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Inspirational Creativity in the Foursquare Church

Shelley McBride

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Inspirational Creativity in the Foursquare Church

by
Shelley McBride

Master of Arts in Christian Studies
George Fox University
1996

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December 17, 1996

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Introduction

From its very inception, the Foursquare denomination has functioned in the gifting of creativity. Just as in genetic coding family traits are passed down, there is a freedom of Spirit and blessing from God to be received by current Foursquare pastors from Aimee Semple McPherson's legacy of unique spiritual gifts. This denomination, once thought of as a cult, is now one of the fastest growing denominations in the United States and is known throughout the charismatic community worldwide. Each church in the denomination functions or is in process of receiving its own special or unique gift. This paper seeks to illustrate a denominational receptivity to potential creativity resident in each church as observed in its founder, Aimee Semple McPherson.

It will be important to look at Aimee's life and the growth of Angelus Temple. The establishment of the church and denomination will be studied to ascertain the role of creativity in both Aimee and the church. It is important to try to determine how much of Aimee's creativity influenced the Foursquare movement at its inception, continuing to the present time. How would this creativity be defined and where is it seen within the church? What role does it play today? It is fitting to explore the ways the church feels it continues to resemble Aimee. How should the church nurture and sustain creativity? These are all questions to be addressed and supported in the chapters ahead.

Chapter one will review the life of Aimee Semple McPherson and the development of the Foursquare denomination. Chapter two will define creativity. Chapter three will address the Foursquare church today and the ways in which it is creative. Chapter four will talk about nurturing creativity within the church.

Chapter 1

Aimee Semple McPherson

To understand the focus and purpose of the Foursquare church, it is important to have a basic understanding of the founder and the early years in the life of the church. Much of what can be seen in the life of the church today is a direct result of the life of the founder Aimee Semple McPherson and her ministry. The Foursquare denomination may be considered a young one in the church world, but even in its youth, it is bearing fruit into new generations. Aimee Semple McPherson left a legacy or a mantle for the church at large: both the Foursquare denomination and the Body of Christ. In order to suggest this and study the church today for evidence of a legacy, it is important to have some knowledge of the Foursquare church and of Aimee herself.

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was born on October 9, 1890, in Salford, Ontario.

Minnie Kennedy, her mother, took Aimee to her first Salvation Army Jubilee when she was just three weeks old. Her parents raised her with a mixture of Methodist Church and Salvation Army teachings. This will later appear in the configuration of the church structure. At a early age, she proved to be an eloquent orator and even won awards in that category. As a child, she would play “Salvation Army” with the other children at school. She would, of course, be the Sergeant Major marching around beating on a box and singing until the other children fell in step with her.

Aimee’s high school years served to try as well as to strengthen her faith in God. It was during these formative years that her teacher introduced Darwin’s theory of evolution. She confronted the teacher as to what the Bible said about creation and was

resoundly told, “concerning the early history of the human race, the Bible was bigoted and full of error.”¹ She later questioned the Methodist minister whether miraculous healings took place in the twentieth century. His response failed to satisfy her query.²

During this season of adolescent testing and rebellion, Aimee challenged the conservative beliefs and practices of her combination of Methodist and Salvation Army heritage. Aimee became increasingly interested in what her mother considered worldly activities: dance parties, skating parties, and movies. Aimee’s participation extended in school activities. It was while she was rehearsing for the Christmas program that she noticed a Holy Ghost revival meeting advertised in a storefront window for a little mission in town. She convinced her dad to take her there the next night to have a laugh at the “believers’ ” expense! This was her first exposure to a Pentecostal church. She felt convicted of sin while she listened to Robert Semple preach on repentance. Three days later, she burned everything reminding her of her godless involvements. She writes that her conversion was in December 1907.

Aimee appears to have gone from what she considers worldly involvement to an almost fanatical obsession with the Pentecostal movement. “Aimee’s desperate determination to be spiritually transformed without delay was fueled by a Pentecostal teaching that especially fired her imagination: Jesus was about to return, and, if Aimee was ready when He came, she would meet Him in the air.”³ Aimee’s belief in “this blessed hope” reinforced her desire to live differently. She then began attending the “tarrying”

¹Daniel Mark Epstein, Sister Aimee (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993) 30.

²Aimee Semple McPherson, This Is That (1923; Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1996) 30-31.

³Edith L. Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993) 64.

meetings. It was also at the mission, when a snowstorm brought everything to a standstill, that she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Aimee met Robert Semple at the mission and remained in contact with the evangelist by letter as he moved from town to town.⁴ Robert returned to Ingersoll and happened upon the house where Aimee was baby-sitting. He stayed with her and, after the children were in bed, they began to read the Bible and to talk. Robert declared his love for her and his desire that they marry and work side by side.⁵ Aimee and Robert Semple married six months later, on August 12, 1908. They moved to Chicago before starting off to work as independent missionaries in Hong Kong. In the winter of 1910, the couple left for Ireland to visit his parents. They sailed to London in March, where Aimee was asked to bring a message before a Pentecostal gathering in Victoria and Albert Hall. This was her first sermon. She relates that she only opened her mouth and the Holy Spirit spoke powerfully through her. They arrived in Hong Kong in June. By August, both Robert and Aimee were stricken with malaria and dysentery. Robert died on August 17, 1910. His daughter, Roberta Star, was born a month later on September 17, 1910. A month and a half after Roberta's birth, Aimee and the baby sailed back to America. They arrived in New York in November. It was while in New York that Aimee met Harold McPherson. Not knowing where to turn and desperately lonely, she accepted McPherson's proposal and they were married on February 28, 1912. The couple moved to McPherson's home in Providence, Rhode Island, and on March 23, 1913, Rolf Kennedy McPherson was born.

⁴Blumhofer, 55.

⁵McPherson, 55.

Aimee tried to live as a typical American housewife, but was in great spiritual turmoil because of her “call to the ministry.” All the while living in Providence, the Lord kept asking her to “Go! Preach the Word!” While in Providence she was hospitalized. In This Is That, Aimee does not give an extensive account of her time in the hospital, but talks of what the Lord was saying to her.

So she became deathly ill. Along with her neurasthenia she developed ‘heart trouble.’ She began to hemorrhage from her stomach.

In those days the treatment of choice for hysterical women with internal bleeding was a hysterectomy. The surgical techniques were haphazard. Aimee went under the knife several times during this period, the surgeons extracting one organ and another, here an ovary, there an appendix. Each time she returned from the hospital a little worse, more nervous, more depressed. The scalpel so crisscrossed her abdomen, she would never fully regain control of her lower stomach muscles. She became convinced that God had sentenced her to a slow execution because she had strayed from His way.⁶

Aimee came to the point where she was either going to die or answer the Voice calling her. She finally answered God’s call to go. After regaining consciousness, she realized that the pain had subsided. She believed the Lord had spared her life so that she could go and serve Him.⁷

⁶Epstein, 74.

⁷McPherson, 76-79.

Embarking on Her Ministry

It was in the spring of 1915 that Aimee took her children during the night and left for her home in Ingersoll, Ontario. Aimee left Harold McPherson in Providence, Rhode Island, to follow the Lord's calling. Roberta, Aimee's daughter, told of how Aimee loved Harold, but that he desired for her to be a typical housewife, while she felt her calling was to lead people to the Lord and that required her to travel doing camp meetings.⁸ The two philosophies about their marriage were not to mix. Aimee invited Harold to join her in the ministry. Harold joined her in Mount Forest in the summer of 1915, but "by that time Aimee was so far along 'her way,' Mack would never catch up."⁹

In August, she held the first independent revival meeting in Mount Forest, Ontario. At the opening service, there were only three people in attendance. Aimee determined that she would go out into the street and bring more people back with her.

How could I gain their attention? I remembered Robert Semple's slogan:

"When in doubt, pray." So, I started in. Setting my chair down firmly just outside the curb, I mounted the tiny rostrum, lifted my hands high to heaven, closed my eyes, and just stood there lifting my heart to God without speaking a single word aloud. Minutes passed. Nothing happened, but I never moved, never spoke, never lowered my arms. Then a wave of interest and excitement stirred the populace.¹⁰

⁸Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

⁹Epstein, 76.

¹⁰Aimee Semple McPherson and Raymond L. Cox, Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1979) 81.

She ended up running back to the mission and the crowd followed her. After this first revival meeting, Aimee was able to procure a large tent which would enable her to travel without concern for shelter and large groups of people.¹¹

She embarked upon seven years of revival meetings. The revivals stretched from coast to coast. Notable crusades were held in: Florida; Long Branch, Long Island; Boston; Miami; Key West; Philadelphia; Los Angeles; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Dayton, Ohio; and San Diego. During her evangelistic tour, Aimee wrote This Is That, an account of her life, revival meetings, accounts of people's conversions, healings, sermons and other writings.

It was while Aimee was preaching in the summer of 1917 that she wrote the first Bridal Call magazine to be sent out to people who supported her ministry and other people she had met along the way. The Bridal Call included her sermons, testimonies, and poetry. Over the years, the Bridal Call would change its format and become the Foursquare denomination's monthly publication known today as the Foursquare World Advance.

Trans-Continental Trek

Aimee, her family, and her secretary would travel in her "gospel car" up and down the East coast. It was during this season of travel Roberta tells the time when they drove late into the night in the Kentucky Bluegrass area and, at some point, pulled off to the side of the road. In the morning the children awakened to find they had parked in front of a mansion and the butler was coming out to them in the morning mist with coffee and a tray

¹¹McPherson and Cox, 83-84.

of fresh strawberries. Aimee had recently expressed the desire for strawberries.¹² This was just one account of God's provision during the unpredictable rigors of itineration.

It was during a wide-spread influenza outbreak, while in New Rochelle, New York, that Roberta and Aimee were stricken with the illness. God spoke to her saying, "Fear not. Your little one shall live and not die. Moreover, I will give you a home in California where your children shall go to school...."¹³ The vision precipitated their plans for the transcontinental tour. Driving across the countryside, Aimee and her family stuffed mailboxes with tracts. Aimee was one of the first women to ever drive across the country.¹⁴

It took Aimee two months to reach Los Angeles with her two children, mother, and personal secretary. She slept in the front seat while her mother Minnie Kennedy stretched out in the back seat. The cover to their car functioned as a tent off the running board for Roberta and Rolf to sleep under. Roberta remembers that this trip was not for the casual traveler. Pavement was generally restricted to towns alone. The dirt roads would often develop deep ruts from heavy rains, causing Aimee many nights of sore and aching muscles from the strain of holding a jerking steering wheel. In Texas, the sheriff stopped people and would only allow cars to leave town to cross the flat expanse in groups. In the convoy, the driving order would be one hour as the leader and three dust-filled hours in the caravan.¹⁵

¹²Roberta Sample Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

¹³McPherson and Cox, 101.

¹⁴Roberta Sample Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996

¹⁵Ibid.

They arrived in Los Angeles, December 23, 1918. One Sunday night during a packed service at the Philharmonic Auditorium, people felt led by the Lord to promise to build Aimee and her family a house and provided the canary and rosebushes which Roberta and Rolf desired. Aimee could now leave the children with the housekeeper while she went back to her evangelistic tour.¹⁶

Building Of Angelus Temple

It was in 1921 that Aimee first saw Echo Park, near the heart of Los Angeles. She saw the park with the lake as the consummate place for a church to be located. "It's right in the city, yet so restful."¹⁷ People could ride the trolley cars to church, since many still did not have cars. Families could picnic after church and then attend the evening service before returning home. When Aimee first saw the plot of land where Angelus Temple now stands, it was not for sale. Her comment was, "The Lord has been keeping this property for us, and His word is confirmed."¹⁸ That very day, she began to draw the shape for the church and the way it should be built. The lot was a pie-shape. She said that this was to be God's megaphone to the people of Los Angeles. The platform would be placed at the mouth of the megaphone.¹⁹

The purchase of the property left Minnie and Aimee with only five thousand dollars for the contractor to rent a mule and begin digging the foundation.²⁰ As she raised money on her revival tours, she would send the money back to continue the construction process. One of her techniques for raising money was setting up a clothesline on which

¹⁶McPherson and Cox, 105.

¹⁷McPherson and Cox, 119.

¹⁸McPherson, 531.

¹⁹Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

²⁰McPherson and Cox, 120.

people could pin their currency for the new church building. When it came time for the chairs to be purchased and assembled, Aimee wrote about it in the Bridal Call. She sold dollhouse chairs for twenty-five dollars.²¹ “Buy a chair. When you pray, pray for the souls sitting in the chair.” Chairholders, punning on the word “shareholders,” were buying from the ground beneath to the dome above. Five thousand chairs were sold. Later on, people would come West to sit in the chairs they purchased and become upset when someone was sitting in “their” chair. This was a throw back to the family pews in the liturgical churches on the East coast.²²

Angelus Temple was given the Latin name for Los Angeles, “the City of Angels.” The structure itself resembles Victoria and Albert Hall in London. The acoustics in the church are so impressive that many people thought she had amplification in order to achieve the far-reaching sound. The people in the third balcony could be distinctly heard on the platform by Aimee herself. In the early 1930’s “Angelus Temple had been renovated (it is said that Charlie Chaplin advised Sister on stage arrangements) better to accommodate Sister’s illustrated sermons...”²³

One might wonder at the number of doors that lead into the church. This idea presented itself to Aimee while she was touring and holding evangelistic meetings. She saw the powerful force of the crowds entering and exiting. Aimee designed the church with doors on all sides so there would be orderly crowd movement getting in and out of the building for each service.²⁴

²¹McPherson and Cox, 121.

²²Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

²³Blumhofer, 351.

²⁴Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

Angelus Temple was dedicated on January 1, 1923, after taking only two years to build. Aimee was not quite thirty-two years old and she had a church that was debt free. The builders said that the dome she had sketched out would collapse, but she insisted that this is what God had shown her. The dome remains intact after numerous earthquakes even today.²⁵ The church was dedicated to the cause of interdenominational and worldwide evangelism. Aimee ministered in this pulpit from 1923 until 1944. There were services seven days a week with weekly crowds totaling around 25,000. A typical Sunday schedule offered three services, Monday's service emphasized deeper life, Tuesday's service taught about evangelism, Wednesday's service was designated for prayer and Bible study, Thursday's service was for baptism, and Friday's service was for the youth. Tuesday afternoon and Saturday evening services were run for and by the children entirely. At times Aimee would prepare up to twenty-one services a week.²⁶ Frequently Aimee was forced to enact the illustrated sermon two times a night because there were too many people to all fit into the church the first time.

Illustrated Sermons

Aimee's illustrated sermons were famous throughout Los Angeles during a time in which silent movies were all the rage. During the Depression, people would come because they did not have the money to go to the movies and the illustrated sermons were free to the public. Some people went for the entertainment value only and walked away with a changed life and faith in God. There were others who went to see the "spectacle" and then would go home saying they were greatly entertained.²⁷

²⁵Mary Samples, Personal Interview, 17 July 1996.

²⁶"Angelus Temple," Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, 19.

²⁷Lena Zendron, Personal Interview, 6 May 1996.

The illustrated sermons are perhaps the most widely celebrated facets of Aimee's ministry. They left a lasting impression because they were graphically visual. Aimee could make any story simple and understandable. Many times the illustrated sermons consisted of Aimee appropriately costumed, from an authentic Indian fringed gown and headdress to Southern ante-bellum ensemble, for the illustrations in front of colorful and thematic backdrops. Many times she would include other people and animals as extras. The sermons were based on Scripture. Some of her most powerful and memorable sermons were: the "Eye of the Needle," "Arrested for Speeding," and her last illustrated sermon before she died, "The Leak in the Dike." Some of the illustrated sermons achieved legendary status because of embellishment and the continually retelling. The best example of this was the sermon "Arrested For Speeding." The story goes that Aimee rode a policeman's motorcycle down the ramp to the platform to begin the sermon. The truth is the motorcycle was parked next to the pulpit and Aimee changed into a policewoman's uniform for the sermon. Aimee had been fresh out of ideas for Sunday's illustrated sermon so she and Roberta went to the beach to get an idea. On the way there Aimee was pulled over by a motorcycle cop. He said, "You're arrested for speeding." She exclaimed, "I've got it!"²⁸ This was the catalyst for her Sunday illustrated sermon. Aimee told the congregation how she had been arrested the day before. She continued,

Life is a highway. People are speeding to destruction. They need to be on the straight and narrow. They are too busy to go to church because of bridge games, golf matches, or executive meetings. What happens when

²⁸Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

you lose your job? God has arrested you for speeding and given you time to think about the state of your soul, family, prayers.²⁹

In addition to creating and performing illustrated sermons, Aimee wrote music and authored books. She wrote seven sacred operas. Five of them are as follows: “The Crimson Road,” “The Iron Furnace,” “The Bells of Bethlehem,” “Regem Adorate,” and “The Rich Man and Lazarus.” She also wrote three children’s cantatas: “The Road To Bethlehem,” “The Little Match Girl,” and “The Candy City.” “In all, she wrote some 180 songs, many of which have never been published.”³⁰ Her books are: This Is That (1919), Divine Healing Servant (n.d.), The Second Coming of Christ (1921), The Holy Spirit (republished as Fire From On High, 1969), In the Service of the King (1927), Give Me My Own God (1936)

KFSG

Aimee’s first encounter with the radio was in 1921 when it “was less than eighteen months old.”³¹ “Sister professed some nervousness as she faced the studio equipment in San Francisco, but a gratifying number of calls flooded the switchboard when she finished, proving that her invisible audience had indeed been large and far-ranging...Radio was a logical next step for her.”³² It was only a few years later when Aimee came home exhausted after preaching the evening services to find Rolf and a friend playing with a Quaker oats box radio constructed from a battery, wire, radio crystal, and a head set.³³

²⁹Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

³⁰“Aimee Semple McPherson,” The Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, 570.

³¹Blumhofer, 183.

³²Ibid.

³³John Holland, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

There were only two radio stations in Los Angeles in 1923...My soul was thrilled with the possibilities this media offered for the spread of the gospel. We secured time on a radio station and began broadcasting a few services. But the thought persisted that if Angelus Temple had her own radio station we could broadcast almost all of the meetings!³⁴

She exclaimed, "I can't get everybody into Angelus Temple, but I could broadcast to everyone in the city with a radio." One year later KFSG was the largest religious broadcast station in the United States.³⁵ She would be able to speak in "over 200,000 homes with receiving sets within a radius of one hundred miles of Los Angeles."³⁶

Aimee's radio broadcasts reached far distances because of the few radio stations and little wave length interference across the United States.³⁷ "Kall Four Square Gospel," (KFSG) became the Foursquare radio station in February 1924. Aimee became the first woman to own and operate a radio station in the United States.³⁸ The station ran twenty-four hours a day until World War II when blackout times occurred. With the advent of live radio broadcasts from Angelus Temple, Aimee became very aware of stagnant moments. She would jump up to lead a song to cover radio silence. KFSG is still operating today and is the longest continuous Christian broadcasting station in history.³⁹

³⁴McPherson and Cox, 127.

³⁵John Holland, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

³⁶McPherson and Cox, 127.

³⁷Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, The Vine and the Branches, (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992) 14.

³⁸John Holland, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

³⁹Rolf McPherson, Personal Interview, 16 July 1996.

Conception Of Foursquare

The inspiration behind the “Foursquare Gospel” came to Aimee while she was preparing for the Oakland rally in July 1921. The Foursquare Gospel was not formalized until 1922. “Later in the 1920s, Sister sometimes offered another four-sided summary of her views in the form of a square with the sides labeled Holiness, Happiness, Healing, and Heaven.”⁴⁰

We [the Foursquare denomination] emphasize not simply salvation but *Jesus* the Saviour, not merely the baptism with the Holy Spirit but *Jesus* the Baptizer, not divine healing but *Jesus* the Healer, and not the second coming but *Jesus* the Coming King. Our gospel is *Jesus*. Our message is *Jesus*. Our emphasis is *Jesus*.⁴¹

The vision of the Foursquare Gospel came to her while preaching from Ezekiel 1:4-10. She saw that the four faces of the living creatures in Ezekiel’s vision were related to the four Gospels.

In the face of the Man we beheld that of the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, dying on the tree.

In the face of the lion we beheld that of the mighty Baptizer with the Holy Ghost and fire.

The face of the Ox typified the Great Burdenbearer, who Himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses, who in His boundless love and divine provision had met our every need.

⁴⁰Blumhofer, 190-191.

⁴¹Aimee Semple McPherson and Raymond L. Cox, ed. The Foursquare Gospel (L.A.: Foursquare Publications, 1969) 51.

In the face of the Eagle we saw reflected soul-enrapturing visions of the Coming King, whose pinions soon would cleave the shining heavens, whose silvery voice would set the Milky Way to echoing as He came to catch His waiting bride away.⁴²

Aimee stated, "A perfect gospel. A complete gospel for body, for soul, for spirit, and for eternity. A gospel that faces squarely in every direction."⁴³ On the side of Angelus Temple is a plaque stating: "Angelus Temple Church of the Foursquare Gospel -- Aimee Semple McPherson, Founder." In the middle of the inscription is a square containing the four faces from Ezekiel: the face of man as the Savior, the lion as Baptizer, the ox as the Healer, and the eagle as the Coming King. They are positioned to look like an old fashioned pinwheel. Aimee prepared a doctrinal booklet called "The Foursquare Declaration of Faith" which was adopted by the church at the time of its incorporation in December 1927.⁴⁴

Aimee could make the most complicated concepts simple. She was able to advertise the Foursquare Gospel message through music, slogans, jingles, logos, uniforms, drama, color, and design. She designed a Foursquare flag to stand next to the Christian flag. The Foursquare flag has a black square in the top left corner with an open Bible. A cross rests in the center with a smaller square encompassing the number four. The square is followed by four horizontal stripes. The stripes from the top are purple representing the Coming King, blue symbolizing Healing, yellow representing Baptism, and red signifying

⁴²Aimee Semple McPherson. The Foursquare Gospel. (L.A.: Foursquare Publications, 1969) 5.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Van Cleave, 23.

Salvation.⁴⁵ Aimee also designed symbols to accompany the Foursquare Gospel message. The four symbols, displayed in the same colors as the flag, are found in four squares with white space between creating the shape of the cross. The symbols are the cross as Jesus Christ the Savior, the dove is Jesus as Baptizer, the cup is Jesus as Healer, and the crown is Jesus as the Coming King.⁴⁶ Aimee's Foursquare songs may not be sung frequently, but her symbols and designs are still emphasized in the churches, from graphics to stained glass windows.

One of Aimee's musical gifts lent itself to catchy choruses which would remain in the churchgoer's mind for the trolley ride home. The songs, illustrated sermons, personal anecdotes and application were spiritual witnesses to the "Angelenos." Mann Flint, son of a trolley driver, said his parents were converted by exposure to the Angelus Temple trolley riders. His mother became one of the first graduates of L.I.F.E. Bible College.⁴⁷

L.I.F.E. Bible College

Aimee wanted to meet the needs of the growing church with trained workers and evangelists. Three months after Angelus Temple opened, "The Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute" was begun. It was soon incorporated as Lighthouse for International Foursquare Evangelism and later renamed L.I.F.E. Bible College.

L.I.F.E. began with approximately fifty students in attendance; by

September of 1926 the enrollment had increased dramatically to six

⁴⁵Communications Department at ICFG, Personal Interview, 3 December 1996.

⁴⁶Inspiration of Aimee Semple McPherson.

⁴⁷Mann Flint, Personal Interview, 26 July 1996.

hundred fifty. By 1929, there were approximately one thousand students who could hardly wait to get to the whitened harvest.⁴⁸

The importance of opening a Bible school was to train workers and evangelists. The opening of the Lighthouse for International Foursquare Evangelism (L.I.F.E. Bible College) facilitated learning about the Bible, getting training to go out and pastor or assist in a Lighthouse church, and preparation for missions work. Bible, missions, evangelism, music, art, and physical education were among the required subjects. Students needed to have sixty credits in Bible and sixty credits in practical service to graduate. Upon graduation, Aimee would send them out to plant churches. Students were even known to lead a church while they were still attending school. “They possessed an irrepressible burden for souls. When that eventful summer came to a close, there were thirty-three established branch churches, one in almost every sizable community of Southern California, and several in Central California.”⁴⁹

Practical Christianity

Aimee instructed her congregation they were all ministers no matter what situation they found themselves in: be it school, job site, the market place or at home. She, as a woman, was called to be a public minister of the gospel. Not everyone needed to be in the pulpit to reflect God. It was important to take care of others, to reach out, and to do the expedient.⁵⁰ She focused on the fact that everyone can do something. She believed in practical Christianity.

⁴⁸Van Cleave, 12.

⁴⁹Van Cleave, 30.

⁵⁰Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

Upholding Christian servanthood, Aimee established the Angelus Temple Commissary in August 1927 for the increasing needs of the great numbers of people migrating to Los Angeles. She told her congregation that if they could not give financially, they could bring non-perishable food and usable clothing to the services.⁵¹ She asked people to give as they would give unto the Master. If people did not have money to give, they were asked to tithe their time. The helpers were made to feel important. "When you want someone to do something, make it easy for them to do it,"⁵² was the philosophy taught to the L.I.F.E. students. "Demands on the Commissary grew dramatically during the Depression, and Sister insisted the needy be served without reference to race or creed."⁵³ Lines of people coming to receive food and clothing could be as long as a mile and a half. During the Depression Richard Halvorson, who later became the U.S. Senate Chaplain, and his mother came through the Commissary lines and were clothed and fed. He later reported this over the open mike at KFSG.⁵⁴ During the next ten years she fed and clothed over a million people of Los Angeles and kept whole groups of people alive during the Depression.⁵⁵

In addition to the food and clothing Angelus Temple provided through the Commissary, Job Swaps were set up. Aimee would have people fill out cards for an index file of what they could do and what they needed. One example Roberta Semple Salter remembers is of a girl who was getting married. They found a woman who was a

⁵¹Van Cleave, 19.

⁵²Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

⁵³Blumhofer, 345.

⁵⁴John Holland, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

⁵⁵Ibid.

dressmaker and asked her to make the wedding dress. In return, the bride-to-be painted the dressmaker's kitchen.

In the organization of the Commissary, Aimee established a group called "the City Sisters." Aimee mapped out the city of Los Angeles into districts and captains were appointed for each area. The women were in charge of dealing with every situation that arose in their area and assisting however was needed.⁵⁶ They made baby layettes with scraps of material from the ends of fabric bolts department stores would give them.⁵⁷ Aimee was also aware of many young girls' pregnancies where the girls had no where to turn. Aimee would house many of them and then work to reestablish the relationships between the girls and their mothers. A police officer called late one night to tell of a woman who had just had a baby. Los Angeles's city agencies would not help at night, so Aimee called a new grandmother and sent her to help at three a.m. The grandmother was to "Come and report to me [Aimee] at breakfast."⁵⁸ Aimee saw a need and filled it. Creating this organization of women led to the unification of workers within the church, but it also became the foundation for today's FWI, Foursquare Women International. FWI is "dedicated to the ministry of affirming, equipping, mobilizing and releasing women to meet the needs of a contemporary society, while continuing to remain true to the biblical mandate of authentic Christian living."⁵⁹

June 29, 1925, KFSG and the Commissary worked together in unity to provide for the city and citizens of Santa Barbara. Aimee received a phone call from a member of the

⁵⁶Van Cleave, 21.

⁵⁷Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

⁵⁸Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

⁵⁹Foursquare Women International (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1996).

church, who had moved to Santa Barbara, telling her of the devastating earthquake. She called the newspaper to confirm the report and then she interrupted a KFSG broadcast to ask listeners to find what they could for the people of Santa Barbara. They were to immediately bring it to the church and men were to bring their trucks with plenty of gas to form a convoy to travel to Santa Barbara.⁶⁰

By the time the Red Cross convened a meeting to organize aid, a second convoy had arrived with blankets and food for the homeless. Sister's followers...responded with commendable spirit and self-sacrifice in the crisis, verifying again Sister's instincts about the creative use of modern media to extend the gospel.⁶¹

"Police officers and firefighters brought the needy to the Commissary for immediate help. The philosophy was simple: 'We feed them first, and question later...We give as unto the Lord; and if anyone takes advantage of it, their settlement must be with the Lord.'"⁶² By this time she had developed a wonderful relationship with both the police and the fire department. Many times the ambulances would bring people for the healing services and then leave. Aimee had a real healing ministry but believed that, first and foremost, people needed to be saved. While holding evangelistic services, she found many people simply came to be made well.

They are not healed, for coming to Jesus for healing is like coming to Him for salvation. If one kneels at the altar to be converted, but never prays or makes any effort to confess their sins, or call upon the Lord, they go away

⁶⁰Blumhofer, 268-169.

⁶¹Blumhofer, 269.

⁶²Blumhofer, 347-348.

in exactly the same condition as that in which they came...They must seek if they would find, and believe if they would receive.⁶³

World Tour And Give Me My Own God

Beginning in 1930, Aimee suffered physical and emotional illness due to the extreme conflict between her mother and her and the additional pressure of a failing third marriage. Aimee had a heart attack in 1934 and it was then that Rolf, who would succeed her, asked the Lord to give his mother ten more years. While on a whirlwind world tour, she kept a journal of her travels and impressions. This would later become her book Give Me My Own God. In it she describes meeting Mahatma Ghandi. She had an unusual look into the heart of what was going on in Europe. Upon returning to Los Angeles, she told everyone there would surely be war. She had a glimpse of Mussolini and his men and had foreseen what would happen.

On returning to the church, she frequently preached on eschatology. Ivy Stanton, co-pastor of the Evergreen Christian Center, the Foursquare Church in Hillsboro, Oregon, compiled several of Aimee's prophecies into a book. The dates when the prophecies were given were concentrated from 1917-1925 and then again from 1936-1938. Her prophecies focus on Christ's return and the church. Ivy calls these foretellings "prophetic promptings to our generation."⁶⁴ Aimee's favorite verse remained Hebrews 13:8, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" Aimee's desire was always that God's children would be sensitive and listen to the Holy Spirit.

⁶³McPherson, 288.

⁶⁴Ivy Stanton, ed. Has God Said? A Record of Prophetic Promptings To Our Generation, (L.A.: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1980).

Victory Bonds

When the war finally broke out and America became involved, the city of Los Angeles requested that Aimee raise Victory Bonds for support of the war effort. She became one of the foremost leaders. Many news reels pictured her raising support with church members and a band in the background. When soldiers came to church, she would give them Bibles and invite them to sit on the platform.

Last Days

In the Fall of 1944, Aimee decided to go back on the road to do evangelistic meetings. After the first night, she told her son Rolf that she was indeed happy to be conducting revival meetings. Evangelism was what the Lord had called her to do. Because the next day would be full, telling her life story required much energy, she took some sleeping pills for her insomnia. Sleeping pills in those days had a side effect of causing people to forget they had already taken medication. She had previously poured out several pills, so then she reached back for more. The next morning, she was found barely breathing. The paramedics came, but were unable to resuscitate her. There was controversy surrounding Aimee's untimely death, but there has never been any proof to substantiate the accusations and insinuations that her death was suicidal.

Summary Of Aimee

Many people mourned the loss of this amazing woman. Others said this would be the end of the Foursquare church. To the credit of the Lord and of Aimee, it has continued on to a third and, expectantly, a fourth generation. The Foursquare denomination has always been a young one and, as the fourth generation matures, it will

be interesting to see what the Lord will have for it to do. The church has not died and the flame has not been extinguished. The question has been and will always be whether the Foursquare church will continue to walk in the way the Lord leads and to follow the Spirit's leading.

Regardless of the controversy some see surrounding the life of Aimee Semple McPherson, the fact remains that she was called of God and that He used her mightily. Aimee's reputation was hurt by the newspaper headlines and scandalous books written about her, but the church she planted remains committed to the cause of interdenominational and worldwide evangelism. Her passion was for the Lord's return and she desired that all Christians would be ready. This can be seen in the title of her magazine, Bridal Call. Her early as well as her latter years were filled with the hope of Christ's return and the Church's preparation as the Bride of Christ. In Angelus Temple, Aimee commissioned a painting of Christ holding out His hands welcoming His Bride with thousands of angels blowing trumpets and kneeling before the Lord. "This is that" blessed hope she possessed.

Chapter 2

Creativity and the Church

To best understand the Foursquare church and Aimee Semple McPherson, it is important to understand the role creativity plays in the formation of both the church and the woman. Creativity is integral in the process of worship and healthy individual living. Believing creativity is intrinsic and inspiration essential in every part of life, it is crucial to understand how these gifts from God influence the past and present life of the historic church and the Foursquare denomination. To begin this exploration of creativity, it will be important to look at the following: God's creation in Genesis, to find a working definition of creativity, to canvass creativity in the history of the church, to highlight creativity as it is seen in the church today, and to determine how creativity is nurtured.

Before defining creativity, it is important to look at the creation of man in the book of Genesis. God's first act is the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. If human beings are created in God's image, then it is reasonable to assume the creative process is resident within everyone. "So we are, on a finite level, people who can create...Man [sic] was created that he might create. It is not a waste of man's [sic] time to be creative."⁶⁵ Humanity may not be able to create "ex nihilo," out of nothing, but it is certain by looking at the world in which we live that we are a creative people.

Man, because he is limited, has a very limited choice. He is limited by time, as well as talent. He is limited by the resources at his disposal as well as in the skill to use what he has. We do not all have the talent to produce all the ideas that come into our minds...

⁶⁵Edith Schaeffer, *Hidden Art* (1971; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1979) 24.

And so--what can we get done in those few hours and days and weeks and years? We are limited by time and by areas of talent and ability. So our creativity is not on God's level at all. His creativity is unlimited and infinite. Nevertheless we have been created in His image, so we can be, and are made to be, creative.⁶⁶

God is the only perfect creator. This ability to create is not necessarily purely used by His creation or out of right motivation. As we live in a fallen world, our creativity can take a perverse twist.

Without sin, man [sic] would have been perfectly creative, and we can only imagine what he [sic] would have produced without its hindrance. With sin, all of God's creation has been spoiled to some degree, so that what we see is not in its perfect state. One day, God will restore all that has been destroyed or spoiled.⁶⁷

Though there is sin, all of God's creation can still declare His glory. Colossians 1:16 says God created all things in heaven and earth. "God's Art communicates! We are told in the Old Testament in Psalm nineteen: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork.'⁶⁸ If His art communicates, what does our art say? Should we have standards of integrity to validate our art?

In Acting Out Faith, Gordon C. Bennett commends use of criterion for art and the artist. He states that though the guidelines may have different names, it does not make them any less important. He states that Tolstoy believes in the sincerity of the artist, while

⁶⁶Schaeffer, 25.

⁶⁷Schaeffer, 25-26.

⁶⁸Schaeffer, 15.

Francis Shaeffer's standard is validity. Bennett's personal standard is integrity. This is a good indication or gauge for personal and or corporate use.⁶⁹

Definition Of Creativity

When referring to creativity we will be discussing divine inspiration within the church-at-large and how it has affected the life of the historic church through the centuries within the confines of the architecture, art, drama, and music. Madeleine L'Engle believes "creativity defies precise definition."⁷⁰ It is not uncommon today to find classes teaching innovation and resourceful artistry. However, even with classes, life-giving, life-breathing creativity is still something that cannot be taught. There really is no model for creativity. It comes from proper positioning under God, the fountainhead of divine inspiration. People who are not "of faith" still function with creativity; however, as people "of faith" we have access to the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives to give our lives meaning whereas unfaithed people constantly search for meaning without such divine assurance. We can miss His whispered promptings if we are too busy doing other things which crowd out His voice.

While interviewing Roberta Semple Salter, Aimee Semple McPherson's daughter, she defined creativity as "seeing the vision and working with it."⁷¹ Aimee's creativity was birthed out of necessity. She saw specific needs and filled them. Aimee utilized her creativity when an illustrated sermon or play was not going exactly as planned. She spontaneously and often humorously thought on her feet. During one of her illustrated

⁶⁹Gordon C. Bennett, Acting Out Faith: Christian Theatre Today (St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1986) 32-33.

⁷⁰Robert J. Sternberg, The Nature Of Creativity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 43.

⁷¹Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

sermons, Aimee had a clothesline of cardboard cutouts to represent Christians being “raptured.” Some of the cutouts were accidentally placed on the clothesline backwards. Aimee’s response, as the crowd started laughing, was that even backsliders were trying to get into heaven.⁷²

The following definition of creativity was profiled by a psychologist studying children and how they responded to certain stimuli.

Creativity is wanting to know, digging deeper, looking twice, listening for smells, listening to a cat, crossing out mistakes, getting in, getting out, having a ball, cutting holes to see through, cutting corners, plugging into the sun, building sand castles, singing in your own key, shaking hands with tomorrow, and plugging in for more energy.⁷³

Certainly, there are always new ways in which people can open themselves to express creativity and their giftedness. Creativity is an intrinsic part of human nature as humans are created in the image of God.

Creativity comes from inspiration; inspiration comes from holiness; and holiness comes from God. All people are created in the image of God and so are spiritual, as well as physical, beings.

By having a soul, a spiritual life, Christians of all people should understand inspiration. Because we are created in God’s image, we are not only spiritual, we are creative...Inspiration took place, creativity followed, and uniqueness was the result.⁷⁴

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Sternberg 49-57.

⁷⁴Elmer C. Yazzie, “Reminders of Faith,” Sojourners May-June 1996: 20-21.

“God’s creativity can be reflected in innumerable ways in our world, but artists have a particular role. Artists often instinctively sense changes in society first. In this way the artistic and the prophetic often go hand in hand.”⁷⁵

The act, formation, or development of creativity is not always as easy as some might think. Often art is birthed out of a struggle that is within. Michelangelo, who was talented in many forms of art, struggled to free statues he perceived as trapped inside the blocks of marble. Each block of marble was a living and breathing creation that he was bringing out of the rock; bringing to life.⁷⁶ Handel spent twenty-four days writing “The Messiah,” in which time he ignored both food and sleep.⁷⁷ When inspired, time is of no consequence. The focus is on the work fueled by creative adrenaline.

The essence of creativity is found in this type of struggle. While inspiration might indeed present itself (unsought after and unannounced) from time to time, without the strain entailed in making it visible there is no true creativity involved. There’s no way around getting a bit grimy and collecting a few bumps and bruises along the way.⁷⁸

How can understanding as well as enjoyment be the end result of art if there were no participation or labor to develop it? Observers in an art gallery can admire a painting or sculpture, but only those who have labored over their own personal art forms can truly appreciate the discipline that goes into the creative process. Just as artistic creations symbolically struggle in their development into the presented and embodied form, so also

⁷⁵Garth Hewitt, “Songs of the Forgotten,” *Sojourners* May-June 1996: 21.

⁷⁶Michelangelo, *The Four Unfinished Captives (Giants)*, Galleria Accademia; Florence, Italy.

⁷⁷Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of Great Composers* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1981) 63-64.

⁷⁸Virginia Maksymowicz, “A Row With An Angel,” *Sojourners* May-June 1996: 25.

is the creators' developmental struggle. Theirs is a common bond of training and exercise. "To enter into the creative struggle takes fortitude, faith, and hope that all those who fight to give form to their vision (parents, mathematicians, teachers, mechanics) will find their way to become co-creators with God, which is perhaps God's ultimate invitation to us all."⁷⁹

Creativity is a means of communication from the innermost part, the spirit, of a person. It is a means of expression of the artist's thoughts to the viewer or listener. "Creativity opens us to revelation...In the act of creativity, the artist lets go the self-control which he normally clings to, and is open to riding the wind."⁸⁰ The creative process can reproduce or recreate the artist's original illumination or clarification for the viewers. How often has a spectator exclaimed, "That's just how I felt!"

Creativity is not limited to what can be accomplished within the realm of art. There is a freedom in creativity which may spawn future creativity. "One area of art inspires another area of art, but also one person's expression of art stimulates another person and brings about growth in understanding, sensitivity and appreciation."⁸¹ Creativity can also be turning the ordinary into something extraordinary. "Perhaps art is seeing the obvious in such a new light that the old becomes new."⁸² It is in the hands of the creator/artist to help the audience see the uniqueness of the creation. "Artists bring to the process their particular perspectives and experience, the context in which they work,

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Madeleine L'Engle, Walking On Water: Reflections on Faith & Art (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980) 75.

⁸¹Schaeffer, 14.

⁸²L'Engle 175.

their discipline and talents.”⁸³ Artists enrich the souls and help sharpen potential aficionados’ skills by exposure to and appreciation of art.

A further means of understanding the fullness of creativity is to define it in terms of the progenitive analogy. Creativity has the capacity to produce, birth, and fructify. The term “reproduction” is not meant to induce thoughts of copying something, but instead to promote reflection on further growth and capacity to do and to express more. John Foley devotes much of his book Creativity and the Roots of Liturgy to the study of the reproductive analogy. Foley encourages readers to “begin from an understanding of creativity in human conception, gestation, and birth; go next to creativity as found in the making of art works; end with the liturgy, asking the question ‘is a liturgical event creative in any of the senses already uncovered, and is it therefore aesthetic?’”⁸⁴ Human beings are not capable of creating a human life without the involvement of another person. Just as God ordained this biological teamwork, He has placed His Holy Spirit to help in the quest for creative fruition.

Human beings must express themselves symbolically. God’s presence in the warm recesses of their selves cannot simply slumber there, removed from the outer world. The union is pregnant in exactly the same way that creative intuition is. Its purpose is to work its way into the outer world so that men and women can know themselves as one with Christ in his Spirit.⁸⁵

⁸³Walton, 75.

⁸⁴John Foley, S.J., Creativity and the Roots of Liturgy (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1994) 7.

⁸⁵Foley 238-239.

In summary of his book Creativity and the Roots of Liturgy, Foley continues the reproductive analogy saying, “The church is analogously the mothering womb where liturgy, Christ’s presence, is nurtured and prepared.”⁸⁶ People within the church must be careful to make it a nurturing environment in which all people can explore the creativity God has given them. If this is not the case, then it should be. The Body of Christ is in the church, and it is there that exploration of God’s gifts can happen. “Creativity cannot exist as an individualistic, solo event.”⁸⁷ The participation of the Holy Spirit is needed. Creativity is not found imitating or copying someone else; it is found in personally following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Creativity does not include the use of man-made “shticks.” Creativity births something new; it is not in the business of identical replication. This origination can be compared to throwing a rock into the water and watching the rings form and expand. No two rocks will form the same circle or size because each rock has a different shape and weight. Listing all the different variables would be tedious. This is why there cannot be exact replication in the creation of art.

This rock and ripple analogy can be applied to Aimee Semple McPherson and the development of the Foursquare church. Aimee was not copying anyone else; she was original. No other women were doing large scale evangelization and church planting in the early decades of this century. Los Angeles was uniquely positioned to receive Aimee’s creative ministry because she resourcefully met people’s needs. It is important to note that Aimee was not trying to focus on creativity and how to become more gifted; she simply functioned in God’s inimitable equipping power. In retrospect, Aimee’s creativity

⁸⁶Foley 265.

⁸⁷Ibid.

was the outgrowth of her obedience and commitment to God. She was determined to present the gospel to the world.

Creativity doesn't just stop with the artistic impression or idea. From the time of the idea's inception to the completion of the product or task, the creative possibilities are endless. Creativity involves stepping out in faith. Sometimes it can be daring and other times it is the product of sheer desperation. Creativity is a necessity in perilous situations because it requires individuals to seize a new perspective or orchestrate new managing techniques. Challenging situations tend to stimulate adrenaline and bring tenacity to everyone. Of course sometimes the finished product looks like the result of a stressful predicament while at other times, it looks as if impetuosity brings out the best. Similarly, inspiration often came to Aimee when she was at a low ebb emotionally and physically. Her final years writing, composing, and acting were spiritual triumphs demonstrating faith and courage in the midst of adversity. Creativity as found in Aimee Semple McPherson's life involved faith, courage, and inspiration.⁸⁸

Each individual has to define creativity in his or her own life and how it relates to one's specific talents or gifts. How does creativity cause everyone to think differently? Can it direct or limit people's lives? Leaving personal comfort zones, either of workable methods or survival ruts, is frightening. It takes courage to look at the familiar with new eyes. Solitude or introspection gives the time without distractions needed to allow the Holy Spirit to speak. When time is devoted specifically for solitude, concentration can be placed on developing personal gifts. This period may promote deeper insight or even provide the time necessary to simply explore a new idea.

⁸⁸Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

Spending time with God not only promotes learning more about Him but also allows understanding of the distinctives He created in each individual. Time spent in God's presence acts as a mirror showing who the person really is and who he or she is to become. It is within the function of art that additional sides of who God is are revealed.

Creativity and spirituality are intimately linked: The place from which I create is the place I most closely touch God; the piece of God within us inspires us to create; the Source of all things is the finest and first artist.

We all have many gifts to share--including a creative spirit--but some of us find our truest gift calls us to the arts.⁸⁹

As a person creates, this is a time one can have the best understanding of who the Creator God is and what is involved in the process of engenderment. Johann Sebastian Bach "felt that everything man does and believes is religious...Bach often wrote *I.N.J.*, for the Latin words meaning *In the Name of Jesus*, on the manuscripts of even his non-religious works."⁹⁰

Edith Schaeffer, author and director of ministry at L'Abri, is a strong advocate for people getting away from the busy cities with everything that is not natural. In the country, in the environment God Himself created, it is much easier to plan and think of new ideas while hearing nature's noises. Edith defines creativity as "recreation which produces creative results, which stimulates creativity, which refreshes one's ideas and stirs one up to produce."⁹¹

⁸⁹Carrie Newcomer, "The Great 'AH-HA,'" *Sojourners* May-June 1996: 23.

⁹⁰"Bach, J.S." *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1970 ed.

⁹¹Schaeffer, 172-173.

Creative ideas are apt to flow in the midst of the creativity expressed in God's creation, as one is temporarily separated from the confusion of conflicting voices which would separate us from the simple basic realities of what 'is'--and this is especially true today, when so much of what man [sic] builds, paints and writes, not only has no place for God but has no place for nature or man [sic] either.⁹²

History Of Creativity

A study of church history and its relationship with the arts will bring a greater understanding of current dynamics of the church and different art forms today. It is important for the church to determine from history what past issues remain to be dealt with. Dealing with the problems of the past, the current church may then become healthier.

Gordon Bennett, in his book Acting Out Faith: Christian Theatre Today, has broken the theatrical movement into five acts. Act one begins with Greek theater melding religion with the theater. The second act is found in the Roman era. Roman theater was by no means Christian, crudely victimizing and publicly ridiculing believers in Christ. The theater became so hated by the Christians that, with the conversion of Constantine, the theater became almost non-existent. The third act is called the reconciliation. The Catholic church of medieval times used drama to teach illiterate congregations about the Bible. Clerics in the church began to believe that drama had become too secular and was corrupting the church; thus began the era of alienation. As a result, in 1210 A.D. Pope Innocent III had drama removed from the church, but the dramatists continued to play in

⁹²Schaeffer, 169-170.

the street. Act four introduces the final alienation scene and the Puritan period. In 1642, the theaters were forbidden and torn down. They were restored to popularity in 1660, but playscripts quickly became immoral causing criticism once again. Act four seems to have vacillated between the two extremes: acceptance and total denial. Act five--today--begins with renewed interest in the cooperation of the church and theater.⁹³

Before medieval drama was thrown out of the church, thespians performed miracle, morality, and mystery plays. The miracle plays often portrayed Jonah and the whale, Noah and the Ark, and Job. They taught about the heroes and saints of the church. Morality plays were designed to teach appropriate Christian behavior and the way of salvation. Mystery plays depicted Bible events or interpretations of the Bible. Special effects accentuated the mystery concept: angels flying across the stage and flaming animal carcasses for the burning flesh effect. Cycle plays portrayed Bible history sequences. They most often began with Creation and ended with the Last Judgment. These plays took place during Corpus Christi or other holy days.⁹⁴

The town's craft guilds sponsored and prepared the plays. The city fathers or aldermen allocated plays to suitable guilds: The shipwrights, for example, or the waterdrawers guild, would be assigned the play of Noah's ark; the play of the Magi, requiring crowns and golden jewelry, would be assigned to the goldsmiths, and the crucifixion to the carpenters or the nail-makers.⁹⁵

⁹³Bennett, 19-20.

⁹⁴Bennett, 52.

⁹⁵Bennett, 52.

The beginning of the church and theater conflict came as dialogue moved away from the Bible, introducing superstitious and mystical inclusions. An additional factor was the language change from the Latin to the vernacular. Contemporary analysis seems to justify this theatrical performance update. The change in language facilitated greater understanding of what was being said and the contemporary references could be included. After theater was removed from the church, cycle plays developed. This emerging drama still maintained basic religious elements, but was able to add more theatrical elements.⁹⁶

The major argument in the seventeenth century against the theater was it attracted the lower class of society by displaying immoral acts on stage. Appealing to the senses, this staging ended up glorifying the world. It was also capable of corrupting the actors because they were portraying immoral characters. Contamination of spectators occurred as they viewed the actors portraying immoral people.⁹⁷

Just as the intent of the medieval church was to educate the populace in ways they could understand, so Aimee Semple McPherson wanted to teach the people of Los Angeles in a way they would surely understand. She spoke plainly and to the point. She observed the movie industry and noted the music and popular songs of the day. She saw ways of using everyday events and ordinary things occurring in Los Angeles and made them applicable for the church. Aimee, as well as the medieval church, saw art as a method of telling everyone who entered a cathedral or Angeles Temple of the glory of God. Aimee thought the church should not only be functional in seating a large number of people, but the decor should further direct the worshippers' attention to God. She paid

⁹⁶Richard C. Leonard, "The Bible in Medieval Art: Christians in the Middle Ages may have been largely illiterate, but they were not ignorant of the Bible." Christian History Volume XV, no. 1: 27.

⁹⁷Bennett, 22-23.

particular attention to the design of the stained glass windows and their telling of Christ's story, but she also had a clear understanding and vision of Christ's return and had that picture painted above the platform.

Within the context of the historical church, art was used to convey God's message in as simple and clear a way as possible. The people were typically poor and ignorant and the church was a form of education for them.

Artists have a unique capacity to anticipate and express the deepest concerns of human beings. The churches can use artists' insights in order to meet more effectively their goal of providing liturgical expressions that connect the reality of God with the concrete realities of human beings.⁹⁸

When artists are in tune with their emotions they are in turn able to help the viewers identify with their feelings. The art work reminds people of images which have been forgotten and God's glory is revealed.

The artists and architects made considerable impact on the artistic genre of the Middle Ages. The art of the church during this time period represented the Bible and helped teach the populous. The medieval church was the only place which allowed the melding of all forms of art.

And despite widespread illiteracy, the Bible played an important role in the faith of the ordinary believer. It wasn't the printed word that imparted the key events and teachings of Scripture, but the visual word: mosaics, paintings, book illuminations, dramas, stained glass, and sculptures.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Walton, 87.

⁹⁹Leonard, 27.

Most Gothic cathedrals, such as Notre Dame in Paris, were designed in the form of the cross. The altar brought to mind Jesus' head while on the cross. Everything that went into building the church had symbolic value. Worshipers entering the churches would find "bas-relief" depicting different Biblical passages in the archways over the doorway or on either side of the entrance.¹⁰⁰ The work of the artisans and craftsmen may have had Biblical or superstitious intent, but, regardless, the church interpreted all art as having spiritual significance or meaning.

These examples illustrate the extent to which Christians in the Middle Ages were exposed to the events, characters, and teachings of the Bible, even when few of them could read it. In both worship and daily life, events from the life of Christ and other biblical scenes were present in sculpture, mosaic, and stained glass, in books, in drama, and in architecture.¹⁰¹

Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales relates stories characters tell on their pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. Travel in the fourteenth century consisted of walking in groups from town to town. Each church's distinctive spire(s) indicated the town the traveler was approaching. This distinctive structure for the church not only pointed toward heaven, but also served as a landmark.

Art within the church has remained important from early monasteries, Gothic cathedrals, as well as to churches today. Janet R. Walton came up with four ways art influenced the early church: art stimulated memory, art depicted the demands of the

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

Christian gospel, art complemented oral instruction, and art stimulated a variety of senses.¹⁰²

Strengths

Art helps to provide insight or revelation into what we do not fully understand.

“The process of revelation through art involves more than seeing. It requires a temporary surrender to someone else’s experience, the experience which the artist has shaped.”¹⁰³

Revelation leads us to transformation. Our sensitivity to things around us can lead us to an understanding of our Heavenly Father. “Art can reveal what we are groping to understand, what we know deep within us but are unable to express. The power of revelation is one of art’s distinctive features.”¹⁰⁴

The wonderful thing about the Christian community is the freedom and variation of expression. God is not bound by human conceptions of what should be. Though a church might not incorporate drama into its corporate service, it might use drama as a tool in street ministry or on tour through different churches. The options are endless. It is important that a church not incorporate a new expression if it is not what the Lord is calling it to do. The life of the church is not about keeping up with the church down the street. Each church has a different ministry.

Art’s power is sensual and long-lasting. It has the power to evoke memories.

“What art reveals is not immediately obvious.”¹⁰⁵ Just as people will remember an illustration from a sermon or a lecture, so they will remember art.

¹⁰²Walton, 25-27.

¹⁰³Walton, 76.

¹⁰⁴Walton, 77.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

Art unearths, stirs, shakes us, keeps alive aspects of human experience that otherwise plunge into oblivion or, at best, occupy a back burner. Through its capacity to emphasize, to focus, and to divert distracting ideas at least temporarily, its impact burrows into aspects of our consciousness, often before we know it. Art asks a question.¹⁰⁶

This residual value allows the person to ponder and consider not only the meaning of the art, but also to determine the value it has for the person specifically. “Art communicates best when the participant interacts with it, rather than simply analyzes it.”¹⁰⁷ Particularly if the person is willing to look deeper and to explore the possibilities. “The illusion of art pushes us to probe deep within ourselves, wrestling with its expressiveness to discover what it means.”¹⁰⁸

It is possible that some may view the early days of the Gothic and medieval church as keeping the congregation at a distance and not allowing them to liturgically participate. On the contrary, the church mass included the entire congregation by involving all their senses. The liturgy had a very sensual base. A person would hear, see, smell, touch, and taste what was going on, especially during Communion. Through the use of the five senses there is the possibility for the inclusion of a sixth sense: intuition or perception. The use of incense, ringing bells, stained glass windows, icons, communion wine and wafers, recitation, music, and touching the hand of a neighbor in fellowship or the kiss of peace would symbolize the use of the senses. With usage of some or all these things, a

¹⁰⁶Walton, 81.

¹⁰⁷Janet R. Walton, Art and Worship: A Vital Connection (1988; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 70.

¹⁰⁸Walton, 78.

person might better be able to sense the presence of the Lord. In an article entitled “The Artistic Life of the Faithful,” Rose Marie Berger states, “Beauty is essential to faith.”¹⁰⁹ This may help to lead us in our understanding of the construction of churches. Though many churches today may not practice these specific liturgies, they have other methods of directing people to reflect upon God and His majesty.

God created humankind with five senses. Like the Big Bad Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood we can laughingly say they are “all the better to get to know Him with.” Since we cannot see Him, we are able to hear Him, to see the works of His hand, feel His presence, etc. The Early Church understood this. It is important to understand the methods of the church through the centuries because, though technology has changed, the church still reaches out to people through similar methods. One difference today is that our society is over-sensitized and stimulated.

One cannot help but be influenced by the power of art. Several people can look at the same work of art and each one can walk away with different impressions and interpretations. Each person carries his or her own experiences which make up who one is and how he or she looks at things.

Creativity In The Church Today

What is the role of creativity in the ministry of the church today? How would art fit into worship or even drama and music? All are God’s creations, thus everything Christians do should be pleasing and glorifying to God. The workplace and the jobs people hold have the potential to glorify God. During the Middle Ages, people were committed to working and building the church for the Lord. They dedicated their art and

¹⁰⁹Rose Marie Berger, “The Artistic Life of the Faithful,” Sojourners May-June 1996: 19.

craftsmanship to Him as well. It was common practice for artists not to put their signature on a piece of art because they did not want to receive the honor, but give it all to God.

“Creativity is a way of living life, no matter what our vocation, or how we earn our living.

Creativity is not limited to the arts, or having some kind of important career.”¹¹⁰

Everyone is created with the capacity for ingenuity. Artistry is unique to the individual. Each person can be creative in a very personal and distinctive way. Every person has something unique to give. A church with large numbers of members will have a large representation of gifts and talents.

The purpose of art of any kind within the church is not to attract attention and glory as an end in itself. It is instead to take humanity’s attention and place it upon the Lord. People’s giftings can be used as sacrifices of praise to God.

Future Of Creativity In The Church

There are methods for positioning one’s self to help promote ideas and stimulate growth. It is important to remain humble, flexible, willing to listen, lose inhibitions, look for different perspectives, and to take time to simply “be.” All these things are important for continued growth and for fresh perspective. This posturing or positioning allows the Spirit to move in the life of the church both personally and corporately.

Though some will argue that society is overly sensually saturated, the church can help restore focus and spiritual direction. This is not to say the church has to compete with the media and other types of entertainment. Drama can be used inside and outside of the church to illustrate the Gospel. The intent should never be to increase membership or offerings. There is a fine line where creativity and its practices become hype or

¹¹⁰L’Engle, 90.

commercial. When this happens, the church has lost the focus or the point. The church should be aware of what the Holy Spirit is saying and be concerned with the welfare of the people around it.

There is the possibility that churches will not be favorable to the arts within their walls because they are fearful of people taking it to extremes, losing their focus, and becoming much too emotional. Human beings respond from the rational to the emotional, thus it is perfectly all right for churches to use a variety of art. People from traditional churches may find they are most comfortable with rich liturgy and what has historically constituted a worship service for them. In this case, the Holy Spirit can find ways to breathe freshness into the people. Understanding this makes one aware of the richness of the Body of Christ. It is like going into a museum. One person might admire the impressionistic era, while the next prefers the realists. In the same way one person might find that music speaks more to his or her soul than does the architecture of the church.

It is up to the church and Christians in the church to use the gifts they have been given. What better place to practice or explore the gifts than in the church? There are many members of the Body of Christ; thus there is a wide expanse of callings and abilities. Creativity in the church is only as successful as the church is willing to embrace and utilize the possibilities represented. There are wonderful opportunities to reach out to people, if only people will try.

The expression of such profound human needs is complex and difficult. Historically artists have been most successful in articulating human realities. They have been able to penetrate beyond superficial

interpretations to the heart of human concerns. The contemporary church needs the help of artists to provide expressions of truth.¹¹¹

Modern Day Examples

Within the establishment of the church today, people are finding ways to reach the masses. A current example is of Jacques Gaillot, a bishop of the Roman Catholic church, who no longer has a church. He was removed from his post with no explanation and given the title of “Diocese of Partenia,” which is no longer in existence. A well-known Internet expert gave the bishop the idea that “If Partenia was nowhere, then it was also everywhere. If he had no pulpit, he could have a home page.” The address is “<http://www.partenia.fr>” and receives visits from people around the world. He fields people’s requests for spiritual advice as well as responds to questions for everyday living. The one thing he does not do is accept confessions over the Internet. He writes a little newsletter that he places at his web-site telling of social injustices for immigrants to France and other problems that he sees in and outside of the church. Jacques has creatively created a new parish and job description for himself.¹¹²

An additional example of creativity in the arts is of the Brothers of the Benedictine Monastery, Christ in the Desert (<http://www.christdesert.org>). They illuminate manuscripts to publish on the World Wide Web. This is a process which has once again been revived after hundreds of years, lost because of the arrival of the printing press. Their latest project is to put more than 10,000 church documents on the web for access. “Monasteries can reclaim their heritage by building with bits and bytes ‘what the architects

¹¹¹Walton, 67.

¹¹²The Associated Press, “Bishop offering comfort on ‘Net,’ The Register-Guard 1 Sept. 1996,: A18.

of St. Peter's Basilica created in stone and glass."¹¹³ There are more religious groups than just the Roman Catholic church on the Internet. Within the world of cyberspace there is a digital crusade going on, "using electrons instead of swords and spears to win converts," says Jeff Zaleski.¹¹⁴ "If denominations ignore the Internet, they do it at their own peril."¹¹⁵

Creativity in the modern day church is bringing the mind of Christ to bear on society through the programs in the church. Many denominations are finding that in order to maintain their influence on church attendance, they need to provide the services that are not being filled elsewhere. To meet people's spiritual needs, the church must start at the basic need level and continue from there. Churches now have classes for finances, single parents, aerobics and other applicable issues or needs for today's culture. At other times in the life of the church there were classes for education. Now the church is updating classes they offer, providing for contemporary needs not being met.

Aimee Semple McPherson never feared to use new mediums to reach people in the greater Los Angeles area with the gospel. This is evidenced by the fact she used dramas, musicals, radio shows, parades, art, and changed the lyrics of popular music to have a Christian theme. Nothing was too difficult to accomplish.

A similar spirit of courage is often required within church bodies themselves as power struggles persist over the interpretation of church doctrine and structures. Members who challenge the status quo and call

¹¹³Leslie Miller, "A megabyte mission: Monks called to put Vatican's word on the Web," USA Today 13 November 1996: D2.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

for creative change are threatened frequently by the accusations of institutional authorities.¹¹⁶

There is still a lot to be learned about creativity considering that no one has perfected the art. Creativity is an ever evolving powerful possibility. In order to stay on top of things, the church will need to continue to grow in its creativity. The key is being open to the possibilities of creativity through the arts. The church must search for ways to nurture the creativity resident in it for centuries. Part of the creative makeup is the expectancy of what will happen.

¹¹⁶Walton, 54.

Chapter 3

Creativity in the Foursquare Denomination

If creativity comes from God and His Holy Spirit's move in individual lives, how can this inspiration be released within the church body? How has this been seen in the Foursquare denomination? To illustrate specific creativity found in the Foursquare denomination, this study will include examples from East Hill Foursquare Church in Gresham, Oregon; and Faith Center in Eugene, Oregon. At times other Foursquare churches are included for support or verification.

The Foursquare denomination experienced an increase in growth in the early 1970's. It was a time of renewal with resulting new forms of creativity. Dr. Rolf K. McPherson, Foursquare's President Emeritus, noted, "An unusual and special anointing of the Holy Spirit characterized the conclave and eternal results have been established."¹¹⁷ The churches experiencing such dramatic growth and their pastors were Dr. Jack Hayford of Church On The Way in Van Nuys, California; Dr. Roy Hicks Jr. of Faith Center in Eugene, Oregon; Dr. Ted Roberts of East Hill in Gresham, Oregon; and Dr. Ron Mehl of Beaverton Foursquare in Beaverton, Oregon.

This growth was largely on the West Coast, particularly the Pacific Northwest where Oregon and Washington are the most unchurched states in the United States¹¹⁸ This exceptional growth was due to "a sovereign act of God" and the "Jesus People" movement was spawned from it. Many churches were unwilling to accept the "Jesus

¹¹⁷Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches* (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992) 202.

¹¹⁸Jared Roth, "An Accurate Picture of Northwest Foursquare Churches Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming & North Dakota," thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1992, 1.

People,” but to serve this new generation of Christians, the Northwest District of Foursquare Churches began aggressively planting churches for this influx of people into the church.¹¹⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson left her denomination a legacy of service for the Lord and a flexibility to the Holy Spirit. This is how the denomination has continued through the years and will continue into the next century. The Foursquare denomination has been blessed and has thrived because of its willingness to follow and to serve the Lord.

Foursquare defines creativity as the Holy Spirit working in people’s lives. When the church individually and corporately gives the Holy Spirit freedom to move and work, He is then able to freely give necessary inspiration. The Foursquare denomination believes if people have the Holy Spirit operative in their lives, there will be observable evidence. Under the heading of “The Gifts & Fruit of the Spirit,” the Internet statement of Foursquare beliefs states, “We believe that the Holy Spirit has gifts to bestow upon the Christian; and that we should show spiritual fruit as evidence of a Spirit-filled life (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Galatians 5:22).”¹²⁰

Each Foursquare church is unique. There is no standard for producing cookie-cutter churches. In fact,

Foursquare congregations in the Northwest tend to be formed around various homogeneous units. These groups include: married yuppies, single baby-busters, African-Americans, Messianic believers, surfers, four distinct Hispanic peoples, Korean, Filipino and Russian immigrants and, of course,

¹¹⁹Roth, 5.

¹²⁰What The Foursquare Gospel Church Believes... (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications).

many WASP congregations reflecting four different generations. These churches are encouraged to plant other churches 'like themselves'.¹²¹

Each church has a gifting or calling that is its specialty. Once a church tries to copy the format of another church, it has failed to hear its calling. Looking at different churches, it is easy to gauge their creativity level such as: creative, almost creative, stereotypical, dependent, and dead. Creativity includes adapting the world's methods but not its mind set.¹²²

Just as each church is unique with an individual calling, so it is true with the pastor. "We don't try to make a pastor 'Foursquare,'" president John Holland explains. "Rather, we encourage pastors to use their giftings and individual strengths to reach those in the community around them. You will not find a 'typical' Foursquare congregation."¹²³

Liturgical practices vary from Messianic Jews observing traditional Hebrew holidays to churches holding multiple services to accommodate different ethnicity's. The Foursquare mother church, Angelus Temple, has eight different ethnic groups and language services weekly. Worship styles and content vary as well: flag and banner usage, drama presentations, interpretive dance are just a few. Each church is vastly different, but still committed to the corporate creedal statements and the declaration of faith Aimee Semple McPherson established for the Foursquare church.

In the Middle Ages, the church paid particular attention to the exterior and interior of the church. The art work was symbolic of the Bible or of the saints through the

¹²¹Roth, 1.

¹²²Greg Fisher, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

¹²³Steven Lawson, "The Foursquare Church Faces The 21st Century," Charisma March 1993:

centuries. Today people are not superstitious about warding off evil spirits by having gargoyles and other such figurative pieces of art. One thing all these churches share in common is the simplicity of decor. This modesty establishes an aesthetic appeal as well as warmth.

Foursquare has stayed with simple architecture. It is the philosophy of many in the Foursquare denomination that church is not made up of buildings, but of people. This philosophy allows more money to be spent on programs rather than buildings.

Simplicity and functionality as opposed to 'cathedral-type' buildings exhibit a form of creativity. The plain austerity of the building forces the worshiper to focus on God rather than buildings and or religious symbols.¹²⁴

Unpretentious design and serviceability are not tenets Aimee handed down, but most likely began out of economic necessity. This modesty still fits for today with a skeptical society convinced every church just wants their money.

It is interesting to note the exterior and interior appearance of the churches. In describing them, it may give some idea of the mission of the church. East Hill looks like it could have been a Safeway supermarket before it became a church and this is how the congregation describes their church. This is because the building has a rectangular shape accented by yellow awnings. The youth building happens to be part of an old strip mall. Several Northwest District churches are currently using strip malls for church and or office

¹²⁴Dave McBride, Personal Interview, 21 October 1996.

space as an alternative to high building expense. Affordability and availability make such leases desirable.

Faith Center's exterior looks similar to Beaverton Foursquare. It is shaped in a square. Inside the seating arrangement is a combination of theater in the round and the Greek amphitheater. This design affords a warm and comfortable atmosphere and is quite accommodating for all to see the platform without concern for someone tall sitting in front of them. The drawbacks are that if anyone leaves during the service, the whole congregation can watch them leave and the only available seating for latecomers is behind the platform where the view, most of the time, is of the back of the pastor's head.

This generation appears to be renovating the traditional church for one more contemporary. More and more non-denominational churches are forming to accommodate the surge of people to contemporary worship and preaching. This contemporary style was what Aimee was using back in the 1920's. She was definitely ahead of her time.

No spires. No crosses. No robes. No clerical collars. No hard pews. No kneelers. No biblical gobbledygook. No prayerly rote. No fire, no brimstone. No pipe organs. No dreary 18th-century hymns. No forced solemnity. No Sunday finery. No collection plates.

The list has asterisks and exceptions, but its meaning is clear. Centuries of European tradition and Christian habit are deliberately being abandoned, clearing the way for new, contemporary forms of worship and belonging.¹²⁵

¹²⁵Charles Trueheart, "The MegaChurch" The Oregonian 22, Sept. 1996: E1.

Individually and corporately the church must be sensitive during these massive societal changes. In this case sensitive means to be attentive, discerning, responsive, and perceptive. John Holland, president of the Foursquare denomination, strongly believes Foursquare should be cognizant of cultural changes. John Holland states, “If we are not sensitive to the changes in our culture, we will die.”¹²⁶

Churches do not have to trade in their way or method of doing things for a new and contemporary style. What is important to understand is where the Lord is leading the church, not blindly following current trends and patterns. It goes back to a church’s specific calling. There are ways to refresh and make the traditional church more creative.

Outside the Foursquare denomination, some churches are expanding within their own tradition. Notre Dame Catholic church in Paris, France, has begun inviting priests from other countries to offer masses from their own cultural traditions. On occasions there have been African dancers to celebrate an interpretive mass. At other times a priest from a North African church sang, sounding much like a Muslim man singing from the minaret calling the faithful to prayer. In this case the priest was Catholic instead of Muslim and was inviting the church to come and worship with his singing.¹²⁷

East Hill

East Hill is a church known for its innovation. East Hill is located in Gresham, Oregon, a modest suburb in the Portland metropolitan area. Gresham is currently dealing with the homeless, the Hispanic community, and many low-income families. The church is located in the middle of the city and is attended by many people referred to from these

¹²⁶Steve Lawson, “The Foursquare Church Faces The 21st Century,” Charisma March 1993: 26.

¹²⁷Note: Authors experience while worshipping at Notre Dame Cathedral May 15, 1994.

groups. East Hill has the reputation among the community for taking the people others do not want.¹²⁸ The congregation has a larger mix of needy people than are usually found in the middle-class suburban church. The church staff therefore concentrates on working with their congregation through these distinct problems. They have established a variety of programs addressing the needs. East Hill is a church dedicated to the whole person: physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. The pastoral staff is committed to raising up people within the church for ministry; this follows the Ephesians 4 model. The pastor, Ted Roberts, believes in letting the person with the vision continue with the implementation process. The church then asks how it can facilitate.

East Hill provides the church body with a monthly magazine, Tapestry, that tells what is going on in the life of the church and what opportunities are available. Inside Tapestry, the first page of every monthly issue describes who East Hill is: “We have a clear Calling. We have a distinctive Character. We are a people Committed to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”¹²⁹ The article continues on to define what the “Calling,” “Character,” and “Commitment” are. So much is going on at East Hill that is important for the congregation to have a guide to the times and places for various activities. The magazine also advises the reader to call the church with specific problems.

It is amazing to see how closely East Hill parallels Aimee Semple McPherson’s ministry at Angelus Temple. East Hill did not try to replicate the ministry Aimee had, instead it responded to its specific assignment from the Lord. By so doing, East Hill is moving in His anointing. Ted and Diane Roberts were unaware of this resemblance until

¹²⁸Ray Morris, Personal Interview, 29 October 1996.

¹²⁹Roberta Harlan, Ed., “Who is East Hill Church?,” Tapestry Sept. 1996: 2.

they read a biography about Aimee's life. They feel this is a result of their obedience to God's calling which is for their church and the denomination.¹³⁰

East Hill's goal as a large church growing even larger is to remain personal. To maintain this significant relationship the church sees it as vital to minister to people's needs on a personal basis. As church attendance grows, the needs of the people increase. Because the needs are so numerous, East Hill has developed a full time "Care Ministry" to care for the needs of the congregation. The Care Ministry department devotes time and effort to providing food, clothing, and financial assistance. At Christmas they sponsor the Blessing tree, which provides presents for those less fortunate. Families at the church pick one of the Blessing tree ornaments and return the wrapped gift for the person indicated before Christmas.

East Hill has recently expanded their Care Ministry to include Stewardship Ministry. This new ministry was founded because East Hill did not want to continue enabling the recipients of financial assistance without seeing people's lives changed.¹³¹ The goal of stewardship is to teach budget training to repeat beneficiaries. The person, family, or couple in need commit to spend a maximum of six months under the financial care of Ray Morris. They come in for a meeting with Ray every time they get their pay check. Ray helps them figure out the amount needed for their tithe and savings. If they still are being confronted with unexpected bills, the church will help with the need.

Most couples who come into Ray's office generally only come in one or two times; any additional times are usually for reassurance they are doing the right thing. Ray offers

¹³⁰Diane Roberts, Personal Interview, 24 October 1996.

¹³¹Diane Roberts, Personal Interview, 24 October 1996.

a one hundred percent success rate for those who follow his guidelines. Ray is excited about this ministry because “God talks to us through our wallets.”¹³²

Ray also sees the Stewardship Ministry expanding to offer finance seminars. His goal is to make teaching about finance portable and usable for small groups. He hopes to present youth seminars, parent seminars, investment counseling, and tips on home or car purchases. Ultimately, Ray wants to see each person find personal points of financial freedom. Finding this, each person can then pursue the passion God individually has given.¹³³

Prayer is vital in Care Ministry. A group of people get together on Monday and Tuesday nights to call and pray with people who left prayer requests placed in the offering plates on Sunday. People requesting prayer receive personal calls that week. They know they are being prayed for and cared for. This program has been extremely successful. During the pastoral staff meetings each pastor takes two to three of the requests to pray through. East Hill’s goal in the next two years is to call all the names listed in the church directory and ask “Is anything we can agree with you in prayer about?” They are also asked if they have any input to give pastor Ted or the church. Ted sends a welcome letter to people who have visited East Hill for the first time. This letter in addition asks if they have any suggestions they would like to offer the church. The response has been significant.¹³⁴

The church has another Care Group ministry where groups of five to ten couples meet twice a month for fellowship. These group members can support each other and

¹³²Ray Morris, Personal Interview, 29 October 1996.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

minister on an individual level. An example of the support these groups offer was a time when one of the group members had a wedding to plan without the support of family in the area. This group not only helped with the planning but with the wedding itself.¹³⁵

The East Hill church is committed to many distinct programs which are so innovative they may not be found at other Foursquare churches. The church has gifted people in the genre of dance who do interpretive dance on occasions. The goal of this group is to allow women freedom to worship through the expression of dance. For many of the women, it is a point of healing in the way they see their bodies. Many have been abused or had eating disorders and this is simply another step in the healing process. This is an opportunity to dance before the Lord in purity and in total surrender.¹³⁶ God puts movement in each of us. Some people may not be effective speakers, but can express themselves in movement. Marie Skaugg, who helps lead the group, pointed out that not all people communicate well verbally. For some, dance or movement is their best form of expression. "Dance is an expression of love, thanksgiving, and praise to God."¹³⁷

The dance group performs for women's gatherings such as the Red Rose Conference, a women's conference beginning with a concert the first night and concluding the next day with a speaker highlighting issues pertaining to women. In one Red Rose Conference, the women danced while Annie Herring, formerly of the Second Chapter of Acts, sang. The verse they hold particularly dear is Psalm 30:11, "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy..." Their mission statement is: "It is our desire to come along side of the singers and musicians with the

¹³⁵Diane Roberts, Personal Interview, 24 October 1996.

¹³⁶ Marie Skaugg, Personal Interview, 29 October 1996.

¹³⁷Ibid.

expression of dance to minister to God during our worship services at East Hill.”¹³⁸

“Through dance, East Hill’s ministry of ‘His Hands Extended’ can be used for intercession. It can break through oppression. It can enhance our times of worship and break the heavy yoke. It can be used to heal us and set us free.”¹³⁹ Red Rose can serve as a way to introduce the unchurched and get them into classes.

East Hill offers a variety of classes from ministry development to a support class for women who have had abortions. Every class is devoted to people’s health and growth, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. In addition, there are classes for breaking out of bondage such as: alcohol and drug abuse and sexual addiction. Ted and Diane Roberts are committed to raising up leaders out of the congregation and releasing them in ministry. If people come to Ted or Diane and ask why there is not a specific class, they are then asked to think about starting one. Ted and Diane also ask their staff members to lead the way by attending class, especially if it applies to them. They are to be examples for the rest of the church.

The Women’s Ministry department has developed a vision for their specific ministry: “Our desire for the women of our church is that they will be healed, equipped, and released to minister to their full potential.”¹⁴⁰ There are always opportunities for women to get involved with the women’s ministry department. The church has prepared a packet of information which tells all the possibilities.

¹³⁸Marie Skaugg, Worship Dance Ministry statement of purpose, East Hill Foursquare Church, Gresham, OR, 1996.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Diane Roberts, Purpose Statement for the Department of Women’s Ministry, East Hill Foursquare Church, Gresham, OR, 1994.

Drama

Aimee was renowned for her illustrated sermons on Sunday nights. Many would come so they could enjoy entertainment. Many of the Hollywood movie stars would come to church. “Her object was not to create sensation but to make the message more effective...Many would have given little heed to an ordinary spoken sermon.”¹⁴¹

Drama in the Foursquare church is not used in quite the same manner as did Aimee while pastoring Angelus Temple. Huge productions are not the weekly fare in the church today. Productions of that size may still be seen at Christmas or Easter. The pageantry known during Aimee’s day no longer holds the same value since the advent of video rentals, movies, and cable television. The large dramas have been replaced with sermon spots and sketches. Sermon spots “use rich imagery, convey excitement, tell stories creatively, develop conflict, and confront people compellingly.”¹⁴² Sketches are short, easy to perform and used to introduce or enhance the service. However, there is a renewed interest in the value of drama in the church. As more and more people see dramatic presentations in the “megachurch,” it will seem reasonable for others to try it in their churches also. It all comes back to the individual church. What is it called to do? Churches known specifically for having drama in the Northwest district are Eastside in Kirkland, Washington; East Hill in Gresham, Oregon; Evergreen in Hillsboro, Oregon; and Westside in Bend, Oregon.

An example of drama being used as an evangelistic tool is Judgment Days at New Life Center in Everett, Washington. During the week of Halloween, the church takes

¹⁴¹Van Cleave, 11.

¹⁴²Bennett, 90.

several of the rooms in the church building and gives the viewers an impression of what the Judgment will be like. The purpose of this presentation is to “scare the hell out of them” and to offer salvific hope.

Faith Center uses drama as a support to its service. One well-received sermon spot used was the Prodigal Son. One gentleman walks down the aisle to the waiting gentleman on the platform. The son and father reunite and there is celebration. While this is taking place, the older son walks toward the platform. The older brother questions why the younger gets such a welcome when he has squandered all of the money his father gave him. After a little more interchange, the older brother storms off. Similar sketches are rarely done, however; video seems to be an easier method of dramatic presentation. Video clips of one of the actors doing a sketch is more likely to be played. One advantage of video is that it can be used easily in more than one service, while scheduling actors may be more difficult. Also, having the sketch videotaped allows for appropriate timing of music and presentation at any location without the thought of proper set design or technical lighting. This video format is used as an alternative to the traditional sermon spots or illustrations to stir interest and promote awareness.

Faith Center’s children, however, do have the opportunity to be involved in drama for the use in Sunday school and in the main church services at Christmas and Easter. The two possibilities involve both the adults and the children. The Sunday morning group performs in conjunction with the worship band.

East Hill has a group of adults who present dramatic inserts which will tie into the sermon. “Rambo” has rappelled from the ceiling to the platform on Father’s Day. Mice

have talked about the farmer they cannot see but know tends the crops. The drama group performs about every six weeks or whenever it fits in.

East Hill's children also have a drama group. They meet together once a week for rehearsals and then perform for the Wednesday night Adventure Kids Club. They also perform at Christmas. The group is made up of third through fifth graders, some junior leaders, and a few adults. In the past the group has performed Toon Town sketches, presented Western themes, and portrayed a family called the "Fraidy Bunch." Paul Duris, head of the Children's Ministries department, writes the scripts for the Wednesday night dramas. For the most part it is a continuing theme with the same characters every week. They use the characters to teach Biblical principles and to show different problems.¹⁴³

East Hill is always searching for new ideas to incorporate. Several years ago Ted and Diane began presenting special shows for holidays such as: Valentine's Day, fashion shows, and a marriage celebration. East Hill's purpose in presenting these special events is to invite the community who would not normally set foot inside a church to come to a non-church activity.¹⁴⁴

Music

Music was very important to Aimee. She had a band, orchestra, and choir to help her lead worship. She wrote much of her own music. There were times when she took a popular song of the day and changed the lyrics to make it edifying. "The music and the program appealed to rich and poor, black, brown and white, rural and urban, cultured and rustic, young and old."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³Julie Duris, Personal Interview, 29 October 1996.

¹⁴⁴Diane Roberts, Personal Interview, 24 October 1996.

¹⁴⁵Van Cleave, 15.

There are many Foursquare members and pastors who write music. One of the most recognizable songs in the denomination is “Praise the Name of Jesus,” written by Roy Hicks, Jr. Numerous songwriters are not uncommon for churches in the megachurch category. It is typical for a church of two to three hundred people to have at least one songwriter.¹⁴⁶ Foursquare has been fairly successful in producing worship albums of their music and then sending them out to the other churches. In the past, songwriters found networking to be too difficult. Gene Skinner, worship pastor at Faith Center in Eugene, Oregon, tried to have all the different churches send him their music so he could produce a tape of it to distribute among the churches and to promote the recording of the music. That initiative got little response, but today, Caleb Quaye, head of the National church music and worship office at Foursquare’s International office, is once again trying to gather all the music to record and publish.¹⁴⁷

Foursquare is committed to the act of worship rather than music of the moment or the latest worship style. The freedom of expression from church to church comes from the Holy Spirit’s leading. Successful worship is not about having a worship band with the best music, but having hearts willing to worship God.

Foursquare does not have a standard or form for worship; however, there may be common threads in different churches in given areas or complementary denominations. This commonality has resulted in part from the widespread influence of publishers such as Maranatha Praise Band and Promise Keepers; Hosanna Integrity; and Vineyard. These three groups contribute to a continuity of style. More recently, the Pentecostal movement

¹⁴⁶Gene Skinner, Personal Interview, 18 October 1996.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

has seen a resurgence of Black Gospel music.¹⁴⁸ Within the Pentecostal movement, musical variety ranges from new wave (Tommy Walker) to old Gospel (Fanny Crosby). Many churches are adopting a worship band style.

If the worship music ever becomes a production or show and people become spectators, then the purpose has been defeated. Music should facilitate entering into the presence of the Lord. Steve Overman, pastor at Faith Center, has said worship should be simple, even bland, so as not to distract. If a person is attracted to a specific church simply for the music, then the purpose of music facilitating worship has failed. Worship should feel intimate, just as if people are at home in their living rooms praising God. A person coming to Faith Center for the first time would most likely compare the worship to that in a smaller church. For a Foursquare church, Faith Center may be considered middle of the road. Faith Center's intent is not for people to walk in saying, "Wow, great music," but "Wow, God is here!"¹⁴⁹

There have been many changes in worship and music in many different denominations since Foursquare's inception in the 1920's. Foursquare is committed to making any changes necessary because of the Spirit's leading but not because of new phases or fancies. Faith Center will not change its basic worship style unless God wants it.¹⁵⁰ Its goal is to keep pure its vision and identity while working within the Eugene community.

This goal of purity is not limited but receptive to contributions from the hearts of others, within the local church as well as through other congregations. It is necessary to

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Gene Skinner, Personal Interview, 18 October 1996.

respect and appreciate other believers even if their calling differs from the Foursquare's vision and identity. This mutual respect lends itself to the appreciation of what God is doing in individual church bodies. Specific callings for the one can inspire or translate into a new-found sensitivity for the other. The essence of the fire in one church can spread and ignite within another. I Corinthians 12 reminds the church at large that all members are gifted, needed and equally important. On the outside, it will not look as if the church has changed because the change occurs inside.¹⁵¹

Creativity can be intimidating. Small churches may be daunted by what they see happening in the larger churches. The small church first reaches out to God and then to other models. Models can pose as potential stumbling blocks. A church may not become the successful ideal that it sees in a model. Lack of vision can also frighten churches. The response that should be made here is to be patient; God will provide one.¹⁵²

East Hill and Faith Center use a similar format for worship. Each church utilizes a worship band with worship leaders and has systems for visually projecting the words of songs. Music is seen as an integral part in the invitation to worship. Each church allows time for special music. This time could be for a guest musician or a congregation member teaching the worshippers new music.

The Mission statement for Faith Center and its worship team is "To work with Jesus to see people saved, healed, empowered and mobilized for Kingdom ministry in the home, the church, the civic community and to the ends of the earth."¹⁵³ The goal then of

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Mission statement of Faith Center Church in Eugene, Oregon.

worship in the church is to “Lead people into the presence of the Lord.”¹⁵⁴ How are people to respond as worshippers? They are to be “Aware,” to be “Sensitive” to the moving of the Holy Spirit, and to “Let” Him.¹⁵⁵

In Angelus Temple’s early years, Aimee would jump up and begin to lead a song if she felt the service was lagging. She had an innate ability to facilitate her worship service’s smooth flow. People called this spontaneity. It takes an unusually gifted individual to do this; one who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and able to follow His quiet lead. In recent years, Dr. Roy Hicks Jr. functioned the same way at the Foursquare denomination’s yearly conventions. Roy was sensitive to go to the podium, lead another song, give an exhortation, or to begin praying. Today, Steve Overman shows a similar ability. He does not have a problem singing different songs, praying when the Spirit leads, or even foregoing a sermon he has prepared in favor of what the Lord is currently saying.

Faith Center believes the worship team should plan for the service, but be willing to allow the Spirit to go another direction. The argument given is if there is not a plan, it causes nervousness and then spontaneity certainly cannot happen because the worship leader or team is emotionally limited. When a pastor is sensitive to the Spirit, he can help to steer the church in the direction the Spirit is moving. The key is not trusting in the plan, but instead to trust in the Spirit.¹⁵⁶

Special music at Faith Center consists of the introduction of new music, guest musicians, an adult choir, kids choir, and special holiday music. The purpose of not having too many soloists is not to highlight an individual person. If this happens to an

¹⁵⁴Gene Skinner, Worship Essentials (Eugene, Faith Center, 1993), 1.

¹⁵⁵Skinner, 2.

¹⁵⁶Gene Skinner, Personal Interview, 18 October 1996.

individual, then it is certainly clear that the person is presenting the gifting which the Lord has given him or her.

The Faith Center Kids choir publicly sings around three times a year. They usually sing with a central theme using poignant verses or phrases. It is a touching service for the adults to have the children refresh them on the importance of childlike faith. It also builds the self-esteem of the children to lead the adults in a time of worship. The goal of both the Family Ministries and Worship department at Faith Center is to encourage the children to have a personal relationship with God. During the rehearsal time, they are having a mini Sunday school and worship time of their own. Foursquare is committed to investing in its children.

Worship at East Hill combines many different forms of worship expressions: worship dance class, youth choir, worship band, sign language, and worship leaders. Not all of these groups participate in a given service. The worship band plays choruses from Integrity Music. Worship is taken very seriously and prepared for weeks in advance. The song lists are pre-planned and worked on for flow and continuity. They plan so the worship can begin to look casual or spontaneous. In this season of life at the church, they are working towards not being so concerned with details. It is an evolution from considerable structure to a looser, more comfortable format. The desire is to be obedient so that the Spirit can move.¹⁵⁷

Darrell Dahlman, pastor of music ministry, has yearly goals for worship ministry. His tries to write one new chorus as well as to provide special music every month, and to have a rotating worship team. The desire to be sensitive to the Spirit affects the

¹⁵⁷Darrell Dahlman, Personal Interview, 29 October 1996.

productions the church does. For example, Christmas this year can be approached as a worship event rather than a production. The focus can be simple: prayer and ministry. This unity of focus between the church and the music ministry is being achieved on an individual level as well.

The worship team is to be accountable to every member of the group. Each person is part of a small group for ministry. The flow that is so desired comes from the relationship that is built between each person in the group. "Spiritual ministry in music is deeper than the ability to play."¹⁵⁸ People are most important, thus relationship is part of creativity. East Hill has found the congregation would rather know and have a relationship with the person who is ministering than listen to someone with whom they have no bond. It really is a building time for the church.

Youth

At the Foursquare Pastor's Conference in Beaverton Oregon, September 30-October 2, 1996, Andy Gilbert, the Northwest District Youth Supervisor, announced that the youth of Foursquare is experiencing revival. The president of L.I.F.E. Bible College echoed much the same. Foursquare continues to place value on its youth, as did Aimee. There was a time when Family ministries was not considered as important and their needs were placed at the bottom of the budget. Emphasis is now placed on functioning as a multigenerational church. The children are the future and must be nurtured.¹⁵⁹

Interest in the children's ministry is renewed. They will be the future generation of leaders for Foursquare. Shannon Kearney, in charge of Family Ministries at Faith Center,

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Shannon Kearney, Personal Interview, 30 October 1996.

is adamant that the church today not marginalize the children. She does not believe that children should be removed, but instead should be involved. Shannon has a new vision from Mark 10:16 about the presentation of children before the church: "And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them." She has a bulletin board display of the children and what they are currently doing. Once a year, the children present their missions offerings before the church. Often videos are presented in the main services showing the children during Sunday school or in related activities.

Shannon does not believe that children have to grow old to understand the Bible. Almost from Angelus Temple's beginnings, Aimee had children run their own services and allowed her daughter Roberta to preach.¹⁶⁰ Shannon makes pamphlets listing the children's classes being taught each month. The themes are from the Bible and presented in such a way the children will understand. Shannon has prepared a teaching booklet to help the teachers better respond to the needs of the children.

The opportunities available to children are numerous. The Kid's choir is introduced to the entire church on Sunday morning 2-3 times a year. There is a worship band that performs for the Sunday school classes during the first service. The band is made up of high school students and adults. After Christmas, there is a six-week class for children before the choir starts again. The first week is an event in which all the children can be involved. The five weeks following are set aside for class study and the children get to decide which class they want to attend. There are classes on missions, the Gospel of John, and servanthood.

¹⁶⁰Roberta Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

The desire of children's ministry at East Hill is to see kids ministering to others. They want to have children pray for people and have the gifts of healing. It is the heart of the children's ministries department to see a big Holy Spirit in small kids. The focus is on having kids doing the things adults would normally do. At camp, they have seen children praying for other children to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. They also desire to teach children to think globally.

East Hill finds itself in a position where church is the only place where many children are nurtured and can nurture their giftings. Church is a place for them to belong, where people have confidence in them. One third to one half of the children are from single or divorced homes. The hope is for the kids to bring their friends to church. Currently the church is working on a program in conjunction with Young Life. The Hispanic community is growing. Young Life is teaching these Hispanic children English. They would like to hold the classes at the church. If this works out, the children will stay for Wednesday Adventure Kids Club and learn about Jesus.

The Creative Arts Ministry at East Hill is a time for the youth of the church to come once a week and learn dance, drama, or sing in the choir. On the information and permission slip the word art has been broken down to say it is: "A place where kids can express faith through dance, drama, and choir, Release point for kids into ministry, Team skills in the arts, Show a servant's heart in ministry." The group meets Tuesdays from four until five o'clock in the evening. They charge fifteen dollars for the program to cover the cost of supplies, but also promote commitment to attendance. The program has been very well received at the church.

Internet

When interviewing both Roberta Semple Salter and Rolf McPherson, Aimee's children, independent of each other said that their mother would have used the Internet to reach people with the Gospel.¹⁶¹ People can access Foursquare International at <http://www.foursquare.org>. It talks about the different aspects of denominational life. Foursquare International uses Internet addresses to e-mail missionaries overseas, and communicate with their different districts. It is convenient to send messages with the necessary attachments that might normally take too long to send via the post office. The Internet can provide update and up to the minute information on how the missionaries overseas are doing.

On a church level, Faith Center in Eugene, Oregon; is currently adding a web site designed to welcome people and introduce them to the church. <Http://www.faithcenter.org> will have icons to access the different possibilities. It will tell about the different service times, the different classes, when the college-age meets for the students at the University of Oregon. This web site will inform them about the church and the different college age activities. It is during the college years that people can really be seen searching for the Truth. The average age for someone using the Internet is twenty-six and by the year 2000 the average will drop to the age of fifteen. The Internet has become very popular, and with so many "surfing the Net," it is a wonderful opportunity to present the Gospel.¹⁶²

The hope for the future is to have audio and visual capabilities on the Internet.

¹⁶¹Roberta Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

Rolf McPherson, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

¹⁶²Russ Pierson, Personal Interview, 30 October 1996.

The possibilities for Faith Center in fulfilling our mission statement are remarkable; we can make our teachings available in several forms--including on-screen, print, audio and even video--even live broadcast are within the realm of possibility. There is a tremendous capacity for training leaders, for strengthening Christians worldwide and for providing a virtually anonymous, painless way for seekers to explore the claims of Christ.¹⁶³

This function will allow anyone access to the sermon recorded from the previous service. They also hope to have all of the past sermons by both Steve Overman, the current pastor, and Dr. Roy Hicks, Jr., the previous pastor, available on the Net. The future could also include running a virtual bookstore where people could order resources. This Internet is a cost-effective method of publication for both parties. There is also another gentleman, Donald Breeden, who desires to have Christians from all the churches in the Eugene area on-line twenty-four hours a day to offer counseling.

The Internet is a possibility for easy access for any church to share their resources. The thought is there will be video conferencing, which would enable the pastor or staff to stay where they were without the need to travel. The point was brought up that the Internet would connect the smaller churches with the larger ones. There would not be the isolation like there was in the past. It could be a "virtual community."

Monastery Christ In The Desert (<http://www.christdesert.org>) and the French Catholic Bishop Jacques Gaillot having web-sites are evidence that people are looking for

¹⁶³ Russ Pierson, proposal to Communications Department Meeting, Communications Department for Faith Center, Eugene, OR, 9 Jan. 1996.

answers and hope. There was a woman on The 700 Club, October 14, 1996, who testified of an injury from which she had recovered. During her recovery she would wake in the middle of the night. When she would wake, she would get on-line. She discovered teenagers who were lonely or hurting in “chat rooms.” She began talking with them, offering comfort and hope. It was not long before she became known as “Air Mom.”

The “Air Mom” is just one example of the resource that the Internet can be. The possibilities of reaching an innumerable amount of people all over the world are limitless. There is something about the Internet that makes people feel comfortable sharing deeply and intimately.

The Foursquare denomination has done a lot of innovative authorship since its inception. Jack Hayford, pastor of Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, besides authoring many books, has contributed to and edited the Spirit-Filled Bible. Along with Hayford, other pastors have written study guides to accompany the Spirit-Filled series. Dr. Roy Hicks, Jr. wrote one such book called Power Faith. The proceeds from two of Ron Mehl’s four books are being used for the construction of the Roy Hicks Jr. Memorial Student Center at L.I.F.E. Bible College in San Dimas, California.

Other Foursquare churches in the Northwest are doing creative new things. New Life Center in Everett, Washington does a “jeans and sneakers” offering every Fall. This offering is for the families who are financially limited and cannot afford to buy their children new shoes and clothes for the new school year. Another church in the urban Seattle area has a “car clinic” where single mothers bring their cars for tune ups and one woman is chosen as the winner of a new car. These churches are tending to the needs of

society. Typically these churches are found in urban centers and highlight the homeless, poor, addicted, and destitute. In Seattle, one of the Foursquare churches formed its own non-profit organization and bought a motel for prostitutes to check into for the night in order to get off the streets. This church even has a camp in the area where they take people with addictions and try to help them combat the addictions in a safe environment.¹⁶⁴ Ted Roberts at East Hill church is planning on having daily one minute spots on a secular radio station in Portland as of January 1997.¹⁶⁵ These are current examples of Aimee's practical Christianity, raising people up to take care of the needs of the people right around them.

Aimee saw everything as ministry tools or opportunities be it music, drama, or the giving of one's resources. Seeing these churches today accomplishing their mission is a fulfillment of Aimee's vision for Foursquare churches. East Hill is about serving the Lord and their congregation and community. What better way to tell someone about the Lord than to serve people's needs? The creativity represented in these churches is not always of the artistic sort, but it comes from the promptings of Holy Spirit. Churches are in a time of creative evolution. Continuing to be creative "takes initiative and the willingness to learn new ideas and undertake new skills."¹⁶⁶ Ultimately it is not programs that make the church creative, but obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶⁴Scott McBride, Personal Interview, 22 October 1996.

¹⁶⁵Diane Roberts, Personal Interview, 24 October 1996.

¹⁶⁶Terri Lackey, "Initiative & work nurture creativity, minister says," Christianity Today Online, Internet, 25 June 1996.

Chapter 4

Nurturing Creativity in the Life of the Church

Foursquare's roots are steeped in creativity both innovatively and practically. Since Aimee's death there have been ebbs and flows of creativity. Is Foursquare called to nurture and care for inspiration within the life of the church, both individually and corporately? If so, how does the Foursquare denomination continue to nurture the inventiveness resident in Aimee's ministry and the new artistry and skills developing in the church today? There is assuredly a need for the church to be creative, not just because of economic necessity or stimulation, but to enable continual growth. To advance creativity, the church must celebrate, nurture, encourage, and reward this process. The church needs to maintain integrity and authenticity to perpetuate this divine spark.

Creativity resides in human beings because humanity was formed in the image of God as found in Genesis 1:1, 27. Though humans possess sinful natures, they still have the ability to create. This capacity allows for both constructive or destructive impulses. "If we have been created in the image of an Artist, then we should look for expressions of artistry, and be sensitive to beauty, responsive to what has been created for our appreciation."¹⁶⁷

God is bigger than the arts; yet He endowed the human race with specific artistic ability. This divine inbreathing of God's Spirit in humanity helps in our understanding of God. As His people use the arts to communicate who He is on different sensory levels, a greater impact and understanding of His character can be made. Artistic exploration in the

¹⁶⁷Edith Schaeffer, "The Art of Life," Christianity Today Volume 40, #6, Christianity Today Online, Internet, 10 Oct. 1996.

church furnishes the congregation with a fuller understanding of who God is as well as giving a better idea of the diverse gifts and talents God has given everyone.

The arts have always had value as teaching instruments. Visual pictures leave lasting impressions on us. Much of Renaissance art had Biblical themes depicted in them. The Roman Catholic church powerfully influenced the artistic community and genre. The church commissioned many great masterpieces which can still be seen today. These sculptures, paintings, tapestries, altar pieces, music, and graphics are monetarily and aesthetically priceless considering how many people's faith and artistic expression they have inspired. It is amazing to view these works of art knowing they are one of a kind and no longer being created. Art ever evolves; creative ingenuity today can have just as much value and spiritual impact as in the past. Artistic vision as well as the actual endeavor can have equally profound effects on viewers then and now. Antique stained glass windows in cathedrals were not only beautiful artistry, but they helped teach stories from the Bible. Stained glass windows need not be restricted to the gothic cathedrals in Europe; they can be used in today's modern churches. Such windows may not necessarily teach the illiterate, but could induce deeper reflection regarding what is depicted in the scene.

Art has the potential to draw the viewer into a specific scene or musical setting. "Through its capacity to emphasize, to focus, and to divert distracting ideas at least temporarily, its impact burrows into aspects of our consciousness, often before we know it. Art asks a question."¹⁶⁸ The question is meant to stay with viewers to ponder for quite a while after seeing it.

¹⁶⁸ Janet R. Walton, Art and Worship: A Vital Connection (1988; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 81.

The lasting effect of art is entire and unequalled; it seizes human emotions and aspirations and gives it a language with which to communicate. Humans think in sensory impressions and scenes, transferring them into feelings. Art ascertains and hints at desires, joys, hurt, pain, and suffering. It is out of these internal feelings and utterances that creativity is released to expression. Art forms are expressed in the language of the creator. Ultimately, art is the incarnation of life, life as God intended.

Drama was used in the medieval church to teach. The church today has retained this genre for the same purpose. Drama has the ability to make a realistic application which may not be possible with a painting. Drama presentations require the actors to play their roles convincingly. Hopefully, after the viewers have suspended their disbelief, they will understand the dramatic relevance and see what is being presented in a whole new light. Drama gives fluidity and movement. It is not a static presentation.

Presentations of art, such as a painting or sculpture and art as drama, all communicate ideas, but they differ in the length of impression on the observer. Artistic sensation usually only lasts as long as the medium is viewed, but dramatic performances can replay themselves in a viewer's mind even after the play has ended. The impact of both will stay in a person's mind indefinitely, whether consciously or unconsciously.

How does art reveal God? It is disclosed by celebrating, nurturing, and encouraging His divinely-given creativity. He is made known through teaching, preaching, word usage, and people's lifestyles and dress.¹⁶⁹ Creativity that is celebrated, nurtured, encouraged, and rewarded is most likely to make God known and real to its generation.

¹⁶⁹John Holland, Personal Interview, 18 July 1996.

The arts are not meant to sustain the church, but they can add a dimension or depth the church has not fully realized. They can add warmth to the rich traditions many churches have established. The arts initially captivate a person's attention and later its meaning or significance can be recalled.

Is creativity really necessary in the church? Assuredly! If creativity were absent, the church liturgy and vitality would be dry and lifeless with nothing to offer because people had nothing to give. Creativity presses ever forward urging fresh life and furthering the exploration of expression. This divine inspiration adds multiple dimensions through any of the five senses promoting better mental retention. This is why Sunday schools teach a Bible story to children followed by a related craft project. Children will most likely remember the craft or picture long after the story has been told.

How does the church celebrate, nurture, encourage, and reward creativity in the members of the congregation and in the life of the church? The church cannot force creativity to grow; they can only encourage its continued existence. The church should be a safe environment for people to be nurtured in their giftedness. Every person's ability is a gift from God and if all believers were gathered together it would be amazing to see the wide range of gifts.

Creativity flourishes when people nurture it within themselves. In order to do this, they must learn how they function creatively. The constants or components of the creative process must be personally determined. There are times when the nurturing process necessitates quietness and contemplation. Life can be distracting and disquieting. People can become so confused and diverted by all that their lives entail they put their creative

nurturing on hold. In so doing, they stagnate personal growth in this area. Getting away from distraction allows people to determine their priorities. This time of reflection helps in the renewal of vision. How can people hope to gain insight or new perspectives unless they are searching for them?

Caring for creativity is a daily endeavor. Sometimes the process can seem tedious, mundane, and repetitive, but it is in those times diligence is required. Many people have heard the phrase, "Nothing in life is free." In this case, it means that creativity is not always easy and natural. The things that look the easiest are often the ones requiring the most work. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time can bring necessary peace to the soul allowing a new flow of inspiration.

Nurturing creativity is much like tending a garden. To enjoy the beautiful colors of the flowers, the gardener must weed, fertilize, and water the plants. So it is in fostering creativity. The more people tend to the process, the easier and more proficient they will become in their specific giftings.

Nurturing creativity in an individual's life has many of the same components as in corporate life. However, the individual has more mobility and opportunities to artistically explore than groups can ever know. Individuals can take the time whenever they wish to reflect, imagine, explore, or do whatever is appropriate for the moment. Individuals can go in any direction they desire, whereas the group has a focus or a theme. The challenge to individual nourishment is self-discipline; no one is there to encourage the person onward but himself or herself.

Just as the process of creation is not always simple, so the nourishing of inventiveness may bring about pain. Change always hurts to some degree. Transition should be about moving forward. The best way to deal with change is to meet it head on. Modification of attitude can begin as churches view the arts as constructive tools. Acceptance of one or many different art forms into the order of service help to enlarge the church's spiritual sensitivity.

Facilitating opinion modification is to consider what other creative people have previously done. The ideas of some of the classic advocates for Christian faith may seem commonplace today but, in their time frame, they were scandalously innovative. Martin Luther's and John Hus's studies of Scripture enabled believers to see they could have a personal relationship with God. These works, as well as the work of many others, allow the church today to have freedom in exploration of expression.

Simple yet important ways to encourage change in individuals' perspectives are: exploring personal interests, pursuing different artistic avenues available, keeping a notebook of ideas, and spending time in nature. A church as a community cannot explore these options, but it can be encouraged individually. Churches may begin assimilating ideas from others regarding how they might explore interests as church bodies. They can take what they like and format it to fit their church's needs and desires.

It is difficult to utilize individual creative acts for entire church involvement. Imagine taking an entire church out for a walk in the forest or corporately painting pictures. The church draws together people from all different creativity levels and experiences. These diverse abilities can be aptly used in a worship setting, children's

ministries, or in the multifaceted administration of the church. Paul addresses a church's ability to create in Romans 12:6, "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly." Listening to and observing other creative people serve as a catalyst for personal creativity. Creativity breeds more creativity. The church must pray the Lord will give it creative insight.

In the Foursquare church, the focus is the same for both individual and corporate life--to glorify God. Everyone was created by God and made in His image. All humanity has the ability to create despite its fallen and finite existence, but not everyone has the desire to glorify God with this God-given gift. Madeleine L'Engle explains the difference between Christian and secular art. "The purpose of the work, be it story or music or painting, is to further the coming of the kingdom, to make us aware of our status as children of God, and to turn our feet toward home."¹⁷⁰

Creativity can also influence humanity by doing something out of the ordinary or out of the routine. An example of this is using a traditional method of musical accompaniment one week and rotating it with contemporary worship bands every other Sunday. It is nice to have a change of pace and as well as an appreciation for what is available to the church. Combinations or rotations of old and new can provide a very rich blend of traditional art forms mixing with new.

Written examples of the old influencing the new are the works of Timothy R. Botts and Eugene Peterson. Both gentlemen have taken religious literature and given it fresh perspective. Botts designs beautiful calligraphy to illustrate and complement Bible verses,

¹⁷⁰Madeleine L'Engle, Walking On Water: Reflections On Faith & Art (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980) 163.

while Peterson's paraphrases of Scripture give the Bible a twentieth-century interpretation. Creativity of this nature is used individually for devotions, Bible studies, encouragement, and anything else the mind can envision.

Creativity is really about functioning in divinely appointed giftedness and being who God has created each individual to be. Each person must have a focus. The gifts of this focus are tempered in solitude. These abilities can function in whatever place people find themselves.¹⁷¹ Creativity should enhance and provide additional tools of personal and corporate spiritual development. The use of many different translations is excellent for study. For example, reading The Message for fuller study or as complementary reading, has the potential to highlight points people have never seen before allowing for further exploration.

Exploration brings about the recognition of barriers or hindrances to creativity. Simple obstructions to spot are useless traditions that bind the church. Creativity is about freedom, not confinement. It is willing to embrace changes no matter how large or small. A second obstacle can be the fear of failure. The church body may resist trying anything new for fear of failure or membership loss. A third impediment can easily be the lack of specific resources. The fourth restraint is the failure to cultivate creativity or giftedness. It is easy for individuals to stop the flow of creativity by being their own worst critics.

How can the church be aware of these barriers and work to tear them down and prohibit their return? The first step is to realize traditions do not necessarily connote effectiveness. There are times when it is necessary for the church to branch out and try

¹⁷¹Clarence McClendon, "Fulfilling God's Purpose In You," Wednesday night church service, Church of the Harvest West Adams Foursquare Church, Los Angeles, CA, 17 July 1996.

something new. The old adage, “If it’s not broken, don’t fix it,” no longer applies if there is something that works better. The second deterrent, fear, should not paralyze a church from trying something new. The church in this instance needs to go to the Lord and pray about its fear and ask the Lord to free it from bondage. A third hurdle is the challenge of resources. This situation can be seen as an opportunity to appeal to God for specific needs. Some practical applications could be approaching a project with what resources are available, or asking someone to help out by donation of time, money, or materials. Cultivating creativity comes through its nurture and use. Since creativity comes from being made in God’s image, it is essential to seek Him for guidance and inspiration.

How does the church maintain its authenticity and integrity throughout the creative exploration process? The church cannot afford to compromise its innovative work. It is necessary to give God the credit for all creative origins as well as to maintain a focus of the primary vision. God is the One who gives all humanity the ability to create and He is honored when we diligently live a life of creativity. There are no shortcuts in the creative process; it takes honesty and work.

There may not be shortcuts in learning about creativity, but there are good places to start. Jim Tippins, a minister of music at First Baptist Church in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, says, “Over time we can all learn a few things from listening to creative people. Inspiration can’t be taught, but it can be improved.”¹⁷² Tippins further outlines the skills of a creative person. A creative person needs:

- spiritual and mental preparation;
- a sense of humor;
- well-being;

¹⁷²Terri Lackey, “Initiative & work nurture creativity, minister says,” Christianity Today 1, online, Internet, 25 June 1996

- the ability to analyze and prepare;
- the ability to correlate ideas;
- the ability to see non-standard meanings;
- the ability to scan ideas;
- the ability to visualize;
- a facility with words; and
- the ability to pick up rhythm.¹⁷³

As a music minister, Jim Tippins has advice for people who believe themselves to be creative. He recommends they begin,

reading creative resources and keeping an ideas folder; outlining your desired message; attending seminars; drawing from your own experiences; discussing and writing down topics no matter how strange they seem; considering the needs of the congregation; getting out into the world; and staying close to God. The closer you are to God, the better your creative vision.¹⁷⁴

People should never copy one another, but they can observe the creative process in others and learn from that. Jack Hayford, of the Van Nuys, California, Foursquare church, has been instrumental in creatively enabling many churches even beyond the Foursquare denomination. He has given many teaching seminars for pastors. “Many...were motivated to seek God for the approach that would bring growth to their congregations in their own communities.”¹⁷⁵ Watching others can help determine what works and is successful in the church specifically and at large.

¹⁷³Lackey, 1-2.

¹⁷⁴Lackey, 2.

¹⁷⁵Nathaniel Van Cleave, The Vine And The Branches (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992) 203.

In the midst of all the creativity and innovation the church still needs to remember the focus and reason for all that is done. Through drama, video, music or other genres, the artistry needs to be used effectively. Are the different forms bringing people into the presence of the Lord?¹⁷⁶ The church should not create art for the sake of art. If the proper motivation behind the inventive framework is absent, the finished product does not bring glory to God. The art may be humanly eloquent and offer “angelic ecstasy,” but without the breath of divine love and inspiration, it is “nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.” (1 Corinthians 13:1, The Message)

How was Aimee Semple McPherson so creative and why did so many creative people surround her? Because Aimee herself was creative, this innovative spirit acted as a magnet drawing others to her. She was able to continue to attract many artists because she welcomed and utilized their resources. There was a balance of artistically creative as well as analytically creative people; these two types facilitated each other. Aimee and her mother Minnie Kennedy modeled this practice. Aimee exemplified the visionary and her mother embodied the administrator. Minnie enabled her daughter to focus on her vision and calling. Minnie was there to take care of the children and deal with the administrative logistics of setting up meetings in different cities.¹⁷⁷

Aimee could visualize every detail necessary for a completed project. She could delegate responsibilities to others around her to achieve a finished product or an end result.¹⁷⁸ She needed sets and props every week for the illustrated sermons. She would

¹⁷⁶Gene Skinner, Worship Essentials Eugene,OR: Faith Center Church, 1993.1.

¹⁷⁷Edith L. Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993) 125-126.

¹⁷⁸Roberta Semple Salter, Personal Interview, 25 April 1996.

tell the people in charge what she needed and then survey the work done. Sometimes she would incorporate animals into the illustrations. The animals were found on farms, at the zoo, and from the circus. Whatever required materials Aimee needed, her team of workers found.¹⁷⁹

How did Aimee encourage creativity in the life of the church? How can Aimee be an example for the church today? She continually found new ways to present the Gospel: cleverly illustrated sermons, radio broadcasts of live church services, and grandiose floats in the Rose Parade. By pressing the creative boundaries for the church as a whole, she encouraged individuals to be imaginative as well. Aimee will continue to be an example of fulfilling the vision she had--to obey Jesus' command for the Gospel to go into all the world (Mark 16:15).

Reflection on Aimee's accomplishments makes it hard to imagine any one person physically being able to do all the things she did. Aimee was a creator surrounded by a multitude of facilitators. Today, the Foursquare denomination does not focus on or support just a single creative person. Instead, each church must nurture creativity within itself and then stand behind that vision.

Inspiration did not die with Aimee but has continued to live and flourish along with her memory. Spiritual gifting remains with believers their entire lives. People can choose to use their talents and abilities or, conversely, to leave them behind. What must be remembered is that an idea does not take root and then appear in perfected form tomorrow. There is no such thing as instantaneous fulfillment. A creation takes time,

¹⁷⁹Daniel Mark Epstein, Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993) 254-258.

sweat, and tears. "The important thing is to recognize that our gift, no matter what the size, is indeed something given us, for which we can take no credit, but which we may humbly serve, and, in serving, learn more wholeness, be offered wondrous newness."¹⁸⁰

It is not only the Foursquare denomination's heritage and mandate to be creative...it is the whole Christian community's. The future for the Christian society will be that of rediscovering the arts and their heritage. The arts are nothing new in the church, but it has been such a long time since they were utilized in the way the early church did. Churches must determine where their strengths and weaknesses lie. This discovery process can help determine what needs more work or where innovation could be useful. "Don't expect to sit idly by and act as a conduit through which God's creativity flows...Being creative takes initiative and the willingness to learn new ideas and undertake new skills."¹⁸¹

Moving forward involves change and full partnership and involvement. Regarding moving into the twenty-first century, John Holland, President of Foursquare International, states, "First, change is unavoidable, uncontrollable from the human standpoint, and unpredictable..Second, the expectation of an emerging generation can only be satisfied when they are full partners in the process."¹⁸² What lies ahead of the church may not seem like a creative task, but there is a vital need for fresh vision. The Foursquare International office and East Hill in Gresham, Oregon, both concur the church of the future must care for the needs of the people. People are needy and respond only after they have been

¹⁸⁰L'Engle, 195-196.

¹⁸¹Lackey, 1.

¹⁸²John Holland, "President's Perspective: Getting A Start On Cincinnati!" Minister's Update Fall 1996: 1-2.

helped. President Holland discusses ways to meet people's expectations and confirms that God will free and nourish His people with wisdom and giftedness for ministry.¹⁸³

"Our legacy will bear fruit, but not because of our efforts, as good as they may be. We'll see great fruitfulness because we have His blessing as we do His will. It's a great time to be living!"¹⁸⁴ Not only does this apply corporately, it applies individually as well. Christians must always be creative in the ways in which they spiritually refresh themselves. Although these words are specifically written for the Foursquare denomination, this is almost a call to worship to the entire Body of Christ. It is important that creativity in the church continue to be nurtured. Reaching the year 2000 is an opportune time for the church to experiment with new forms of creativity necessary to meet people's needs. Fresh inspiration is essential for the church itself so it does not become steeped in tradition and deny the possibility for continued growth. This creative call acknowledges that humans are made in the image of God and, as such, His creativity is woven in their spiritual genetic structure.

¹⁸³Holland, 2.

¹⁸⁴Jim Tolle, "Do You Believe The World Is At Its All Time Worst?," Foursquare World Advance Sept.-Oct. 1996: 3.

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