



Foursquare Identity Keystones

A Summary of Five Significant
Areas of Identity Congruence for
the Foursquare Church

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Congruence for the Foursquare Church

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PREFACE

The organization framework and the particular identity markers selected for this booklet are grounded in Sam Rockwell's 2013 doctoral research on identity congruence in the Foursquare Church. In 2017, a group of Foursquare scholars was selected to write papers on each of the five identity markers included in this booklet: Leah Payne, Karen Tremper, Aaron Friesen, Matt Temple, Steve Overman and Jessie Cruickshank. Their papers were edited and compiled into a 2017 book entitled, *Identity Keystones: What Makes Us Foursquare*. This document is intended to be a summary distillation of much of their work through a process of editing and compiling portions of their original papers along with the addition of some remarks of my own. I want to recognize the significant contribution of each of these writers to the contents of this document, while taking personal responsibility for any issues or problems that may be present.

Aaron Friesen
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INTRODUCTION

The Foursquare Identity Keystones build upon the Foursquare Global Distinctives and help Foursquare in the U.S. differentiate itself from other religious groups and organizations.¹ The identity markers to be examined in this book are: upholding an integrated mission, advancing women to senior leadership, exhibiting a distinct Pentecostal ethos, practicing indigenous empowerment, and exhibiting a moderate “middle-of-the-road” approach to worship and ministry.

It is important to note these identity markers, as an ensemble of qualities, combine together to differentiate Foursquare as distinctive among its peer institutions. In turn, these markers help deepen the concept of what it means to be a Holy Spirit-filled person by creating, or at least introducing, a more comprehensive brand of Pentecostal identity. It is additionally helpful for clarifying the identity of U.S. Foursquare as it has gradually become similar to other U.S. Protestant denominations over the last century.² As Foursquare has legitimized itself in identifying with similar peer institutions, it now faces the reality that many of those institutions are struggling to remain relevant and viable. This presents a new challenge of becoming sufficiently self-differentiated in this postmodern and post-Christian era. Secular organizations have negotiated this chal-

lenge by strategically differentiating themselves among their organizational peers using a variety of tools and techniques. Identifying areas of identity congruence or “domains of expertise” is one helpful way to do this. These identity markers described in this document emerge from the history and practices of the Foursquare Church and build upon existing work on our identity. By Embodying And communicating our distinctiveness, Foursquare will be better equipped to motivate insiders and attract outsiders in alignment with its mission.

In what follows, each of the five identity markers or “domains of expertise” will be examined in a summary fashion³ in order to provide a basis for conversation and further study of these important aspects of Foursquare identity as they relate to the future of the organization and its missional influence in our current cultural context.

1

PENTECOSTAL ETHOS

During a leadership meeting in the 1970s, several of the members who had represented the denomination at the meetings of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) were insisting that Foursquare needed to incorporate more explicit initial evidence language in its official statements. “If we are Pentecostal,” they asserted, “we need to say we believe in initial evidence.” This mildly troubled longtime President Rolf McPherson, the son of Sister, who after a few moments of reflection replied, genuinely, “But we’re not Pentecostal; we’re Foursquare.”⁴

Foursquare is without a doubt a Pentecostal organization. The roots of the organization and the spiritual experiences of its founder, Aimee Semple McPherson, are easily traced back to the early Pentecostal revivals held at Azusa Street in Los Angeles. Yet, the statement by Rolf McPherson above assumes correctly that there is more to defining Foursquare as an organization than simply saying that we are Pentecostal. Sam Rockwell has observed that Foursquare embodies a distinct way of being Pentecostal that is traced back to McPherson who “embraced Pentecostalism in her day while simultaneously differentiating

herself from it.”⁵ As we seek to more deeply understand and live out our shared Pentecostal spirituality, Rockwell’s study suggests the following practices are significant root expressions of Foursquare’s identity as a Pentecostal organization: the public expectation of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, passionate and expressive worship, physical healing and present-day miracles.

Expectation of Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

One way in which Foursquare has historically differentiated itself from some other Pentecostal groups is in its emphasis on fostering a Pentecostal environment that makes room for Spirit baptism and accompanying manifestations while leaving room for diversity in how such values are expressed doctrinally. The *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* affirms the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as that experience which empowers the believer “to glorify and exalt the Lord Jesus; to give inspired utterance in witnessing of Him; to foster the spirit of prayer, holiness and sobriety; to equip the individual and the church for practical, efficient, joyous, Spirit-filled soul-winning in the fields of life.”⁶

As such, Spirit baptism is understood by Foursquare to be an essential aspect of every Christian’s life. Yet, in drafting the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith*, it is important to note that McPherson avoided using language that referred to speaking in tongues as the “initial evidence” of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Instead, she stated more ambiguously that “the believer may have every reason to expect His incoming to be after the

same manner as that in which He came upon Jew and Gentile alike in Bible days.”⁷ The accent here is on the *expectation* as opposed to *evidence*. While it is clear from her writings and sermons that McPherson anticipated that speaking in tongues would normally accompany Spirit baptism, it is significant that she did not lock herself or her organization into tightly defined language about that experience. In fact, it was in reference to the fruit of the Spirit rather than speaking in tongues that she used evidential language, calling it the “irrefutable evidence of the Spirit-filled life.”⁸ Thus, one can reasonably argue that it is in keeping with the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith*, as well as the spirit and practices of its founder, that Foursquare as an organization embraces a shared expectation of charismatic gifts rather than enforcing dogmatic assent to the particulars of what has come to be known as “classical Pentecostal” doctrine.

Speaking in Tongues

The experience of speaking in an unknown language as a private devotion or a means of public exhortation is an important characteristic of Foursquare’s Pentecostal ethos. A 2011 survey of Pentecostal ministers across three denominations (Foursquare, Open Bible and Assemblies of God) showed that while Foursquare ministers were the least likely to subscribe to a rigid doctrine of initial evidence, they were the most likely to speak in tongues privately on a daily basis.⁹ This evidence suggests that the regular practice of tongues is a significant part of Foursquare’s shared Pentecostal spirituality, even while remaining somewhat flexible in doctrinal formulations. Jack Hayford, past president of the Foursquare Church, has done much

to enlarge and deepen the Pentecostal understanding of speaking in tongues and other *charismata* without being dogmatic about the specific doctrinal formulation of such experiences.¹⁰ Hayford has made a helpful distinction between being Pentecostal with an “uppercase ‘P’...whose major concern is the doctrine of initial, physical evidence,” and being Pentecostal with a “lowercase ‘p’...who actually practices prophetic speech (*glossolalia*) on a regular basis with a missional effect.”¹¹ While other organizations have validated their status as Pentecostal by assenting to a fairly narrow set of doctrinal formulations, it is Hayford’s lowercase ‘p’ definition that better articulates the essential Pentecostal experience for Foursquare.

Physical Healing

McPherson is recognized as one of the great healing evangelists of the twentieth century, and her passionate conviction that Jesus continues to heal people was a hallmark of her ministry. The ministry of McPherson to the sick and marginalized in Los Angeles anchors Foursquare’s Pentecostal identity to caring for those who suffer physically. Some scholars have characterized the ethos of early Pentecostalism as spiritualizing social problems while neglecting the Spirit’s engagement with real world problems.¹² This characterization is certainly not consistent with the roots of Foursquare, and it may be argued that Foursquare has tended to resist a sharp separation between the physical and the spiritual. In contrast, Foursquare recognizes the healing ministry of Jesus as one of its four overarching tenets, and the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* emphasizes the power of Jesus to heal and meet the needs of those who are sick

in the body, “as well as the soul and spirit.”¹³ Foursquare’s belief that Spirit baptized people should carry on the healing ministry of Jesus continues to be a platform for bridges to be built and partnerships to be formed with individuals and organizations who are finding creative and effective ways to address and minister to the physical needs of people in our society.

Passionate and Expressive Worship

Perhaps the most distinctive element of Foursquare’s Pentecostal ethos is the dynamics and feel of a public worship service. In fact, of the twenty-three distinctives that Rockwell assessed in his study of Foursquare identity, the highest ranking distinctive was “passionate and expressive worship and prayer.”¹⁴ But what does Foursquare mean by “passionate and expressive?” More than simply making room for a free-flowing use of spiritual gifts, this value is expressed in Foursquare through the concerted and organized use of music and artistry to create a collectively exuberant worship experience. Although McPherson often preached against the cold and lifeless formalism that she believed characterized many of the mainline churches, she was not afraid to incorporate worship practices and art forms that required extensive preparation, programming and professionalism.¹⁵ Far from getting in the way of authentic worship, McPherson believed that such elements helped people’s hearts and emotions to connect with the liturgy in meaningful ways. As an indicator of core assumptions — “that God is able and willing to intervene in human affairs, that He is ‘present’ rather than distant (the doctrine of immanence), and that...He is intimately engaged with human needs, emotions,

and decisions”¹⁶ — making space for people to emotionally connect with the reality of God’s presence in their midst through music and song continues to be an essential aspect of the corporate worship experience in Foursquare.

Present-Day Miracles

A final aspect of Foursquare’s shared Pentecostal ethos is our common belief in and contention for present-day miracles. This theological distinctive is indicative of a core assumption of the “immediacy of God’s presence.”¹⁷ In corporate worship settings, this immediacy of presence is expected to be experienced through the four elements already mentioned, and also through preaching. McPherson’s belief in the immediate presence of God led her to consider the task of preaching as a primary means by which people could be drawn imaginatively into the living history of God’s people. Her emphasis on dramatic sermons, elaborate stories, and illustrations in communicating the truths of Scripture were artful ways in which she attempted to help remove the historical distance between the text of Scripture and the context in which she ministered. Today, a continued part of Foursquare’s Pentecostal ethos is the common belief that the powerful workings of God recorded in the Bible can be experienced today by the People of God in equally surprising, miraculous and unexpected ways.

2

MODERATION

In her 1939 sermon, “This is My Task,” Sister related how interested and “impressed” she was listening to the broadcast of the anointing in Rome of the new Pope, Pius XII. With delight and approval, she described the cheering, waving of handkerchiefs and clapping of the nuns as the Cardinal processed, and especially the anointing procedure, including the details of anointing his hands with oil and then offering him “the Communion.” While she and her followers did not agree that the Pope was the one mediator between God and man, she nevertheless believed that, in a sense, “We’re all Catholic. We’re Protestant Catholics, whether Methodist, Baptist or whatever.”¹⁸

Such a bold statement of ecumenism would no doubt have been seen as compromising to some early Pentecostal leaders. However, for Aimee Semple McPherson, it was a reflection of her tendency to take a mediating position wherever she could, and it is evidence of a broader posture of moderation that she not only exemplified in her own life, but made a defining value of Foursquare. One of the most distinctive elements in the *Four-square Declaration of Faith* – a document that mostly details

traditional Protestant doctrines with the addition of some distinctive Holiness-Pentecostal elements – is the statement on Moderation: We believe that the moderation of the believer should be known to all men; that his experience and daily walk should never lead him into extremes, fanaticism, unseemly manifestations, back-bitings, murmurings; but that his sober, thoughtful, balanced, mellow, forgiving, and zealous Christian experience should be one of steadfast uprightness, equilibrium, humility, self-sacrifice and Christ-likeness.¹⁹

While few movements would want to be known as imbalanced or fanatical, no other early pentecostal denomination had such a statement delineated at length in its articles of faith. Far from peripheral, this idea of moderation “was central to the whole idea of a Foursquare movement.”²⁰ The very word “Foursquare” was in McPherson’s estimation a name that “stands for balance, poise, solidity, strength, and speed.”²¹ This notion of Foursquare as a place of balance and stability was embodied in many ways in the teachings and ministry of McPherson and continues to be a guiding value for Foursquare leadership. Some of the areas and ways in which this value is expressed will be highlighted below.

Moderate Public Worship

One might assume that a “middle of the road” approach to Pentecostal manifestations was taken by McPherson in order to avoid controversy, but that was far from the case. In fact, her moderate approach to charismatic manifestations in public worship meetings was a source of criticism among fellow Pentecostals who were quick to charge her with “quenching the

Spirit.” In one incident during a revival service in Wichita, Sister asked some who attempted to exercise spiritual gifts at a certain point in the meeting to hold those expressions until a more fitting time. The story was recounted in a Pentecostal publication as evidence that she was straying away from her Pentecostal roots and issued a call to readers to pray for her “restoration” to the (truly) Pentecostal fold.²² In response to these criticisms, McPherson explained the importance of moderation in worship services, and she continued to nurture such a posture throughout her ministry.²³

McPherson also expressed her value of moderation in Pentecostal worship in the structuring of services at Angelus Temple. She built into the design of Angelus Temple rooms for personal ministry and tarrying services away from the main sanctuary. The Five Hundred Room was a place for specific in-depth teachings and prayers for healing. The Hundred and Twenty Room (sometimes called “the Upper Room” after the gathered disciples described in Acts 1:15) was set aside specifically for prayer services, preparation of altar workers and for individuals who wanted to tarry for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. She explained, “The Upper Room is the power house...The Church and the field constitute the great harvest land, and the Spirit-filled are winners of souls therein; quiet, moderate, efficient, spiritual workers.”²⁴

Mediating Doctrinal Positions

Importantly, a “middle-of-the-road” sensibility is noticeable in the balanced and moderate doctrinal positions sketched

out in the *Foursquare Declaration of Faith* and further evident in the church's overall attitude towards an approach to the use of formal doctrine. Nathaniel Van Cleave notes, "This relative doctrinal tranquility can probably be traced to Aimee Semple McPherson's positive teaching and her position of moderation in all things; in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."²⁵ Admittedly, this attitude and approach may have contributed at times to a neglect of theological and doctrinal depth and precision in The Foursquare Church. For that reason, in recent times the Foursquare movement has embraced a deeper value for ministerial development in holistic education of all kinds.²⁶ But on the whole, in a religious world far too often torn apart by unnecessary separation, this magnanimous, communal and practical attitude and approach to formal doctrine has been and continues to be a great blessing to the Body of Christ.

Interdenominational Spirit

McPherson's early vision for the Foursquare organization was not to "simply assemble and retain a sectarian Pentecostal subculture, but to contribute a timely gift to the larger Body of Christ."²⁷ It was this vision and spirit which inspired the inscription on the cornerstone of Angelus Temple, completed in 1923: "Dedicated unto the cause of inter-denominational and worldwide evangelism." McPherson's goal was to speak to all Christians and to make the story of Jesus Christ relatable to the masses. There were fundamentalist features in her approach, to be sure, but she was not hostile to other expressions. In fact, in a way that perhaps distinguished her from other Pentecostal

leaders, she felt a connection and was open to appropriating understandings and practices from other streams of the larger Church.

In many ways, the interdenominational spirit which animated Sister's ministry foreshadowed later Pentecostal renewal movements of the 20th century – the “Charismatic Movement” of the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church and many other denominations, and then later into other Pentecostal and Charismatic inspired “Third Wave” movements such as The Vineyard Churches. Such a spirit of negotiation also led Foursquare to send delegates as inaugural participants in the official International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogues in 1972.

Cultural Discernment

Throughout Christian history, we have often seen extremes in Christian attitudes towards the surrounding culture: some rejecting it wholesale, others accepting the surrounding culture without discrimination. McPherson and the Foursquare movement has taken a more moderate approach to such issues. In her own ministry, McPherson adapted and utilized many aspects of the surrounding culture of Hollywood. From elaborate stage-sets, costumes, scripts and lighting to her radio broadcast station, McPherson was eager to use elements of the surrounding culture if they could help more people hear and understand the gospel. McPherson also promoted a moderate attitude towards the holiness code current in her religious subculture – how to dress or wear one's hair, whether to wear make-up (her answer,

“If you like”), and, eventually, whether to go to movies.²⁸ “middle-of-the-road” approach to the surrounding culture continues to be a guiding value for Foursquare as it seeks to communicate the power of the gospel in a Post-Christendom, post-modern culture that is increasingly skeptical of organized religion and religious institutions. It also continues to be a guiding vision for unity in a culture too often divided by particularities and preferences. At the social and political levels, a posture of moderation allows us to acknowledge diverse perspectives while remaining in a place that cares about the whole, and works to avoid and heal unnecessary and unhelpful separation. In our relationships with all other human beings in our families, our neighborhoods, our churches, our cities and nation, and in our relationship with other nations in the world – we can, from that moderating and mediating position, not only pray for but also work to see God’s Kingdom come and God’s will to be done on the earth, even as it is being done in heaven.

3

WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP

“There are some who believe that a woman should never witness for Jesus Christ — that her lips should be sealed. This is not according to the Word of God...I would bring a message to my sisters just now: ‘Go on with the Word of God!’ God has used the womenfolks!...

Through the centuries I seem to see them coming; these witnesses, these precious women of God...an unbroken, steady line of heroic womanhood! It was not only yesterday that the Lord used women, He has used them since time began and is still using them.”²⁹

This proclamation of the irrevocable call on women to be witnesses for Jesus Christ was given by Aimee Semple McPherson in a Baccalaureate sermon that she preached in 1930 for L.I.F.E. Bible College graduates. Just as her own sense of evangelistic urgency compelled her to become a preacher, McPherson sought to inspire other women to do their part in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Throughout our history, Foursquare has supported women being called to and fulfilling all levels of leadership ministry roles and offices within the church. Foursquare believes, “Anyone called by God and verified through character, spiritual experience and preparation for service of leadership is qualified for Foursquare Church ministry in any role or office, regardless of gender, age, or ethnicity.”³⁰ We trace this value in Foursquare back to the life and ministry of our organization’s founder, Aimee Semple McPherson. Her empowered and anointed leadership as a female continues to inspire women in the pursuit of their own God-given calling. In fact, Karen Tremper has observed that “women in the Foursquare Church today reference their heritage and the founder as one of the primary reasons they experience opportunities today as credentialed women leaders.”³¹ McPherson’s own life story and ministry provide an impetus and tangible witness that have contributed to the Foursquare Church’s historic position in support of women in ministry. However, Foursquare’s valuing of women in church leadership goes much deeper than the gender of its founder. Important theological, organizational and societal factors have given rise to and shaped Foursquare’s historical position.

Theological Foundations

With over forty percent of early Foursquare ordained ministers being women,³² McPherson’s ministry made a considerable impression on the predominately male role as pastor in other denominations. What compelled her to do this? Although the first wave of feminism in the United States occurred during the lifetime of McPherson, scholars have observed that feminist

ideology was not as influential as Pentecostal theology in shaping McPherson's views about women in leadership.³³

McPherson found an encouraging precedent for pursuing church leadership as a female in the Salvation Army heritage of her mother, and she found the budding Pentecostal movement to be similarly accepting of women leaders.³⁴ In general, the early Pentecostal movement supported women participating in Christian leadership even when such roles went against the social norms of the day. This openness to and encouragement of women in active public ministry was fueled in large part by a sense of urgency to evangelize the world as quickly as possible before the Lord's soon return. Early Pentecostals understood that God gave this anointing equally to men and women, and a perceived need for "eleventh-hour" laborers empowered by the Holy Spirit overshadowed troubling questions of Church tradition on the subject.³⁵ The equal empowerment of men and women attested to in the Book of Acts provided the primary biblical impetus for Pentecostals', including Foursquare, support of women in ministry leadership roles. However, we can find many other biblical witnesses for support of women filling leadership roles at the center of the community.³⁶

Toward the end of McPherson's life, she made very explicit statements regarding women. "In 1936— in her 'Back to Pentecost' meetings... she called on the Foursquare denomination to renounce all forms of gender discrimination."³⁷ That same year Foursquare passed a resolution against gender discrimination at their annual convention:

There shall be no discrimination between women and men in relationship to their duties, activities, ecclesiastical and spiritual standings and recognitions in the Foursquare Gospel Organization. All executive offices shall be open to both men and women in good standing in the organization.³⁸

Organizational Challenges

McPherson successfully straddled the fence between supporting women in ministry, addressing any opposition to women as preachers and organizational leaders, and maintaining and supporting the “turn-of-the-century [view which]...accepted women’s primary function as mother, her subordinate position as wife, and her idealized role as moral guardian of culture.”³⁹ Her theological perspective as a Pentecostal did not completely dissolve her understanding of gender roles in the family. Thus, it should not be surprising that although she licensed and ordained a great number of women in the Foursquare Church, she “only occasionally placed women in top leadership positions...[and] when women had children the man assumed the role of pastor.”⁴⁰

Despite a consistent theological stance in support of the equality of men and women at all levels of church leadership, Foursquare has faced various challenges putting this belief into practice at an organizational and local congregational level. Sam Rockwell’s study of Foursquare identity revealed “women in leadership” as one of eight distinctives in Foursquare that showed a high level of identity congruence.⁴¹ In other words, Foursquare ministers identify with and attempt to put this value into practice in their ministry. Yet, statistics show that despite

these efforts, a significant gap remains between male and female leadership in Foursquare, particularly at the level of senior pastor and higher. For example, during the 1930s, 40% of senior pastors in Foursquare were women.⁴² In 2012, 37% of Foursquare's credentialed ministers were women, but only 7% of the total number of senior pastors were female.⁴³ There are currently seven women serving at the level of Foursquare national church leadership: five women on the Board of Directors, one female District Supervisor, and Tammy Dunahoo, who has served as the General Supervisor of the Foursquare Church since 2010.⁴⁴

Although the Foursquare Church has not followed some other Pentecostal organizations who have placed restrictions on the roles of women in the organization, women leading in the denomination declined steadily after the death of McPherson in 1944.⁴⁵ A contributing factor to this reality may be that although McPherson functioned in both ministering and ruling authority, she tended to appoint men and women in what could be considered stereotypical gender roles.⁴⁶ Thus, without an official position on the issue throughout much of its early history, Foursquare gradually conformed to the gender ideology of its time.

Societal Barriers

Perhaps the greatest hurdles for women in leadership to overcome are found in the deeply held values within conservative society that describe gender with expectations that prescribe the behavior of men and women. This reality, coupled

with the predominately male environment of the Foursquare Church, has often resulted in the practice of releasing women with ministry authority but not into ruling authority.⁴⁷

When considering the historical context of the founder and the Foursquare Church, the distinction between ecclesial functions of “ministry authority” and “ruling authority” is evident. Spirit baptism and the resultant calling such an experience implicitly places on a woman’s life provide her with authority to preach, teach, and evangelize, which are consistent with ministry authority. However, much of our history demonstrates that ministry authority does not automatically translate to ruling authority within an organization. Although the Foursquare Church has shown consistent theological and biblical support for women in leadership at all levels, including ruling authority, the organization has often struggled to have its orthopraxy (conduct) line up with its orthodoxy (beliefs).⁴⁸

The Future of Foursquare Leadership

The history and heritage of the Foursquare Church has consistently voiced support of women leading at all levels of leadership as modeled by the founder, Aimee Semple McPherson. When considering McPherson’s life and the opportunities she experienced as an anointed woman leader, the reference point for these opportunities was rooted in a theological perspective of the outpouring of the Spirit. McPherson embraced the expectations of Spirit baptism as understood in Acts 2 for the equipping and calling to ministry that came to all who asked, empowering regardless of gender.

The displaying of Hebrews 13: 8, “Jesus the same yesterday, today, and forever,” in every Foursquare Church supports women’s expectations today. In other words, because God anointed the founder and He is unchanging, He can anoint any woman leader and she should experience the same opportunities as the founder did regardless of the historical timeframe. At the same time, the Foursquare Church must continue to wrestle with incongruence between our beliefs and practices in this area by intentionally identifying and raising up women leaders in the organization at national, district and local levels.

4

INTEGRATED MISSION

After her death in 1944, Foursquare pastors and leaders worked to honor McPherson's integrative gospel legacy. Rev. Raymond W. Becker wrote in 1948: "The Christian life is a balanced life, a life in which Christ's truth is blended with Christ's love; assimilated by thought, exhaling in worship, softening into sympathy with man's suffering and sorrow. It calls for the believing soul, the devout heart, the helping hand. It is the perfect balance in a saintly soul of feeling, creed, communion, and work!"⁴⁹

This value expressed in Becker's message – integrating a concern for the saved soul with sympathy for the suffering – was likely established in McPherson's vision of effective Christian ministry through her early experiences with the Salvation Army. Throughout her ministry, during a period of time where her peers often emphasized one at the expense of the other, McPherson was passionately committed to both the evangelism of souls and ministry to the physical and social needs of people and families in her city and around the world.

A Christocentric Approach

The theological center of the Foursquare movement is decidedly Christocentric. Foursquare theology is based on the Person of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon-Coming King.⁵⁰ This Jesus-centered focus gives the Foursquare Church its practical and theological impetus: as a movement, Foursquare is dedicated to imitating His saving, empowering, healing work in the world, and ushering in His Kingdom. The Foursquare Church seeks to share the message of this saving, empowering, healing, and soon-coming Jesus by promoting a gospel that is both personal and corporate. The movement blends the seemingly opposed missions of traditional evangelism (e.g., focusing on the redemption of single persons through individual conversion) and social justice (e.g., seeking the salvation of the world through the redemption of sinful structures) into one integrated mission. Foursquare's commitment to integrating these two impulses is a distinct domain of expertise.

Passion for Individual Salvation

From the outset, McPherson was committed to blending social and individual gospels. Her ministry included appeals for individual conversions through classic revivalist methods such as revival meetings, altar calls, and gospel tracts. McPherson also created innovative methods for encouraging individual conversions. She was on the vanguard of radio broadcasting in the early 20th century and she encouraged individuals in her "Cathedral of the Air" to come to Jesus wherever they heard her

message. McPherson produced elaborate stage productions she called “illustrated sermons,” encouraging attendees to convert to the Foursquare gospel. These productions were part vaudeville stage production and part morality play and they almost always ended with an altar call. The contents of McPherson’s sermons emphasized a personal, intimate love relationship with Jesus and a desire for soul-winning. “Jesus,” she would say, “won’t You give me souls at this opening meeting? I want them, Lord, and You want them, too.”⁵¹

Passion for Social Transformation

McPherson’s message was not simply for the salvation of the individual. She was concerned with the salvation of her city. To that end, McPherson heavily invested in meeting the social needs of the city of Los Angeles. For example, a central mission of Angelus Temple was “Food for the hungry, comfort for the lonely, aid for those who are ill, clothes for those in need – all this and much more.”⁵² Groups like McPherson’s “City Sisters” worked to meet the social needs of their community by maintaining a food bank, running an employment office, and creating rehabilitation programs for young women leaving prostitution. During the Great Depression, Angelus Temple fed thousands of Los Angelinos per week; their efforts were more wide-reaching than the local or state government. Aimee Semple McPherson’s daughter Roberta summed up her mother’s position on personal and corporate salvation in a short 1925 essay called, “Welfare Work.” “Sister McPherson always said, ‘You are not saved to sit in church on Sunday morning and listen to a good sermon. You’re saved to serve’.”⁵³

Renewed Balance

The balance between personal and social aspects of salvation present in the early ministry strategies of Foursquare have not always been successfully maintained. Throughout the 1950s-1960s the culture wars in broader evangelicalism influenced Foursquare toward the diligent celebration of individual conversions, while paying less attention to the social implications of the mission of Jesus.⁵⁴ This gradual move away from an integrated view of salvation continued in various ways through much of the latter half of the 20th century.

The 21st century, however, has seen a revival of interest in the movement's early integrated approach to the personal and corporate mission of the Church. For example, Foursquare has platformed socially-conscious ministries like "Laundry Love" that encourage pastors and congregations to start a "ministry of love and practical help in his or her own community," and has recommended books such as, *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World*, *Zealous Love: a Practical Guide to Social Justice* and *Barefoot Church: Serving the Least in a Consumer Culture*.⁵⁵ In 2014, Life Pacific College launched several new degree programs aimed at preparing "those who wish... to work in social justice ministries."⁵⁶

The Dream Center organization continues the legacy of McPherson by providing practical relief and resource to thousands of struggling families and individuals each week in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. Developed under the leadership of Matthew Barnett, pastor of Angelus Temple, the Dream Center "aims to not only meet the immediate needs of

communities like providing food and clothing, but also focuses on the full successful transformation of people's lives, all free of charge."⁵⁷ The success of the Dream Center model in Los Angeles has spurred a network of over seventy Dream Center ministries in other cities throughout the United States and internationally.

In 2004, after selling KFSG – the radio station first started by Aimee Semple McPherson in 1924 for \$250 million, the Foursquare Church created the Foursquare Foundation.⁵⁸ The Foursquare Foundation's purpose from its inception was to accelerate worldwide and interdenominational evangelism. The Foursquare Foundation sponsors global and domestic efforts toward personal and corporate evangelism through traditional revivalist means, as well as methods commonly associated with the social gospel. Globally, it has distributed over \$70 million in grant funding for evangelism and church planting. Through its initial efforts, over eight million people made decisions to follow Christ. The Foundation distributed grants among 116 nations, enabling the church to meet and serve people in many practical ways.

An Integrated Future

As long as Foursquare is centered theologically and practically upon the Person of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon-Coming King, Foursquare will be focused upon the saving, empowering, healing work in the world, ushering in the Kingdom of Jesus. This work is neither liberal nor conservative and therefore should not be placed on a political or ideological spectrum. Foursquare's commitment to an

integrated view of Jesus' saving work may best be summed up by the Foursquare Foundation: "The gospel message is being spread through food distribution, hospice care, community outreach, prison ministry, church planting, one-to-one evangelism, and many more creative ways."⁵⁹ This emphasis and expression is definitely aligned with the early days of our movement and likewise finds relevance and efficacy in this present era.

5

INDIGENOUS EMPOWERMENT

“Angelus Temple is opening one of the mightiest missionary enterprises that has ever been started. Nothing short of establishing missionaries and mission stations in every land and among every kindred, tribe and tongue will satisfy these earnest, enthusiastic and consecrated followers of the Foursquare Gospel, ‘The field is the world’ is their motto, and ‘Around the world with the Foursquare Gospel’ is their slogan. The spirit of the Foursquare Gospel is that of the true pioneer.”⁶⁰

This statement in a 1927 *Bridal Call* article explaining Foursquare’s early missionary focus captures the clear vision of Aimee Semple McPherson to take the gospel around the world. When Angelus Temple was opened in 1923, the evangelistic focus of McPherson’s ministry was inscribed in the cornerstone, “Dedicated unto the cause of inter-denominational and worldwide evangelism.” This sense of evangelistic purpose led to rapid growth through church planting. By 1925, over thirty churches had been planted. By 1927, the number had increased to 128 in twenty-five states.⁶¹ That same year, the first official missionary was sent out to a foreign field. As with many other

Pentecostal organizations, missionary intent and evangelistic passion have been at the heart of Foursquare's identity. Such a value continues to be a distinctive characteristic of the organization with 65% of ministers ranking "global and foreign missions" and 64% ranking "emphasis on evangelism" as the top two distinctives of the organization.⁶²

As Foursquare has sought to mobilize individuals to spread the good news "around the world," it has intentionally embraced contextual expressions of the gospel that address the felt needs of a particular community and through which diverse groups of people may be included, welcomed and embraced. This practice of empowering missional creativity and hospitality among local and indigenous church planters and leaders is evident in the history and structure of the organization.

Crossing Cultural Barriers

The story of Pentecost found in the Book of Acts provides a theological foundation for the practice of empowering people to express the gospel in the particularities of their culture. The miracle that all the foreigners gathered in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost heard the gospel in their native tongue is significant and spectacular. Pentecost was the declaration of the victory of God's Kingdom and the sign that God's wonders could be found among all the languages and cultures in the world. "The invitation of the gospel was not to be relegated only to certain people groups or cultural expressions - it is the universal call of God for all people to come!"⁶³

The seedbed for the present-day Pentecostal movement was the Azusa Street Revivals that took place from 1906-1908 in Los Angeles. Mark Noll notes, “In an America that still took racial barriers for granted, Azusa Street was also remarkable for the striking way in which blacks and whites joined to participate in nightly meetings.”⁶⁴ Racial, gender and socio-economic barriers seemingly dissolved during the Azusa Street revival meetings and this created the possibility for a beautiful new mosaic of workers to be sent into the harvest field.

McPherson’s own evangelistic ministry was strongly influenced by this vision of racial integration. Barfoot observes that even before she dedicated Angelus Temple or conceived the Foursquare Church, “Aimee was perhaps the first evangelist in modern America to hold integrated revival meetings in the South.”⁶⁵ Just two years after the dedication of Angelus Temple, the church bulletin posted this invitation on February 15, 1925: SPANISH! JAPANESE! ARMENIAN! GERMANS!— ATTENTION! Do you know that we have a class in our Sunday School for you, taught by one of your own nationality and in your own tongue. You will find these classes in the east part of the first balcony, and a hearty welcome awaits you. COME!⁶⁶

McPherson’s theology found a unique blend as she sought out “new theological territory between the existing boundaries of the ‘fanaticism’ of Pentecostalism and the ‘formalism’ of the denominational churches.”⁶⁷ She merged Pentecostal ethos, conservative Protestant theology and a deep concern for issues of social justice, allowing her to integrate into her ministry a

“dual concern of local church planting and indigenous leadership development with global concern for the disenfranchised.”⁶⁸

Creative Training Opportunities

Filled with compassion for people who lived on the margins of society and a passion to preach the gospel around the globe, McPherson and the early leaders of the Foursquare movement realized they would need training opportunities to empower the people they were reaching to take the gospel into their world. McPherson established the first evangelism and missions training institute, L.I.F.E. Bible College (now known as Life Pacific College), in the same year as the dedication of Angelus Temple. In 1927, realizing the already changing demographics of the city, the leadership of L.I.F.E. Bible College made an introductory course on Spanish a requirement for all students to graduate. L.I.F.E. committed to shaping leaders who knew how to communicate the gospel in diverse settings.

From these early days until today, the creative use of “In-service Leadership Training” (ILT) has been a staple of the Foursquare Church.⁶⁹ One of the most prolific of these institutes is Angelus Bible Institute (ABI) in Los Angeles. ABI develops leaders by sending pastor/teachers into a local context for a week to teach a class to the local leaders. They currently have over eighty-four satellite locations around the world and have graduated over 1,500 students.⁷⁰

Missionary Strategy

Foursquare Missiology is developed around what we call, “Four Stage National Church Development.”⁷¹

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

We see Foursquare’s commitment to indigenous empowerment in this distinct four-stage missiology. Concerning the third stage, dedicated to expanding and multiplying, John Amstutz says, “If the church is to be fruitful and multiply, it must fit the setting in which it is ministering. It has to be released to develop in a way that is culturally appropriate so that it can become truly indigenous.”⁷²

The Foursquare Global Council represents Foursquare’s continued commitment to support and resource indigenous

leadership around the world. Through a network of respected international pastors and leaders who serve in an eldership capacity, the Council seeks to nurture, train, spiritually support and offer guidance, as invited by our global Regions, through proactive collaborative relationships. The purpose of the Global Council is to advance the Kingdom of Christ to reach the nations, bringing hope, salvation and restoration in a united vision as led by the Holy Spirit. One of the foundational beliefs of the Council is “the intrinsic value and giftedness in every nation and culture.”⁷³ In May 2017, Leslie Keegel, the National Leader of the Foursquare Church in Sri Lanka and the South Asia Regional Chair, became the first chair of the Global Council from outside the U.S.⁷⁴

Whether compelled by the biblical examples in Acts, the articulation of our Foursquare missiology, or the necessities of the harvest, missionaries quickly learn to empower the indigenous peoples as soon as possible. Missionaries are not there to reproduce themselves or their culture, but rather to seek to witness the Word of God taking flesh in them and Jesus expressing His life in their culture. Thus, missionaries come alongside emerging disciples and leaders to help them grow into the fullness of Christ. Their ministry is to equip them to fulfill their calling, so the gospel advances among the indigenous peoples, resulting in an empowered people leading a church multiplication movement.⁷⁵

When the gospel takes root among a new people group, Foursquare churches are from the outset intended to be self-

governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-theologizing. Thus, missionaries “seek from the outset to develop healthy, indigenous disciples, leaders, and churches who are well equipped to carry on the work under the leadership of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the Word of God, being anchored to Kingdom principles while untethered to outside cultural practices and historical norms that may interfere with the advancement of the gospel among new people groups. This leaves in place a church that is solid and flexible, and able to thrive regardless of the context in which it is planted.”⁷⁶

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

ENDNOTES

¹ The Foursquare Domains of Expertise were developed on the basis of Sam Rockwell’s Identity Congruence Study of 468 US Foursquare licensed ministers. Sam Rockwell, “Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence Within the Foursquare Church,” (Ph.D. diss., Fielding Graduate University, 2013).

² This is in keeping with the theory of neo-institutionalism as described by Rockwell in *Identity Keystones: What Makes Us Foursquare* (Los Angeles: The Foursquare Church, 2017), 14.

³ A more detailed account of each of these Domains is given in Sam Rockwell, ed. *Identity Keystones: What Makes Us Foursquare* (Los Angeles: The Foursquare Church, 2017).

⁴ This account was relayed by Dr. Risser via Steve Overman.

⁵ Rockwell, “Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence,” 93.

⁶ Aimee Semple McPherson, comp., *Declaration of Faith* (Los Angeles: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, n.d. [1923?]), 16-17.

⁷ McPherson, *Declaration of Faith*, 17.

⁸ McPherson, *Declaration of Faith*, 19.

⁹ Aaron Friesen, *Norming the Abnormal: The Development and Function of the Doctrine of Initial Evidence in Classical Pentecostalism* (Eugene, Pickwick Publication, 2013), 215.

¹⁰ Hayford suggests that a consequence of being overly dogmatic and preoccupied with a particular doctrinal formulation of tongues is that it detracts from the real scope and purpose of speaking in tongues. Jack Hayford, *The Beauty of Spiritual Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 92.

¹¹ Gary Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 60. Speaking in tongues functions as “prophetic speech... with a missional effect” in that it allows for an experience of God beyond the rationalistic presuppositions of modernity and the language boundaries of a particular cultural identity. Rockwell, *Identity Keystones*, 17.

¹² See Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 127.

¹³ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Divine Healing: A Doctrinal Sermon,” *Bridal Call Foursquare* (Jan 1930): 11.

¹⁴ Rockwell, “Denominational Identity,” 69. 57% gave this a ranking of 1; 76% gave it a ranking of 1 or 2.

¹⁵ Her use of various media to communicate her message such as dramatic illustrated sermons, full-length sacred operas and plays, necessitated more tightly programmed and structured services than some early Pentecostals were accustomed.

¹⁶ Rockwell, *Identity Keystones*, 17.

¹⁷ Rockwell, *Identity Keystones*, 18.

¹⁸ Steve Overman, “Moderation,” in *Identity Keystones*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: Foursquare, 2017), 77.

¹⁹ McPherson, *Declaration of Faith*, 20.

²⁰ Overman, “Moderation,” 76.

²¹ *Lost and Restored: Sermons and Personal Testimony of Aimee Semple McPherson. Centennial Edition.* (Foursquare Publications, 1990), 31.

²² The General Council Office, “Is Mrs. McPherson Pentecostal?” *Pentecostal Evangel* (June 10, 1922): 9.

²³ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Is Mrs. McPherson Pentecostal? Yes or No?” *Bridal Call* (October 1922): 10.

²⁴ Aimee Semple McPherson, *The Holy Spirit* (Los Angeles: Challpin Publishing Company, 1931), 199–200.

²⁵ Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992), 24.

²⁶ For Foursquare’s Philosophy of Education go to http://s3.com/foursquare-org/assets/education/Philosophy_of_Education.pdf.

²⁷ Overman, “Moderation,” 77.

²⁸ Leah Payne, *Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism: Making a Female Ministry in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 70-74.

²⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Baccalaureate Sermon," *Bridal Call Foursquare 13* (February 1930), 5. Quoted in Sutton, 205.

³⁰ Steve Schell, ed. *Women in Leadership Ministry* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Media, 2007), 31.

³¹ K. A. Tremper, "Credentialed Women in the Foursquare Church: An Exploration of Opportunities and Hindrances in Leadership," (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2013), 40.

³² Robert Cornwall, "Primitivism and the Redefinition of Dispensationalism in the Theology of Aimee Semple McPherson," *Pneuma 14* (Spring 1992): 24.

³³ Tremper, "Credentialed Women in the Foursquare Church," 76.

³⁴ Aimee Semple McPherson, *Aimee Semple McPherson: The Story of My Life* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973), 25-

³⁵ Edith Blumhofer, "Women in Pentecostalism," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review 57* (2003): 104.

³⁶ See Karen Tremper, "Advancing Women in Senior Leadership," in *Identity Keystones*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: Foursquare, 2017), 35-37.

³⁷ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 207.

³⁸ International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Report of the Annual Convention, 1936 (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publishing, 1936), 6. Quoted in Sutton, Aimee Semple McPherson, 207-8.

³⁹ Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 7.

⁴⁰ Nathaniel Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Brances: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992), 42.

⁴¹ Rockwell, "Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence," 83.

⁴² Steve Schell, ed., *Women in Leadership Ministry*, 69.

⁴³ Marcia Graham, ed., "Women You Should Know," *Foursquare Leader* 3 (May 2012): 20-21.

⁴⁴ "About Our Leadership," accessed April 13, 2018, https://www.foursquare.org/about/our_leadership/executive_team.

⁴⁵ Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard, "Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches," *Review of Religious Research* 22 (September 1980): 14.

⁴⁶ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 362.

⁴⁷ Tremper, "Advancing Women," 43.

⁴⁸ Tremper, "Advancing Women," 43.

⁴⁹ Leah Payne, “Integrated Mission,” in *Identity Keystones*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: Foursquare, 2017), 26. Such a value continued to be important enough to Foursquare that they re-published Rev. Becker’s work again in a 1955 version of *The Foursquare Magazine* under the title “The Balancing Act.”

⁵⁰ This is an adaptation of Christian Missionary Alliance founder A. B. Simpson’s fourfold gospel. See: <https://www.cmalliance.org/about/history/simpson>.

⁵¹ Charles S. Price, “The Opening,” *Bridal Call* 6 (1923):

⁵² Aimee Semple McPherson, “What’s Doing in Angelus Temple Today,” in *Bridal Call Foursquare* 11 (September 1927): 19.

⁵³ Roberta Semple, “Welfare Work,” (*Foursquare Heritage Center*, Los Angeles, 1925), 6.

⁵⁴ Payne, “Integrated Mission,” 26.

⁵⁵ “Zealous Love,” *The Foursquare Church*, last updated June 9, 2010, http://www.foursquare.org/tools/item/zealous_love; “Barefoot Church,” *The Foursquare Church* last updated April 4, 2012; “Social Justice Handbook,” *The Foursquare Church*, last updated February 1, 2010.

⁵⁶ “Life Pacific College Offers New Degree Programs,” last updated April 15, 2014, http://www.foursquare.org/news/article/life_pacific_college_offers_two_new_degree_programs.

⁵⁷ “About the Dream Center,” accessed April 13, 2018, <https://dreamcenter.org/#about>.

⁵⁸ Paul Risser, “KFSG Plans for the Future,” FNS [Foursquare News Service] Press Release #62, Nov. 3, 2002.

⁵⁹ “Our History: Preach the Word,” Foursquare Foundation, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://foursquarefoundation.net/our-history>.

⁶⁰ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Foursquare Gospel World-Wide Missions,” *Foursquare Bridal Call* 11 (October 1927): 15. Quoted in John Amstutz, “Foursquare Missions: Doing More with Less,” *Pneuma* 16 (Spring 1994): 64.

⁶¹ Amstutz, “Foursquare Missions,” 63.

⁶² Rockwell, “Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence,” 69.

⁶³ Matt Temple, “Practicing Indigenous Empowerment,” in *Identity Keystones*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: Foursquare, 2017), 62.

⁶⁴ Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing 1992),

⁶⁵ . H. Barfoot, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Making of Modern Pentecostalism 1890-1926* (London, UK: Equinox, 2011), 74.

⁶⁶ James Scott, “Aimee Semple McPherson and the Spanish-Speaking Ministry in Los Angeles: Lessons for the 21st Century Foursquare Church,” *Doctoral Dissertation for Bakke Graduate University*, 2008, 22-23.

⁶⁷ Barfoot, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 332.

⁶⁸ Rockwell, “Denominational Identity and Ministerial Identity Congruence,” 95.

⁶⁹ Amstutz, “Foursquare Missions,” 73.

⁷⁰ “About Angelus Bible Institute,” Accessed April 2018, <http://www.angelusbibleinstitute.org/abi-about-us>.

⁷¹ John Amstutz, *Disciples of all Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Missions Press, 2009).

⁷² Amstutz, *Disciples of all Nations*, 68.

⁷³ “Other Expressed Values,” *Global Council Information Sheet* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Global Council), 2.

⁷⁴ Helen Melahouris, ed., *The Foursquare Global Council Resource Guide, Update May 2016* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Global Council, 2016), 99.

⁷⁵ Jeff Roper, “A Missionary’s Perspective,” in *Identity Keystones*, ed. Sam Rockwell (Los Angeles: Foursquare, 2017), 70.

⁷⁶ Roper, “A Missionary’s Perspective,” 71.



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