



Aimee Semple McPherson



Our Founder

The early 20th century evangelist, **Aimee Semple McPherson**, was a pioneer of women in religion. Having experienced a profound religious conversion at age 17, Aimee began preaching across the United States and later, the world. In 1918, she established her base in Los Angeles, Calif., where in 1923, the 5,300 seat [Angelus Temple](#) was dedicated and became the center of her revival, healing and benevolent ministries. She was the first woman to own and operate a Christian radio station. Her sermons were the first to incorporate the contemporary communications of that day into her preaching of the Gospel. From Angelus Temple she performed an extensive social ministry, providing hot meals for more than 1.5 million people during the Great Depression. She summarized her message into four major points known as "[The Foursquare Gospel](#)," and founded a denomination called The Foursquare Church.

Aimee was born October 9, 1890 on a small farm near Ingersoll, Ontario, Canada and was the only child of James and Minnie Kennedy. While a student in high school, she attended a revival service conducted by Robert Semple. By her own account, she stated that at the time she was "cold and far from God" and began questioning the truths of the Bible. During this revival meeting, the message of "repentance" and a "born again experience" pierced her heart with conviction. When Robert began talking about the baptism with the Holy Spirit, it disturbed her so much that she left the meeting. But the Holy Spirit continued to grip at Aimee's heart, and for three days she struggled with such conviction until finally, alone in her room, she threw up her hands and said, "Lord, God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Immediately the burden was gone and the glory of the Lord filled her heart. She had been born again.

As she continued to attend the revival services, she learned that God had even more for her and so she began to seek the baptism with the Holy Spirit. After a time of prayer and seeking the Lord, she was gloriously filled and began speaking in her heavenly language and praising God. Aimee would describe that time by saying, "Each moment I could feel myself drawing nearer, nearer into His presence," and her heart cried out, "Take me, use me, have Thine own way. I am only a school girl. I live on a Canadian farm, but such as I am I give myself to Thee." Aimee said that, with the incoming of the Holy Spirit came a love and compassion for souls that melted her heart with longing for Christian service.

Her desire for serving the Lord seemed perfectly fitted to Robert Semple's evangelistic work and when he asked her to marry him, she quickly responded with a "yes." The two were married and this longing for service was first fulfilled when, before her twentieth birthday, she and her husband of less than two years, embarked on a missionary trip to China. Aimee would have been content to live out her days in obscurity. But what started out as a glorious adventure and fulfilment of God's calling ended with the tragic death of her husband three months after their arrival. Penniless, and alone with a one-month-old daughter, Aimee returned to the United States.

Shortly after returning home, Aimee met and married a businessman, Harold McPherson, with whom she had a son, Rolf. She tried to settle down to a "normal" home-life, but the call to Christian service remained constant. God continually knocked at the door of her heart and said, "Now will you go?" Growing weaker and weaker from sickness, Aimee, while on her deathbed after her second operation within two years, answered "yes" to God's call. Almost immediately thereafter, she was

healed.

Knowing that she had to keep her promise to the Lord, she began evangelizing and holding tent revivals, first by traveling up and down the eastern part of the United States, then expanding to other parts of the country. She eventually held meetings in all parts of the world. People began coming in ever-increasing numbers to hear this remarkable lady evangelist. When not in a tent, she would need to find the largest auditorium in town in order to hold the record number of people that would come to her meetings. Often times she would have to share the time with whatever "event" was happening in the town. Like, on one occasion she met in a boxing ring, but had to hold her meetings before and after the boxing match. Once in San Diego, the National Guard had to be brought in to control the crowd of over 30,000 people. People would often stand in line and wait many hours for the next service to begin in order to be assured a seat.

Aimee's charismatic personality was a God-given gift used to draw people to hear her message. Her sermons were not the usual "fire and brimstone" messages given by contemporary evangelists, but ones which showed the face of a loving God, with continual outstretched arms. It was a message about heaven, as a place you wanted to be, and serving Jesus, as the only life that offered true fulfillment.

With Aimee, all were called and all were welcomed. God was no respecter of persons and neither was Aimee. She evangelized when segregation was rampant in the South. Although she invited all to come to her meetings, often times she would go to the "black" parts of town and hold meetings after the main meeting was over. She broke down racial barriers such that one time at Angelus Temple, some Klu Klux Klan members were in attendance, but after the service, many of their hoods and robes were found thrown on the ground in nearby Echo Park. She is also credited with helping many of the Hispanic ministries in Los Angeles get started, and there was even a great Gypsy following, after the wife of a Gypsy chief and the chief himself had been healed in a Denver revival meeting. With Aimee Semple McPherson there was no color, ethnic, or status separation line.

While holding a revival meeting in San Francisco in April 1922, Aimee became the first woman to preach a sermon over the radio. Being intrigued with the possibilities of this medium, Aimee purchased a radio station herself, thus making her the first woman to possess a radio license and operate a station. Through the wonder of radio, Aimee's voice became the most recognizable voice around the world. Since there were not many stations in Los Angeles at its inception, one could walk down the street, especially on a Sunday morning, hear the entire message from one open window to another, get to the destination, and not miss a single word of the sermon.

Weary of constant traveling and having no place to raise a family, Aimee rejoiced when in 1918, God called her to Los Angeles. This was to be her base of operation. God told her He would build her a house in Los Angeles and He did--one for her family and one for His people. For several years she continued to travel and raise money for the building of **Angelus Temple** and on January 1, 1923, Angelus Temple was dedicated. The church held 5,300 people and was filled to capacity three times each day, seven days a week. In the beginning, Aimee preached every service. It became the spiritual home for thousands of her followers and a base for her evangelistic ministry. What grew out of a desire to have a base of operation to preach the Gospel, quickly evolved into a church organization--supporting and sending out missionaries, providing commissary and community services that were more reliable than the city's own relief programs, as well as a full program of church ministries.

Aimee was famous inside and outside the church. Every city where services were held usually had in attendance civic leaders, as well as pastors representing the local churches of every denomination. She made sure that Angelus Temple was represented in local parades and entered floats into the famous Rose Parade in Pasadena. Her illustrated sermons attracted even those from the entertainment industry, looking to see a "show" that rivaled what Hollywood had to offer. These famous stage productions drew people who would never have thought to enter a church, and then presented them with the message of salvation. Aimee believed that the Gospel was to be presented at every opportunity and used worldly means at her disposal to present the Gospel to as many people as possible.

She was a woman in a man's world, and single at a time when women her age were suppose to be married. But she was willing to go, when God called, and was not limited by what she saw, but believed in the God who called her to fulfill the greatest call of all--the winning of souls.

Aimee once wrote:

"You don't need to be an orator. What God wants is plain people with the Good News in their hearts who are willing to go and tell it to others. The love of winning souls for Jesus Christ sets a fire burning in one's bones. Soul winning is the most important thing in the world. All I

have is on the altar for the Lord, and while I have my life and strength, I will put my whole being into the carrying out of this Great Commission."

Sister McPherson, as she was affectionately called by her constituents, went to be with the Lord, September 27, 1944, while conducting a revival service in Oakland, Calif. Memorial services were held on her birthday, October 9th, at Angelus Temple.

From its beginning at Angelus Temple, The Foursquare Church has now grown to include more than 50,000 churches worldwide. There are currently more than 5 million members in 147 countries around the globe. It presently ranks as one of the three or four most distinguished branches of Pentecostalism.