement is on page 8 of the PDF document.

¹⁹ Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 211. In an unpublished paper written by former president of Foursquare's Life Pacific University, Jim J. Adams, commenting on the *Declaration of Faith*, argues that there is little doubt that McPherson means "by this manner" that tongues is to be expected with Spirit baptism and the Scripture reference says as much. Yet Adams acknowledges that the omission to any explicit reference to tongues is intentional. This is significant given Adams' overall argument in his paper that Foursquare has always held to initial evidence. James J. Adams, "The Development of Doctrine in the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel" (copy of original manuscript, December 14, 2000), 1-31; Aaron Friesen in *Norming the Abnormal*, a book that explores the development of initial evidence in Classical Pentecostalism, aligns with Blumhofer but in a way that Adams would appreciate. In his view Aimee

McPherson's middle-of-the-road moderation and her desire to reach across denominational lines was reflected in Angelus Temple's aforementioned cornerstone with its "interdenominational" reference. She wanted to see the larger church revitalized, not just a part of it, and she adjusted her rhetoric to make that possible.²⁰ A key interpretation Matthew Avery Sutton makes in his biography of McPherson is that her "life marked the beginning of Pentecostalism's advance from the margins to the mainstream of American culture." For Sutton, McPherson's celebrity status and location in Los Angeles, coupled with her "use of spectacle and mass media savvy," situated her perfectly to gain broad influence.²¹ The fullness of that mainstreaming would await the latter half of the 20th century, but Aimee was an important early pioneer.

McPherson's desire to reach the masses and the broad Christian community was evident. In the years following the 1923 dedication, Angelus Temple became a bustling ministry center with ministries that served young and old, and Aimee was the star in those early years.

She drew standing-room-only crowds—some 25,000 worshipers weekly, who came to hear her vividly illustrated sermons, fully costumed operas, and cantatas. There was a 100-voice choir, a large Kimball organ, and a "Silver Band." While Sundays featured a communion service as well as inspirational and revivalist services, each Monday the emphasis was on deeper life; Tuesday the focus was on evangelism; Wednesday was dedicated to prayer and Bible study; Thursday evening was reserved for baptismal services; Friday was set apart for the young people; and

"separated herself from her American Pentecostal contemporaries, not in her doctrine, but in her refusal to impose every point of her doctrine on her followers without flexibility. Her purposeful exclusion of a strict 'initial evidence' doctrine from the Foursquare *Declaration of Faith* is just one example of how she was not willing to reduce the essence of the Pentecostal message to one particular doctrine. After 1920, Aimee seems to have understood the doctrine of tongues as the initial evidence of Spirit Baptism as an important doctrine, but one that certainly did not capture the 'distinctive testimony of Pentecostals.'" Aaron Friesen, *Norming the Abnormal* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 110.

²⁰ A helpful interpretation on McPherson's gospel preaching that addresses her rhetoric is found in Kristy Maddux, "The Foursquare Gospel of Aimee Semple McPherson," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 291-326.

²¹ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, quotes taken from the first edition book jacket, inside back flap.

Tuesday afternoon and Saturday evening were given over to divine healing services.²²

Angelus Temple's radio station KFSG went on the air in 1924, widening even more McPherson's and church's impact in Los Angeles as Aimee became an adept radio personality. The evangelistic training institute that started with fifty students by 1926 became L.I.F.E. Bible College (now Life Pacific University) with an enrollment of 650 students and by 1929 had nearly 1000 students, the majority women.

Drawing on McPherson's roots in the Salvation Army, Angelus Temple opened its Commissary in 1927,²³ and the "commissary met the physical needs of over 1.5 million people during the Depression, regardless of race, creed, or color. [Aimee] fought for higher wages and greater benefits for police and firefighters and railed against organized crime."²⁴ These initiatives won praise from law enforcement, emergency services, and the broader civic and business leadership in Los Angeles. The Temple even had an employment agency to help the unemployed find work. Aimee was highly esteemed for her social work, and she captured "the imagination of the lower classes while she captivated the hearts of many in the middle and upper classes."²⁵ McPherson developed a strong relationship with the Spanish-speaking community in Los Angeles and actively worked with Hispanic leaders in developing associated congregations.²⁶

Aimee's example as a woman in ministry leadership inspired other women to aspire to and enter ministry.²⁷ McPherson did not publicly align herself with the feminist movements of her day, though she did openly renounce "all forms of gender discrimination" in the Foursquare

²² Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. "Angelus Temple" in Stanley Burgess and Edward M van der Mass, *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 314-315.

²³ Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches*, 12ff; Especially helpful in understanding the Commissary's work and McPherson's social work is Gregg D. Townsend, "The Material Dream of Aimee Semple McPherson: A Lesson in Pentecostal Spirituality," *Pneuma* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 171-183.

²⁴ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. "Aimee Semple McPherson," *NIDPCM*, (854-859), 857.

²⁵ Robeck, "Aimee Semple McPherson," 857.

²⁶ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 197-198. McPherson's work with the Hispanic community was under appreciated until the work James C. Scott was published. James C. Scott, *Aimee and Her Work with the Hispanic People* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 2008).

²⁷ Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 360.

Church in 1936.²⁸ She justified the legitimacy of her ministry primarily around her understanding of God's call on her life, fully affirming that she was simply obeying her calling as an evangelist. While it is true that Aimee was a pioneer for women in ministry leadership, she still believed that men and women had different spheres of ministry.²⁹ She made a place for women in key roles at the Temple, but all of the elders at Angelus Temple were men in accordance with her understanding of Paul's words to Timothy that an elder must be *the husband of one wife* (1 Tim. 3:2 [KJV]).

Difficulties

At the height of her popularity and success in May 1926, Aimee disappeared from Venice Beach, California, where she had gone for the day to rest and swim. After a long and intense search for her body, she was presumed drowned. While her followers mourned, the press gave the story of her disappearance daily coverage. An elaborate memorial service for McPherson was held on June 20, but just three days later, Aimee suddenly reappeared in Douglas, Arizona, with a story of being kidnapped and held for ransom. Rumors swirled that she had a "tryst" with a KFSG employee and that the kidnapping story was a cover. Controversy and legal battles followed for months, with the press increasingly becoming more hostile, utilizing the scandal to sell newspapers. The episode cast a shadow over her ministry for the rest of her life. McPherson's followers were undaunted, however, and she has been fiercely defended in Foursquare circles then and over the years since.³⁰ McPherson's more recent biographers have shown sympathy for her kidnapping story while acknowledging that questions remain.

Aimee soldiered on, but the years that followed the kidnapping were difficult. She no longer had the sympathy of the press or of the religious community. Even before the scandal, some pastors began criticizing her ministry. Disagreements with her mother over the management of Angelus Temple brought a painful separation. The pressures of

²⁸ Karen Tremper, "Advancing Women in Senior Leadership," in *Identity Keystones: What Makes Us Foursquare*, edited by Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: The Foursquare Church, 2017), 58-81.

²⁹ Lisa Stephenson, "Prophesying Women and Ruling Men: Women's Religious Authority in North American Pentecostalism," *Religions* 2 (2011): 410-426.

³⁰ For example, see Jack W. Hayford, *The Unending Trial of Aimee Semple McPherson* (Van Nuys: Living Way Ministry, 1990), transcript of September 9, 1990 message.

sustaining the ministries of the church and her ministry without her mother's assistance, a lengthy vindication tour, and ill health took their toll. McPherson suffered a nervous breakdown in 1930.

In 1931, feeling profoundly alone, she married singer and actor David Hutton, ten years her junior. Already a divorcee, the marriage rankled some pastors and church leaders in the growing movement that was nearing 200 churches in 1931. A group of churches in the Midwest decided to leave the movement partly because of her remarriage but also believing Foursquare was considering a change in which the denomination would hold all church properties centrally. Despite the exit, churches were still being planted, and others joined the movement. In 1933, there were more than 275 churches, with 520 credentialed ministers, the majority of whom were still women. Missionary work also continued. Overseas works had expanded, and by 1931, Foursquare had twenty-two full-time missionaries in ten countries.³¹ The economic challenge brought on by the Great Depression, followed by WWII, slowed missionary work, and only "six new fields were opened" from 1931 to 1947.³²

Though the movement was seeing growth nationally and internationally, Angelus Temple struggled financially, with the Commissary's ministries being the primary contributor to the strain. Not only was the Commissary giving away food and clothing, but over 2000 meals a day were served during the Depression years. Adding to the troubles, Aimee's marriage to Hutton was failing, and the two were frequently separated before divorcing in 1934. Ever resilient, and needing money for the Temple, Aimee accepted an offer from Vaudeville agents to appear on Broadway in New York, believing it would be a way to reach an even wider audience and earn \$5000 weekly. In her mind, it was foremost an opportunity to leverage her celebrity status to "go where the people are."³³ She had once gone to bars and brothels to share the gospel, and this endeavor was an extension of her desire to bring the message of salvation to a new audience. The production proved unsuccessful and closed after a week. Aimee's response in weeks that followed was to get back to more direct itinerant evangelism in the East and Midwest.

³¹ John L. Amstutz, "Foursquare Missions: Doing More With Less," *Pneuma* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 64.

³² Amstutz, "Foursquare Missions," 65.

³³ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 180.

In the middle of all the 1930s turmoil, McPherson turned to Giles Knight, a former businessman and Foursquare pastor, inviting him to manage the Temple's affairs. Knight's autocratic management approach helped lead the Temple back to financial stability in just two years, but his iron-fisted ways displeased many.³⁴ Knight protected Aimee from the press but also restricted the access of some of her closest associates at the Temple. Knight insisted that Aimee cut back her travels and give more attention to the public ministries of Angelus Temple, a move that proved beneficial. Particularly painful, however, was Aimee's unfortunate and very public falling out in 1936 with her daughter Roberta, at least in part due to Knight's role. She and her daughter were estranged for the rest of her life. Though Knight had served to right the ship, Aimee eventually tired of his overbearing ways, and in 1944, Aimee asked him to resign.³⁵ Son Rolf, who had been at her side throughout the turmoil, stepped in as vice president to help his mother manage the Temple and the Foursquare Church.

The disappointments and missteps that followed the kidnapping in 1926 put Aimee on what Sutton called her "long road back to Pentecost." The journey culminated in the summer of 1936 when she held events at the Temple celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Azusa Street Revival.³⁶ Inviting African American evangelist Emma Cotton to preach with her, McPherson returned to a more distinctly Pentecostal message. She openly began to reaffirm Spirit baptism and its "Bible evidence," namely speaking in tongues, and she again began "publicly delivering messages in tongues."³⁷ The meetings also highlighted a renewed emphasis on her more egalitarian commitments that were evident in her early revivals.³⁸ The "Back to Pentecost" meetings and "a procession of Black leaders" she brought in to preach in the months that followed were a reminder of "the radical unity...McPherson had experienced during her itinerant days..."³⁹ Aimee lamented that in the

³⁴ Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 350; Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 210-211.

³⁵ Blumhofer, *Everybody's Sister*, 374.

³⁶ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 185.

³⁷ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 201.

³⁸ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 185-211. Sutton gives substantial focus to McPherson's "long road back to Pentecost" in his biography.

³⁹ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 200.

years since the Azusa Street revival, Pentecostalism's early interracial character had largely been lost.⁴⁰

Through all the ups and downs that surrounded her life and ministry in the 1930s, the denomination continued to expand, and by 1940, the Foursquare Church had almost doubled over the decade with nearly 375 churches, the majority still in California but with a growing presence nationally, especially in the Midwest. Foursquare's global presence had grown also, supporting nearly three dozen missionaries deployed broadly in Central and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

In 1944, Aimee died unexpectedly⁴¹ on a ministry trip to Oakland. Although the exact cause of death was undetermined, the coroner ruled that it was likely an accidental overdose of sleeping pills. McPherson had suffered from ongoing health problems for over ten years and used medication for pain and to sleep. Even in her death, her media profile brought speculation that she had committed suicide, though this was unlikely.⁴²

The Foursquare Church's founder and president for life was gone. Her son Rolf McPherson succeeded her, similarly appointed as president for life of the Foursquare Church, and also as senior pastor of Angelus Temple. The previous years had been tumultuous. The scandal that surrounded her "kidnapping" in 1926, her failed third marriage in 1931 with David Hutton, and her estrangement from her daughter and mother forever left a shadow over the life and ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson. Nevertheless, Aimee Semple McPherson was a gifted and capable female evangelist and leader in a world dominated by men; her ministry and its legacy left their imprint on the movement born that first day of January in 1923.

⁴⁰ McPherson's egalitarianism should not be romanticized. Although she was likely one of the very first evangelists to hold interracial meetings in her early ministry, she also spoke to the KKK on a few occasions and accepted their offerings to support her ministry. During WWII her strong support of the war effort found her defending the internment of Japanese Americans and referring to the Japanese as "Japs."

⁴¹ Jack W Hayford and S David Moore, *The Charismatic Century: The Enduring Impact of the Azusa St Revival* (New York: Warner Faith, 2006), 150.

⁴² Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 268.

The Years After Aimee: Foursquare US

Rolf was a very different kind of leader. Lacking the communication and theatrical skills of his mother, he was, however, a highly capable administrator and financial manager and had helped his mother manage the Temple and denomination in her later years. His leadership brought the movement into a new season of steady growth that continued until and beyond his resignation in 1988. When Rolf took over, there were 446 Foursquare Churches in the U.S., and Foursquare missionaries were in some 200 mission stations around the world.⁴³ When Rolf McPherson stepped aside forty-four years later, there were more than 1250 churches in the U.S. and over 15,000 churches globally.

“Doctor” McPherson, as he was commonly known in the movement, made sure the denomination was on solid financial ground. Committed to his mother’s desire for interdenominational fellowship, Rolf brought the Foursquare Church into ecumenical partnership with the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America⁴⁴ and the Pentecostal World Conference.⁴⁵ He sought membership in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) for the denomination, and though initially rebuffed, Foursquare joined the NAE in 1952.

Rolf’s leadership brought stability to the Foursquare Church in the post-WWII years. By 1960, Foursquare in the U.S. had grown to some 750 churches, although the growth slowed during the 1960s, and only fifty more churches were added in the entire decade. Things changed in the 1970s with the emergence of younger, gifted leaders who embodied Aimee’s willingness to bring Foursquare to new audiences. A number of Foursquare churches embraced the Jesus People movement, and its hippie converts. Many welcomed people from mainline denominations who had been Spirit-baptized and found themselves unwelcome in the congregations they had hoped to renew.

The most notable example of this was the rise of the Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, pastored by Jack W Hayford, Jr. Hayford had taken a fading Foursquare congregation with a couple of dozen people and by 1980 saw it grow into a megachurch with 2000 members.⁴⁶ Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, it was the largest

⁴³ The exact number of overseas fields in 1944 is difficult to determine at this writing. Research is underway but the sources reviewed conflicted.

⁴⁴ Renamed in 1994, The Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America.

⁴⁵ Now the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

⁴⁶ The Church On the Way grew to over 10,000 members by the 1990s.

Foursquare church in the U.S. Roy Hicks, Jr. turned his church in Eugene, Oregon, into a church planting center that trained young leaders and launched dozens of new churches in the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s and 1980s. Ralph Moore started a church in Manhattan Beach, California, in 1971 and, in the coming years, fashioned a “movement within a movement” that would plant hundreds of churches in the decades that followed.⁴⁷ Leaders like Hayford, Hicks, and Moore and their churches were remarkably different in how church life and practice was expressed, something that has marked Foursquare churches in the last fifty years.

After Rolf McPherson resigned the leadership of Angelus Temple and the denomination in 1988, it marked the first time the movement’s leadership was not led by a McPherson. A series of presidents have served the movement in the decades since 1988, two of which had to resign over issues of financial mismanagement. The movement’s “modified” Episcopal polity⁴⁸ has remained unchanged since the early 1930s, although there have been several attempts at organizational restructuring in how Foursquare oversees its U.S. churches in the last twenty years.⁴⁹

At present, there are just under 2,000 churches and congregations in the U.S. national church, a number that has been relatively unchanged since the 1990s despite several church planting and revitalization

⁴⁷ The church later moved to Hermosa Beach. Although most of the churches planted under Moore’s leadership were associated with Foursquare, a number were not.

⁴⁸ “Modified” refers to the mix of both episcopal and congregational forms of church government that characterizes Foursquare polity.

⁴⁹ The restructuring has primarily been how the U.S. districts of the Foursquare are drawn and managed. There has been an intentional decentralizing and reduction of corporate staff at Foursquare’s U.S. Central Offices in Los Angeles that has coincided with more money given back to the field through what’s been labeled “the return of the tithe.”

initiatives in the last three decades.⁵⁰ The growing edge of today's Foursquare Church is outside North America.⁵¹

The Years After Aimee: Foursquare Global

Foursquare's global growth saw significant expansion in the 1950s but has mushroomed in the last four decades, following the trends seen in the broader explosion in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity that began in the last half of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century. It is widely acknowledged that these various Spirit movements have reshaped the landscape of Christianity in the last 120 years, moving its center from the North and West to the global South and East. This is reflected in the Foursquare Church. The Foursquare expression in Indonesia has over 24,000 churches, and Brazil has nearly 19,000 churches. Several nations have many more churches than the U.S. national church, including Nigeria, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Colombia. Throughout the denomination's history, Foursquare missions has followed Aimee's slogan "around the world with the Foursquare Gospel," proclaiming Jesus as Savior, Healer, Spirit baptizer, and the Coming King. The Foursquare Gospel's proclamation in the majority world is consistently accompanied by signs, wonders, and various charisms of the Spirit, and churches continue to grow and expand.⁵²

There are at least twenty-seven national churches globally that are identified in Foursquare as "four-stage" churches. The four-stage model expresses a missiology that was identified and developed by missionary Don McGregor and missiologist John Amstutz as they studied the history of Foursquare missions and where it was most effective in missionizing.⁵³ Referred to also as the "Foursquare Wheel," it describes the various stages of national church development. The first stage is the

⁵⁰ A Church is an Employer Identification Number (EIN)—registered with the IRS—and Chartered or Covenant church affiliated with ICFG legally authorized to conduct business as a church and share Foursquare's status as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt corporation. A Congregation is related to and registered under the EIN of a Foursquare Church on The Hub (i.e., Multisite Campus, Ethnic Congregation, Pipeline Charter & Covenant Plant). We also track FCI meeting places (Chaplain's Congregations). Text to the author from Emily Plater, August 15, 2023.

⁵¹ "2023 Annual Report," PDF Document. The Foursquare Church, presented to the Foursquare Cabinet in March 2023.

⁵² Alan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*.

⁵³ Amstutz interviews.

initial evangelization of the nation/region. The second stage is focused on discipling converts and training leaders, enabling them to mature practically and theologically as disciples of Christ. In the third stage, the aim is appropriate contextualization and indigenization of the national church, so it becomes fully self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating within its own culture. In the final stage, the national church reaches beyond its own culture in sending out missionaries and church planters. Amstutz sees the four-stage model as simply the missionary enterprise observed in the Acts of the Apostles narratives, calling it “an infinitely reproducible pattern” or “life cycle” for mission.⁵⁴

At the heart of the four-stage missiology has been the focus on starting evangelization in major urban centers, where converts are then trained in churches and Schools of Ministry and commissioned to carry out evangelization in ways that are more culturally appropriate. This approach and the challenge of limited financial resources contributed to rapid nationalization in many fields the Foursquare Church has penetrated. In the last forty years, Foursquare U.S. has intentionally moved from a paternalistic approach to serving as a partner to its global expressions and mutually supporting each other in the task of world evangelization.

Challenges and Opportunities

As would be expected in a movement founded and led by a woman who championed women in all spheres of ministry leadership, the majority of the denomination’s credentialed ministers, church pastors, and evangelists were women during Foursquare’s first decade. Women also held key executive roles in the early years. Yet, even during Aimee’s lifetime, these numbers began to decline. At her death in 1944, less than 15% of the movement’s U.S. churches were pastored by women.⁵⁵ This trend continued through the rest of the century, and by the mid-1990s, only 3% of all Foursquare churches in the U.S. were pastored by women.

As the millennium began, efforts were put in place to reaffirm the denomination’s commitment to the full and unrestricted partnership of men and women as ministers of Christ. During the late Jack Hayford’s presidency from 2004-2009, the first woman in decades was appointed to the Foursquare executive leadership team, and in 2009, then interim

⁵⁴ John Amstutz, *Disciples Of All Nations* (Fresno: Editorial RENEUEVO, 2013), 27.

⁵⁵ Blumhofer *Everybody’s Sister*, 361.

president, Glenn Burris appointed Tammy Dunahoo as General Supervisor, overseeing the entire U.S. National Church. The current General Supervisor is a woman, and two of Foursquare's six U.S. districts are led by women. A significant development was the 2019 appointment of Angie Richey as president of Life Pacific University, the first woman to lead Foursquare's primary ministry training institution in eighty years.

Globally, although all Foursquare Churches affirm the denomination's twenty-two Articles in its *Declaration of Faith*, Foursquare reflects the theological dexterity of its founder. As the global Foursquare Church has matured, some theological differences have emerged, though these differences largely remain within acceptable Classical Pentecostal norms. For example, while many national Foursquare churches affirm *glossolalia* as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism, a number of Foursquare Churches see *glossolalia* as a sign along with prophecy and other manifestations of various charisms of the Holy Spirit also serving as evidence.⁵⁶ Even though the U.S. Church holds to the evidential value of *glossolalia*, the late Jack Hayford's position of affirming tongues as evidence while not "insisting on it" as the *only* evidence, has muddied the waters on the issue, particularly within Foursquare U.S.⁵⁷ Many Foursquare pastors sign the annual credential statement affirming tongues as evidence though not always following it in practice.⁵⁸ This tolerance for some theological nuance has characterized Foursquare since its beginning. McPherson's "middle of the road" way has left its mark on the Foursquare Church for good, and some might say for ill.

The Foursquare Church in the U.S. is facing the challenge of an aging clergy. Almost 70% of its credentialed ministers are fifty years or older. There are initiatives in place to develop younger leaders, but the numbers speak for themselves, creating uncertainty in filling pastoral roles as they become available in the coming years. While most Foursquare churches in the U.S. are plateaued, the denomination is growing among its ethnic and immigrant churches, particularly Foursquare's Hispanic churches. One of the six U.S. districts, The

⁵⁶ The U.S. Foursquare Church still affirms initial evidence. See Adams, "The Development of Doctrine" a history of the doctrine in the U.S. church.

⁵⁷ Jack W Hayford, *The Beauty of Spiritual Language* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992).

⁵⁸ In recent years, the U.S. Foursquare Church adopted a policy to not appoint senior pastors to churches who do not speak in tongues. A few exceptions have been made but this is now the general policy.

National Hispanic District, is dedicated to supporting and fostering the growth and health of the denomination's Hispanic works.

Given Foursquare's historic commitment to train and deploy leaders for evangelization and mission, Foursquare continues to invest in education. Globally, Foursquare has six degree granting colleges/seminaries, and twenty-six Global Council certified Schools of Ministry in twenty-five nations around the world that grant a one-year ministry certificate.⁵⁹ While these more formal training institutions are vital in equipping leaders for the harvest, the majority of ministerial training takes place through informal training seminars lasting just a few days. With the rapid global growth in the majority world and given the limitation of resources and facilities, these Discipleship and Leadership Training (DLT) seminars are invaluable in supporting the development of leaders worldwide. In recent years Foursquare has made a significant commitment to the expansion of DLT training.

In a notable return to the movement's roots, Foursquare invited Matthew Barnett, founder of the Dream Center in Los Angeles, a ministry that reaches out to the disadvantaged populations of Los Angeles providing support to the homeless, hungry, and marginalized people, to pastor Angelus Temple. Barnett, who holds both Assemblies of God and Foursquare credentials, has helped revitalize the multi-ethnic church. Today the Temple has a thriving Spanish-speaking congregation in addition to the English-speaking congregation. The move reflected the interdenominational aims of Foursquare's founder and McPherson's commitment social justice and diversity. It is just one of a number of initiatives reflecting a return to the movement's commitment to social justice and reaching a more ethnically diverse audience. When Foursquare consolidated its US districts of churches from 14 to six in 2021, the six supervisors appointed to lead the districts included an African-American female, an African American male, a Hispanic male (and, as of this writing, an interim Cuban-American female Supervisor). Given the current highly polarized state of American politics, some of these changes in Foursquare have been met with resistance. Nevertheless, they reflect commitments found in the movement's early years.

In closing, both challenges and opportunities are ahead for the Foursquare Church. Its present U.S. leadership team, led by Foursquare

⁵⁹ The exact number of certificate-granting Schools of Ministry globally is unknown. These numbers reflect only those nations and Schools which have opted to align with the Foursquare Global Council's certification requirements.

president Randy Remington, is aware of and seeking to respond to both the U.S. and global community. One thing is certain, the Foursquare Church is thriving globally, and the U.S. church is providing support and serving as a vital partner. The vision of Aimee Semple McPherson is being celebrated around the world this centennial year, and there is renewed hope that the entire Foursquare Church will experience fresh outpouring and renewal through the work of the Holy Spirit.

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Foursquare Missiology: Reproducible, Empowering, and Relational

Ted Vail

Abstract

The growth of the Global Foursquare Movement has been fueled by a unique missiology. Following in the steps of its founder, Aimee Semple McPherson, an evangelist who saw the importance of disciple making, training, and apostolic sending; Foursquare combines training with relationship building then emphasizes mentoring, indigenous empowerment, and multiplication locally. Men and women are entrusted and empowered to plant the Gospel locally and globally in such a way that disciples, leaders, churches, and movements are reproducible. The outcome is a global movement held together by relationships, shared mission, and global eldership, continuing this mission collectively by choice.

Keywords: relationship, training, indigenous, multiplication, reproducible, empowerment, mission, innovation, women

Introduction

How does a global movement like Foursquare begin? How does it expand, growing from one church pastored by a woman to a global movement of 85,000-100,000 churches in over 156 nations in 100 years? Is there some strategy that propels this, or is it purely God's sovereignty? Or perhaps it's both but with an undergirding missiology.

Sometimes expansion is fueled by Spirit-empowered passion that seizes a *kairos* moment in time. If this, however, is solely the case, it would make for a great biography and certainly a case study to learn from, but it's nothing that we can replicate since it is not reproducible. Even if a movement starts this way, sustainability requires strategy and missiology.

In 1923, Aimee Semple McPherson, a Canadian-American evangelist, launched "Angelus Temple" and soon after the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Los Angeles, California. This church was not

initially designed to be a church, but rather a center for equipping everyday people to be ministers of the Foursquare Gospel. In 1923, the term “Foursquare” did not refer to a denomination but rather a revelation of who Jesus Christ is, particularly as seen in the Book of Ezekiel. “Foursquare” is found in the King James translation of the Bible, where it represents being solid, resolute, firm, and literally square in shape and appearance.

Sister Aimee, as she was affectionately called, not only was a passionate evangelist, but she also had an amazing healing gift. This was coupled with a passion for winning lost people to Jesus Christ, a willingness to be creative and innovative, and a commitment to go to amazing lengths to get the gospel message to as many people as possible. This is reflected in her history, which becomes the history of Foursquare and subsequently the genetics of the Foursquare movement. The location of Angelus Temple in Los Angeles meant that she had access to the Hollywood studios in the adjacent neighborhood and to the burgeoning entertainment industry. She became the first woman in the history of the United States to have a radio license, and she broadcast the gospel over the airwaves of KFSG radio. In the 1920s, perhaps not unlike today, there were men who wouldn’t enter a church building to hear a woman preacher, but they would listen on the radio. Many men not only listened to her on the radio, they received Christ through the radio broadcast ministry. Some ended up coming to the Temple. Subsequently, some of these, along with many women, became the first church planters and missionaries. The innovation went far beyond her media ministry at the time but delved into bringing the arts back into the church with stage design, stage productions, elaborate illustrated sermons, and outreaches into the community. These outreaches included entries in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses parade with a Foursquare float that lifted up the name of Jesus.

There was such a desperation to get the gospel to every man, woman, boy, and girl who lived in Los Angeles and around the world that Sister Aimee went to any length and any expense to get the gospel to them. This really built the essential framework of Foursquare’s missiology, a missiology birthed from Scripture and the Holy Spirit’s urgency to evangelize.

Intuitive Missiology and The Development of a Movement

In the very first year of Angelus Temple, Sister Aimee planted what would become LIFE Bible College. The church grew exponentially and

was undoubtedly one of the first mega-churches in American history, as the building had a seating capacity of nearly 5,000 people and hosted twenty-one services every week. Sister Aimee had a passion to get the gospel to everyone. The fourth square of Foursquare's belief that Jesus Christ is the Coming King propelled the message with urgency. When combined with Acts 2:17-18 and the belief that the power of the Holy Spirit was available to all believers—both young and old, men and women—it is easy to see how a strategy for mission was coming together: urgency to get the gospel out combined with the availability of the priesthood of all believers provided an enormous force.

To further understand the genetics of the Foursquare movement, and ultimately Foursquare's missiology, it's important to grasp the early years of Angelus Temple and the early days of Foursquare. There were a few primary components: first and foremost was lifting up Jesus Christ. While this might seem obvious, Jesus was so preeminent in the ministry's heart and mind of Sister Aimee that she was driven and compelled to get this message, this good news, to everyone. As the church grew, trained, added ministers, and planted "branch churches" locally, regionally, and internationally, she incorporated this movement as the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. At the same time, it's worth noting that on the very cornerstone of Angelus Temple, it reads: "Dedicated unto the cause of interdenominational and worldwide evangelism." The fact that her desire to lift up the name of Jesus was greater than a desire to plant a denomination is visible in her commitment to work together with everyone in the body of Christ for the cause of getting the good news to all.

Secondly was her dedication to plant churches—local and contextual churches. This is demonstrated by her desire and willingness to send workers to other parts of Los Angeles as well as other parts of the United States and other nations. She sent workers to other parts of the city to plant churches among other language groups. She utilized the Angelus Temple building to have congregations form around other cultures and languages. For example, there was a Jewish Christian congregation and a Native American ministry, not to mention those of other immigrant-based groups. Any of her meetings would clearly demonstrate fully diverse and integrated gatherings in a time when that was not popular and, in some places in the country, not even legal, but she understood context and made room for it.

Third was Sister Aimee's realization or perhaps revelation of the importance of caring for people. Her own journey is one of being a widowed single mother as a young missionary in China. In the years

following, as she served as a traveling evangelist in the U.S. and Canada, Sister Aimee regularly encountered poverty. Her mother was part of the Salvation Army Movement which traditionally focuses on the wounded of the city and the physical and spiritual needs of the person. Just a few years into the existence of Angelus Temple, the Great Depression hit America. Sister Aimee and the church mobilized what was called “The Commissary.” “Commissary” is a military term and perhaps has a connection to the Salvation Army, which is, of course, also military in nature. But the concept is that of provision, and provision it had. Angelus Temple was so generous through its Commissary that it outgave the entire government structure and system of the City of Los Angeles during the Great Depression. Angelus Temple’s Commissary was known to have no strings attached when giving, just a desire to care for the physical needs, particularly food and clothing.

Fourth was the strong belief in Bible training. As mentioned, within the first year of the planting of Angelus Temple, what would become LIFE Bible College was planted. It’s interesting to note that Spanish language training was required. The idea behind this was simple – Spanish was so widely spoken in Los Angeles and even in parts of the United States that it seemed logical that if you were going to be trained, you should learn one of the primary languages of the land.

So strong was this core missiology of Sister Aimee in her early years with Angelus Temple that she sought to launch a duplicate Angelus Temple and LIFE Bible College fully in Spanish on a different parcel of property. This church and institute were placed in the hands of Hispanic leaders and were not legally tethered to Angelus Temple. Did Sister Aimee believe in indigeneity? Or was this a reflection of her desire to get the gospel out and limit any bureaucracy? Those who have listened to her sermons would suggest it was the latter. She did not like to take time for bureaucracy and believed that as little administration as was necessary was the best approach.

Against this backdrop, a mission took shape. The earliest Foursquare missionaries were deployed out of the fires of revival. Some were Americans of European descent who were sent to nations where they would need to learn language and culture to plant churches. Others were immigrants or even visiting sailors or workers who received Christ in Los Angeles and were trained and sent back to their countries of origin. Sending immigrants back to their home countries, because they already knew people, language, and culture and had access to people in ways that a foreigner would not, became part of Foursquare’s pre-World War II strategy and missiology.

Post-WWII: Establishing a Missiology

Aimee Semple McPherson died in 1944 during World War II. Thus, in the post-World War II age of missions, Foursquare took some new forms as well as embraced some of the former. Indigenous empowerment continued to be a very high value, and it's worth noting that no credible source can tell the root of this desire. Was it a pure desire to indigenize, the reality that when there isn't enough money, you have no choice, or an attempt to avoid the administration and ensuing bureaucracy—so it seemed better to just get the gospel out and plant more churches?

After Sister Aimee's death, her son Rolf became the president of the Foursquare movement. While Foursquare continued to be apostolic in some ways in the U.S., it also functioned much more as a denomination and a corporation than it ever had. Outside of the United States, however, Foursquare Missions International (FMI), the missions branch of the Foursquare Church of the U.S., somehow seemed to retain the initial and original apostolic identity of the movement and its founder. This movement continued to highlight dramatic miracles and healings, preaching the gospel everywhere, planting churches, and establishing training institutes to empower the local people who were touched. Just as in the early days of Angelus Temple, local people, who were touched by the gospel and subsequently trained, became the most fruitful and effective ministers.

It is worth noting that for a global movement the size of Foursquare, Foursquare Missions has never fielded a lot of missionary workers from the U.S. or from other nations. In the 1960s, this caught the attention of Jim Montgomery, who had studied at Fuller's Institute of Church Growth and was based in the Philippines researching the expansion of the gospel. After viewing various movements that were experiencing exponential growth in the Philippines in the 1950s and 1960s, Montgomery decided to solely study the Foursquare church because it didn't have very many missionaries from the West, yet it was experiencing rapid expansion. He recounts his research and journey in a book called *New Testament Fire in the Philippines* and, as a non-Pentecostal, he objectively looked at all angles for the cause of the growth, both natural and supernatural.

Montgomery's findings illustrate what was partially instilled in Foursquare missionaries at the time and what became codified from this season forward to become not only on-field, in-service training but pre-field training for all personnel. How is it that a movement can have such

exponential growth and revival in another nation without many missionaries? The few Foursquare missionaries that were there did not plant many churches. But if they did, they turned the leadership of those churches over very quickly to local leaders. They planted Bible institutes even when there were very few believers in the area; they prayed for the sick and believed in the miraculous. While there were Foursquare missionaries in less than forty countries, Montgomery's story captured in the Philippines helped in understanding Foursquare missiology and development.

As in the beginning, Foursquare missiology is highly empowering, which necessitates training and a trusting relationship. It is a missiology that is infinitely reproducible; in other words, disciples make disciples, leaders make more leaders, churches plant more churches, those churches turn into movements, and those movements send workers or missionaries to other parts of the island or the country or even another nation where that worker starts all over and makes disciples, raises up leaders, and plants churches again. This life cycle missiology is known as Foursquare's "Four Stages of National Church Development," or, more simply, "The Four Stages." Taken from the pages of Scripture, it was developed into a book, *Disciples of All Nations*, and then into a book series by the late Foursquare missiologist, Dr. John Amstutz. This missiology not only focuses on infinite reproducibility, but it emphasizes indigeneity, contextualization, and mission sending. In other words, it captured the original essence of Foursquare and those key four components mentioned earlier, brought them into an expansion-based missiology that is both scriptural and Spirit-led, and one that not only works for Americans and Western funding structures, but for any nation and any believer.

This missiology is relational in nature, as is God. It is focused on people groups more than individuals. It has shown itself to be organic more than mechanical, focusing on lifecycles and movements.

The Four Stages of National Church Development¹

Stage 1: Initiate

The goal is to make healthy, reproducing disciples. It is in this phase that gospel witness is initiated among a people group. This is likely where a church is planted in some way.

¹ John L. Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations* (Fresno: Editorial RENEUEVO, 2013), ch. 2.

Stage 2: Nurture

The goal is to make responsible, reproducing leaders. It is in this phase that mentoring, modeling, and leadership development take place. Stage 2 is the place of mobilizing members, cultivating congregational life, and strengthening the family as well.

Stage 3: Expand

The goal is to make responsible and reproducing congregations. It is in this “empowerment” phase that the church community “contextualizes” and develops structure. It more fully takes on the identity of the people group or “soil” where it is planted. It not only looks less like any outsiders who may have planted it, but it becomes governed by locals themselves with less and less outside control.

Stage 4: Extend

The goal of Stage 4 is to make responsible, reproducing, missionary-sending churches. This stage is one in which churches and the church movement are growing in awareness and maturity as they begin raising up and sending missionaries. These people might be sent to those geographically and culturally near or far. Ultimately, this “restarts” the cycle as these missionaries activate Stage 1 all over again. It is worth keeping in mind that this missiology refers more to people groups, regions, and nations than it does to individuals, and that it is more of a meta-strategy.

With this strategy/missiology, other nations outside of the United States have emerged as missionary-sending forces. Foursquare’s missionary force has been multiplied through the involvement of missionaries from other nations. While it is common for some nations to reach their own diaspora populations in other nations, and this certainly has its place, these nations have also stretched beyond and reached across cultural boundaries and borders to people of other languages and cultures.

Two core components of Stage 4 sending are partnering and networking. Historically, Foursquare has worked together collaboratively more than competitively in missionary sending and opening new people groups. The Foursquare U.S. church, through FMI, has historically provided regional and area field coordinators who are multi-gifted and relational and who embody this four-stage missiology. Through these coordinators and field leaders, partnership and networking become more attainable. Note that they are not granted global organizational

authority, hierarchically speaking; rather, any authority they have is spiritual and is based on relationship and its influence.

As of the year 2000, not all these field coordinators were U.S. citizens. As the global Foursquare movement has grown, there is an increased level of partnership and influence from a variety of nations even though the source—or some might say the clearinghouse—has resided with FMI for opening new nations and serving other nations according to their stage of development.

Hence, this missiology plays out as a global movement by identifying the stage of development of a nation and its people groups and determining how others might best serve in networking and partnership with that nation and people group. It has historically been the role of FMI to relationally make these assessments and essentially listen to the leaders of a people group or nation to hear where they're at and what would serve them best in advancing the gospel and applying this missiology. The way forward is not usually clean-cut but rather something that is Spirit-led through prayer and discussion with leaders from various nations and respective missionaries.

Global Identity, Ownership, and Empowerment

Among the valued aspects of Foursquare's missiology is that it is relational, Spirit-led, and increasingly less directed by any one nation or person. As the global Foursquare church has grown in breadth and depth in the twenty-first century, its levels of leadership have also matured under an indigenizing mission strategy. Not only do the Four Stages serve a people group or a geopolitical nation, they also serve regions of the world and the world itself. Starting in the 1980s and taking more shape in the early 2000s, Foursquare formed a global leadership structure, Foursquare Global Council, comprised of elders from various nations and regions. In other words, Foursquare took on and became Stage 3 as a movement, gaining its own context and ownership that wasn't housed within the United States. While many nations had been independent and indigenized for decades, there was always a harkening back to the United States for direction and leadership. While that tendency continues under a regional and global structure, the Foursquare movement is much more globally led in its 100th year. For example, today Foursquare has a Global Doctrine Committee. Though each nation may have its own doctrinal committee to address national and contextual doctrinal issues, the global family wants to be able to address key global doctrines, and this committee

does not want nations to “slip up” or compromise core aspects of the faith when under trial. Also, this committee wants to be a support for nations or portions of the world that are going through a doctrinal or pastoral struggle where perhaps another part of the world could assist them.

In 2012, Foursquare convened a Global Summit comprised of leaders of nations from around the world to discuss the various distinct characteristics of Foursquare and what might be baseline qualities or characteristics of Foursquare. From this Summit came six Global Distinctives that global Foursquare leaders identified as being core characteristics of the movement, no matter the country where one might serve. These six Global Distinctives² have provided a rudder or a plumbline for all nations, and this is particularly vital because there is no “Rome” or Pope (single hierarchical person) in Foursquare, but rather a Global Council functioning as an eldership more than governorship. There is no central hierarchical structure housed in one nation or embodied in one person except for Jesus Christ Himself. This ultimately means that an entire movement is relationship-based and volunteering their participation; so, to be members, there must be core beliefs and practices or distinctives. With so many nations now planting churches and making disciples amongst other nations and people groups, not merely those where there is no gospel presence but also amidst those where there is a gospel presence, even a Foursquare presence. Things can become complicated, and the need for identifying characteristics and baseline beliefs becomes essential.

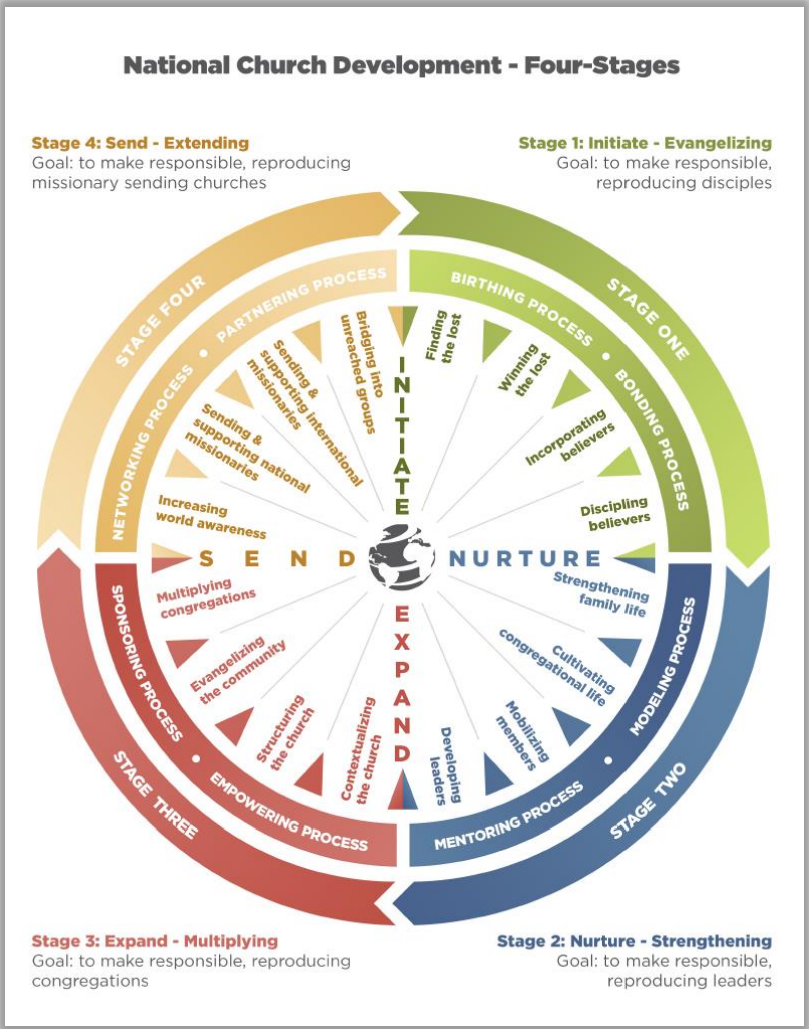
Shared Mission

Foursquare focuses its mission and ministry efforts on multiplying disciples, leaders, churches, and national movements. Holding to God’s passion for the lost, Foursquare is a movement of evangelism, mercy ministries, contextualized church planting, and mobilizing indigenous believers in ministry among all peoples.

With these foci in place and a global movement shifting into a Stage 4 position of global networking and partnership to reach other nations, a global mission has become one of the most vital and logical next steps in this global missiology. In 2010, a small cohort of national missions directors began to convene; this group has grown and is now a part of

² See the article in this publication entitled “Global Distinctives and Foursquare U.S. Church keystones.” Also, Foursquare Church, “Global Distinctives” (<https://www.foursquare.org/about/beliefs/>), accessed on Sept 19, 2023.

the global structure of Foursquare. The Shared Mission committee assists to catalyze, identify, and even allocate resources to key opportunities in nations to open people groups that need to be reached or to provide training opportunities for potential workers to go into mega-contexts of the world. The baseline question that undergirds this is, “What can we do together that we would not be able to do as effectively individually or alone?” The Shared Mission committee also partners with a cohort of global national missions directors who assist when planting and opening works in other nations.



The FouStage 4 Comes to America: Multi-ethnic Ministry

The U.S. Foursquare church has never embraced a “home missions” department. As was mentioned before, it could be due to a lack of funding that can often accompany a highly indigenizing movement that gives autonomy quickly to leaders. It also could be the sovereign hand of the Lord and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whatever the case, due to the relational nature of FMI and Foursquare globally, connecting Stage 4 church planters, missionaries, or immigrant church planters from other nations to the United States Foursquare church has theoretically not been difficult. What has proven difficult is for these incoming missionaries to navigate the U.S. Foursquare church structure and the relationships that come with it. Recently a movement, which had grown enormous outside of the United States, was increasingly sending back spiritual sons and daughters from all nations to come and serve in the United States. However, they were running into difficulties and oftentimes becoming frustrated to the point of not working with Foursquare in the U.S. A home missions department would likely be able to mitigate some of these challenges, but no department existed.

In 2008, an intentional step was taken by the leaders of the U.S. Foursquare Church to partner more effectively with leaders from nations throughout the world who were sending missionaries and immigrants to the United States to work with Foursquare. This process began with repentance on the part of the U.S. church and continued with the changing of policies such as license transfers, and immigration assistance for visas that ultimately expressed Foursquare’s ethos and missiology to a world that had become Stage 3 and Stage 4. The result of this shift was a strong uptick in growth in the U.S. Foursquare Church, fueled by incoming immigrants from other nations, as well as immigrants who had already landed but often were left wondering if the U.S. really recognized them or wanted them. As often is the case, this breakdown was both structural and emotional in nature, and both needed to be addressed.

Overall, the development of the multiethnic ministry in the U.S. church became something of a role model or test case for the growing worldwide church to see how to deal with and even experience growth through the networking and partnership of immigrants and people groups coming to any nation. The view of people as intruders who didn’t know the language or culture has been traded for the biblical metaphor of those friends in the nearby fishing boat who came to help bring in the big catch (Luke 5). This relational reproducing missiology is,

therefore, not easy, and not always very mechanical, but it does make sense. It is organic, and it allows Foursquare to function as a movement and even, sometimes, in the healthiest sense of the word, as a family. To be clear, structure was added, particularly in the form of gifted “multi-culturally adept” team members assigned to assist immigrants and multi-ethnic ministry. Legal staff was also added to help with visas and the many immigration challenges people face.

Of note is the fact that with multi-ethnic ministries taking on the role of accepting, onboarding, and assisting incoming missionaries and workers, FMI has stayed very involved relationally since these relationships are deep globally. Those leading this ministry in the U.S. are very connected and often part of the FMI team. This is the essence of Stage 4 missiology: partnership and networking.

The Commissary Returns: Relief as Mission

Early in the twenty-first century, the Foursquare Church of the United States, along with the Foursquare Global Council, noticed that the movement’s response to global and regional disasters and crises was not going well. Oftentimes, Foursquare lacked the competency to respond effectively. Response efforts were farmed out to other organizations, and yet something seemed missing. Looking back to the Commissary days of Sister Aimee (1920s/30s), as well as post-World War II missionary efforts and a few notable stories along the way, FMI created Foursquare Disaster Relief (FDR) in 2008. It was not difficult for FDR to gain traction or to have people embrace it because it really wasn’t something new at all; it had been around a long time. Foursquare is ultimately a movement that believes in the local church, in evangelism, and in caring for people in their time of need, so it was not difficult conceptually to put this together and recreate the Commissary at a national and global level. Foursquare’s new global Commissary has drawn upon Foursquare missiology. It has trained and empowered chaplains who are often modern-day evangelists and caregivers. Chaplaincy requires training and specialized gifts that can come alongside a local pastor and a local church when a crisis strikes their region. Foursquare Disaster Relief began to build partners of other Christian agencies, church movements, and non-Christian governmental organizations. Through these partnerships, FDR has become more capable and competent in responding to various crises both in the United States and globally. FDR is not a separate stand-alone organization any more than the Commissary was to Angelus Temple in

its earliest days. FDR is simply an extension of Foursquare running on the same rails as the Foursquare Church of the United States and globally of FMI and the global Foursquare movement. Therefore, very few personnel needed to be hired or acquired.

FDR needed competency in the right places, and it needed those who knew how to partner with others effectively, or in Stage 4 missiology terms, knew networking and partnership well. In a very hierarchical and organizational world of disaster response and relief, FDR gained competency in the language and culture of disaster relief but kept Foursquare's missiology and relational ethos.

FDR primarily responds through a local church or local churches to assist everyone in the region where there is a crisis. This has opened enormous doors for the gospel, including amongst unreached people groups and in hard-to-access nations and regions. FDR is no longer just a U.S. organization; many nations have their own FDR with contextually trained responders.

Unreached People Groups

In 2016, Foursquare Missions U.S., at the behest of the global Foursquare movement, began taking an even more serious approach to the unreached people groups (UPGs) of the world. Not only did FMI begin to emphasize and promote mission to the unreached, but Foursquare globally began to incentivize and highlight the unreached as well. This was predicated on the idea that we can do certain things together better than we can do alone or, in the case of the unreached, we might not be able to do it alone at all. In reference to FDR, there's an opening of hearts and nations amidst crises, and it is essential for any movement to walk with integrity in these times and not exploit the situation. At the same time, this has proven to be a great opportunity for the gospel to spread in Stage 1 form to places and to people who do not know Jesus Christ.

Interdenominational

As nations continue to move through the four stages or phases and reproduce and repeat in the regions of the world, the whole global Foursquare movement is also experiencing the same rebirthing and developing of leaders on a global scale, empowering, indigenizing, allowing contextualization to occur, and ultimately networking, partnering, and sending into new areas. Harkening back to what Sister Aimee put on the cornerstone of Angelus Temple, that Foursquare was

“dedicated unto the cause of interdenominational and worldwide evangelism,” this networking and partnering is not merely inward where Foursquare only works with Foursquare, but rather Foursquare has so many others to thank for its current development. If it were not for the help of so many other denominations, missions’ agencies, and movements, as well as individuals, Foursquare would not be where it is today. The Kingdom of God has continued to grow outside of Foursquare and over the walls of what Foursquare is because of interdenominational partnerships.

A Movement on Mission

While far from perfect as a movement, Foursquare is growing, relational in nature, innovative, and always seeking to put Jesus as the source and end of its missiology. As in the earliest days, disciples are equipped and empowered, as are the churches and the movements they pioneer.

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Global Distinctives and Keystones of Foursquare U.S. Church

Tammy Dunahoo and Aaron Friesen

Abstract

As Foursquare marks its centennial year of existence in 2023, this article seeks to name and describe five important identity keystones and distinctives that have given definition to the denomination over the past hundred years. The article explains how each of these characteristics of identity has developed historically, provides a unique and important contribution to the Body of Christ, and presents opportunities and challenges for Foursquare's continued growth and development.

Keywords: Foursquare, identity, keystones, distinctive, denomination

Introduction

“Identity” is defined as the unique identifying characteristics of a person or group. These characteristics are the distinctives by which a person or group is known or recognized. In a group, these distinctives held in common and contextualized in ethos and behavior develop global identity congruence and provide a sense of belonging and heritage for succeeding generations. Many cultures, as well as stories in Scripture, connect a person's name to identity markers. This is true of The Foursquare Church. While preaching in Oakland, CA, in 1922, founder Aimee Semple McPherson likened Ezekiel's vision of God as a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle to the four aspects of Christ as Savior, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Coming King and exclaimed, “Why, why it's the Foursquare Gospel!”¹ The message and organization were named and centered around this truth.

A decade before The Foursquare Church's centennial in 2023, conversations emerged regarding the need to clarify and articulate Foursquare's distinct identity. Leaders recognized that some aspects of who we are that once were clearly defined had become somewhat ambiguous. Continued generational shifts and growing numbers of

¹ https://resources.foursquare.org/sister_aimee_explains_the_foursquare_gospel/.

people joining Foursquare from other organizations were beautifully diversifying us and revealing the need for focused attention to what unifies and defines us. What is in our Foursquare DNA that we must retain and articulate for the future because it makes us uniquely who we are called to be and defines the mission we are about as a global family?

Two gatherings convened that resulted in a written statement, The Foursquare Global Distinctives, and a book of essays, *What Makes Us Foursquare*, which was later summarized into the booklet, *Foursquare Identity Keystones*. The first gathering in 2012 was the Foursquare Global Summit, which was composed of leaders from more than seventy nations (including the elders comprising Foursquare’s Global Council). Through days of prayer and listening, the Summit agreed that churches and communities where they minister would require flexibility and contextualization, but there would be a common commitment to align to the distinctives.

In 2017, a group of U.S. Foursquare scholars gathered to discuss the Global Distinctives and relate it to the research work by Dr. Sam Rockwell, a U.S. district supervisor, on identity congruence in the U.S. Foursquare Church. The essays written by the group on five topics identified in Rockwell’s research as “Foursquare Identity Keystones” were compiled into *What Makes Us Foursquare* and later summarized in *Foursquare Identity Keystones*.

Since publication, these have been distributed and taught throughout the U.S., including the insertion of these texts into the licensing process for all ministry applicants. The Global Council continues to teach, propagate, and organize around these distinctives.

In the sections that follow, we will describe each of these distinctives and keystones and the way they relate to each other. As a movement “dedicated unto the cause of interdenominational, worldwide evangelism,”² our commitment is to do our part in fulfilling the Great Commission with our unique DNA while joining together with the larger Body of Christ for the sake of revealing the love of God to the world.

² This phrase was inscribed on the cornerstone of Angelus Temple when it was completed in 1923.

Kingdom Partnerships

The distinctive of “Kingdom Partnerships” was the expression of the Global Council³ to address our founding statement regarding our interdenominational mission. Another important aspect of a clear and congruent identity is that it builds a settled confidence in who we are without the need for others to be like us. We honor and respect how our Creator has graced and gifted each one of us and how each Christian movement is formed with its unique DNA. Each part of the Body of Christ brings an important contribution as we are connected to one another. Just as the human body has unique systems, cells, and attributes, so the Body of Christ. The Global Summit described this distinctive:

We will work alongside other Christians and churches with whom we can partner in mission. We will be a distinct movement but will also hold a collegial spirit and maintain a helpful and cooperative posture.⁴

A beautiful portrayal of this value is found in local communities where varying churches lay aside their differences to unite around Christ and His mission. One will often find Foursquare pastors involved in local ministerial alliances and nonprofits engaging with a relational and missional focus to do good in their communities and to meet felt needs, demonstrating the good news of the kingdom of God. This type of unity is essential in our world today! The Church has the opportunity to model the beauty of bringing people together with the character of Christ revealed in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control as the Spirit-filled and Spirit-formed people of God. For the Foursquare Church, this is part of living out a shared mission which will be further discussed in the last distinctive. We may disagree inside the various church ecclesiologies about liturgy, practice, and doctrinal expressions; yet, in our shared communities, we can agree that the kingdom of God is breaking out everywhere God’s people are found and where Jesus is the central figure. No matter the distinctives of each group, what we hold in common with the larger Church is Christ and His mission on earth.

³ As noted above, the concepts behind the Global Distinctives originated with the larger Global Summit members but was later formalized by the Global Council.

⁴ <https://resources.foursquare.org/global-distinctives-announced-by-foursquare-global-council>.

This was a motivating passion and practice of Sister Aimee McPherson in fulfilling the task to get the gospel to every man, woman, boy and girl.⁵ When describing “the church I like,” McPherson said, “A church is interdenominational in spirit where all men may meet on a common footing at the foot of the cross and satisfy their hungry hearts upon the Word of the Living God.”⁶ The varying streams in her own formation, which included Methodism, Salvation Army, and early Pentecostal movements, formed this interdenominational spirit.

On the whole, “in a religious world far too often torn apart by unnecessary separation, we find this more magnanimous, communal, and practical attitude and approach to formal doctrine a blessing.”⁷ In many ways, the interdenominational spirit that animated McPherson’s ministry foreshadowed later Pentecostal renewal movements of the 20th century—the “Charismatic Movement” of the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, and many other denominations. Later, this spirit impacted other Pentecostal and Charismatic inspired “Third Wave” movements such as The Association of Vineyard Churches. Such a spirit of negotiation led Foursquare to send delegates as inaugural participants in the official International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue in 1972. Fifty years later, Foursquare continues to be officially involved in this dialogue that is now in its seventh formal phase of dialogue.

Sound Doctrine and Moderation

The Global Foursquare family of churches has a shared commitment to doctrinal soundness. This distinctive represents the Global Council’s commitment to the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* as an authoritative guide rooted in the Scriptures for the doctrine and practices of Foursquare churches and leaders around the world. But what does that commitment mean practically? How is doctrinal soundness evinced and judged in a movement as large and culturally diverse as Foursquare?

The *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* is the doctrinal statement of the Foursquare Church. This doctrinal statement is binding for U.S. Foursquare ministers and provides a baseline of doctrinal boundaries and accountability for Foursquare churches around the world. Interestingly, the *Declaration of Faith* has not been modified since it was

⁵ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 250.

⁶ https://resources.foursquare.org/the_kind_of_a_church_i_like/.

⁷ Steve Overman, “Moderation,” in *Identity keystones: What Makes Us Foursquare*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: The Foursquare Church, 2017), 146.

originally compiled by McPherson in 1923. The doctrine in the *Declaration of Faith* is clearly Pentecostal in nature. Yet, the *Declaration* also has some unique features when compared to other Pentecostal denominations.

One distinct feature is its statement on “Moderation”:

We believe that the moderation of the believer should be known to all men; that his experience and daily walk should never lead him into extremes, fanaticism, unseemly manifestations, backbiting, and murmurings; but that his sober, thoughtful, balanced, mellow, forgiving, and zealous Christian experience should be one of steadfast uprightness, equilibrium, humility, self-sacrifice, and Christlikeness.⁸

While few Pentecostal movements would want to be known as imbalanced or fanatical, no other early Pentecostal denomination had such a statement delineated at length in its articles of faith. Far from peripheral, this idea of moderation has been central to the whole idea of the Foursquare movement. The very word “Foursquare” was in McPherson’s estimation a name that “stands for balance, poise, solidity, strength, and speed.”⁹ This notion of Foursquare as a place of balance and stability was embodied in many ways in the teachings and ministry of McPherson and continues to be a guiding value for Foursquare leadership. Thus, it is no surprise that “Moderation” was one of the five identity keystones that Rockwell identified in his study of the U.S. Foursquare Churches.

A “middle-of-the-road” sensibility is noticeable in the balanced and moderate doctrinal positions sketched out in the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* and further evident in the church’s overall attitude towards and approach to the use of formal doctrine. The moderate attitude toward doctrinal formulation that McPherson exhibited is in line with her early vision for the Foursquare organization not to “simply assemble and retain a sectarian Pentecostal subculture, but to contribute a timely gift to the larger Body of Christ.”¹⁰ This doctrine of “Moderation” correlates with the “Kingdom Partnerships” distinctive as it was this posture that enabled her to partner with other denominations. McPherson’s goal was to speak to all Christians and to make the story of Jesus Christ relatable to the masses. There were fundamentalist features in her approach to

⁸ McPherson, *Statement of Faith*, 20.

⁹ McPherson, *Lost and Restored: Sermons and Personal Testimony of Aimee Semple McPherson*. Centennial Edition. (Foursquare Publications, 1990), 31.

¹⁰ Steve Overman, “Moderation,” in *Identity Keystones*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: Foursquare, 2017), 77.

doctrine, to be sure, but she was not hostile to other expressions. In fact, in a way that perhaps distinguished her from other Pentecostal leaders, she felt a connection to and was open to appropriating understandings and practices from other streams of the larger church.

One specific example of this “middle-of-the-road” approach to doctrine is Foursquare’s doctrinal statement on “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” During the same time that the Assemblies of God began to refer to the doctrine of initial evidence as “the distinctive testimony” of Pentecostals, McPherson’s statement on “The Baptism” avoided such language. It looked to the early days of the church as a precedent for a present-day expectation of “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit” without rigidly defining speaking in tongues as the evidence or making such a doctrine a touchstone of Foursquare identity.

Nathaniel Van Cleave notes, “This relative doctrinal tranquility can probably be traced to Aimee Semple McPherson’s positive teaching and her position of moderation in all things; in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”¹¹ Admittedly, this attitude and approach may have contributed at times to a neglect of theological and doctrinal depth and precision in The Foursquare Church. For that reason, in recent times the Foursquare movement has embraced a deeper value for ministerial development in holistic education of all kinds.¹² Questions of how best to interpret the *Declaration of Faith* as it relates to doctrinal boundaries and “essentials” for licensed ministers are currently being addressed by both the Foursquare U.S. and Global Doctrine Committees. While Foursquare has always championed “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever,” it has also come to recognize the importance of updating and revising one’s descriptions and applications of these principles of doctrinal soundness and moderation for each new generation.

Empowering Leadership

The statement on empowerment in leadership by the Global Council was drafted specifically to address our value of diversity in The Foursquare Church. Intentional focus has been on young generations,

¹¹ Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992), 24.

¹² For Foursquare’s Philosophy of Education see http://s3.com/foursquare-org/assets/education/Philosophy_of_Education.pdf.

women, and all ethnic people groups as these are often those among us that experience theological, cultural, and systemic barriers. The Global Council determined,

According to God's gifting and calling, we will intentionally prepare and release men and women across generations and cultures into all positions of leadership and areas of ministry.¹³

Both the U.S. Church and Global Council have developed intentional strategies to identify these three groups and prepare and release them into leadership as well as address systemic barriers.

Women in Senior Leadership

The U.S. *Identity Keystones* was specific regarding empowering women to senior leadership. There was a discovery that most ministers and congregations believed, and they supported women in ministry roles. The barrier was toward women in senior leadership or governing roles. In the keystone booklet, the author recounts the emphasis of McPherson in a baccalaureate sermon which she preached in 1930 for L.I.F.E. Bible College graduates and her explicit statements regarding women in her "Back to Pentecost" meetings in 1936. She called on Foursquare to "renounce all forms of gender discrimination."¹⁴ That same year the convention passed a resolution at their annual convention stating, "There shall be no discrimination between women and men in relationship to their duties, activities, ecclesiastical and spiritual standings, and recognitions in the Foursquare Gospel Organization. All executive offices shall be open to both men and women in good standing in the organization."¹⁵

Unfortunately, like many other organizations, The Foursquare Church has been influenced by cultural and theological biases. The Foursquare *Identity Keystones* booklet states,

Foursquare ministers identify with and attempt to put this value into practice in their ministry. Yet, statistics show that despite these efforts, a significant gap remains between male and female leadership in Foursquare, particularly at the level of senior pastor and higher. For

¹³ <https://resources.foursquare.org/global-distinctives-announced-by-foursquare-global-council>.

¹⁴ Aaron Friesen, ed., *Foursquare Identity Keystones* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Missions Press, 2018), 27.

¹⁵ Friesen, ed., *Foursquare Identity Keystones*, 28.

example, during the 1930's 40% of senior pastors in Foursquare were women. In 2012, . . . only 7% of the total numbers of senior pastors were female.¹⁶

In 2005, a renewed focus on this distinctive launched an effort that is still active today. The doctrine committee was commissioned to write a booklet with an official statement with recommendations for action to see that this distinctive is fully realized in our behaviors and was updated in 2019 to reflect current realities. A Board-commissioned task force was assigned the mission of reviewing and recommending action steps and strategies for implementation. Since this effort ensued, there has been a significant increase in the number of female senior pastors appointed, female Board of Directors elected and appointed, and female executives, district supervisors, associate supervisors, regional and area pastors selected (representing the care, missional, and supervisory structure of The Foursquare Church).

A major step in establishing the culture of this distinctive was taken in 2019 when the revised *Women in Ministry Leadership* and *Foursquare Identity Keystones* booklets were added to the ministerial licensing course. This process requires that every incoming minister affirm beliefs and practices that align to the keystones including developing and sponsoring women to senior leadership roles. This is a part of the panel interview for every license applicant.

The foundational belief of The Foursquare Church, which was central to the founder's teaching on this matter, is that Pentecost, not cultural shifts, launched the re-created community as God intended in Genesis 1 and 2.¹⁷ Men and women were created in the image of God as a blessed alliance to share the responsibility of stewarding God's creation as mutual partners. Christ's restorative work broke the curse and Pentecost rebirthed this mutual missional alliance. Peter declared this inauguration in Acts 2:14-18.

Generational Diversity

The Foursquare Church has been keenly aware of our aging ministerium, generational differences, and the need to equip and appoint young leaders in all positions of leadership for the present and future vitality of the movement. To give attention to the development of young leaders, there has been a renewed focus on NextGen ministries (cradle

¹⁶ Friesen, ed., *Foursquare Identity Keystones*, 29.

¹⁷ Friesen, ed., *Foursquare Identity Keystones*, 26-27.

to college) as well as various forms of leadership development for young adults. These efforts have included local church internships and residencies and a strengthened partnership with Life Pacific University, the denomination's flagship educational institution.

District supervisors have developed resources for aging pastors to prepare for redeployment into other areas of ministry when it is time for succession. District leaders have been intentional in preparing younger pastors, congregations, and retiring pastors for transition.

The distinctive of intergenerational ministry has been the goal, and The Foursquare Church acknowledges this is an area of ongoing need and action. As with women in senior leadership, there have been advances in younger generations moving into leadership through successions, appointments, church planting, and selections as denominational leadership.

Ethnic Diversity

As a global family, The Foursquare Church has always experienced a missional sending and receiving of workers around the globe. The partnership of member nations has been a vibrant work of the Global Council in moving from the U.S. as parent to partner.

Now the U.S. is among the top receiving nations of global workers. In 2015, a regional Hispanic District was launched because of the growth and unique needs of this people group. In 2020, this district became national in its reach. The Hispanic District is one of the fastest growing demographics of Foursquare ministers and church planters in the U.S. Each year at the annual convention, various ethnic groups gather for Ethnic Network Connections where they support one another and strategize among their people group. These include Chinese, Korean, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Black Pastors, and others.

Diversity Summits have been held nationally and regionally to provide opportunities for cultural intelligence training, relationship building between groups, and networking for missional engagement. Another important aspect of the summits is to identify the system barriers in the organization and develop strategies to address and remove said barriers. One of those identified was the need to assist when a group grows beyond the size of a network. How are they to have resourcing and authority in decision-making to continue their movement? This question and barrier identification is what launched the Hispanic District.

Guided by relationship, this distinctive is described as one of empowerment to ensure that everyone no matter their age, gender, or ethnicity, has a sense of belonging and the equipping, support, and sponsorship needed to fulfill their God-given call.

Family Relationships

Closely connected to the empowerment of all people is the way we relate to one another. The global distinctive states:

We will relate to each other with love in our Global Family. We acknowledge that relationships are the heart of God’s Kingdom and will extend grace to fellow believers through ministry, cooperation, and mutual submission in our global church.¹⁸

It is common to hear discussions about our “Foursquare family,” especially around the globe. Some have recommended other terms because of the effect “family” can have when it is not realized. Yet, the biblical narrative is replete with family descriptions. As Paul was equipping Timothy for his pastorate, he instructed him to treat the older men as fathers and older women as mothers, the younger men as brothers and younger women as sisters. We are joined in the household of faith, brothers and sisters of and in Christ. The goal is to grow in love, maturity, and Christlikeness as we live in relationship with one another.

Key words in the global distinctive are grace, cooperation, and mutual submission. These are attitudes of the heart that speak to the value of relationship and humility. We see these lived out among the Global Council and member nations as they seek to partner in mission. In the U.S., a recent structural change was made intending to give closer connection and care for local ministers through the appointment of area pastors whose only responsibility is to cultivate connection and care among the ministers.

Recognizing the current hour of the Church and the exposure of unhealthy leadership and abuse, the convention body resolved in 2022 that a *Healthy Leader Culture Initiative* be engaged. The Board of Directors employed an outside agency to review and recommend actions to implement this initiative. This too is part of what it means to value family relationships. We must be honest about what is in our DNA and

¹⁸ <https://resources.foursquare.org/global-distinctives-announced-by-foursquare-global-council>.

the current realities that bring harm to one another and our witness to the world and address it with courage, truth and grace.¹⁹

Spirit Empowerment and Pentecostal Ethos

Foursquare is without a doubt a Pentecostal organization. The roots of the organization and the spiritual experiences of its founder are easily traced back to the early Pentecostal revivals held at Azusa Street in Los Angeles. Yet, there is more to defining Foursquare as an organization than simply saying that we are Pentecostal. Sam Rockwell has observed that Foursquare embodies a distinct way of being Pentecostal that is traced back to McPherson who “embraced Pentecostalism in her day while simultaneously differentiating herself from it.”²⁰ Rockwell’s study suggests the following practices are significant root expressions of Foursquare’s identity as a Pentecostal organization: the public expectation of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, passionate and expressive worship, physical healing, and present-day miracles. These commitments are further expressed in the Distinctive of the Global Council on “Pentecostal Ethos”:

As a Spirit-filled movement, we will consistently minister the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and teach and encourage believers to fully express the gifts of the Spirit in their daily lives. We totally submit ourselves in obedience to the Spirit’s use of our lives and His miraculous works in our day.²¹

By focusing on Pentecostal ethos rather than doctrine, Foursquare has chosen to emphasize the importance fostering a Pentecostal environment that makes room for Spirit baptism and accompanying manifestations while leaving room for some diversity in how such values are expressed doctrinally. “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit” is understood by Foursquare to be an essential aspect of every Christian’s life. Yet, in drafting the Foursquare Declaration of Faith, McPherson described speaking in tongues and spiritual gifts as an *expectation* as opposed to *evidence* of such an experience. While it is clear from her writings and sermons that McPherson anticipated that speaking in

¹⁹ <https://www.foursquare.org/healthy-leadership>.

²⁰ Rockwell, “Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence,” 93.

²¹ <https://resources.foursquare.org/global-distinctives-announced-by-foursquare-global-council>.

tongues would normally accompany the Baptism, it is significant that she did not lock herself or her organization into tightly defined language about that experience. In fact, it was in reference to the fruit of the Spirit rather than speaking in tongues that she used evidential language, calling it the “irrefutable evidence of the Spirit-filled life.”²² Thus, one can reasonably argue that it is in keeping with the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith*, as well as the spirit and practices of its founder, that Foursquare as an organization embraces a shared expectation of charismatic manifestations rather than enforcing dogmatic assent to the particulars of what has come to be known as “classical Pentecostal” doctrine.

The experience of speaking in an unknown language as a private devotion or a means of public exhortation is an important characteristic of Foursquare’s Pentecostal ethos. A 2011 survey of Pentecostal ministers across three denominations (Foursquare, Open Bible, and Assemblies of God) showed that while Foursquare ministers were the least likely to subscribe to a rigid doctrine of initial evidence, they were the most likely to speak in tongues privately on a daily basis.²³ This evidence suggests that the regular practice of speaking or praying in tongues is a significant part of Foursquare’s shared Pentecostal spirituality, even while remaining somewhat flexible in doctrinal formulations.

Perhaps the most distinctive element of Foursquare’s Pentecostal ethos is the dynamics and feel of a public worship service. In fact, of the twenty-three distinctives that Rockwell assessed in his study of Foursquare identity, the highest ranking distinctive was “passionate and expressive worship and prayer.”²⁴ But what does Foursquare mean by “passionate and expressive?” More than simply making room for a free-flowing use of spiritual manifestations, this value is expressed in Foursquare through the concerted and organized use of music and artistry to create a collectively exuberant worship experience. Although McPherson often preached against the cold and lifeless formalism that she believed characterized many of the mainline churches, she was not afraid to incorporate worship practices and art forms that required

²² McPherson, *Declaration of Faith*, 19.

²³ Aaron Friesen, *Norming the Abnormal: The Development and Function of the Doctrine of Initial Evidence in Classical Pentecostalism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2013), 215.

²⁴ Rockwell, “Denominational Identity,” 69. In the study, 57% gave this a ranking of 1; 76% gave it a ranking of 1 or 2.

extensive preparation, programming, and professionalism.²⁵ Far from getting in the way of authentic worship, McPherson believed that such elements helped people's hearts and emotions to connect with the liturgy in meaningful ways. As an indicator of core assumptions — “that God is able and willing to intervene in human affairs, that He is ‘present’ rather than distant (the doctrine of immanence), and that . . . He is intimately engaged with human needs, emotions, and decisions”²⁶ — making space for people to emotionally connect with the reality of God's presence in their midst through music and song continues to be an essential aspect of the corporate worship experience in Foursquare.

McPherson is recognized as one of the great healing evangelists of the twentieth century, and her passionate conviction that Jesus continues to heal people was a hallmark of her ministry. The ministry of McPherson to the sick and marginalized in Los Angeles anchors Foursquare's Pentecostal identity to caring for those who suffer physically. Some scholars have characterized the ethos of early Pentecostalism as spiritualizing social problems while neglecting the Spirit's engagement with real world problems.²⁷ This characterization is certainly not consistent with the roots of Foursquare, and it may be argued that Foursquare has tended to resist a sharp separation between the physical and the spiritual. In contrast, Foursquare recognizes the healing ministry of Jesus as one of its four overarching tenets, and the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* emphasizes the power of Jesus to heal and meet the needs of those who are sick in the body “as well as the soul and spirit.”²⁸ Foursquare's belief that Spirit baptized people should carry on the healing ministry of Jesus continues to be a platform for bridges to be built and partnerships to be formed with individuals and organizations who are finding creative and effective ways to address and minister to the physical needs of people in our society.

²⁵ Her use of various media to communicate her message such as dramatic illustrated sermons, full-length sacred operas and plays, necessitated more tightly programmed and structured services than some early Pentecostals were accustomed.

²⁶ Rockwell, *Identity Keystones*, 17.

²⁷ See Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 127.

²⁸ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Divine Healing: A Doctrinal Sermon,” *Bridal Call Foursquare* (Jan 1930): 11.

A final aspect of Foursquare's shared Pentecostal ethos is our common belief in and contention for present-day miracles. This theological distinctive is indicative of a core assumption of the "immediacy of God's presence."²⁹ In corporate worship settings, this immediacy of presence is expected to be experienced through the elements already mentioned and through preaching. McPherson's belief in the immediate presence of God led her to consider the task of preaching as a primary means by which people could be drawn imaginatively into the living history of God's people. Her emphasis on dramatic sermons, elaborate stories, and illustrations in communicating the truths of Scripture were artful ways in which she attempted to help remove the historical distance between the text of Scripture and the context in which she ministered. Today, a continued part of Foursquare's Pentecostal ethos is the common belief that the powerful workings of God recorded in the Bible can be experienced today by the people of God in equally surprising, miraculous, and unexpected ways.

Shared Mission, Integrated Mission, Indigenous Empowerment

The Foursquare Global Council represents Foursquare's continued commitment to support and resource indigenous leadership around the world. Through a network of respected international pastors and leaders who serve in a global eldership capacity, the Council seeks to nurture, train, spiritually support, and offer guidance, as invited by our global Regions, through proactive collaborative relationships. The purpose of the Global Council is to advance the kingdom of Christ to reach the nations, bringing hope, salvation, and restoration in a united vision as led by the Holy Spirit. One of the foundational beliefs of the Council is "the intrinsic value and giftedness in every nation and culture."³⁰

The Global Council's Distinctive of "Shared Mission" describes the Council's shared commitment to utilize a diversity of methods and types of ministries in its desire to carry out Jesus' mandate to "make disciples of all nations."

We will focus our mission and ministry efforts on multiplying disciples, leaders, churches, and national movements. Holding to God's passion for the lost, we will seek a movement of evangelism, mercy ministries,

²⁹ Rockwell, *Identity Keystone*, 18.

³⁰ "Other Expressed Values," *Global Council Information Sheet* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Global Council), 2.

contextualized church planting, and mobilizing indigenous believers in ministry among all peoples.

When Angelus Temple was opened in 1923, the evangelistic focus of McPherson's ministry was inscribed on the cornerstone, and this sense of evangelistic purpose led to rapid growth through church planting. By 1925, over thirty churches had been planted. By 1927, the number had increased to 128 in twenty-five states.³¹ That same year, the first official missionary was sent out to a foreign field. As with many other Pentecostal organizations, missionary intent and evangelistic passion have been at the heart of Foursquare's identity. Such a value continues to be a distinct characteristic of the organization with 65% of ministers ranking "global and foreign missions" and 64% ranking "emphasis on evangelism" as the top two distinctives of the organization.³²

As Foursquare has sought to mobilize individuals to spread the good news "around the world," it has intentionally embraced contextual expressions of the gospel that address the felt needs of a particular community and through which diverse groups of people may be included, welcomed, and embraced. This practice of empowering missional creativity and hospitality among local and indigenous church planters and leaders is evident in the history and structure of the organization. Rockwell has observed that McPherson merged a Pentecostal ethos, conservative Protestant theology, and a deep concern for issues of social justice allowing her to integrate into her ministry a "dual concern of local church planting and indigenous leadership development with global concern for the disenfranchised."³³

In the current challenges of this rapidly changing global context, Foursquare seeks to empower a new kind of leader, disciplined into missionary engagement, and given freedom to experiment as they seek to contextualize the gospel for their culture and generation. We see this practice as an integral part of the beginnings of our movement and evidenced throughout our history, and it is vital that our discipleship and empowerment methods continue to make room for diverse leaders, expressions, and forms which emerge in the Foursquare movement both in the U.S. and around the world.

³¹ Amstutz, "Foursquare Missions," 63.

³² Rockwell, "Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence," 69.

³³ Rockwell, "Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence," 95.

In addition to making room for a diversity of leaders and expressions, Foursquare is committed to intentionally equip and empower indigenous people to become the primary leaders and strategists for their own ministries. This is a critical part of Foursquare's National Church Development process. Foursquare missiology is developed around what we call "Four Stage National Church Development":³⁴

- At Stage One the work is initiated by mission focused people. The gospel is sown, people are won to Christ, and a church is born resulting in the multiplication of disciples.
- During Stage Two, these believers are nurtured, discipled, and brought into greater fullness in Christ resulting in the multiplication of leaders.
- In Stage Three, as leaders grow, the gospel begins to expand beyond them, reaching even more people and resulting in the multiplication of churches.
- At Stage Four, the church planting movement begins to send out missionaries to cross boundaries into new people groups resulting in the multiplication of missionary work in new fields.

We see Foursquare's commitment to indigenous empowerment in this distinct four-stage missiology. Concerning the third stage, dedicated to expanding and multiplying, Amstutz says, "If the church is to be fruitful and multiply, it must fit the setting in which it is ministering. It has to be released to develop in a way that is culturally appropriate so that it can become truly indigenous."³⁵ When a church or ministry is not successfully released to the indigenous people, the ministry usually will not multiply in the same way.

Conclusion

As the Foursquare denomination marks its centennial year and looks forward in sober anticipation of the next hundred years, the Distinctives and Keystones described above provide both grounds for celebration and a path for our continued growth and development as an organization. Over the past hundred years, we have been blessed to see many ways in which God has used these aspects of our identity to grow the lasting fruit of the kingdom of God in people's lives and relationships around the world. At the same time, there is also a sense in

³⁴ John Amstutz, *Disciples of all Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (Fresno: Editorial RENEUEVO, 2013), chapter 2.

³⁵ Amstutz, *Disciples of all Nations*, 64.

which these identity markers are idealistic and aspirational. They accurately reflect our desires and goals as an organization—who we feel God has called us to be in the world—but we are not there yet! We honestly recognize that there are many gaps between these goals and reality. As such, these are aspects of our unique identity in the Body of Christ that we believe not only describe our successes in the past but articulate our challenges for the future. These are things that we trust the Holy Spirit to continue to refine, hone, and clarify in us and through us as we move forward.

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Abstract

All ministries must be regularly assessed, and action taken to improve in areas where the assessment shows weakness. In 2015, Foursquare had a global assessment done that showed four areas that needed improvement. It was conducted by Foursquare's global eldering body (The Foursquare Global Council) who responded by creating a new global position (Global Education Coordinator) who would lead a global team in developing a response. This article details the global response and highlights some specific benefits garnered along the way.

Keywords: discipleship, global collaboration and empowering, discipleship framework, transformational teaching

Introduction

The leadership principles of Nehemiah are well known. Among them is that of assessment—"By night I went through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem" (Neh. 2:13).¹ Conclusion? "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins" (Neh. 2:17). Response? "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem . . . so they began this good work" (Neh. 2:17-18).

The sixteen global elders of the Foursquare Church (known collectively as the Foursquare Global Council) found themselves in a similar situation in 2015. A thirty-five nation National Strategic Assessment (NSA), commissioned by the Global Council, yielded data showing the need for global improvement in four key areas: 1) the need to get better at strategically making disciples; 2) the need to get better at holistically training leaders; 3) the need to more strategically minister the baptism with the Holy Spirit, including training those who are Spirit-baptized how to move in power and authority as kingdom ambassadors; and 4) the need to provide additional theological resources to help

¹ All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, is from the TNIV.

young leaders understand what Foursquare believes on several doctrinal issues (including a fresh global exegesis of Foursquare's *Articles of Faith*) and pressing pastoral matters (such as social justice, creation care, healthy and unhealthy leadership, LGBTQ+, etc.).

The concerted global response to the NSA (known as Discipleship and Leadership Training [DLT]) has been ongoing since January 2016 under the direction of the Global Education Coordinator. It is the first time in Foursquare's 100-year history that a unified international endeavor of discipleship and leadership training has been undertaken. It is an endeavor that is truly global in practice and influence which is beginning to slowly change the face of Foursquare, not only in the four areas of concern noted above but in areas well beyond the four concerns.

Greater Global Collaboration

Because DLT is based on global collaborative discussion and discovery of principles to be contextualized within each local church setting, no one individual or nation defines it. As the Coordinator, I ask more questions than I answer and together a team of about 250 is finding answers together as a global family. One result that Foursquare is seeing is a more active participation and collaboration of leaders throughout the world, leaders who historically have somewhat held back and looked to the U.S. Foursquare Church "to give them the answers." In this regard, DLT has helped fuel a passion of former Foursquare U.S. President Glenn Burris that "Foursquare go from parenting to partnering" or from the world seeing the U.S. church as the "parent" and themselves as "the responsive children." We are experiencing a new level of "being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind" (Phil. 2:2).

Greater Empowering of Non-Majority People Groups

DLT has helped to fortify the implications of "here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Col. 3:11). Even though it was never Foursquare's heart nor intent, non-majority people groups have been less embraced and empowered than they should have been. There have been vestiges of paternalism in the last 100 years. Foursquare as a whole has been strategically working to correct this during the last decade, and DLT has played a major part in that strategy. One of Foursquare's African bishops said recently,

After seven years of DLT, I finally believe that not only does the Western Foursquare church want to hear from Africa but that I as a black man have something to contribute that is as valued, received, and implemented as that which comes from the white community. I am beyond grateful.

I personally appreciate his invaluable insights and wisdom that have greatly enhanced the outcomes of DLT. His comment is a “win” as Foursquare celebrates 100-years.²

Global Certification and Establishment of Schools of Ministry

Foursquare has seven degree granting Bible colleges within its global network, but the preponderance of ministry education is accomplished through short-term seminars or through Schools of Ministry that offer a one-year Ministry Certificate. In 2019, the Foursquare Global Council adopted a resolution to establish a global Certification Program that recognizes participating Schools of Ministry (twenty-six to date). Certification standardizes education and administrative requirements and highlights the importance of spiritual formation/character development and ministry experience as part of one’s ministry training. It also networks Foursquare’s global educators. Of the twenty-six schools, five have opened since starting the Certification process in 2019, and seven nations are currently in the development stage to open a School of Ministry.

Global Commitment to Creating a Foursquare Culture of Discipleship

The above-stated need to get better at making disciples led to the realization that what Foursquare actually needs is a culture change. Our revivalist and evangelistic heritage unwittingly caused us to have more of a “go and vacate hell” culture than a “go and make disciples” culture.

² In May 2023, a Foursquare global leadership meeting was convened in Anaheim, CA. One item on the agenda was a report on the pan-African coalition of African leaders who are working strategically to address an overdependency on the West. Part of their report included the statement, “As Africans, we refuse to view ourselves as ‘victims’ despite a keen awareness of history.” This represents another step forward in the empowering of non-majority people groups.

Foursquare’s mantra, “Preach the gospel ‘til all have heard,” generally stops short of strategic discipleship. Changing this culture will take years.

Our global dialogue the past seven plus years has given us “fresh eyes” with reference to the culture of discipleship³ that Jesus addresses in Matthew 28:16-20. Here are some of our culture change realizations.

- We need to clearly define “disciple” and keep that in the forefront of all we do. In other words, what exactly did Jesus command us to “make”?
- We need to clearly define what is involved in strategically making disciples (creating a discipleship framework).
- We need to clearly define the connection between teaching and obeying (transformational teaching).
- We need to make an honest assessment as leaders of where we are now in terms of strategically making disciples—both as individuals and as local churches.

Defining a Disciple

Whereas we encourage all our leaders to have their own definition of a disciple, the Global Council established a working definition for the purposes of our global endeavor. “A disciple is a believer in Christ who, together with others and by the power of the Holy Spirit, intentionally pursues Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is actively engaged in the mission of Jesus.” It reflects the key biblical elements: 1) that discipleship begins after conversion;⁴ 2) that discipleship is a partnership of the Holy Spirit and other Christ-followers (we don’t disciple ourselves in isolation); and 3) that the core of discipleship is following Jesus in

³ A culture of discipleship can be defined as “a group of disciples who collectively, by the power of the Holy Spirit, commits to being devoted disciples who love God and love people, and to making mature and whole disciples who intentionally pursue Jesus, are being changed by Jesus, and actively engage themselves in the mission of Jesus.”

⁴ Foursquare also acknowledges that there is an entire “pre-discipleship” journey in the lives of most moderns before they personally accept Jesus. Though important, we see this as a separate emphasis so it will not be addressed here.

every facet of life, giving ourselves to the Spirit's transformation (sanctification), and being involved in a myriad of ways in *missio Dei*.⁵

Creating a Discipleship Framework⁶

"A discipleship framework is the essential biblical understanding, values, convictions, and means that guide your intentional and strategic disciple-making" (Dr. John Lewis). A discipleship framework is built on the understanding that

- Disciple-making must be intentional rather than passive (Matt. 4:19, 28:19). "Pastors often assume that discipleship happens naturally if they keep doing what they've been doing, but that's a myth" (Dr. John Lewis).
- Disciple-making must be holistic (head, heart, and hands) rather than partial. This holistic understanding means our intentional disciple-making efforts must include a variety of experiences and settings; the heart is reached differently than the head, and the hands require doing.
- We cannot simply "do more church services" and expect believers to become fully devoted disciples.
- Disciple-making must be integrated (helping disciples "connect the dots" of their experiences and input) and not piecemeal (offering various disconnected opportunities in the local church which we hope disciples will be able to "glue together" on their discipleship journey).

Transformational Teaching: Embracing and Practicing Incarnational Learning Approaches

The impetus for DLT's understanding and emphasis on transformational teaching is one of Jesus' statements in the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to *obey* everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20, emphasis added). Teaching to obey is radically different than traditional teaching that accompanies most discipleship approaches whereby disciples attend

⁵ It is vastly important that we understand that involvement in *mission Dei* is more than involvement in ministry in the local church, though it can certainly include that.

⁶ Foursquare is indebted to Dr. John Lewis and The Kingdom Story ministry in Tacoma, WA (www.thekingdomstory.org) for much of this understanding on creating a framework and the subsequent Two-Lane Highway analogy. His input has been invaluable.

classes and Bible studies, but there's no way of knowing what, if anything, "sticks."

Regarding truth "sticking" to be obeyed, contemporary educators of adults know that lecture, the "standard" method used globally for adult learning (both outside and within the church), is not very effective. Some claim that only 5% of what is heard through lecture is retained, let alone acted upon . . . despite the best efforts of professors, podcasters, and preachers. 5%. Because DLT is discipleship focused (transformation of the head, heart, and hands), we have had to completely revamp our approach to discipling and training to increase the probability of incarnational and transformational equipping. (This will be further discussed below.)

We see this principle in Romans 6:1-14 as Paul directs us toward the goal that "sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). He notes that this journey starts with knowing biblical truth (head [vs. 3]); this truth is then to be pondered and personally incarnated (heart [vs. 11]); and *then* it can be actively practiced (hands [vv. 12-13]). He is clear that the amazing promise of verse 14 cannot bypass incarnating the truth learned ("count⁷ yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" [vs. 11]).

Teaching to obey necessitates that leaders think through the different types of input that are needed for incarnational and transformational learning to happen in a disciple's life; namely, it requires formal, non-formal, and informal discipling. The informal discipling is referred to by a variety of names, including *informal discipleship*, *mentoring*, *doing life together*, *discipleship*, *small group discipleship*, *one-on-one discipleship*, etc. It's where disciples have an opportunity to personally process what they're learning; to receive personal prayer and encouragement; to have personal applications and implications of the teachings applied to them; to have someone listen to them and give feedback; and to be held accountable. This is the dynamic seen between Jesus and the Twelve following His teaching the Parable of the Weeds to a large crowd. "His disciples came to Him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field' and He explained it" (Matt. 13:36-43).

⁷ Count understands the Greek word, *logizomai*, in Romans 6:11 to connote the nuance of taking known facts and pondering them, reflecting or meditating on them over and over in one's mind until one is thoroughly convinced of the truth pondered. It can also be translated "consider" (NRSV, ESV) or "reckon" (NKJV).

How has DLT implemented this? To help disciples incarnate and apply the content of the DLT modules more effectively, a strategic decision was made in 2019 regarding the format of the materials. They are written as extended outlines with imbedded questions designed to be studied through small group guided self-study.⁸ This also allows for contextualization of content as evidenced by Foursquare Africa's understanding of "wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22) versus that of America's and Europe's perspective when as a global family we studied the DLT module, *Family*.

A Two-Lane Highway Discipleship Culture

One perspective that readily surfaces in Foursquare when discussing creating a culture of discipleship is that of the role of "church" as we currently know it. In most of Foursquare, discipleship is defined by programmatic classes taken in the local church with the primary aim being that of "creating dedicated and tithing church workers." Some of our nations also have a "modified Roman Catholic model of clergy" which heightens the place of "the clergy" and de-emphasizes the fact that all believers are called to make disciples and do "works of service"⁹ (Eph. 4:7-16). Inherent in this model is also the perspective that discipleship happens primarily from the pulpit with many Foursquare pastors believing that Sunday morning service is "the silver bullet of discipleship."

Does the answer lie in "blowing up church as we know it" and opting entirely for informal discipleship? Our answer is, "Absolutely not!" Using the analogy of a two-lane highway (whereby both lanes are needed and invaluable in getting people to their destinations), Foursquare has embraced Dr. Lewis' Two-Lane Highway Discipleship Culture that equally values church as we know it and informal discipleship. This approach both celebrates the value of each "lane" and acknowledges the limitations of each.¹⁰

⁸ Statistics show that this increases the potential of retention to approximately 50%.

⁹ Or "the work of ministry" (NRSV, Updated Edition).

¹⁰ A third element of Lewis' analogy is that of the Auto Repair Shop. Just like autos occasionally need to go to the mechanic, so disciples on occasion "break down" and need specialized discipling. The Auto Repair Shop references anywhere disciples go to find professional or specialized help and ministry in their discipleship journey beyond the abilities of the average disciple-maker and

- **PROGRAM LANE**—the planned and more organized church activities experienced in groups of five or more. Most efforts and money go into this approach in our churches. Pastors and church leaders take the lead in discerning what people need to hear, understand, experience, and focus on.
- **PERSONAL LANE**—this is what some call personal mentoring or informal discipleship. It’s usually where the most incarnation of truth and transformation of character happens. It’s more organic and less organizational than the Program Lane. It requires vulnerability; happens outside the church’s structured programs; is largely responsive to the disciple’s situation; is flexible; involves commitment by both the disciple-maker and the disciple; is reciprocal; and is built around doing life together (2 Timothy 3:10-11). BUT it does have structure and intentionality.
 - Meeting someone for coffee or just doing life together bears much fruit without the need for much structure. Ideally, this would be part of every relationship in the Personal Lane. However, the Personal Lane is maximized when we also invite disciples and disciple-makers into a more *intentional* path toward biblical and personal goals. (Dr. John Lewis)

A Global Doctrine Committee

Because of Foursquare’s commitment to greater global collaboration and the above-mentioned need for additional theological resources defining our beliefs, a Global Doctrine Committee was established in 2018 to oversee the development of DLT resources and to answer doctrinal questions that arise within Foursquare’s global regions. The DLT resources, therefore, have input from Foursquare scholars on every mega-continent enabling us to “globally fine tune” our understanding on key issues. It has not been an easy task at times because of differing contextual perspectives and understanding, but we now have a confidence that when theological resources are read in Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, Europe, etc., what has been written reflects the input of different cultures. It is somewhat like the letter that was mutually agreed upon by the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23-29).

in many cases the ministries of the local church (Program Lane)—healing; counseling; deliverance; addiction recovery, etc.

Strategically Releasing Younger Leaders

A final aspect of DLT that was not part of the original intent but has become hugely important is that of strategically releasing younger leaders. Foursquare is working hard at accomplishing this. Older leaders often affirm the need for younger leaders, and even quote Paul's words to Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young"¹¹ (1 Tim. 4:12), but don't actually "release" them.

In 2021, I was invited to lead a two-day conference in Medellín, Colombia, for over 100 Foursquare pastors from Latin America on the topic of creating a culture of discipleship. A few months before the conference, I met Pastor Tassio Barletta, a thirty-something Foursquare pastor from Belem, Brazil, who was leading nearly 2000 twenty-somethings on a strategic pathway of discipleship. He was actively and ardently living the two lanes referenced above, and he was doing it far better than I. I invited him to join me, and we shared the platform together modeling intergenerational ministry. I did the same thing a year later when I invited twenty-three-year-old Pastor Giancarlo Agnoletto from Portugal (whom I'd been mentoring) to co-present with me on the topic of discipleship at the annual national convention for Foursquare Netherlands.¹²

Sadly, this is not done as often as it should be. Both instances were small steps toward strategically releasing younger leaders, but they were steps, and the global Foursquare family has taken note. Tassio and Giancarlo were both amazing with Giancarlo going on to do a "solo workshop" on discipleship at the 2023 Foursquare European Conference. I attended the workshop and sat quietly in the audience. "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2). I plan to do more sharing of the platform with younger leaders.

Tassio's input in Medellín? It was so exceptional that it has become a regular part of Foursquare's global DLT training on discipleship. I close this article by offering it to you.

¹¹ Most scholars surmise that Timothy was in his early 30s.

¹² Both Tassio and Giancarlo have also taught me a lot about discipleship and have spoken into my life personally enabling me to experience the benefit of "reverse mentoring" (see Rom. 1:11-12). I'm indebted to them.

Principles of Discipleship by Tassio Barleta

Tassio Barleta is a thirty-something bi-vocational Foursquare pastor in Belem, Brazil. He leads a ministry of approximately 2000 young adults within a congregation of approximately 6000 members. The emphasis of the young adult ministry is “doing life together discipleship” (Personal Lane discipleship)—that is, how to supplement discipleship that happens “in church structured services” (Program Lane discipleship) with more daily, life-related discipleship that focuses on individuals and their discipleship needs.

Personal discipleship programs and movements thrive throughout the Latin America church, especially in Foursquare Brazil. However, there are concerns regarding some of these approaches, concerns that often center around “heavy handed discipleship” or discipleship that focuses more on meeting the discipler’s (pastor’s) needs and plans than the needs of the disciple. It is within this context that Pastor Tassio shares his Principles of Discipleship.

Principle 1

Discipleship is helping disciples understand Jesus’ purpose for them, not to reach goals the discipler has for a disciple. Adam was charged to tend a garden, not farm a plantation to get something back (Gen. 2:15). For pastors to be committed to discipleship, they must remember that:

- a) Discipleship isn’t about them; discipleship is about the disciple.
- b) Discipleship isn’t interested in church growth numbers; it’s interested in people and having compassion for individuals. Discipleship requires seeing with Jesus’ eyes and not “church growth eyes.”
- c) Discipleship requires one-on-one investment so that individuals see Jesus’ purpose fulfilled in their lives. Discipleship doesn’t use people to fulfill the “vision/goals” of the pastor, but desires to see Jesus’ vision/purpose fulfilled for individuals. Discipleship refreshes the disciple (2 Tim. 1:16).
- d) Discipleship is a willingness to invest in individuals, not simply performing a program to attract people to church services. To effectively disciple, pastors must “die” to personal desires to have large churches, their name esteemed, or their finances/lifestyles made comfortable (John 12:24).

Principle 2

Discipleship isn’t controlling lives but appealing to disciples and teaching them to hear and obey Jesus (Philem. 8).

- a) Disciplers guide with kindness.

- b) Disciple-makers free their disciples, aren't intimidated by them, and release them to God's purposes.

Principle 3

Discipleship isn't a program; it's a lifestyle.

- a) We don't disciple people so they'll come to our church, but so they'll grow in Christ and infiltrate their world.
- b) It isn't a "teacher/student" relationship where the student sits down and listens; it's not just sharing knowledge; it's sharing life-lessons and wisdom as we do life together; it's being extended family to one another.
- c) It doesn't happen primarily from the pulpit; a pulpit isn't a kitchen table. "The pulpit is great for inspiration . . . but lives are transformed around a table."
- d) Discipleship isn't something that happens once a week; there can be formal aspects to the disciple-making process, but that's not its core. You do life together. You may or may not be best friends with those whom you disciple; the discipleship may include the discipler disciplining at times.

Principle 4

Discipleship is not "one formula works for everyone"; every disciple is different, and disciple-making must be customized to the individual. Each disciple needs specific care and input. Good disciple-makers must know their disciples individually. Notice how Jesus dealt individually with Zacchaeus and with Matthew, as well as with Peter/Andrew vs. James/John (Matt. 4:18-22).

Principle 5

A disciple should feel safe with the disciple-maker (Matt. 18:15-16); discipleship must be a place where the disciple can be free to share; be vulnerable; and be guided from their past to their future, not have their past held against them.

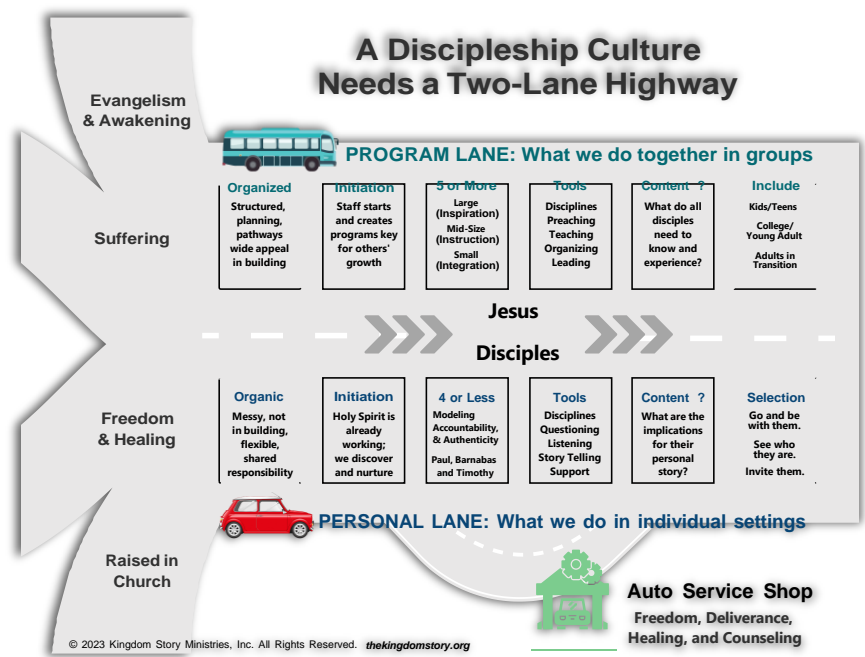
- a) What happens between a disciple-maker/disciple stays with them confidentially.
- b) Disciples must "feel" the interest and love of the disciple-maker.
- c) Discipleship is a place where we incarnate God's love and learn to care for people with everything we have.
- d) Discipleship helps people find significance and meaning in life.

Principle 6

The foundation of discipleship is discipling people to love God and love people. It doesn't elevate church attendance, church serving, tithing, etc. above these two truths.

Conclusion

Discipleship is basically passing along what we’ve learned. As pastors, let’s opt for a culture of discipleship and not a culture of attractional church performance. Let’s care for the “garden” (disciples) God gives us (Gen. 2:15) and be encouraged by God’s promise to give us wisdom and understanding on how to be better disciple-makers (Jer. 33:3).



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Compass: Navigating a Changing Culture with the Gospel

Cody Whittington

Abstract

In a Western culture, sexuality and gender occupy much of the social, political, medical, psychological, and personal conversations about what it means to be a flourishing human today. Though it can be challenging to keep up with the fast-paced changes relating to terminology and policy, it is nonetheless crucial for the church to graciously and honestly be involved in these discussions. For many in our churches and communities, sexual orientation and gender identity are more than cultural topics up for public debate; instead, it is a defining issue for them. Given the cultural shifts around sex and gender, churches must find ways to be both prophetic and pastoral, clear and compassionate. Further, churches must grapple with their place in a new post-Christian terrain where no consensus exists on moral and spiritual values. In other words, churches must recover a missional lens to see our current situation.

One Foursquare district has been developing a resource called *Compass* to help pastors and leaders navigate this cultural landscape, particularly regarding LGBTQ+ and the church. This article provides an overview of *Compass* and how one district uses it to educate and equip local churches to care well for LGBTQ+ people while retaining the denomination's belief in the historical orthodox beliefs about marriage, celibacy, and the stewardship of the body. Here, Cody Whittington summarizes *Compass*'s development, content, and aims as one of many potentially helpful resources for churches interested in engaging in discussions and ministry around LGBTQ+ and the church.

Keywords: contextual theology, culture, gender identity, LGBTQ+, mission, sexual orientation

Introduction

In 2021, Reed Sowell became the NextGen Coordinator for the Foursquare U.S. Northwest District. One of his first tasks involved connecting NexGen leaders to discover specific needs within their context. The primary response across the District was a request for

more leadership development and direction for discipling LGBTQ+ youth and young adults. Since then, Reed and I have worked together in developing a resource called *Compass* to help meet this need. Discussions about the church and LGTBQ+ remain at the forefront of cultural shifts, and with 21% of Gen Z (those born between 1995-2012) identifying as LGBTQ+,¹ we must support and empower our leaders to engage this cultural climate with confidence and compassion. This article details the nature, function, and goals of *Compass*.

What is *Compass*?

Compass is a cohort-driven resource developed to help our pastors, leaders, and broader Foursquare family think missionally about cultural engagement within their various contexts. For many in the Church, the increasingly postmodern and post-Christian terrain is uncharted territory, and questions about how to engage our culture are endless. *Compass* aims to provide faithful, culturally intelligent, contextually literate, and pastorally sensitive ways of doing theology. We want to put people from different ministry environments and roles into a conversation about culturally pressing and relevant topics. It is essential that *Compass* is not merely an expert in the field of teaching ministry leaders but that we are providing space to interact beyond a question-and-answer involvement into authentic dialogue and shared experiences.

Compass is rooted in the missiological discipline of contextual theology, which considers Scripture, tradition, and human experience, past and present, alongside one another to develop ways of engaging cultures with the gospel in word and deed.² In this context, “human experience” refers to personal, communal, and cultural experiences in one’s social location. To integrate sociological, anthropological, and statistical insights into “doing theology” is not to elevate human experience above Scripture.³ Nor does it necessarily birth a subjectivism often feared in contemporary Western theological development. Because all theology takes place within a social and cultural context that involves the human experience, there is no such thing as non-experiential theology. However, there is such a thing as non-missional theology,

¹ Jeffery Jones, “LGBT Identification in U.S. Ticks Up to 7.1%,” *Gallup News*, February 17, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>

² Stephan B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 3.

³ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.

which *Compass* addresses. Three values guide the *Compass* experience in any setting: Dialogic Education, Moderation, and Pentecostal Ethos.

Dialogic Education

Dialogic Education provides a facilitated learning space where the instructor and students explore a topic in-depth and in conversation. We anchor *Compass* in discussion for educational and theological reasons. Dialogical learning improves critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and information retention.⁴ Rupert Wegerif states,

Dialogic Education takes place through dialogue, which means opening up dialogic spaces in which different perspectives can clash or play together and new learning can occur. But dialogic education is not only education through dialogue, it is also education for dialogue, meaning that as a result of dialogic education learners become better at learning together with others through dialogue.⁵

In other words, the dialogic form of learning has a natural logic of extending the conversation to others. Dialogical learning has missional intent for *Compass*' purposes: we hope to take the conversation to others as prophetic witnesses.

The late Brazilian educator and author Paulo Freire articulates the necessity of dialogical learning. He discusses the significance of dialogue in learning over and against what he calls the “banking concept of education.”⁶ In the banking concept of learning, the teacher sits above the student, and the task is to inform or indoctrinate; thus, education “becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor.”⁷ Freire is not interested in demoting the teacher’s voice; instead, the intent is to elevate the student’s voice in the community, whereby critical inquiry can occur without being silenced or dismissed.

⁴ Rocío García-Carrión, Garazi López de Aguilera, Maria Padrós, and Mimar Ramis-Salas, “Implications for Social Impact of Dialogic Teaching and Learning,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (February 2020): 140.

⁵ Rupert Wegerif, “Dialogic Education,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, March 2019, <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-396>.

⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 50th Anniversary Ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 72.

⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72.

Dialogical learning is a central method in practical contextual theology, as it requires the learner to formulate propositions to communicate and discover how to act on the beliefs in real situations.⁸ After all, our God is dialogical. Adam Neder states,

God is talkative, and our communion with him is conversational. Instead of concealing himself in silence or declaring himself from a distance, God speaks the world into existence and starts a conversation with his creation. He establishes and sustains Israel with words, and in Jesus Christ, the words he speaks are his own life. The Logos invites us into dialogue, and Christian faith is the long process of learning to hear and respond to Jesus Christ's voice.⁹

Further, the Word became flesh and communicates the exact representation of God (John 1:14, Heb. 1:3). God's self-revelation in Christ is His ongoing dialogue with humanity about who He is, who we are, and how we can participate in His love in the Spirit.

Moderation

Foursquare endeavors to foster a culture of balance, humility, thoughtfulness, and avoiding the dogmatic extremes that tend to divide. In Foursquare, a "middle-of-the-road" disposition applies to worship, doctrine, interdenominational unity, and cultural discernment.¹⁰ Moderation always looks for common ground and avoids extremisms that hinder the spread of the gospel. This value provides a nice guardrail as *Compass* cohorts discuss sensitive and emotional topics. Cultural engagement and contextual theology are cross-denominational disciplines, and the content used in *Compass* reflects the broader Christian tradition on this point. From an interdenominational perspective, *Compass* integrates a collective and diverse voice.

But if we developed this resource for Foursquare, why is moderation necessary? There is a need for an *inter*-ecumenical posture precisely because there will be second and third-level beliefs about which pastors and leaders in Foursquare might disagree. For example, the question

⁸ Bevans, *Contextual Theology*, 72.

⁹ Adam Neder, *Theology as a Way of Life: On Teaching and Learning the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 113.

¹⁰ Aaron Friesen, *Foursquare Identity Keystones: A Summary of Five Significant Areas of Identity Congruence for the Foursquare Church* (Anaheim: Foursquare Missions Press, 2018), 16-23.

about whether Christians should use the language of “same-sex attracted (SSA),” or “celibate gay Christian” to describe their state of faithfulness to Christ.¹¹ “SSA” avoids LGBTQ+ language but has unfortunate connections to the ex-gay movement. “Celibate gay Christian” emphasizes the position (celibate), orientation (gay), and loyal identity (Christ). As Bennett argues, “Christians need a more nuanced understanding when they use the word gay.”¹² There are good arguments on each side of the debate, but this would not be a debate over which local churches should divide.

Pentecostal Ethos

Compass is Pentecostal in that it aims to reflect upon central orthodoxies in fresh ways to embody them in our cultural contexts. Pentecost in Acts 2 is a theological symbol for Pentecostals “because Pentecost itself is a praxis rather than a doctrine.”¹³ This is not to dismiss the significance of doctrine; instead, it refuses to relegate doctrinal reflection exclusively to the realm of systematics. Vondey notes,

Pentecostal theology does not want to be understood, it wants to be embodied and lived (as a form of understanding, yet sometimes in pre-cognitive or irrational ways). This kind of theology struggles with doctrine defined and selective, propositional, and prescriptive terms because embedded in the experiences of the whole of life, the full gospel represents and recreates the unbounded presence of God in the world.¹⁴

This sentiment raises questions and tensions and highlights the necessity to explore Pentecostal cultural engagement. Pentecostal theology has much to offer contextual theology and the dialogical experience of living out historic doctrines in our own time.

¹¹ For a thoughtful perspective on the language of “same-sex attracted,” see Rachel Gilson’s *Born Again This Way: Coming Out, Coming to Faith and What Comes Next* (Epsom: Good Book, 2020). For an engaging perspective on the language of “celibate gay Christian,” see David Bennett’s, *War of Loves: The Unexpected Story of a Gay Activist Discovering Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

¹² David Bennett, *War of Loves*, 214.

¹³ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2017), 28.

¹⁴ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 28.

Bringing it All Together

There are three steps that each cohort will go through: 1) Cultural Landscape, 2) Theological Mapping, and 3) Navigating with Care. This flexible framework is helpful for smaller events, such as conferences or retreats, or for the classroom. None of these steps exists in isolation, as one can only do missional theology with cultural literacy or theological formation while thinking through pastoral implications. Still, treating them as separate headings for clarity, nuance, and focused discussion is helpful. During each step, a presentation corresponds with the subject, an open dialogue among the cohort, and the opportunity for concentrated reflection and questions with the facilitator(s). Here, we will show how each step functions in the conversation related to sexual orientation and gender identity.¹⁵

Cultural Landscape

“Cultural Landscape” is the first step in discerning how to be a missional presence in our society around LGBTQ+ and the Church. *Compass* grapples with the complex realities of culture and how the story of God’s self-revelation in Christ might be articulated and embodied with missional instincts and sensitivities in our present situations. In the “Cultural Landscape” portion of *Compass*, we provide recent research, and a sketch of the language involved with the topic, and then discuss how the Western emphasis on progress and individualism has played a formative role in how society thinks about the issues at hand. Western values on identity, purpose, and meaning did not develop in a vacuum. Understanding the cultural roots helps us make sense of the fruit of individualism in contemporary society. One of our culture’s most robust identity narratives is located in one’s sense of self through sexual orientation and gender identity.

Both Cultural and Personal

2015 was a landmark year for LGBTQ+ rights in the United States. It was the year the Supreme Court ruled on *Obergefell v. Hodges* and guaranteed the right for same-sex couples to marry across all fifty states. Within four months after the ruling, “There were approximately 96,000 marriages among same-sex couples. These marriages comprised an

¹⁵ Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021), 230.

estimated 11.2% of all new marriages during this period.”¹⁶ It was also the year when Caitlyn Jenner, formerly Bruce, publicly came out as a transwoman. Further, *Vogue* magazine released an article detailing several other celebratory transgender moments in 2015, such as *Time* magazine naming Jaz Jennings one of the most influential teens of the year.¹⁷ *Vogue* was correct; this was a pivotal social, political, and cultural year.

This was also the year when a young man in our youth ministry in East Texas shared his experience with the sense of incongruence between his biological sex and gender. Alex was a sophomore in high school who came to youth group regularly with a couple of friends. At a Wednesday night gathering in early 2015, we discussed sexuality. This teaching led Alex to share with me and his small group leader the difficulties he experienced. I recall him simply saying, “I just feel weird about myself most of the time; something doesn’t feel right.” At school, Alex contemplated going by the name “Rebecca,” which would be a first step in social transitioning. Still, Alex was unsure what to think or how to live. He loved the thought of embracing a new name that might help him cope with his reality, but he also took his faith in Jesus seriously.

After our meeting, he shared this information with his parents. Thankfully, Alex’s parents remained calm and non-judgmental, and asked honest questions. Ultimately, Alex entrusted himself to his parents and a few church leaders and received professional help to learn more about his experience and how to live with it. Alex chose to keep his name and discern what discipleship meant as he lived in the tension between his sex and gender. He was brave for selecting a path against the broader cultural script.

That summer, we took our students to a youth conference in Georgia, where thousands of teens gathered for a few days of worship. The last night of the conference took place on June 26, 2015, the day the Supreme Court decided on *Obergefell v. Hodges*. In the wake of the culture-shifting news, the keynote speaker chose to speak on (or against) same-sex couples and trans people with little nuance, much anger, and crowd-rousing platitudes. During a moment of loud applause and shouting, I looked at Alex, and he was visibly withdrawn and nervous.

¹⁶ Gary J. Gates and Taylor N.T. Brown, “Marriage and Same Sex Couple After Obergefell,” Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2015, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Marriage-Post-Obergefell-Nov-2015.pdf>.

¹⁷ Trey Taylor, “Why 2015 Was the Year of Trans Visibility,” *Vogue*, December 29, 2015, <https://www.vogue.com/article/2015-year-of-trans-visibility>.

We stepped outside of the event and talked about how we felt. The event made him question whether belonging to a church or being a Christian with his ongoing struggles with gender dysphoria was possible. This remained challenging for Alex, but he kept walking with Jesus. He carried, however, a lingering suspicion and skepticism towards churches.

The New Terrain

Debates and discussions about same-sex marriage, gender-affirming care, trans-athletes, gender curriculum in public schools, restroom policies, and pronoun usage in the context of free speech are all significant and ever-present. In recent years, the Presbyterian Church USA, The United Methodist Church, and the Anglican Church have each experienced internal strife and division over LGBTQ+ inclusion. Further, policies come and go. On the one hand, in March 2023, Norway revised its more progressive policies on gender care towards a more cautious approach because they no longer feel the guidelines are evidence-based.¹⁸ On the other hand, Australia's health minister, Ryan Park, has committed to making gender-affirming care for children more accessible based on the research relating to the various challenges children with gender dysphoria face, such as higher rates of suicide and marginalization.¹⁹ This landscape remains unsettled and contested.

One of the more perplexing and concerning changes in the last ten to fifteen years is the number of young people, particularly females, who experience what has been called, "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria."²⁰ Gender dysphoria is "the experience of distress associated with the incongruence wherein one's psychological and emotional gender identity does not match one's biological sex."²¹ Typically, the onset of gender

¹⁸ Deborah Soh, "Norway Offers a Step Forward in Eliminating Gender Ideology," *Washington Examiner*, March 13, 2023, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/courage-strength-optimism/norway-offers-a-step-forward-in-eliminating-gender-ideology>.

¹⁹ Betsy Reed, "Gender Research at Sydney Children's Hospital to be Reviewed after ABC report, Health Minister Says," *The Guardian*, July 10, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/11/sydney-childrens-hospital-gender-research>.

²⁰ Lisa Littman, "Parent Reports of Adolescents and Young Adults Perceived to Show Signs of a Rapid Onset of Gender Dysphoria," *PLoS One* 13, no. 8 (August 16, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202330>.

²¹ Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 20.

dysphoria can be discerned during early childhood; in most cases, the dysphoria desists into adolescence.²² Yet, in recent years, the amount of youth questioning their gender has dramatically increased. Between 2011 and 2022, referrals to the *Gender Identity Development Service* (GIDS) increased from 210 referrals to 3585. The research is sparse, and the reasons could be many, such as traumatic experiences, prior mental health challenges or disorders, autism, cultural acceptance, or social belonging.²³

Foursquare's NextGen pastors and leaders engage with these challenges regularly. While there is confusion and uncertainty, we desire to create a safe atmosphere for our students to explore Christ with their peers. A *Compass* cohort brings their own stories from their cultural contexts and shares them with others processing similar challenging situations. Discussing the cultural landscape is not just about getting the latest and most up-to-date information and statistics; it's about humanizing and personalizing the topic with a sense of camaraderie, empathy, and a mutual desire to learn from one another.

Theological Mapping

"Theological Mapping" addresses the question, "What do we believe, and how do we live in light of those beliefs?" A. Scott Moreau argues, "The Western agenda for the past several centuries has framed theology in legal, philosophical, historical, and/or scientific orientations. Most theologians assumed that their systems or approaches were universal rather than local."²⁴ Moreau points out that the doctrinal *approaches* are non-universal but maintains that essential doctrines are universal truths that remain unchanged (i.e., the bodily resurrection). *Compass* is one avenue where thinking through fresh approaches can be done. As Clark Pinnock notes, "How we think about doctrines and practices is always subject to reconsideration. There are new models for thinking and acting. Although what we decide about them must grow out of original revelation and be rooted in Scripture, freshness and relevance, aptness

²² Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 91.

²³ Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 163.

²⁴ A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith: A Holistic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 203.

and timeliness should also be at work.”²⁵ Scriptural truths do not change, but methods of development might.²⁶

A theological imperative for Foursquare is knowing sound doctrine and how to reflect upon and apply the doctrine in the context of mission and local ministry. We believe “the Spirit helps us correlate God’s Word with the challenges of our day.”²⁷ This requires us to reimagine our role in the West as missionaries. As Matheny notes, “For the early church mission provided the context for Christian theology. It provided the womb that gave birth, form, and shape to theological thought. Mission made theology possible, and theology participated in the vitality of mission.”²⁸ In other words, we develop theology by opening ourselves up to what the Spirit might be doing to draw people to Jesus. This way of thinking through theology “helps the community open itself to the possibility of the richness of God’s grace and truth.”²⁹

Doing Theology in *Compass*

Given society’s shifting sands on LGBTQ+, it is understandable that one of the questions we receive the most is, “Is Foursquare changing its doctrine with reference to LGBTQ+-related matters?” *Compass* is clear: Foursquare is not changing its assumed doctrinal position on the traditional or historically held views of marriage, celibacy, or homosexuality. Foursquare believes marriage is a life-long covenant between one male and female and that sexual activity is reserved exclusively for the context of marriage. Further, both marriage and holy celibacy are equally faithful expressions of discipleship to Jesus. We maintain that biblically defined sexual ethics are a priority because they are rooted in the human reality that God has created and for which He has a purpose that contributes to human flourishing and is a testimony to His good and holy character.³⁰

²⁵ Clark Pinnock, *The Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 220.

²⁶ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 226.

²⁷ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 230.

²⁸ Paul Duane Matheny, *Contextual Theology: The Drama of Our Times* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 5.

²⁹ Matheny, *Contextual Theology*, 45.

³⁰ Beth Felker Jones, *Faithful: A Theology of Sex* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 20.

Foursquare does not currently have an official public stance on the various nuances of gender identity and gender expression. It is safe to say, however, that Foursquare upholds God's creative intent and will for biological distinctions between "male and female" as sexually dimorphic beings (Gen. 1:26-27). We also remain sensitive to the atypical psychological and physical realities that might occur due to living in a fallen world, even if we cannot fully understand such experiences. Sin has touched the whole of creation and the human person, which should create an empathetic posture within us (Rom. 8:22-25).³¹ Much of the gender identity discussion is new territory that requires humility as we seek to embody God's love and care for the vulnerable and hurting. As will be discussed, clarity, where there can be clarity, is necessary and good for all involved in this conversation. Still, we should be slow to develop strong doctrinal positions regarding complex situations. *Compass* is not a doctrinal slogan maker; instead, we attempt to discern how to embody theological truth in our local churches.

The tendency in conversations about the Church and LGBTQ+ is to begin with exegetical concerns. Texts such as Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-31, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and 1 Timothy 1:10 occupy much of the scholarly and pastoral discussions. While we spend time interacting with exegetical arguments, this section aims to create space for the cohort to dialogue and think missionally about theology and theologically about mission. Exegetical precision is critical, but we also widen our lens in *Compass* to address *what* we believe, *how* we have come to understand and form our beliefs, and *why* we see the good news of Jesus as the most honest and hopeful story for human identity. We use the redemptive narrative of Scripture to structure our teachings and conversations: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration to develop a theology of identity and body, marriage, and celibacy, as well as develop compassionate and clear articulations of our beliefs.

The Story of God: Identity and the Goodness of a Body

The current cultural script encourages people to look within the self to discover one's identity and that the biological and physical properties are subservient to one's psychological sense of self. Though we should not

³¹ It is always good to clarify that the atypical experiences described are not necessarily a result of an individual's choices. Jesus Himself attests to the truth that not all outcomes of a fallen world connect to an individual's sins (John 9:1-38).

dismiss feelings outright, the narrative of Scripture provides a holistic theological and teleological vision of harmony for the mind and body, the material and immaterial.³² This is not to say that our various struggles, desires, or experiences will suddenly subside if we believe in Jesus. Instead, it gives us a hopeful vision for living in and coping with the tensions of a fallen world in the light of discipleship to Jesus. Percy notes, “Many people denounce biblical morality as harsh and judgmental. But in reality, it is based on a respect for our biology as an integral part of the person. It offers a rich, multidimensional view of what it means to be human.”³³ Though, unfortunately, some believers can be harsh and judgmental, the theology itself is life-giving and clarifying.

Compass teases out how the story of Scripture provides a hope-filled and honest counter-narrative to the various cultural scripts that centralize sexual orientation and gender in pursuing identity, purpose, and meaning. Jones argues, “As Christians, we recognize that God made us as good, embodied, sexually differentiated creatures. It matters that embodied goodness – our image bearing – includes both male and femaleness. Being created male and female isn’t the only thing that matters about being human; neither is it the most important thing.”³⁴ Central to identity is a whole vision of image-bearing, which involves not less than human bodies but more. *Compass* discusses how Scripture describes image bearing and its connections to our embodied existence.

The Story of God and Marriage, Celibacy, and the Church

My friend Colin experiences same-sex attraction (his preferred language) and chooses to remain celibate out of his devotion to Christ. Several years ago, Colin looked for a church home and noticed that nearly every church he explored online had a statement about marriage, which affirmed heterosexual marriage, denounced same-sex relationships, and provided a handful of Bible verses. He asked, “What about those who have same-sex attractions but choose celibacy and sexual purity?” Colin’s experience and questions are telling. His struggle to find a church that understood singleness and celibacy as an equally faithful expression of disciples as marriage is unfortunately common. Churches need to retrieve and promote a rich theological vision of the celibate life.

³² Nancy Percy, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 162.

³³ Percy, *Love Thy Body*, 161.

³⁴ Jones, *Faithful*, 34.

Scripture and tradition attest to celibacy as not merely a default alternative to marriage but a faithful expression of discipleship. We have many brothers and sisters in Christ who are single and celibate for numerous reasons, such as divorce, death, choice, and sexual orientation. All of them need a thriving sense of belonging within the local church. If discipleship to Jesus requires them to remain celibate, churches must offer a relational atmosphere of love and participation. As Bennett notes, “Human beings can live without sex, but we cannot live without love.”³⁵ Singleness should not be treated as a state to be pitied but rather as an immense gift to be embraced and empowered within the body of Christ. One of the most fruitful sections in *Compass* has been exploring with the group how our local churches can restructure or develop a ministry to and with those who are single and celibate.

Both marriage and celibacy tell a story of God’s empowering grace and can point to Christ in their unique ways. Marriage is a “microcosm of God’s vision for unity and diversity” and illustrates the self-sacrificial love of Christ for His bride, the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).³⁶ Celibacy tells a story of God’s empowering and sufficient grace, which fosters intimacy with and wholeness in Jesus, and that all desire is fundamentally a desire that points to the need for God’s love revealed in Christ.³⁷ *Compass* helps develop a more robust theology and practice of engaging marriage and celibacy within the local church by using Scripture and Tradition as a guidepost to a life-giving community and witness.

The Need for Clarity and Faithfulness

Compass provides language, metaphors, images, stories, conversations, resources, and theological foundations to strengthen the cohort’s ability to understand and articulate the good news within our cultural climate. The complexity behind the broader LGBTQ+ conversation does not mean clarity is out of reach. Conflict often emerges when churches are not transparent or cannot consistently communicate or apply their views on sexual orientation and gender identity. As Allberry notes, “Key to our witness and credibility is the quality of our life together and the clarity of our message. We need to be clear on the gospel. Clear that it is good news for everyone. That no one is too far gone to enjoy it, or too

³⁵ Bennett, *War of Loves*, 258.

³⁶ Bennett, *War of Loves*, 250.

³⁷ Bennett, *War of Loves*, 258.

complete to need it.”³⁸ We need clarity and consistency to be faithful exiles, priests, and ambassadors of Christ in a foreign cultural landscape.³⁹

When we exist as counter-cultural communities that live as distinct but not distant people with a clear vision of sexuality and human identity, we will find the Spirit using the faithful church. For a counter-cultural church, faithfulness is a prophetic witness. We should heed the prophetic warning of Bennett, himself a celibate gay Christian (also known as Side B), who writes,

Simply changing the doctrine of the church is the most unloving thing that can be done for Side B Christians like me. It makes an already tough path even harder. Sometimes it seems as if the idol of self and personal desires reigns everywhere, and there is little respite for Christians, especially celibate gay Christian...I long for a future in which the church offers a clearer, more direct path for those who struggle with desire, especially those in the beloved LGBTQI community. Jesus himself shows us the way.⁴⁰

We need not surrender central theological truths about sex, the body, and human identity to accommodate the Western cultural situation. We need only to graciously embody what has been revealed in Jesus, preserved in Scripture, and handed down to us from the historical and cross-cultural Church.

Navigating with Care

The last step in the *Compass* experience is taking the “Cultural Landscape” and “Theological Mapping” into the application process within our ministry settings. Churches should expect continuing shifts in the cultural landscape. Yet, Jesus still seeks and saves the lost, drawing people into fellowship with the triune God. Thus, while society changes, the Church’s mission remains the same: to make disciples of Jesus and join God in the reconciliation ministry (Matt. 28:18-20, 2 Cor. 5:16-21). Churches must position themselves with redemptive and missional

³⁸ Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible and Same Sex Attraction* (Epsom: Good Book, 2015), 83.

³⁹ In the *Compass* experience, the Scriptural metaphors and images of exile, ambassadorship, and priesthood frame much of how we contemplate and discuss Christian presence in our secular context. “Exile” is popular language, and for good reason, but we delve into the necessity of the other two images to paint a vision of mission.

⁴⁰ Bennett, *War of Loves*, 260.

lenses by asking, “How can we demonstrate God’s transformative love revealed in Christ to the people in front of us?” In the “Navigating with Care” section, we discuss the principles and practices of exiles, ambassadors, and priests in a post-Christian context. Here, we acknowledge the messiness of ministry in our context but encourage the group to step into the mess for the sake of reconciling people to God and each other in Christ.

An example of a complex situation NextGen leaders face concerns how to facilitate summer camps considering trans students who participate and want to go. Here are some questions we received: “Can a camper who identifies as female but was born a biological male share cabin space with girls (or vice versa)? What if putting the camp-goer in a cabin that aligns with the biological sex causes distress, anxiousness, or discomfort? Further, how do we ensure the other campers are comfortable and safe?”

Minors at camp cannot sleep in their separate rooms, so do we put a male or female or a married couple with transgender students for accommodations? It turns out that none of these are sufficient. One Foursquare District has determined that accommodations with parents or guardians are a more viable option, but it still leaves other questions. Situations like this will continue to need prayerful reflection.

As we discuss “Navigating with Care,” we encourage our NextGen pastors and leaders to embrace the messiness of ministry. There are no “three steps to success” in caring for people. Each situation is different because each person carries a unique story shaped by many events, beliefs, and experiences. A common thread weaved into each stage of *Compass* is the reminder that we are not dealing with abstract propositions; instead, we are working with real people and reflecting upon lived theology in a changing world. In this case, caring looks like celebrating the value and dignity of LGBTQ+ people as image bearers, protecting them from harassment and injustice, being flexible on non-essentials, and creating long-term relational support within the Foursquare church. *Compass* puts incarnational practices before the cohort to discuss their challenges, ideas, and insights on navigating with care. Here, I will provide three of the seven practices: listening, advocacy, and courageous hospitality.

Practice Listening

Recently, Reed delivered some of the *Compass* content to a group of teenagers. Young people are comfortable discussing topics like sexuality and gender identity, as it is the waters in which they swim every day.

After Reed finished facilitating the conversation, a teenager named Ellie said, “Thank you for not being mean.” Ellie had been questioning her sexual orientation and gender identity. As Reed listened to her story, he discovered that kids are cruel to Ellie at her private Christian school. So, when she interacts with a Christian leader, she asks herself, “Will they be mean to me too?” Reed’s warmth and listening ear created a space of relational equity and trust with this teenager. Reed moved the discussion beyond LGBTQ+ questions and towards speaking to Ellie’s value as a person and the beauty of holiness. He listened long enough to know where the good news could make an entrance. At the end of the conversation, Ellie said, “Thank you again for showing real love.” She felt known, valued, and loved.

Listening is not a mere nicety; it is a necessity (Jas. 1:19). Because each story is unique, we must listen to the individual in front us, not just the podcast on hot-button topics. The simple act reminds us that each person we encounter has a story to tell and something to teach us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer argues that the “priority” responsibility we owe one another is the “ministry of listening.”⁴¹ This essential practice is rooted in incarnational theology. Bonhoeffer stated, “Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is to listen to them. It is God’s love for us that He not only gives us his Word but also lends us his ear.”⁴² The incarnation of God’s living Word (Jesus) shows that God hears our cries and cares for us. Therefore, we lend our ears and listen for the joys, aches, and needs of others.

Practice Advocacy

Advocacy is the natural next step after listening. Listening situates us to hear needs and advocacy takes steps with people to ensure they are cared for within the local church. In practicing advocacy, we must come alongside and give visible expressions of welcome and solidarity with those in our churches committed to holy celibacy and those who wrestle with sexual orientation or gender identity concerns. Advocacy finds ways of doing ministry that do not centralize sex or gender but considers the whole person in the relationship. Earlier, I mentioned Alex’s story. The people in our church walking with Alex ensured they showed up to birthday parties, took him to movies, went fishing, and other everyday activities we would do with any other person. Much like the Spirit’s

⁴¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1978), 76.

⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 75.

advocacy on our behalf, our advocacy for others is a commitment to be a loving, helping, and healing presence in the lives of others (John 14:15-17).

Advocacy takes many forms in a local church setting, from teaching to addressing systemic issues. For example, one church with which I met had an inconsistent way of treating celibate but same-sex-attracted people. I asked about the various ministry areas where a celibate gay or SSA Christian could serve, and the pastor listed outreach, hospitality, worship, and greeting. However, the pastor struggled to articulate a coherent answer when asked why they could not serve as council members, elders, or pastors, or work with students. These roles were accessible for those who were single for other reasons, whether divorced, widowed, or single by choice (but heterosexual). I do not believe the pastor or leaders had ill intent, but they had not examined their practices with theological and ecclesial consistency. Advocacy required putting systems and hidden assumptions under the microscope, which turned out to be a healthy and productive experience.

Advocacy should also be work done outside of the church and for the good of our neighbor. Though researchers contest issues of causation, correlations, and percentages, LGBTQ+ people are at greater risk of suicidality and suicide than the broader population. We should not weaponize the information as a type of apologetic against LGBTQ+. Advocacy from the Church should find ways to support and raise awareness of the various challenges our LGBTQ+ neighbors face. In every cohort experience we have done, someone has communicated that they or someone close to them who is LGBTQ+ has struggled with feeling alone, depressed, or has contemplated suicide at some point during their journey.

Practice Courageous Hospitality

A few years ago, Cheryl and her partner Kara attended a church pastored by John, a friend of mine. Within a few weeks, they asked to discuss the church's beliefs about same-sex relationships. John's church holds to a historically Christian view of sexual ethics, marriage and celibacy, and he navigated that discussion honestly and compassionately with them. They respected and appreciated the clarity, and to his surprise, they kept returning. They never made Pastor John's church their "home church," but they made friends and still enjoy visiting occasionally. Though we do not hear stories like Cheryl and Kara's often, they occur more than we know. John's church has done well in

creating an atmosphere of welcome without being vague about the call to discipleship, but it's not without challenges.

After one member of Pastor John's church noticed Cheryl and Kara attending a few times, she asked, "At what point do we tell them that they must repent of their sin?" Pastor John replied, "Cheryl and Kara know what we believe, and we know what they believe. Everyone involved has been clear and cordial. Our main concern is representing God's transformative love and being ready to respond to their questions. Cheryl and Kara do not consider us their church home, but they are our welcomed guests." One can quibble with Pastor John's response if one wishes, but he acknowledged the member's concerns while protecting the dignity and presence of Cheryl and Kara. Courageous hospitality welcomes the stranger, defends their dignity and value, and guides the church family to do the same.

Our hospitality must mirror the hospitality of God as seen in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus welcomed all, and His inclusive invitation did not require a surrender of conviction. Jesus often created a relational context, and in such a space, He taught and told stories highlighting the necessity of repentance and life in the kingdom of God (i.e., Lk. 5:21-26). Jesus both received and gave hospitality; sometimes, He was the guest, while other times, He was the host. In *Compass*, we discuss practical acts of hospitality that bridge the relational distance between the church and our LGBTQ+ neighbors in our church pews or on the street where we live. For example, courageous hospitality requires thoughtful reflection on accommodating our language to our neighbors. Whether to use a person's preferred pronouns, for example, is something we discuss in a *Compass* cohort, and there are differing views. Yet, hospitality requires us to at least ask questions about how to create environments of welcome.

Sharing space, services, and meals with those with different values does not require surrendering the good news. In fact, we argue that the gospel requires it of us, particularly as exiles, priests, and ambassadors. The household of God has an open door, and we do not own the property. This truth does not mean that there are no moral, ethical, or theological standards or convictions. Rather, it means that we do not use theology to exclude but to clarify what we believe to be the direction of discipleship. The doctrine and theology that shapes the historical consensus on marriage, celibacy, and stewarding the body is the same theology that does not permit us to be forceful with our beliefs. Hospitality is a primary expression of an embodied and contextual theology that situates us as missionaries in a strange territory.

Conclusion

Our Western culture will continue to change, and the Church must not forget that it is sent into the world as a counter-cultural community whose life together serves as a prophetic witness. As Christendom's influence on society decreases, churches should not grapple for power as moral and political gatekeepers. Instead, we must rediscover our sense of mission and pay attention to what the Spirit might be saying to our churches. Foursquare has taken up the challenge to explore theologically faithful, contextually literate, and missionally aware ways of engaging our culture with the good news of Jesus. This article has discussed *Compass* as one resource to help move the conversation forward on LGBTQ+ and the Church.

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Foursquare Hispanics: Distinctives of a Growing Community within Foursquare

Hugo Aldana Jr. and Daniel Ruarte

Abstract

The centennial of the Foursquare church is a great opportunity to celebrate how God has been faithful within the Hispanic movement in the US and around the world. This paper attempts to look at the impact of Aimee Sample McPherson's ministry on the Hispanic community and present what we believe are outstanding distinctives of this beautiful group. First, it is a community that loves *la familia (family)*, second, a community that is not ashamed of its Pentecostal identity, on the contrary, it emphasizes strong Pentecostal ministry, the praxis of spiritual gifts inside and outside the walls of the church, and the exercise of spiritual leadership. Thirdly, Foursquare Hispanics value biblical-theological education for leadership and, finally, we are a people faithful to *las tradiciones (traditions)*. This writing is not exhaustive but seeks to reflect our identity. We are Foursquare Hispanics!

Keywords: Hispanic Pentecostal, Foursquare Hispanics, distinctives, ICFG

Introduction

In the centennial year of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (ICFG 1923-2023), we are pleased to share the legacy of the Hispanic community and how Foursquare values have allowed for unique Hispanic distinctives to be visible to the world. The Foursquare Hispanic movement has been growing since its inception. According to a report produced by the Hispanic Theological Association (ATH), formerly recognized as the Hispanic Association for Theological Education, the Foursquare Church in the United States in 1972 had a

total of ten Hispanic churches established in Southern California.¹ By 1993, this number grew to sixty in California and forty-two in other areas of the nation for an estimated total of 102 Hispanic churches.² In 2014, an article by then Hispanic district supervisor Juan Vallejo explained the continual growth in the Hispanic movement—216 Hispanic congregations.³

Today, the U.S. Hispanic National Foursquare District oversees 300 Hispanic congregations in the U.S., including Puerto Rico.⁴ This is only a small glimpse of a fruitful and growing community within Foursquare and does not include all the Spanish-speaking countries where Foursquare is established, which comprises all the *Foursquare Hispanics* around the world. We should celebrate this as part of Sister Aimee Semple McPherson's legacy and the first 100 years of Foursquare ministry. Foursquare Hispanics is a growing community!

The Church of the Foursquare Gospel was born out of the Pentecostal movement of Azusa Street in 1906.⁵ The founder, Aimee Semple McPherson, embodying the DNA of the resulting revival and of the New Testament Church, was called by God to preach the gospel internationally and interdenominationally. The cosmopolitan city of Los Angeles was the epicenter from which the evangelistic movement began to take shape, and like Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), Los Angeles in 1906 was home to dozens of languages and cultures.⁶ Thus, before going to the nations, you only had to look at the thousands of immigrants in the city where Foursquare began. Among these different

¹ Wilson Rodelo, *Toward a History of the Hispanic Evangelical Church of Southern California* (Montebello: Hispanic Association for Theological Education, 1993), Figure #9.

² Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 1992), 83.

³ Juan Vallejo and Andy Butcher, "The Hispanic Quadrangular Movement Wins Altitude," in *Foursquare Leaders* (Los Angeles: November 2014), 52.

⁴ Communication with the Hispanic National District administrator, August 2023.

⁵ Roberts Liardon, *The Azusa Street Revival* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006), 63-90, 197-200.

⁶ Since its founding in 1781, the city of "El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porziuncula," better known as the city of Los Angeles, was erected as a metropolis with a diversity of cultures and languages. See *The History of Los Angeles*, LACITY.GOV, 2023, <https://lacity.gov/government/history-los-angeles>.

cultures and languages, Foursquare Hispanics surfaced from the beginning of Foursquare.

When the iconic Angelus Temple opened in January 1923, it was an English-speaking congregation, but by January 1925 work was established among Greeks, Armenians, Hispanics, Germans, and Japanese. A fruitful and cross-cultural ministry was reaching the city and county.⁴ Nathaniel M. Van Cleave notes that the heart of Sister McPherson and the early leaders of the movement emphasized efforts to reach non-Anglo groups as well, and Foursquare was perceived as a cross-cultural movement.⁵

As the demographics of the area where Angelus Temple was located became increasingly Hispanic in population, the Temple began to have regular services in Spanish. The first Hispanic department of the church was founded in 1928, having services entirely in the language of *Cervantes*. In 1929, all Hispanic parishioners were received as members of Angelus Temple, and it became widely known that Sister McPherson had Hispanics in her heart.⁶ In fact, it is said that she began using the term “Hispanic” decades before the U.S. government made it an official designation.⁷

In 1930, the first Foursquare Hispanic congregation apart from Angelus Temple began in the Los Angeles suburb of Canoga Park; it was followed shortly thereafter by a church in the neighboring city of San Gabriel, and slowly by other churches in cities throughout California. Many of those efforts were led by Sister McPherson’s

⁴ Jim Scott, *Hispanic Foursquare—Part 1*, https://resources.foursquare.org/foursquare_hispana_part_1/.

⁵ Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches*, 92.

⁶ Jim Scott, *Hispanic Foursquare—Part 2*, https://resources.foursquare.org/foursquare_hispana_part_2/.

⁷ The term Hispanic was used in a census by the United States government in the 1960s to identify all those who spoke Spanish. See, Cristina Lacomba, *Hispanics and/or Latinos in the United States* (Cervantes Observatory of Harvard University), <https://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/>. The term Hispanic comes from the word “Hispania,” the Latin term for Spain, and refers to everything that has to do with Spain geographically and linguistically. Thus, the Hispanic countries are those that speak Spanish, that is, most of Latin America and Spain, which adds up to twenty-two nations. See Nicole Canun, *The Powerful Role of Family in Hispanic Culture [Unlike U.S. Culture]*, Homeschool Hispanic Academy, <https://www.spanish.academy/blog/the-powerful-role-of-family-in-hispanic-culture-unlike-u-s-culture/>.

mother. The growth reflected Sister McPherson's passion for *the whole gospel to the whole world*. As Hispanic Foursquare churches began to flourish, both in the number of congregations and in its leaders establishing Bible schools to train Hispanic workers, increasing Hispanic immigration in California, Arizona, Nevada, and Texas led to Hispanic churches being planted outside of California.

From the beginning, Sister McPherson realized that advancing the Foursquare movement necessitated the establishment of a training school for those called to Foursquare ministry. The Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute later became the Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism (LIFE), then LIFE Bible College, and today Life Pacific University (LPU).⁸ This educational and formative arm of the movement helped shape culture, create a tradition, and develop affiliation; for many years, it was the sole formative and developmental tool to prepare ministers for the denomination. LIFE Bible College also included cross-cultural elements that appealed to Spanish-speaking leaders and those with a call to missions in Spanish-speaking countries. By 1927, the Bible college was offering Spanish courses as part of the curriculum. As a result of these efforts, many graduates founded Hispanic churches both in California and other parts of the United States, and some were sent to other countries. For example, the first missionaries sent to a Spanish-speaking nation were the Edwards family; Rev. and Mrs. Edwards were LIFE Bible College graduates. They went to Panama in 1928. After twenty years of ministry in Panama, the Foursquare church grew to more than 100 congregations in the nation.⁹ This fruitful beginning of international ministry to Foursquare Hispanics was extraordinary.

As more and more early Foursquare missionaries were sent out, Sister McPherson always maintained an emphasis on missionaries to Latin America. In the U.S., the numerical growth of Hispanic churches necessitated that administrative divisions and districts had to be organized. With the same fervor that ministers were prepared at LIFE Bible College, Hispanics founded schools that have prepared many ministers around the U.S. and the world. The Foursquare tradition taught Hispanics the love for training and education, which, although much is still needed by way of training Hispanics, the Hispanic people have enthusiastically embraced the importance of education and training.

⁸ Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches*, 49.

⁹ Van Cleave, *The Vine and The Branches*, 97.

Since its founding, the Foursquare tradition has embodied traits that are akin to those in the Hispanic community and so it was not difficult to win their hearts. In addition to not being discriminated against, Hispanics were treated like family from the beginning, which is highly valued in Hispanic communities. Foursquare also fueled the migrant spirit of Hispanics, embodying in them the Foursquare DNA of a genuine love for the Master's mission of evangelism to the whole world and the importance of going to other communities, regions, and countries to share the gospel.

Most recently, advances to promote and bless Foursquare Hispanics include establishing a nationwide Hispanic National District with the vision to reach first, second, and third-generation Hispanics.¹⁰ This strategic corporate decision was motivated by a desire to expand ministry to Foursquare Hispanics even more.

Distinctives of the Hispanic Foursquare Movement

Hispanic Foursquare is a community that loves *la familia* (family). As noted above, *familia* is of high value in the Hispanic community. Sister McPherson's treatment of Hispanics as equals who were made to feel like family was a determining factor for the early growth of the Hispanic community within Foursquare. The fact that Hispanics were treated as *familia* allowed a greater connection and reach into the community. Angel Jordan (Director of Hispanic Initiatives at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) affirms that Hispanics are a cultural group who have a high value on personal relationships and that appreciation is greater when it comes to spiritual matters.¹¹ Canun, a leader within the Hispanic community, testifies that two fundamental values of the Hispanic people are *closeness* and *familiarity*, pointing out the fact that when it comes to the family, this is not understood to be just the nuclear family, but also the extended family.¹² It is common to see uncles, aunties, and grandparents involved in Hispanic homes along with the immediate members of the family.

¹⁰ *Meet Foursquare's New District Supervisory Teams*, <https://resources.foursquare.org/meet-foursquares-new-district-supervisory-teams/>.

¹¹ Angel Jordán, *Eight Hispanic Values Every Church Must Keep in Mind*, Life Research, <https://research.lifeway.com/2023/03/23/8-hispanic-values-every-church-must-keep-in-mind/>.

¹² Canun, *The Powerful Role of Family in Hispanic Culture*.

As a result, Hispanics feel a moral responsibility to help other family members in need. Support and safety among the extended family are the backbone of the Hispanic family. Canun points out that this moral responsibility is a hallmark in the Hispanic community because of the support needed in trying to serve beyond their limits.¹³ When Sister McPherson sought to care for and serve families around the city, she allowed everyone equal access to the Angelus Temple Commissary, thus seeing to it that all families, including immigrant families, had their most basic needs covered during the Great Depression; Foursquare's earliest *cuidando de la familia* ("caring for the family") had a profound impact on Hispanics.

The Foursquare movement arose in a complex political and social time, yet flourished in ways that at times were counter-cultural.¹⁴ This resilience resonated with the Hispanic value of resilience seen in the effort to keep the family together. A study conducted in 2022 notes that "when faced with adversity, many Latino families rely on their strengths to provide a loving and nurturing environment for their children."¹⁵

Finally, Foursquare resonated with the Hispanic community in encouraging bilingualism and biculturalism, children's classes, work with youth, attention to adults, and, above all, proclaiming a message of hope—the Foursquare Gospel, a Christ-centered gospel that was proclaimed from every pulpit. Today, Hispanic Foursquare is a strong and healthy part of the Foursquare U.S. Church that emulates the movement's DNA through these same works and this same proclamation.

¹³ Canun, *The Powerful Role of Family in Hispanic Culture*.

¹⁴ For example, women still did not have a privileged place in pastoral ministry and socially they were not allowed to vote; yet, in that context, a great church movement that was initially built largely on women in leadership ministry began that has now impacted the world for 100 years. See Matthew A. Sutton, "Clutching to 'Christian' America: Aimee Semple McPherson, the Great Depression and the Origins of Pentecostal Activism," *Journal of Policy History* 17, no. 3 (July 2005): 308-338.

¹⁵ Nathasha Cabrera, Angelica Alonso, et al. *Latin Families' Strengths and Resilience Contribute to Their Well-Being*, National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families, <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/latinx-families-strengths-and-resilience-contribute-to-their-well-being/>.

Hispanic Foursquare emphasizes strong Pentecostal ministry, praxis of the manifestations of the Spirit, and Spirit empowered leadership

According to the study *Renewalism and Hispanic Christianity* conducted by Pew Research,¹⁶ the influence of the Pentecostal movement among the Hispanic community is very high. Pentecostals are often defined as Evangelical Christians who are generally more committed to their faith than other Evangelical groups; they live their faith to the fullest, have witnessed miracles, and consider having a *vibrant* relationship with God as essential. Another Pew Research study says that of the 20% of Evangelical Hispanics in the U.S., 6.9% of them are Pentecostals, which is the largest segment;¹⁷ this includes Foursquare Hispanics, for whom fervent worship, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and supernatural manifestations are inextricably part of their Christianity.

Pentecostalism among Hispanics has the potential for a dynamic future since there are many young Hispanics to carry it on. A survey shows that 46% of the Hispanic church's membership is between 30-49 years old.¹⁸ Many of these young adults are migrants from Latin American nations,¹⁹ where the rise of the Pentecostal church and praxis has steadily increased. This study also reflects the reality of the Hispanic Foursquare movement. Like its founder, the missionary spirit to all ethnic groups (Greek, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη [Matthew 28:19]) is still alive. Foursquare Hispanics are active in the U.S., seeking to reach not only

¹⁶ *The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States*, Chapter 7: Renewalism and Hispanic Christianity, Pew Research Center, May 7, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/05/07/chapter-7-renewalism-and-hispanic-christianity/>.

¹⁷ *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion*, Pew Research, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2007/04/>.

¹⁸ Roger G. Robins, *Pentecostals in the Evangelical Tradition Who Identify as Latino*, Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/racial-and-ethnic-composition/latino/religious-family/pentecostal-family-evangelical-trad/>.

¹⁹ According to a Pew Research study, nearly one in five Latin Americans now describe themselves as Protestant and, in all countries surveyed, most of them identify themselves as Pentecostal or belong to a Pentecostal denomination. David Masci, *Why Has Pentecostalism Grown So Dramatically in Latin America?* Pew Research, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/11/14/why-has-pentecostalism-grown-so-dramatically-in-latin-america/>.

Hispanics, but also crossing cultural barriers. As David Masci asserts, the Pentecostal movement has become a global phenomenon.²⁰

Under the leadership of Sister McPherson, KFSG radio station was also used to reach the Spanish speaking masses with the Foursquare Gospel as early as 1924; this outreach increased in 1930 with Pastor Antonio Gamboa's radio outreach to Hispanics.²¹ Foursquare was among the earliest Christian organizations to own a Christian radio station in the U.S., with Hispanics having the opportunity to carry the Foursquare message in their native language over the airwaves. Today, many Hispanic pastors are making use of the media as McPherson did, and through this media, they are reaching thousands. This has allowed congregations to expand and grow, among first, second, and third-generation Hispanics. For example, Lifeway Research shows that 58% of the congregants of Hispanic churches are first generation, 24% of new church members are second generation, and 17% belong to the third generation of Hispanics.²² There is no doubt that using media to share the gospel has been a fruitful tool since 1924.

The message and praxis that attracted Hispanics to the Foursquare church has always been the Pentecostal ethos. Many of the fastest-growing Hispanic Foursquare congregations in Latin America attribute their growth to a strong Pentecostal ministry, praxis of the manifestations of the Spirit in the life of the local church, and Spirit-empowered leadership. Of late, some Foursquare Hispanic churches have become less passionate about Pentecostalism, but nevertheless, the majority of Foursquare Hispanics around the world are firm believers in the power of a revivalist spirit and the manifestation of signs and wonders. The *cruzadas de avivamiento* ("crusades or tent revival meetings") were a part of Sister McPherson's ministry before Foursquare was founded,²³ and this has been a legacy continued by many Hispanic pastors in the U.S. and abroad.

²⁰ Masci, *Why Has Pentecostalism Grown So Dramatically in Latin America?*

²¹ *Foursquare Hispana, Part III*,

https://resources.foursquare.org/foursquare_hispana_part_3/.

²² Hispanic American Church Study, *A survey of pastors of Hispanic congregations in the U.S.*, Lifeway Research, 2022, <https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Hispanic-American-Church-Study-Report.pdf>.

²³ Rolf K. McPherson *Recalls His Mother's Tent Revivals*,

<https://resources.foursquare.org/rolf-k-mcpherson-recalls-his-mothers-tent-revivals/>.

Hispanic Foursquare is a community that values biblical-theological and leadership training

As we have seen, theological training has been a foundational element for the expansion of Foursquare. The former LIFE Bible College began offering Spanish classes early on, so that some of its students could plant Hispanic churches, go out into the Spanish speaking mission field, and not only evangelize but develop biblical-theological education and training for present and future leaders. A significant advance in Foursquare Hispanic theological education was the founding of two iconic schools: *Facultad de Teología* in Montebello, CA, and *Angelus Bible Institute* in Los Angeles. *Facultad* opened its doors in 1978 under the leadership of Foursquare Hispanic pastor, Dr. Enrique Zone. It is still in operation with a tremendous impact not only within the Foursquare church but interdenominationally. It offers programs in ministry training at the associate and bachelor levels. Many Foursquare Hispanics have also benefited from *Facultad's* bridge option into accredited graduate-level programs at several U.S. institutions. *Angelus Bible Institute* (ABI) was established in 1986 by Dr. Raymundo Díaz, who at the time was the lead Hispanic pastor at Angelus Temple. ABI is a Bible institute that offers a certificate in ministry and has expanded by having off-site extensions in other states and even other countries in Latin America.²⁴

The most recent and significant advancement in higher education for Foursquare Hispanics was the start of Hispanic Programs at Life Pacific University (LPU), Foursquare's flagship university in Southern California. In 2018, the university received a special donation to launch a Master of Arts in Leadership entirely in Spanish, marking the beginning of the Hispanic Programs Department at LPU. Dr. Daniel Ruarte was the founding director, pioneering the program and establishing the Hispanic department. To date, more than fifty students have graduated, and multiple cohorts are starting every year. Today, the department is under the leadership of Dr. Hugo Aldana Jr., and there are expectations of national and international expansions for a global impact.

Interestingly, in an interview that Justo González offered to Benjamin Wayman, Gonzalez stated that the challenges with Hispanic theological education are many.²⁵ However, he considers one of the

²⁴ Yader Parrales, *A Brief Timeline of the Foursquare Church and the Hispanic Movement* (Anaheim: Foursquare Missions Press, 2023), 16-17.

²⁵ Benjamin Wayman and Justo González, "Seminaries Need More Latinos," *Christianity Today*, November 13, 2020,

biggest challenges the fact that there are not enough qualified Hispanic faculty who are bilingual and bicultural for the existing demand in the U.S. In fact, many institutions that offer Hispanic-targeted theological education do so with non-Hispanic faculty, which is why González affirms that the crisis of theological education is not only financial but also demographic.

Life Pacific University's work in English and Spanish is a response to this problem. The formation of ministers was always on Sister McPherson's mind. *Facultad*, ABI, and LPU have been key in promoting theological education, leadership training, and the development of more qualified faculty. The Master of Arts in Leadership in Spanish has allowed several new Hispanic leaders to graduate and serve as faculty in Bible schools that prepare workers throughout the U.S. and the world.

The favor of God continues among Foursquare Hispanics. In 2022, LPU, together with Azusa Pacific University (APU) and Latin American Bible Institute (LABI), received a grant of five million dollars (1.4 was for Hispanic Programs at LPU) entitled, *Lilly Endowment Pathways for Tomorrow*. The project is for these three institutions to work together to expand theological and ministry training to Hispanics. Built on the slogan, "From certificate to doctorate," it will give Hispanic students a path to further biblical and theological education. The grant was so important that Hannah McClellan commented on it in her article in *Christianity Today*.²⁶

The mission of LIFE Bible College that Sister McPherson founded continues among Foursquare Hispanics because there are Foursquare Hispanic leaders who value education and training. As Hispanics, it is necessary to have an identity that allows us to deal with current challenges, buoyed by proper training to serve with excellence and stay current for future generations. LPU is an institution that provides high-quality education for Foursquare Hispanics, and we are grateful. Foursquare's Pentecostal-based doctrine and theological foundations must remain strong. Sister McPherson knew that anointing transforms people, but it is education and training that shapes them.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/justo-gonzalez-los-seminarios-necesitan-mas-latinos-es.html>.

²⁶ Hannah McClellan, "Christian Schools Building 'Consortium' for Hispanic Theology Education," *Christianity Today*, November 23, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/november/hispanic-theology-education-lilly-endowment-azusa-life-labi.html>.

Hispanic Foursquare is a community faithful to *las tradiciones* (traditions)

The Foursquare Hispanic community is the repository of an extraordinary denominational legacy. It can be said that today's Hispanic Foursquare church is the result of Sister McPherson's prayers and emphases. Two decades into the twenty-first century, with all its diversity, the Foursquare Hispanic community continues to embody the values of its founder, working hard to make the dream of impacting the world with the message of the Foursquare Gospel. We are committed to the words of her famous homily, "This is my task, this is my task, to take the gospel around the world."²⁷ It is a Foursquare tradition the Hispanic community ardently preserves.

Early Foursquare symbolism, culture, and traditions were very demonstrative and specific—the four-colored flag, symbolizing salvation (red), the baptism of the Holy Spirit (yellow), divine healing (blue), and the Coming King (purple); the symbols of the cross, the dove, the cup and the crown, which have similar understanding; and the four faces from Ezekiel: the face of the man who symbolizes Jesus crucified, the face of the lion representing Jesus as a baptizer with the Holy Spirit, the face of the ox, an animal that carries the heaviest burdens, typifying the fact that Jesus carries upon Himself the burdens of our pains and diseases, and the face of the eagle, which depicts Jesus as the Coming King. This is also Foursquare's defining verse: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8, TNIV). All of these continue to hold meaning and significance among Foursquare Hispanics.²⁸

Conclusion

The Foursquare Hispanic community represents all Spanish-speaking peoples in Central, South, and North America, the Caribbean, Europe, and parts of Africa. If you consider all these areas, it may be one of the largest ethnic groups in our Foursquare family. It is a growing community within Foursquare that will continue to expand with great opportunities for the future. We conclude this article with four

²⁷ "Aimee Semple McPherson Classic Sermon: This is My Task," *Foursquare Leader* (Spring 2020), <https://resources.foursquare.org/audio/aimee-semble-mcphersons-classic-sermon-this-is-my-task/>.

²⁸ There are also the Keystones and Global Distinctives discussed in Friesen and Dunahoo's article.

emphases from Hispanic culture that, if embraced, will benefit the global Foursquare community going forward.

Cultivate a strong family atmosphere

Understanding that Foursquare Hispanics are a community who loves *la familia*, we feel it is very important that the denomination as an organization strive to be a family more than a company. Providing pastoral care for the credentialed ministers should be paramount to the movement; and Foursquare districts and leaders should cultivate family values and focus on the care and health of their pastors more than operations, issues, legalities, and events.

Promote Pentecostal ministry

Understanding that Foursquare Hispanics are a community that emphasizes strong Pentecostal ministry, praxis of the manifestations of the Spirit, and Spirit-empowered leadership, it is very important that the denomination as an organization strives to stand firm in its roots and better promote praxis models of healthy-Pentecostalism.²⁹ Today, there are churches of other denominational lines integrating elements of Pentecostalism into their services because they know the value it adds to the impact and transformation of people. In Foursquare, it should be promoted clearly and unreservedly with moderation, as did Sister McPherson.

Promote formal education and leadership training

Understanding that Foursquare Hispanics are a community that values biblical-theological and leadership training, it is very important that the denomination as an organization strives to promote formal education and leadership training. We believe that Foursquare leaders must be more involved in the operations of our Foursquare universities, Bible colleges, and schools of ministry, fostering the value of formal preparation for ministry, requiring basic biblical-theological pre-service training and ongoing educational development for ministers.

²⁹ The term, “Healthy Pentecostal Churches,” was developed by Dr. Ruarte and is a new perspective to try to define in a practical way what it means to have a church that actively and healthily practices biblical Pentecostalism and the quadrangular Pentecostal doctrine. We understand that there is much to write, research and explain about this and the Foursquare Hispanic community is committed to move the discussion forward.

Create Foursquare traditions to shape our culture

Understanding that Foursquare Hispanic are a community faithful to *las tradiciones* (traditions), it is very important that the denomination as an organization strives to create unique Foursquare traditions that foster a culture of its own. Traditions create culture, and culture directs behavior. Hispanics value clear traditions. Sister McPherson was a creator of traditions and culture, including uniforms, songs, slogans, a flag, a denominational verse, elements required in church ministries, etc. Everyone knew what being Foursquare meant. Creating new traditions without leaving aside some longstanding traditions is important. Who are we as Foursquare Hispanics? Who are we as Foursquare? Distinctives are important because they reveal how we see the world, but traditions are more important because they reveal who we are and how we walk in the world.

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Foursquare and Reconciliation

Jennifer Thigpenn

Abstract

The locus of time in which The Foursquare Church was birthed, supported by its biblical and theological roots, has significantly expanded evangelism, discipleship, social aid and church planting across gender, generation, geography, and people groups in its first 100 years. Though reconciliation is woven into Foursquare's DNA through its high view of Scripture and Pentecostal ethos and modelled in important ways by Foursquare's founder, Aimee Semple McPherson, recurring opportunities to engage the present civically, socially, and theologically invite a regular assessment and theological reflection on how the people of God can live reconciled across social dividing lines.

Keywords: reconciliation, diversity, Foursquare Church, Aimee Semple McPherson, pentecostal ethos, race, gender, generation, geography, wholeness

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Foursquare Church, there has been a value for the proclamation and practice of reconciliation. In the unique times and social locations where Foursquare has found itself in the United States, there have been opportunities for Foursquare to be mobilized for kingdom mission regarding reconciliation across race and ethnicity, gender, and generation. While many may attribute it to founder Aimee Semple McPherson's energetic evangelistic style to welcome people of all creeds, contexts, and colors into the kingdom of God that has spurred Foursquare toward a mission of reconciliation, it is rather Foursquare's high view of Scripture and Pentecostal ethos that has kept Foursquare moving toward an integrated, holistic approach to mission within the United States and globally. In this paper, I will explore Foursquare's biblical and theological roots regarding reconciliation in conjunction with historical engagement with racial reconciliation. I will then provide a brief framework on wholeness, utilizing portions of 1 Corinthians 12-14 as a catalyst for transformative

unity and faithful witness as the reconciled people of God. While Foursquare has not always faithfully nor fully lived out the practice of being a reconciled people in its first 100 years, the desire to see all people mobilized for mission is deeply rooted in Foursquare's DNA and invites us toward alignment in our next 100.

Foursquare Foundations of Reconciliation: Biblical and Theological Foundations

The biblical foundations for the evangelistic nature of the Foursquare Church are not unique to this movement. The global Church's desire to see people reconciled to God is a consistent standard, regardless of tradition or geography. Jesus' post-resurrection message to his disciples was both an invitation and a commission to continue to live out the life that Jesus had modelled throughout his earthly ministry, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).¹

This, coupled with Jesus' final pre-ascension words to his disciples found in Luke's writings, instructed his followers to wait in Jerusalem for the gift that would empower them to live out the commission, the Holy Spirit—"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The expectation that evangelistic work and mission would come because of the presence of the Holy Spirit has been a primary driving force for Pentecostals, including Foursquare, throughout the world. For many, including Foursquare's founder, the baptism with the Holy Spirit seemed to function as a personal Pentecost that spurred people toward empowered mission, particularly as disciple-makers, as Jesus instructed in Matthew's gospel.

In the outcomes of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, we see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting in evangelistic tongues and Peter's declaration that a prophecy in Joel had been fulfilled.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say...'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will

¹ All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, is from the New International Version.

prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:14, 17-21).

Peter’s contextualized interpretation of Joel’s prophecy alluded to the fact that what the people were witnessing was the Holy Spirit leveling cultural and power dynamics between genders,² generations,³ classes,⁴ and communities,⁵ culminating in the declaration that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”⁶ While there was clear conviction at the outset of the New Testament church, much of the rest of the New Testament describes how that was to be lived out in the contextual social location of the first century. Ever since, the Church—including the Foursquare Church—has had to navigate the murky waters of how to faithfully and practically live as reconciled people in its time and location, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Birth of Pentecostalism

The Azusa Street Revival of 1906, led by African American holiness preacher, William J. Seymour, is one of the significant events in the birth of Pentecostalism. A season of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not simply marked by manifestations of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues and being slain in the Spirit, but also the breaking down of long-standing barriers between racial, gender and generational groups. “Unlike most churches of its day, Azusa was very much freely integrated in a day of racial segregation and Jim Crow laws. It is not an insignificant

² “...your sons and daughters will prophesy...” (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17).

³ “...your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions...” (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17).

⁴ “Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:29, Acts 2:19).

⁵ “Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Acts 2:9-11).

⁶ Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21.

fact that a black man, W. J. Seymour, provided its leadership and that everyone sensed a form of equality as sisters and brothers seeking God together.”⁷

Aimee Semple McPherson was, in many ways, a product of her time while holding a prophetic edge that pushed her beyond the societal expectations of the world to which she was ministering. From 1912-1922, as McPherson was establishing herself as an itinerant evangelist, the world was navigating a world war, a global pandemic, the expectations of gender roles inside and outside of the home, and issues of race, segregation, and Jim Crow laws. While there is no evidence that McPherson met or interacted with William Seymour before his death in 1922, the Spirit they shared produced a similar outcome in Aimee’s ministry as her dynamic personality and compelling message resulted in racially integrated tent meetings. In one story that was recounted in several places, Aimee spoke of an event in which white people in Florida, compelled by her preaching style and the message she carried, followed her to a tent meeting that she was holding for Black people (despite very stringent segregationist Jim Crow laws in the southern United States). That was the first of many integrated spaces where Aimee preached, holding faithfully to the understanding that the cross of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit were for all people. “Sister McPherson did not compromise God’s Word even in the face of laws that forbade her to open her meetings to African Americans. Sister McPherson publicly acknowledged that God’s love was for all, that at the foot of the cross, all men were the same.”⁸

Foursquare’s Pentecostal Ethos

From Foursquare’s inception in 1923, there has been a firm understanding that this Spirit-filled movement was invested in playing its part in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The evangelistic spirit of Aimee Semple McPherson took her to all the nooks and crannies of the United States to live out her call to be a soul-winner. Her charismatic personality and anointed preaching and healing ministry took her from segregated rural towns to diverse urban centers, carrying the full gospel

⁷ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Azusa Street Revival,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, edited by Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 349.

⁸ Doretha O’Quinn, *Silent Voices, Powerful Messages* (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel), 22.

message of Jesus to anyone who listened. For McPherson, the outcome of a Spirit-filled life, regardless of gender, generation, race, or class, was to see the gospel reach the people of the world, to fulfil Jesus' commission to preach the gospel⁹ and make disciples.¹⁰

Writing about Foursquare's Identity Keystones, Aaron Friesen summarizes the keystone of Pentecostal Ethos, recognizing the "significant root expressions of Foursquare's identity as a Pentecostal organization: the public expectation of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, passionate and expressive worship, physical healing and present-day miracles."¹¹ The emphasis on Spirit baptism, both in Sister McPherson's ministry and in the 100-year history of Foursquare, is rooted in the empowerment of all believers to "glorify and exalt the Lord Jesus; to give inspired utterance in witnessing of Him; to foster the spirit of prayer, holiness and sobriety; to equip the individual and the church for practical, efficient, joyous, Spirit-filled soul-winning in the fields of life."¹² As a result, there was no exemption of those who could be empowered for mission: men and women, young and old, people of all races and ethnicities—anyone who would receive Spirit baptism was expected to be a soul-winner in whatever context to which they were sent.

In her 1939 sermon, "This Is My Task," McPherson declared, "Oh, to be filled with the Spirit means to be filled with a burning desire to see other men and women saved, and to carry the gospel around the whole world."¹³ In an American society that identified a narrow demographic of who could be considered a pastor, preacher, evangelist or soul-winner, McPherson preached Spirit baptism as the great leveler when it came to the missional expectation of kingdom expansion. Within the first two years of the dedication of Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, multiple Sunday school classes had begun in languages other than

⁹ Mark 16:15.

¹⁰ Matthew 28:16-20.

¹¹ Aaron Friesen, *Foursquare Identity Keystones: A Summary of Five Significant Areas of Identity Congruence for the Foursquare Church* (Anaheim: Foursquare Missions Press, 2018), 9.

¹² Aimee Semple McPherson, "Article X: The Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* (1923).

¹³ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Aimee Semple McPherson's Classic Sermon, 'This Is My Task,'" News + Resources, October 29, 2020, <https://resources.foursquare.org/audio/aimee-semble-mcphersons-classic-sermon-this-is-my-task/>.

English: Spanish, Armenian, Japanese, and German.¹⁴ As Sister McPherson established the Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute, which later became Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism (L.I.F.E.) Bible College, she welcomed women and men, including those from marginalized communities, to be trained for ministry. In places that were deeply segregated, not simply by preference but often by legislation,¹⁵ McPherson established a place where all people would be welcomed, discipled, trained, and released to do ministry as they responded to the Holy Spirit's call. African Americans,¹⁶ women,¹⁷ and Hispanics¹⁸ (people who were regularly on the outskirts of formalized theological and ministry training in the 1920s and 1930s) were encouraged and empowered to be a part of the move of God that was happening in and expanding out of Angelus Temple and LIFE Bible College.

Aimee Semple McPherson's ministry was not limited to the work of preaching and teaching but also reaching out and showing Christ's love in tangible ways, addressing the needs of those who were suffering. During the Great Depression, Angelus Temple's Commissary provided care for thousands impacted by the economic downturn, providing food and clothing for those in need, which largely benefited minority groups such as the Hispanic enclaves of Los Angeles. McPherson's stance was clear, even amid a deeply segregated society: "Let us ever strive to

¹⁴ Angelus Temple Bulletin, February 1925, 4.

¹⁵ Jim Crow laws, named after a minstrel show caricature of a Black man, characterized the segregated South post-Civil War. However, Jim Crow laws were not limited to the mid-South and Southeast United States. Jim Crow laws and the spirit of segregation touched all parts of the United States until legislation began to pass in the late 1940s, culminating in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and subsequent legislation passed as a result.

¹⁶ According to Doretha O'Quinn, "On the opening day of LIFE Bible College, African American students actually entered through those portals and along with them came their many gifts and talents. The cultural tumult that was occurring during this time among blacks and whites in the United States made Sister McPherson's acts of embracing African Americans in this manner nothing less than revolutionary." *Silent Voices, Powerful Messages*, 33-34.

¹⁷ Of the 105 faculty and students at the end of the first term of the Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute (later to become LIFE Bible College), seventy-one were women.

¹⁸ James C. Scott, *Aimee... Her Heart and Work with the Hispanic People and the Untold Story of a Movement* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Media, 2008).

lighten our brothers' load and dry the tears of a sister; race, creed and status make no difference. We are all one in the eyes of the Lord."¹⁹

The Pentecostal ethos infused into McPherson's ministry initiated a 100-year legacy of evangelism, discipleship, social aid, and church planting in and among diverse people groups in the United States and around the globe.

Engaging the Times

In keeping with Sister Aimee's legacy of civil engagement, it was not unusual for the Foursquare Church and its leaders to reflect doctrinally, biblically, and theologically on sociological issues of the day and engage with governmental leaders about those issues. Over several decades following McPherson's death, the presidents of the organization that followed her were committed to engaging the present while keeping their eyes on the future of Jesus' imminent return for his Church.

In the early 1990s, the American Church was facing a society wrestling with issues related to abortion/sanctity of life, the AIDS epidemic, antisemitism/Middle East peace, and racial violence. Foursquare U.S.'s leadership capitalized on the opportunity to faithfully respond to the ills of the day to the best of their ability. In the days following March 3, 1991, the world watched in horror as Los Angeles police officers savagely beat Rodney King following a traffic stop. The 89-second video sparked renewed conversations about race, racism, and policing in the U.S. In 1992, the Foursquare Convention body²⁰ approved two denominational statements ("Denominational Statement Regarding the Safety of the Child" and "Denominational Statement Regarding Racism") that offered doctrinal and theological stances regarding issues that would impede human flourishing.²¹ In a letter to U.S. President George H.W. Bush, Foursquare President John R. Holland represented the 69th Annual Convention with these statements

¹⁹ Edith W. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 346.

²⁰ Those who are allowed to vote on Convention business (see Article 5.5 of the Bylaws of The Foursquare Church) are officers and directors of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, licensed ministers holding active status, and delegates from Foursquare churches.

²¹ I want to express extreme gratitude to Rev. Cindy Henderson, the Board Administrator and Recorder in the Office of the Corporate Secretary of The Foursquare Church, for providing these documents and additional context for my research.

as an affirmation of the commitment to “defending human rights, helping educate the underprivileged and, above all, preaching Christ’s gospel to the nations.”²²

The “Denominational Statement Regarding Racism” reads,

WHEREAS the Holy Scriptures clearly ascribe the creation of all mankind to our heavenly Father; and

WHEREAS both Old and New Testaments consistently reveal God’s love for every individual; and

WHEREAS our Lord Jesus Christ by His works and acts continually demonstrates acceptance, compassion and salvation for each human being regardless of race, position or circumstances; and

WHEREAS God is not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance, and has so loved the world that “whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life”; and

WHEREAS the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel is a worldwide body of believers committed to touch every nation and people with the message of Jesus Christ as Savior, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, Healer and Soon-coming King;

THEREFORE WE REPENT OF THE SIN OF RACISM AND RESOLVE

THAT in all its forms racism both personal and systemic is to be resisted in every activity, attitude and authority of the Church; and

THAT we admit our continuing Adamic nature and dealing with our fears and limitations, open our lives to true Christian fellowship; and

THAT the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel encourage each member throughout the worldwide body to speak boldly, act resolutely and stand consistently against racism; and

THAT together we strive for the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace so that no person is discredited, devalued or disregarded, but

THAT each person be treated with dignity and respect, be valued as an eternal soul for whom Christ died and rose again, and be viewed as the

²² John R. Holland to President George H. W. Bush, “Letter to the President” (Van Nuys: The Church on the Way, April 3, 1992).

object of our Lord's great salvation which makes all those who believe one body and the eternal bride of Christ.²³

The declaration of what it means to be human and the equality of people in God's eyes regardless of race, color, or creed faithfully reflects Foursquare's understanding of Scripture and the DNA of Foursquare's founder. However, when reflected upon in light of Foursquare's history, the theological position has not always been well practiced. In 2002, Doretha O'Quinn published her seminal work, *Silent Voices, Powerful Messages*, which looked back at the contributions of African Americans in the history of the Foursquare Church. In her book, she addresses the successes and the stumbling blocks of African-American ministers within Foursquare, often impeded by the prejudices of the day. In the book's Foreword, Foursquare President Dr. Paul Risser reflected on the decade that had passed since this resolution had been adopted. He writes,

It is one thing to declare "whereas" in a corporate covenant such as happened in 1992 and to be able to declare "where it is" indeed ten years later. To turn repentance into resolve demands that we look at our past to understand the underlying factor of why people acted or reacted in the manner that they did. "Silent Voices, Powerful Messages," written by Dr. Doretha O'Quinn, takes us back to honor heroes in the Foursquare Church whose stories need to be heard and whose messages require continued, honest, and open evaluations on the part of every member of our Foursquare family.

O'Quinn's book was a timely and prophetic work that highlighted the contributions of African Americans, but it was only the beginning of acknowledging the broader systemic barriers to marginalized, minority, and immigrant leaders, pastors, and churches within the Foursquare Church. In the twenty-one years since the publishing of O'Quinn's book and the thirty years since the denominational statement regarding racism, there have been herculean attempts at responding to the challenges of marginalized leaders across gender, generational, and ethnic lines.

Empowered for Reconciliation: Pursuing Wholeness

As we look forward into the next century of Foursquare's story, I believe that a renewed investment in our Pentecostal ethos and high view of Scripture will empower Foursquare's leaders and adherents to

²³ Denominational Statement Regarding Racism (Van Nuys: IFCG), 1992.

lead the charge in being a reconciled people across all societal dividing lines. Rather than fighting the current and future culture wars, centering on Foursquare's Identity Keystones and Scripture will create an alignment to the long-held convictions about the privilege of all believers to be disciple-makers and that Spirit empowerment invites all to participate.

The apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church provides a framework for how people are to live together on kingdom mission, despite severe cultural, ethnic, and class differences. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Paul writes, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now, the body is not made up of one part but of many." Paul concludes the discussion on the body with the instruction: "...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it" (vv. 25-27). In Paul's writings, the clarion call to wholeness, initiated by the presence of the Holy Spirit, not only flattens hierarchies and requires unity, but it also dismantles unjust power structures and encourages mutual submission.

Paul's metaphor of the human anatomy invites believers to consider both the role they play in the life of the body and how they relate to other parts of the body. Living as a reconciled people requires us to faithfully consider the latter. The places where people have lived unreconciled have often been because they have ignored the stories and experiences of those they consider "outsiders" or "others." Living as people of Pentecost, however, should invite us to not only see or hear about the experiences of others but to empathetically walk with them in it—suffering with those who suffer and rejoicing with those who rejoice. If Paul's metaphor is accurate, then we are only as strong as the weakest parts of our body, we are only as honored as the least honorable parts, and we cannot ignore or isolate those parts because their suffering or status makes us uncomfortable. Rather, to be whole, we must move together toward health, recognizing that the flourishing of the body is contingent on the outright rejection and humble repentance of the "isms" that keep us separate.

Author and pastor Peter Scazzero would use a common axiom at his church: “Jesus may be in your heart, but Grandpa lives in your bones.”²⁴ There are stories within Foursquare’s history, told and untold, documented and undocumented, of women and men, people of various cultures and ethnicities, young and old, who have been deeply wounded because of places where the church and culture have intersected, and culture has won. Racism, sexism, and socioeconomic discrimination are among the factors that have historically contributed to the decline of credentialing and appointment of marginalized people in the U.S. Foursquare Church, such as women, African Americans, Hispanics, and other non-English speaking immigrants.

To live as a reconciled people, using Paul’s instructions for the Spirit-baptized body, four postures can lead the Foursquare Church forward in being more whole when it comes to reconciliation—first, humility. The acknowledgment and recognition that “I am not whole without you” is a powerful practice of humility. In the Western world, driven by capitalism over community and where currency is king, autonomy, and power are of the highest value. Humility promotes interdependence over independence, recognizing that the body is most healthy and whole when all the parts are making their best contribution. Humility also leads us to reject assimilation as a requirement for entry into the community. Humility allows for diverse experiences and expression in preaching, worship, spiritual gifts and discipline, leadership, and the like.

Second, curiosity. Because humility makes room for diverse expressions, experiences, and perspectives, curiosity becomes an expression of love for the creativity of God and the ones whom God has created, called, and empowered for mission. The question, “What can I learn from your experiences and perspectives?” makes space and gives voice to those who might be otherwise marginalized. What often keeps people from being curious about those who do not share the same qualities as they, is the fear that they might be implicated in a person’s or group’s pain or suffering. While this is a possibility, Paul’s instruction for the body to not be divided and to have equal concern for one another should spur believers toward repentance, reconciliation, and restoration, as much as it depends on them. Curiosity makes space for creativity and expanded community.

Third, partnership. The Western cultural standard is one of self-making, independence, and autonomy. Viewed through this lens, a partnership is merely a means to an end. However, viewed through an

²⁴ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 72.

interdependent lens of the unified body, partnership becomes a communal act of care for all groups. Rather than trying to accumulate or hoard resources, partnership recognizes that “we are better together” and thus finds ways to promote the flourishing of the whole community. This idea of partnership was reflected immediately following Pentecost as the church was formed, “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

Finally, justice. The pursuit of justice is working toward collective flourishing. It is tearing down barriers that have been created to exclude or prohibit engagement from those who are considered “other.” Justice, as it relates to a Pentecostal ethos, is the primary acknowledgment that the Holy Spirit is available to all; thus, the act of justice begins with equitable empowerment of Spirit-filled women and men, young and old, and people across all ethnic, language, and racial groups.

Pentecostal Ethos: The Fruit and the Manifestations

Though Sister Aimee had a fruitful healing ministry and her gatherings included many of the manifestations of the Spirit,²⁵ including speaking in tongues, her primary reflection of what it meant to be Spirit-filled went beyond the demonstrative acts. In Foursquare’s *Declaration of Faith*, McPherson reflects, “...the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, should be put forth, cultivated and diligently guarded as the resultant adornment, the constant, eloquent and irrefutable evidence of a Spirit-filled life.”²⁶ The evidence of the personal Pentecost that McPherson preached was a life that bore witness to the fruit of the Spirit being cultivated first and foremost, with the Spirit’s manifestations being an external expression of what was happening internally.

A Pentecostal ethos is not simply the expression of spiritual gifts but is primarily the development and nurturing of spiritual fruit. Following his initial thoughts on spiritual manifestations and the wholeness of the body of Christ, Paul speaks of eagerly desiring the greater gifts and

²⁵ See 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

²⁶ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Article XII: The Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit,” *Foursquare Declaration of Faith*.

showing “the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

In these opening verses of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul addresses the Corinthians’ mistaken belief that those who could demonstrate spiritual gifts, particularly those who spoke in tongues, were the best or most mature believers. Paul clearly articulates the fact that love is the highest virtue and that any gifts—tongues, prophecy, faith, etc.—without it are hollow, empty, or merely for show. Love, as a fruit of the Spirit, is that which lasts,²⁷ more so than any of the external expressions of the manifestations of the Spirit. For the Foursquare Church to be whole and for each member to contribute fully, love must be at the center of its life together.

To be a reconciled people, love must be the primary goal. Believers must start with the Great Commandment²⁸—to love God and one’s neighbor—so that the Great Commission might be accomplished. Love invites a person or people group to bring their whole selves under the lordship of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to steward their gifts, talents, culture, language, rituals, and expressions for the sake of the gospel. Love celebrates differences and embraces commonalities across gender, generations, ethnicity, and language, not asking for assimilation or uniformity but rather promoting unity in diversity.

An Embodied Pentecost

One thing that unites Pentecostal people across time and geography is the embodied nature of Spirit-filled living. The experiential nature of Pentecostalism should, theoretically, make more room for understanding when it comes to diverse expressions of preaching, worship, manifestations of the Spirit, leadership, and the people empowered to participate. There has been a long-held tension, at least in more Western contexts (for example, the United States), that comes with organizational leadership responsibilities in Pentecostal spaces. Keeping the status quo of power as it has been historically understood has, for better or for worse, led to a consistency in style, tone, and influence, to the exclusion

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:13.

²⁸ Matthew 22:37-40.

of women and minorities, those from poor, urban, or rural communities, and those whose primary language is other than English. For the Foursquare Church, this reality flies in the face, not only of the legacy of our founder but also in our understanding of being a Spirit-baptized, Spirit-filled people on mission together.

Paul continues his musings on the manifestations of the Spirit in the body of Christ at the opening of 1 Corinthians 14, holding both the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts in tandem, encouraging his readers to “follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (vs. 1). He discusses the role of the gifts as a means of edifying the body and as a witness to unbelievers. Though speaking in tongues is an important gift, Paul writes, it is more important that everyone understand what is being said, so he promotes tongues with an interpretation or prophecy. Paul’s desire for unity and empowerment of the whole body suggests that love will make sure everyone can be included (thus the use of one’s natural language instead of a spiritual language) so that the church will be built up and mobilized for mission. This embodied Pentecost, a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life, creates space for people to encounter the presence of God in a community, making room for life to be shared, love to be experienced, and reconciliation—both with God and one’s neighbor—to be faithfully practiced.

A Pentecostal ethos that is fully embodied begins with recognizing and acknowledging culture and context. Throughout the New Testament, we see the various opportunities the apostles had to speak to the newly formed church communities about what it meant to follow Christ despite cultural divides. Rather than have Gentiles adopt Jewish rituals and practices (e.g., circumcision, dietary laws),²⁹ there was a contextualization for Gentile believers of what it meant to pledge their allegiance to a Jewish Messiah in their Greco-Roman context. Instead of creating a tiered value of believers based on race, gender or class, Paul writes to the church in Galatia that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Instead of requiring uniformity or promoting colorblindness, the apostles and New Testament authors promoted unity in the Spirit, allowing all of a person’s unique identifiers to be a vehicle for the reconciling message of the gospel.

The acknowledgment and celebration of all people, cultures, and languages rejects the dichotomy of “us” and “them” and instead creates spaces where everyone is invited and welcomed. Men and women,

²⁹ See The Council at Jerusalem, Acts 15:1-11.

young and old, and people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are seen, heard, and celebrated in the unique way that God made them; they are invited to see how their stories are redeemed and transformed by the presence of God, leading to the movement toward others with similar experiences being redeemed and transformed by the presence of God. In this vein, there is room at the table for everyone, not just those with wealth, power, status, or influence.

As people from different backgrounds and experiences are welcomed to the table, they are not merely tolerated or placated but are instead embraced; they are loved up close. It is one thing to say you love someone; it is something different to practice love toward someone. Love does not simply tolerate but works toward someone's best outcome, even if it costs the individual something. Love cost Jesus his life, and reconciliation cannot be achieved with a cheap or superficial love that costs very little. "Greater love," Jesus declares, "has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Loving up close makes space for life-on-life sharing that leads to discipleship. A Spirit-filled life is one marked by disciple-making, thus requiring an up-close type of relationship. Jesus sent his disciples out to continue the expansion of God's kingdom, and our mandate is the same. An embodied Pentecost realizes that disciple-making should include equipping and sending disciples out to make more disciples, to grow as a people who are continually being reconciled to the community around them as they faithfully engage it, knowing that there are no limits to what God can do in the world. An embodied Pentecost results in mission-minded, mobilized people ready to carry a Pentecostal fire into the world to those still wandering. This is a high value in Foursquare.

John L. Amstutz, in his work, *Disciples of All Nations*, concludes,

When will the Great Commission be completed? When can it be said, "It is finished"? When He comes! Until then we are to be about the Father's business, for His will is that none perish, but all come to repentance...this is our goal. For this reason the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel is "dedicated unto the cause of interdenominational and worldwide evangelism," dedicated to the making of disciples of all nations...until He comes.³⁰

³⁰ John L. Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations* (Fresno: Editorial RENEUEVO, 2013), 128.

Conclusion: The Next 100 Years

In many ways, Sister Aimee likely never anticipated that the revival center she dedicated on January 1, 1923, in Echo Park, California, would be celebrating its Centennial anniversary. Her eschatological vision of Jesus, the Coming King, and the urgency at which she worked to get the gospel to every man, woman and child in anticipation and expectation of Christ's immanent return set Foursquare up to be an evangelistic force around the world. While mission has fueled expansion in the last 100 years, the opportunities to live as a reconciled people on mission together are ever-present in a society that is extremely polarized. As a Spirit-baptized people, cultivating the fruit and experiencing the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, choosing to live empowered and empowering others for the sake of kingdom mission, the Foursquare Church is presented with the extraordinary opportunity to live out our Pentecostal ethos to faithfully engage the times, move toward one another and invite all to participate in God's work in the world. May Foursquare's next 100 years, should Jesus tarry, be marked by a reconciled people mobilized toward bringing the whole gospel to the whole world so that one day "every nation, tribe, people and language [are seen] standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9).

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Reviews

S. David Moore. *Pastor Jack: The Authorized Biography of Jack Hayford*. Colorado Springs, CO: David. C. Cook, 2020. 367 pages. \$34.99

Most readers are no doubt somewhat familiar with Jack Hayford, known affectionately as “Pastor Jack.” Arguably the most preeminent figure emanating from Foursquare save “Sister” Aimee Semple McPherson. Hayford was the pastor of one of America’s earliest “mega churches,” The Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California. Hayford served in Foursquare leadership in a variety of significant roles over his long ministry career, produced daily radio and television broadcasts, penned well as over 50 books, and founded his own seminary, The King’s University. He was a prolific songwriter who penned the classic song, “Majesty.” Moreover, Hayford was a man of the church who helped to build bridges between the Pentecostal world and larger evangelicalism. He served as a well-respected and erudite spokesman and showed that not all Pentecostals were of an anti-intellectual or excessive “snake handling” persuasion. He was featured on the cover of *Christianity Today* with the heading, “The Pentecostal Gold Standard,” an indication of his stature both within and outside of Pentecostal circles.

While many know of Hayford and the above highlights, none have articulated or captured how a boy from an unremarkable family from Northern California became “Pastor Jack” quite as thoroughly and intimately as S. David Moore in this eminently readable authorized biography. Having conducted over 100 hours of interviews with Hayford, including access to his voluminous personal journal archives, and conducting over forty interviews with colleagues and contemporaries of Hayford, Moore develops a thorough and insightful portrait of a real man who was formed by a deep sense of the reality of Jesus over many years and lessons learned.

Beginning with his humble beginnings, Moore captures how Hayford, described as a “spiritually sensitive” child of the depression-era, fared as his strict yet loving parents moved between Northern and Southern California, once landing in Long Beach where the young Hayford experienced a miraculous healing at a Foursquare church. As a child growing up, he was profoundly influenced by his mother’s own spirituality who encouraged Jack to live “in front of Jesus” and to “listen

for the voice of the Lord.” He would carry these lessons throughout his life and ministry.

After experiencing a sense of calling to vocational ministry, he headed to Life Bible College in Los Angeles. The 1950s and the “college years” were pivotal for Hayford’s connection with and commitment to The Foursquare Church. It was during this early period that Hayford also met his wife and lifelong ministry partner, Anna. Moore recounts the charming period of a new romantic relationship and the sense of fresh possibilities for this ministry partnership. It was during this season that Hayford had several important “breakthroughs” in his spiritual life: the ability to speak in tongues and overcoming his fear of being expressive in worship. One is astonished to read of the man whom we now know as a fearless and outspoken advocate for both who in these early years was timid and reticent.

As Hayford launched into public ministry, he and Anna experienced more spiritual breakthroughs in the small Foursquare church he pastored in Fort Wayne, Indiana. During this period, he began to develop a foundational philosophy of ministry ideals, such as being a “sane and sensible” Pentecostal and appreciating the power of a prophetic word. After moving back to California and a season as the Foursquare National Youth Representative, he began to see the inner workings of the movement firsthand, which he deemed stagnate at that time (the early 1960s). Soon after, he took the position of Dean of Students at Life Bible College. Moore brings in the important historical context of the era, noting the influence of the Charismatic Renewal, Hayford’s burden for the nation in light the war in Vietnam, the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., the Civil Rights Movement, and even Hayford’s thoughts on The Beatles (spoiler alert: he wasn’t a fan).

The second half of the book focuses on the “exploding ministry” of Hayford from the 1970s forward. He details how Hayford once again saw a breakthrough of the Spirit in the struggling First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, which became his “laboratory” for worship, spiritual warfare, and the ministry of every believer. Hayford felt the Lord clearly spoke to him that this new church appointment was not merely the next thing, but “his valley” and long-term place of ministry. Yet he was not initially elated about this. Moore gives some very personal insights throughout the book, including Hayford’s initial candor about this assignment: “I was looking forward to what appeared to be a bleak future in an obscure pastorate lost in the Los Angeles urban sprawl.” Moore helps the reader to see, at various points, how

success was not always guaranteed, and how a giant of the faith like Hayford had very human moments of doubt and apprehension about what the Lord had called him to do.

Moore goes on to give details on Hayford's ever-expanding platform and growing inter-denominational stature. In addition to leading a fast-growing congregation, he became the president of the denominational college and later of the denomination itself, and eventually became a national spokesman whose influence moved beyond the denomination becoming a "pastor and apostle" and "pastor to pastors." He shared platforms with some of the most pre-eminent leaders of his era as a clear-thinking and articulate spokesman for Pentecostalism, arguing convincingly and eloquently for the ongoing manifestations and fullness of the Holy Spirit. He was invited to speak at the international Lausanne II Conference in 1989 and received ongoing invitations to speak for groups as diverse as the Lutherans, Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, and many others. He also developed a passion for the Jewish people and their historic homeland, leading countless tours of devote Christians to visit Israel, and supporting the emerging Messianic Jewish movement.

While all of Hayford's accomplishments and accolades are impressive, Moore brings the reader back to the central focus of Hayford's life and ministry – "keeping a life of personal worship and intimate prayer and fellowship with Jesus." While all great leaders certainly face challenges, and we see the challenges firsthand, Moore portrays Hayford as one constantly buoyed by the Spirit, keeping a life of holiness and honesty before a watching and faithful Savior, who lived in an "enchanted world" in which the Spirit was alive and active. Throughout the book, Moore attempts to situate the life and ministry of Hayford in the larger context and ethos of the Pentecostal and evangelical *sitz im leben* of his era as well as in contemporary society. Moore's book is well-researched, historically grounded, academically informed, and well-documented. Not overly critical, it fairly portrays how one born in hard times was able by the grace of God to rise to the upper echelons of the faithful and impact a generation of leaders.

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Jerry Cook. *The Holy Spirit: So, What's the Big Deal?* North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013. 101 pages. \$8.99.

The Holy Spirit: So, What's the Big Deal? is written by a loving spiritual father within Foursquare who desires to impart wisdom to the reader. Rather than a comprehensive exposition on the Holy Spirit or a research manuscript complete with scholarly evidence, Cook engages the reader with an accessible style and compelling argument for why the Holy Spirit is vital for every Christ-follower. Serving as a Foursquare licensed minister and a long-time local church pastor, the author sets the text's tone with an open invitation for the reader to receive and experience everything Christ intends for His believers. Particularly, Cook desires that disciples receive the Holy Spirit in all His fullness without the eccentric traditions or fanaticism that sometimes accompanies this phenomenological, spiritual experience.

Taking the posture of a lifelong learner, Cook genuinely shares his struggles, uncertainties, and questions about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He asks, "Can serious Christians experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues, without becoming a religious nut?" (Introduction). Cook attempts to answer these questions and present a compelling argument for why all believers should want all the Holy Spirit offers. He confidently proposes that it is possible to be a rational, intellectually sincere, biblical, and anointed Christian filled with the Spirit, who speaks in tongues (heavenly language) and effectively ministers in the fullness of Christ.

The book's layout comprises two main parts focused on (*Part I*) six historic Scriptural events and (*Part II*) Pentecost's continued influence with the ongoing global mission. The six distinct events originate in Genesis depicting God's united relationship with Adam and Eve. The Fall of Humankind and the Exodus story of Israel's deliverance follow. Then advancing chronologically, Jesus's birth, death, resurrection, and ascension depict the gospel message of Christ's purpose and promise. In Part II, Cook emphasizes how the Holy Spirit continues to equip, support, and empower the church with continuing gifts of wisdom, vision, and anointing.

Through an easy conversational tone, chapter one uses artful storytelling to describe the beginning of the gospel story in Genesis. The Garden saga sets the stage where the complex problem of sin and rebellion separates humanity from God. This breach in the relationship between God and humanity has had lasting ramifications. As mentioned, the subsequent story articulates Israel's exodus displaying God's

miraculous power and redemption. Nevertheless, even after such a powerful display, the people of God still wandered away from the initial design of the Garden relationship.

Cook moves into chapters two through five, suggesting that if humanity is ever to experience a renewed relationship with God, He, *God*, alone must initiate the process (9). Thus, Jesus becomes the incarnate form of God sent to rescue humanity from the effects of sin and death. With numerous dramatic word pictures, Cook presents an attractive practical theology of love, grace, redemption, and salvation to restore the collective relationship that was lost. All the while, he was setting the foundation for the role and work of the Holy Spirit.

The first time the Holy Spirit arrives on the scene is when Jesus was resurrected, and His disciples are trying to comprehend what has happened, and what is to come. Cook skillfully captures the emotional state of the disciples, realizing that their Rabbi Jesus had ascended to heaven leaving them to navigate life without Him in their midst. The emotions of abandonment, disillusion, and questioning felt palpable. Yet, as Cook notes, there was hope (9). Hope is a powerful force in that Cook describes this type of *hope* as fuel for the disciples' desire to hurriedly travel to the place where Jesus instructed them to wait.

Cook's definition of what it means to be Pentecostal is noteworthy and is a straightforward, nuanced, and robust definition influenced by his Foursquare heritage. He articulates,

To be Pentecostal means that I acknowledge the reality of Christ's immediate and active presence through the Spirit. Spirit baptism is not for decoration or affect, but to enable the Spirit-filled believer to be Jesus in any situation. We do not relegate the power of the Spirit to an age past or gifted experts in the present. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone (15).

Cook expresses that this definition purposefully invites everyone to experience the Holy Spirit without limitation. Isn't invitation a tool of the kingdom?

From Ephesians 4:7-13, Cook describes the equipping of the church comparatively with Hirsch and Cruickshank's¹ activation of the whole Body of Christ to accomplish the missional works of the gospel through Holy Spirit empowerment. The simplicity of Cook's writing encourages the five equipping gifts of grace that Jesus intends for His Body derive

¹ Alan. Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* (Cody, WY: 100 Movements, 2017); Alan Hirsch and Jessie Cruickshank, *Activating 5Q: A User's Guide* (Cody, WY: 100 Movements, 2019).

from a desire that Christ is tangibly experienced in the world—in communities, homes, and workplaces. Significant measures of apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching expertise should be collectively evident when and where disciples meet. Cook articulates that spiritual disciplines and religious practices are *only a part* of the more extensive work of God in the church. He proposes that apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and instructive ministry *accomplishes* the target of attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:7).

Throughout every chapter, Cook thoughtfully presents why the Holy Spirit is a *Big Deal*. Cook delivers what he sets out as his original intent to share his wisdom and passion for the Holy Spirit to be a central part of disciples' lives today. He encourages generations to come to build upon the framework that he presents. Reflective questions after each chapter could have enhanced each reader's interaction with the material. However, Cook provides all levels of disciples with eternal points to consider. Finally, he leaves the reader with a charge to keep the *Big Deal* the priority it should always be.

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A. J. Swoboda. *After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith without Losing It*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021. 224 pages. \$18.99

I had the privilege of listening to Dr. A. J. Swoboda lecture on this book during the 2022 Foursquare connection in Orlando, FL. I can personally testify that the pastoral tone of the text comes through in the real world. Swoboda is unfailingly kind as well as surprisingly (and disarmingly) funny. I'm thankful for his presentation and the work he's done in writing this book. This isn't an academic treatise. It's the fruit of pastoring people through their doubt while struggling with his own. This timely book is a gift to the church. As John Mark Comer points out in the foreword, Swoboda hits the nail on the head when he says things like, "To struggle with one's faith is often the surest sign we actually have one."

Swoboda's *After Doubt* is a thought-provoking and insightful book that tackles the issue of doubt in the Christian faith. In a world where doubt is often seen as a weakness, Swoboda encourages readers to embrace their doubts and use them as a means of growing in their faith.

The author's personal experiences with doubt and his journey towards a deeper understanding of God provide a relatable and engaging perspective for readers. The book is divided into two parts: "Deconstruction and Doubt" and "Following Jesus through Deconstruction and Doubt."

In the first part, Swoboda examines the reasons why people doubt their faith, including intellectual doubts, emotional doubts, and spiritual doubts. He shares his struggle with doubt and how it affected his faith. He discusses the various forms of doubt, including intellectual, emotional, and spiritual, and how they can be both challenging and transformative. He also discusses the role that doubt plays in the Bible, pointing out that many of the great figures in Scripture experienced doubt at some point in their lives. The most moving example for me was that of "doubting" Thomas (84-85), an example which Swoboda expanded during his session at Connection. Only Jesus gets to say, "Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27). We're told to be merciful to those who doubt (Jude 1:22-25). The author also delves into the reasons behind doubt, such as personal experiences, cultural influences, and theological questions. He encourages readers to embrace their doubts and see them as an opportunity for growth and learning.

In the second part of the book, Swoboda offers practical advice for dealing with doubt. He encourages readers to be honest about their doubts, to seek out community and support, and to engage their doubts in a constructive way. He also emphasizes the importance of prayer and reading Scripture as a means of overcoming doubt. Swoboda argues that doubt can lead to a deeper understanding of God and a more authentic faith. He also explores the ways in which doubt can be a catalyst for growth and transformation. He considers what comes after doubt. He emphasizes the importance of community, prayer, and Scripture in overcoming doubt and finding a deeper faith. He also discusses the role of doubt in spiritual formation and how it can lead to a more authentic relationship with God.

One of the strengths of *After Doubt* is Swoboda's honesty and vulnerability in sharing his own struggles with doubt. His personal stories and reflections make the book relevant and inspiring for readers who may be going through their own doubts. He is not afraid to acknowledge the complexity of the issue or to admit that there are no easy answers. Instead, he offers a nuanced and thoughtful approach that is refreshing. Another strength of the book is Swoboda's writing style. He is engaging and accessible, and he uses personal anecdotes and examples to illustrate his points. This makes the book both informative

and enjoyable to read. Finally, the author's balanced approach to the topic of doubt is incredibly helpful. He acknowledges the challenges and difficulties of doubt while also emphasizing its potential for growth and transformation. He encourages readers to embrace their doubts and seek answers through prayer, community, and Scripture.

Overall, *After Doubt* is an excellent resource for anyone who has struggled with doubt in their faith. It offers a compassionate and insightful approach to a complex issue, and it encourages readers to embrace their doubts as a means of deepening their relationship with God. I highly recommend this book.

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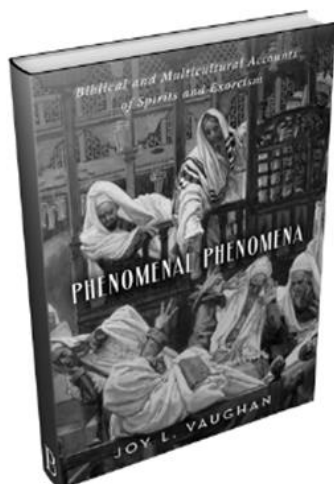
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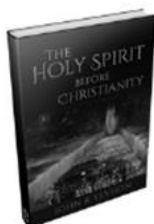
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