

## George Wood helps Ohio church celebrate milestone

On October 30<sup>th</sup> 2011 First Assembly of God Lyndhurst celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. AG General Superintendent Dr. George Wood delivered a message in which he outlined his own family connections to this historic church. Dr. Wood's mother, Elizabeth (Weidman) Wood, grew up in the church and both she and her sister Ruth were sent out from the church as missionaries to China. Dr. Wood's mother left for China a single woman, but met and married his father, George Sr., along the way. Dr. Wood's Aunt Ruth, along with husband Victor Plymire, served the Lord in both China and Tibet for many years. Dr. Wood shared, through testimony of his family's story, how the trials we face cannot be fully understood until viewing them in the context of the bigger picture of Holy Spirit's work. This service concluded a month-long celebration in which the congregation took to time to remember what the Lord has done through this great church.



**Left:** General Superintendent George Wood presenting Certificate of Congratulations to Associate Pastor Marie Gillombardo.  
**Above:** Certificate of Congratulations.



**Above:** Ohio Ministry Network Superintendent John Wootton closing the celebration service with prayer.

**Clockwise from upper left:** Missionaries sent out from First Assembly; Missions activities; Rivaltime sign; post-service reception.

## More on First Assembly's History

The church itself predates the official formation of the Assemblies of God. Near the turn of the Century, the dynamism of the spirit's outpouring at Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles became known among believers at a Christian and Missionary church in Cleveland. They began searching the Scriptures and praying in earnest for the Holy Spirit's outpouring on them as well.

Renting a church owned by the Swedish Baptists at East 57<sup>th</sup> and White Avenue, they could only hold services on Sunday afternoons. However, Christians from other churches would attend their own services in the morning and then gather at the CMA church to learn about the Pentecostal doctrines and experience. Eventually, the building was purchased from the Swedish Baptists and the congregation was reorganized as a non-denominational church. On November 9, 1911, the Articles of Faith were adopted and the church was given a new name – The Alliance Tabernacle Church.

Because of their hunger for a closer relationship with God, members of the congregation also gathered in homes to seek the baptism in the Holy Ghost. Not only were the home meetings abounding with those seeking god, but the church was overflowing as well.

As the church continued to grow, it developed rich ethnic diversity. Services were started in the native languages of German and Hungarian believers. Various groups began meeting in other locations in the city with the blessing of the "mother" church. In February 1914, the church name was changed to "the Pentecostal Church of Cleveland, Ohio".

The church's pastor at the time, D.W. Kerr, delivered the opening sermon at the 1916 General Council. Pastor Kerr was also instrumental in the drafting of the statement of Fundamental Truths and the Assemblies of God stance on Trinitarian doctrine. A church paper, named the *Pentecostal Report*, was published with most of the articles written by Pastor Kerr. In May 1919, it was adopted by the General Council of the Assemblies of God and called *The Christian Evangel*, the forerunner of today's *Pentecostal Evangel*. For many years, the congregation led the Assemblies of God in missions giving. After leaving Cleveland, Pastor Kerr was instrumental in starting Bethany Bible College in 1919; Southern California College in 1920 (now Vanguard University); and Central Bible Institute in 1921 (now Central Bible College).

In 1964, the congregation relocated to its present location in Lyndhurst Ohio. The church continued to grow until at one point, the weekly attendance eclipsed 1,000 people. In 1993, the church helped to plant NewSong Church in Cleveland Heights.

Today, the congregation continues to exhibit the ethnic diversity and missions fervency that have characterized it for nearly its entire history. We join in celebrating not only what the Lord has done, but what He has yet to do through this spirit-led congregation.

Notable Pastors to have served this church include:

- D.W. Kerr - Early AG leader
- Thomas F. Zimmerman – AG General Superintendent (1959-1985)
- Don McManness - Ohio District Council Executive Secretary (1980-2003)

Notable Missionaries who grew up in this church include:

- Elizabeth Wood - China
- Ruth Plymire - Tibet
- Dale Cuckow – China