

A HISTORICAL REVIEW
OF
FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD
SALLISAW, OKLAHOMA

The First Assembly of God in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, was birthed in 1926 because of a desire to see more of God in individual lives and the fullness of the Holy Spirit within a corporate body of believers. Until the mid-1920s, no Pentecostal church had existed in the community. Still, as the Holy Spirit began to move in different parts of the country, it would be only a matter of time before God implanted a burden upon someone's heart to start such a movement in Sallisaw. Thus, the church that stands today is the result of that burden and the hunger that existed within the lives of two extraordinary ladies, Sister Hazel Herring and Sister Redding – two women whom God chose to use, paving the way for many others to follow, as their simple obedience was the beginning of many blessings for this small Oklahoma town.

Sister Hazel Herring, born on February 4, 1889, in Marion County, Michigan, moved to Indian Territory with the rest of her family around the turn of the 20th century. After her schooling, she entered the Cherokee Girls Seminary and, in 1905, graduated with a teaching certificate and began to teach Indian children. Later, she married a Presbyterian man, and together they made their home in the town of Sallisaw. Sister Herring and her husband both attended the local Presbyterian Church. Still, because of a childhood experience of salvation in a country church in Michigan, something stirred within her, and once again, she desired more of the Lord. In correspondence then with her mother, who had since moved to Palm Springs, California, Sister Herring began to learn of the rebirth and resurgence of Pentecost. A follower of the ministry of Aimee McPherson in Los Angeles had recently started her mother's newly founded church in Palm Springs. Upon hearing these things, Sister Herring became much more interested and desirous to learn what God was doing.

Meanwhile, another lady in Sallisaw by the name of Sister Redding was experiencing some of the same feelings as Sister Herring, and concurrent with the events that were happening in other lives, Sister Redding was filled with the Holy Spirit while visiting her daughter in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Being excited then by this new power and the supernatural gifts that ensued, Sister Redding soon brought Sister Herring to Okmulgee to attend a church service with her, and there, Sister Herring was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Through that outpouring, those two women began to experience a fullness of God that would change their lives and the community in which they lived.

A short time after being baptized in the Holy Spirit, they felt it was God's direction to begin working toward establishing a Pentecostal church in Sallisaw. Looking for a plot of land upon which to build the church, the two women, in driving through the center of town and deciding upon the general vicinity of the building, saw a man named W.W. Payne out mowing his yard and stopped and asked if there was a lot he knew of which they could buy. Miraculously, Mr. Payne told them of a tax deed to a lot on the corner of Chickasaw and Pine that they could have, which they would be welcome to if they would just pay the delinquent taxes. Excitedly, the two made their way to the courthouse and prepared to pay the six-dollar tax. But the sovereign hand of God would still be found at work, for as they started to settle, God led the county treasurer to apply two of his dollars to the six dollars owed! Therefore, rejoicing in how God was moving on their behalf, the two church founders went on their way with great gladness.

At first, there was some opposition to establishing a Pentecostal church in town, including a neighbor who didn't want to be bothered by the noise of horse traffic that he knew would come. Also, some older churches and businesses were apprehensive about Pentecost and weren't sure how well the new church would be received. Sister Redding worked at her husband's grocery store, talked to various people throughout the area, and began to spark interest in the hearts of her customers. She invited several to become involved in the new work they were starting. Using the savings she had accumulated, the woman moved next to purchase a small two-room house for fifty dollars and relocated it onto the property. Seeing progress, people who the two ladies had invited to the church came, and the job of remodeling the tiny house to make one large room for worship began. They tore out the center partition and made one room about 18' by 22' in size, re-roofed the structure, papered the inside with wallpaper, and held on with tacks and metal tack holders around

them. A full-blood Cherokee man by the name of Feathers, whose wife had recently been healed of cancer, consented to help out. He remarked that the men around him were so good that he was ashamed even to spit (his tobacco.) This comment drew laughter from those around, and the fruitful efforts of the people continued. Services soon began in the small white-frame building they now called their “church.”

The church faced south on Chickasaw Street. It was heated by a coal-burning pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room. Sister Jewell Land said there were about 25 people in the first service, including Sister Hazel Herring, Sister Redding, Aunt Martha Ford, Sister Helen’s mother, Ada Williams, Brother and Sister Spears, Brother and Sister Simon Denny, Brother and Sister Floyd Eubanks, Sister Spelce, Brother John Taylor, Brother and Sister Floyd Bagley, Sister Grace Taylor, Brother and Sister Clark, Brother and Sister Maynard, Brother and Sister Eversole, and Brother and Sister Gaylord Land. Brother Maynard was the church janitor.

Reverend Jim Tyler came and preached a long revival, enabling the people to start well. In the Spring of 1927, a young man named Druery C. Callahan, formerly of Fannin County, Georgia was urged to come and take the pastorate. He had felt the call of God on his life shortly after moving into the community on “Drake’s Prairie” in 1904 and for three years had been preaching at the Watts Church. Although knowing this new church could not yet financially support him, Reverend Callahan took a significant step of faith and brought his wife Nancy and four children as Reverend Callahan left his farm and moved to town to shepherd this newly formed congregation. He had preached so many funerals all over the county that he hardly had time to work his crops. Here at Sallisaw First Assembly, this pastor would devote the rest of his life to ministry, and he would remain; he died in 1954 at the age of 68 years. His influence and faithful labor contributed greatly to the continued growth and progress of the church, and through the years, he is still remembered and greatly admired.

As with most rural communities in this area, the church members mainly consisted of farming families with little financial means. Cotton picking was the primary source of income, and it was not uncommon for people to pick cotton all day and then attend revival services in the evening. Most of the revivals lasted for many

weeks, as people would make their way to the altars in the little church, asking God to forgive them of their sins and empower them with the Holy Ghost.

Although revivals were the main evangelistic thrust of the day, other aspects of church life are interesting to note: water baptisms, the partaking of the sacrament, and foot washing were all common occurrences. At Sallisaw Creek, many of the newly saved followed Christ's example by being baptized, giving outward evidence of what had happened inwardly. The creek banks were lined with fellow believers who rejoiced along with those baptized, often turning these occasions into glorious times.

Regarding the taking of communion, it is worth noting that it was combined with the practice of foot washing. These two practices were always observed together. After serving the emblems of bread and wine, the men would go to the platform or stage area, and the women would congregate at the back. As a sign of humility and service, each would wash the feet of another, and as a result, the blessing of God would almost always fall. One of the early members recalled that a man in a foot washing ceremony once got so “happy” that he splashed the pan of water dry!

In 1934, Brother and Sister Sallee held a revival in which several people were saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. Brother and Sister Elf Spears and Sister Helen Harrison were saved. Brother Floyd Bagley said that Evangelist Lawrence Seabolt, a large man, was getting happy and shouting in this same revival. Hallelujah marched all around the stove with such exuberance that the floor gave away, and he fell through. That didn't stop him; he exited the hole and began shouting again. Other early evangelists remembered are Brother Henegar and Claudie Wallace, who held an open-air revival beside the church.

1937, there was a great revival, with about 60 people saved and several filled with the Holy Ghost. The revival services lasted for nine weeks. In that revival, Brice, Eutha Callahan, and Robert Wade received the Holy Ghost. Billie Owens and her sister were among those saved. Their salvation impacted the entire community so much that many were added to the church and baptized in Sallisaw Creek on a cold November day.

Several more were saved and filled with the Holy Ghost during another great revival in 1938. The Sallisaw church became affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God in 1939, having 60 people on the membership roll. The deacons then were Floyd Eubanks, J. T. Powell, T. J. Littlejohn, Brice Callahan, and Chester Eversole. Floyd Bagley also was a deacon in that era. Trustees were E. Spears and Simon Denny. Song leaders in those early days were Clennie Armstrong, Jewell Land, Floyd Bagley, and others. Clennie Armstrong played the pump organ and the piano until Vera (Bagley-Franklin) Park became old enough to do so.

Sister Jewell Land remembered when the Callahan girls, the Palmers, and the Grahams would all get together on Sunday afternoons for prayer. They would take unsaved girls home and “pray them through” to salvation. Their parents would have to get them for service that night.

Sunday School was started soon after Brother Callahan became pastor. Sister Eutha said she remembers seeing five classes in the auditorium simultaneously. Due to the church's growth, another room was added to the old church, and at that time, the front of the church faced east toward Pine Street.

The original church building, having undergone many remodeling and construction projects through the years, the first church was demolished in 1947 to make way for a new sanctuary in its place. The women pulled nails out of the boards to be reused and helped build the new church in any way they could. To some, this was one of the most wonderful times remembered, as men and women all pitched in and worked together, constructing not only a building but many friendships. However, some became discouraged with the building project, and attendance had dropped from 115 to about 85 by the time it was completed. This left a tremendous load on the people who remained faithful. Pastor Callahan sold calves and put the money into the new building. While the construction was underway, services were held at the American Legion Hall and part of the time at the Presbyterian Church.

Soon, attendance began to build again, and it was a great time, with a high of 169. Brother Brice Callahan drove the church bus and picked up people, sometimes driving 1 ½ hours to pick them up and then take them home afterward. Personal cars also made trips every Sunday morning to bring people to Sunday School. Brother Floyd Bagley remembered having a group of 29 boys in a class in a bus parked beside the church.

Besides the occasional highlight of building projects, there are other noteworthy things to recall about the church. One such event would be when a New Year's Eve singing was held on an unusually warm and balmy night with Southern Gospel singers as guests. The Eagles Boys, The Bagleys, the Tarpleys, and the Springwaters were some of the groups who drew the astonishing crowd of 1,500 to 2,000 people that night. It is said that people from all around the area were everywhere. They were in the church, standing outside and sitting on cars to hear the music. Another significant event was a visit from Oral Roberts for a service, in which 389 people were present. He came to Sallisaw to pray for an individual who had written him. It is remembered, though, that the man he came to pray for did not receive his healing, but there were others present who did. One of those was a woman who, being so grateful to God for healing her of cancer, built a church in her community with some money she had saved. When Brother D. C. Callahan passed in 1954, the congregation had grown to about 200. Sister Callahan survived him until 1965, to the age of 79 years. Also of note is that one Sunday, under Pastor Callahan's ministry, when there was a push for attendance, over 400 people showed up.

After the passing of Pastor Callahan, Reverend Frank Thomas and his wife, Peggy, from Meridian, Mississippi, were called to be pastors; he had previously held a very successful revival in Sallisaw. The church continued to grow under his ministry. He introduced another building program, and a 30' by 60' annex was added to house seven new Sunday School classrooms. His ministry here continued for four and one-half years. He was the first pastor who the people wholly supported. The first parsonage purchased was located on the corner of Chickasaw Street and Main Street. Deacons were Brice Callahan, Paul Land, and Jim Franklin.

In February 1959, Reverend and Mrs. Tommy Parker and daughter LaQuita came to be pastors. A parcel of 12 acres on Highway 64 west of town, with a home to serve

as the parsonage, was purchased in 1961. In 1964, property at the corner of Choctaw and Cedar was purchased from Bill Russell to build a new church. He and his family were associated with First Assembly for many years. The auditorium and one hallway to the north with Sunday School rooms on each side were built then. The Trustees were Gaylord Land, Howard March, and Floyd Bagley. They also served as a building committee. Brother Parker's ministry here continued for six and one-half years.

Reverend and Mrs. Don Brankel, Brinkie, and Jacqueta came from Rogers, Arkansas, in 1967 to be pastors of First Assembly of God. The church continued to grow, and an addition was built onto the church's west side, housing Sunday School classrooms, the youth hall with a fireplace, "Prophets' Quarters," and the pastor's study. This was accomplished without having to borrow any money; income to the church was \$23,000 that year.

During Brother Brankel's tenure, Brother Paul Hutsell, one of our sponsored missionaries, came for a Sunday night service. At that time, the church family committed to financing the drilling of a well in Honduras. The well, named **"Well of Sallisaw,"** still provides a good water supply. Brother Brankel's ministry here continued for almost seven years.

In July of 1973, Reverend and Mrs. Freddie L. Howard and Sharon came to Sallisaw from Wynne, Arkansas. The Board of Deacons consisted of Jim Franklin, James Tomlin, and Brice Callahan. Larry Tatham coordinated a very successful bus ministry, and the congregation continued to grow. The Sunday School average was at 215.

Toward the end of Brother Howard's ministry here, the old parsonage west of town, purchased in 1961, was moved off, and a new 3-bedroom brick parsonage was built. The first occupants of this new parsonage were Reverend and Mrs. Tommy Parker, who returned in 1977 to be the pastors for a year. Jackie and Sandra Carter were added to the church staff as Youth Directors.

The property adjoining the church on the north, fronting Cherokee Street, was purchased in 1977. The house on it was used for Sunday School classrooms. In 1978, Brother Parker resigned.

In June of 1978, Reverend Eddie Lee was elected as pastor. His family included his wife, Linda, and children Lorayn, Lorinda, Jeena, and Robbie. Brother Lee was passionate about missions and weekly services for people with addictions. There were youth choir tours; one was to Arkansas and one to Las Cruces, New Mexico, which included canvassing the area to invite people to church.

Jackie and Sandra Carter resigned as Youth Pastors; Lyn and Patty Bond followed them.

1979, Deacon Jim Franklin passed away, and Ken Callahan was elected to fill that position.

During Brother Lee's tenure at Sallisaw, the congregation swelled to average a steady attendance of 300. Because of the tremendous growth, several options were explored to accommodate the people. One option was to move the church to the 12 acres west of town. Instead, it was decided to have two Sunday morning services. Wayne Land led worship in the early service, and Floyd Bagley led in the second service. Brother Lee resigned in 1981.

Reverend Douglas Jernigan and his wife, Marilyn, became pastors in 1981. At that time, the Deacon Board was expanded to five men; Larry Cantrell and Herb Pierce were elected to serve. Barney Callahan also served as Deacon for a short time. There had previously been three Deacons and three Trustees. Income for 1981 was \$114,000. While Brother Jernigan was pastor, the "Prophets' Quarters" was remodeled into a nursery and conference room, and a new organ for the sanctuary was purchased. The "convention style" songbooks were put aside, and hymnals were purchased for the congregation.

After the extensive remodeling of the facilities, a daycare was begun with Sister Jernigan as director and Beverly Spilman as instructor. Brother Jernigan completed

the requirements and received his Doctorate while pastoring here. Youth Pastors who served under Brother Jernigan were John and Cindy Malinak, Patty (Rogers) Brown, and Dwayne and Kathy Brothers.

With such a glorious history and great challenge yet ahead of the church, one would think things had always gone smoothly and according to God's perfect will. Unfortunately for the church, the community, and the Kingdom of God, that was not the case, for in 1982, First Assembly suffered a church split. It was a trying time for all in the congregation, but with God's grace, the church proceeded. Frank Weatherford replaced James Tomlin, and Dennis Sprouse replaced Larry Cantrell on the Deacon Board.

In October 1982, the property that joins the church on the southwest corner was purchased from E. B. Sanders for \$32,500. At that point, First Assembly owned the entire city block, except the northeast corner, which houses a dentist's office and is not for sale. Brother Jernigan resigned in 1984.

David and Nancy Kelly of Oklahoma City were then elected pastors. Later that same year, the New Life Center was established in the old Sanders house to reach needy people by providing clothing, household items, and non-perishable food. The Deacon Board approved the purchase of wireless microphones. Dwayne and Kathy Brothers, youth pastors, and Paul and Kim Dodson assisted Pastor Kelly. Beverly Spilman was the children's pastor.

In November 1985, Reverend Robert Polvado and his wife, Patricia, of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, were unanimously elected as our new pastors. They and their children, Leanne and Lamarque, came in December and spent the next 21 years ministering to the needs of the congregation and community.

In 1984 - 1987 Connie Hawkins and Kim Dodson served as office secretary. Following Kim's resignation, Bertha Land and Patricia Polvado temporarily filled that position, working alternate weeks for six months. Equipment such as a copier,

folding machine, and an electric typewriter was purchased to maintain an efficient and modern office. These ladies were followed in 1987 by Peggy Smith, who was office secretary for 18 and one-half years. Upon her retirement in 2006, Karen Land accepted that position. A television, VCR, overhead projectors, and screens were obtained for use in the auditorium and classrooms. Home Bible Fellowships were started as a means to move the church forward.

In May 1987, Paul and Kim Dodson resigned to accept the youth pastor position in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. To keep the youth group going until another director could be hired, a Youth Council was organized at the First Assembly. It comprised four couples: Dennis and Debbie Sprouse, James and Rhonda Woodward, John and Sherrel Davis, and David and Karen Land. Dennis Sprouse served as coordinator and chairman.

In 1988, the First Assembly of God of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, became incorporated as a non-profit corporation because of current trends in business, government, and law and the many benefits that could be realized. The purchase of a computer system and specific programs updated the office equipment and made record-keeping more efficient and accurate. The total income that year was \$131,200.

In April of 1988, following his graduation from Central Bible College and their honeymoon, Robby and Sherri McClure came to spend five years as Youth Pastors. Robby, who had been a member of the youth group when the Polvados pastored in Bartlesville, brought his exuberance and artistic creativity to the office. Youth Quake, organized by Pastor Robby as an annual youth revival, was initially held in August in a tent on the church grounds. Despite the hot weather, it was a spiritual uplift for the youth of the area and the entire church. After the resignation of Robby and Sherri in 1993, Jason and Michele Morris accepted the position of Youth pastor.

Also in 1988, five men of the church joined with men from Austin, Texas, for a MAPS trip to Durango, Mexico, to assist the local congregation in building a concrete block structure to serve as a church. This was only the first mission trip for men and women of the First Assembly. Seven went to the Dominican Republic in October 2005 to assist in improvements to a center that trains children's workers.

Twelve members are scheduled to go to Honduras in 2007 to help construct an orphanage and a teen challenge center.

Beverly Spilman resigned from the position of Children's Pastor in 1989. She was the founder and director of Summer Day Camp for children in elementary school, with enough enrolled to pay her salary. Light Force, an after-school activity involving music and drama, was another outreach she began and directed for several years.

Once again, remodeling was in order. In 1990, the restrooms were converted to the custodian's closet. New restrooms with lovely vanities, tile floors, and wallpaper walls were built in the former classroom. Updating projects, then moved into the sanctuary. The platform area was enlarged, the exposed red brick walls were painted white, paneling was covered with sheetrock, textured, and painted. A new surround with columns and wood trim modernized the baptistry. Many congregation members spent hours pulling staples from the pew upholstery to install the latest foam and fabric. The blue color of the carpet and pews was replaced with a very pleasing shade of mauve.

Sister Grace Taylor had maintained contact with Sister Hazel Herring through the years. In 1991, at a retirement center in Lawton, Oklahoma, Pastor Polvado, Sister Taylor, and others from the congregation went to interview the 102-year-old founder of First Assembly of God. She was very articulate in relating information about her early life, excited to tell of God's faithfulness and provision. She passed from this life on April 11, 1996, at the age of 107, and is buried in Sallisaw City Cemetery. Pastor Polvado conducted the home-going service for this amazing woman of God.

In 1994, after serving on the Deacon Board since its affiliation with the Assemblies of God in 1939, Brice Callahan offered his resignation "to make way for a younger man to take his place." David Land, a worship leader, was elected to succeed Brother Brice. Brother Brice passed away in 2005, leaving his wife, Eutha, as the only surviving original member of the church.

Frank Weatherford, who had served on the Deacon Board since 1982, resigned in 1994, and Harold Tomlin was elected.

Detailed drawings for Phase 1 of a four-phased master development plan, completed by architect Ken Cockram of Fort Smith, Arkansas, were approved by the church body in January of 1994. In April of that year, a fund-raising program entitled “Together for His Glory” was launched, and the congregation began raising the initial \$100,000 that it had stipulated was necessary to reach before construction could begin. On March 3, 1996, a groundbreaking ceremony was celebrated for the 8,000-square-foot addition to the current structure. The building was designed to house 11 classrooms, a fellowship hall, kitchen, restrooms, and storage areas. This is a free-span building with no interior load-bearing walls, so future phases 2 through 4 can be accomplished as the congregation grows and the need presents itself. Leo Schildhauer acted as building superintendent again and personally constructed the kitchen and restroom cabinets and countertops. David and Karen Land designed and implemented landscaping in front of the building. Dedication of the completed building was held on March 16, 1997, with Oklahoma District Superintendent Reverend Armon Newburn as guest speaker.

“Reap and Keep,” a program to assist in integrating new people into First Assembly and maintaining contact with our entire congregation, was launched in 1997. It continued for about two years.

By June 1998, Pastor and Patricia had completed the construction of a new home and moved out of the parsonage. At that time, the parsonage was painted, new flooring was installed, and other renovations were made to prepare it for our new Youth Pastors, Jonathan and Jennifer Watson. The church family and the community loved them, and they ministered in the schools and community services.

Pastor Polvado introduced a new focus on supporting the fellowship's ministries and missionaries monthly. This was demonstrated in the scheduling of annual Missions Conventions. Each year, the highlight was unveiling a unique project to support, such as study books for a library or church construction and the opportunity for congregation members to make faith promises to the mission budget.

Missionaries Charity and Ruth Harris (grandparents of Youth Pastor Jonathan Watson) were invited as guest speakers to the Missions Convention in 1998. At that time, the church family committed to the financial responsibility of constructing a church in the Ivory Coast, West Africa. Pastor and Patricia were presented with an expense-paid trip to participate in the dedication ceremony 2000. What a highlight for First Assembly was seeing firsthand, through the eyes of our pastors, what God had allowed us to accomplish for others.

With the space now available for additional ministries, Debbie Sprouse founded Power Station in 1999. This program offered after-school, one-on-one tutoring in math and reading skills, special subjects, and homework help to third through eighth-grade students. Students were brought from school by church van, served snacks, and given individual attention by volunteers. Parents were to pick them up by 5:00 p.m. This was a tremendous outreach to the community, appreciated by teachers and participants alike.

Another new ministry, "The Carpenter's Kids," was begun in 1999 by Mike and Paula Mouzakis. Using a trailer with a let-down side, they presented "Sidewalk Sunday School" at various locations in Sallisaw. Using puppets, games, clowns, balloons, songs, and prizes, they taught the Word of God in a way children could understand and respond to. Many children raised their hands to accept Christ into their hearts.

In 2001, Wayne and Bertha Land spent many hours mapping out the addresses of homes in Sallisaw for a city-wide canvassing effort. Teams of volunteers visited each home with a brochure entitled "Every Home for Christ " and an invitation to this church.

Also in 2001, Herb Pierce resigned his office as Deacon, and Harold Powell, Jr. was voted in to take his place.

Youth Pastors Jonathan and Jennifer Watson resigned in 2002 to accept the position of Associate Pastors in Bella Vista, Arkansas. Donovan and Cherlene Jones moved from Texas to be our next Youth Pastors.

On the corner of Maple and Cherokee Streets was an old building that had been a private residence years ago and had been converted to a small restaurant called “The Burger Barn.” Adjoining it on the south was a large game room. Seeing it as property valuable to the First Assembly of God, the membership voted in 2002 to borrow money and purchase it for \$100,000 for a youth annex. Remodeling and repairs made it a place where middle and high school students could just “hang out,” enjoy snacks and computer games, and have their gathering place for Wednesday evening youth services.

Seeing the need for a central place to dispense information about the church, in 2003, Pastor Polvado and the Deacon Board enlisted the help of David Land to act as designer and Leo Schildhauer as builder for another remodel. Doorways were moved, space reallocated, and a room for teaching materials and supplies was created. Storage closets were built, shelving for a library within the information booth was installed, and a machine to duplicate cassette tapes was put into service. Sadly, this was one of the final ministries of Brother David Land as he went home to be with his Lord in February 2003 after the completion of this project. Mike Battenfield was appointed to fill the remainder of David’s term on the Deacon Board. Since Mike was planning to move out of the area, he chose not to be voted on in the next election. Arnold O’Neal was elected.

The preschool department was given a facelift in 2004. Where an unused fireplace had been, cupboards were built, and a new hallway was created to improve access to the nursery from the fellowship hall. Our beloved Leo Schildhauer became ill during that project and passed away from this life. Al Brewer, Frank Weatherford, and others took up their tool belts and saw the job through to completion.

In 2005, Donovan and Cherlene Jones resigned from the office of Youth Pastors. They were followed by Matt and Ellie Malek, who led the youth department until 2007.

Former Church Treasurers are Vera (Bagley) Park and Inez Cook. Sister Cook served for many years.

Sunday School Superintendents over the years included Sister Spears, J. A. Boggs, Helen Harrison, Jim Franklin, Brice Callahan, Darryl Martin, Leo Schildhauer, Debbie Sprouse, Russel Burleson, Harold Tomlin, and Kurt Ruark.

Helen Harrison, Virginia Stewart, Ella Mae (Bagley) Cunningham, Lu (Bagley) Wilson, Vera (Bagley) Park, Inez Cook, and Virginia O'Neal have served as Sunday School secretary/treasurer.

Christ's Ambassador (youth) leaders not previously mentioned have included Grace Taylor, Paul Graham, Vera (Bagley) Park, Marie Folsom, Skeet and Travis Treat, Sue Williams, Ken and Mildred Callahan, and Larry and Jacqueta (Brankel) Cantrell.

Children's ministry is essential at First Assembly. Over the years, many have contributed to directing children's activities, including Geri Akins, Doris Pierce, Wayne and Bertha Land, James and Rhonda Woodward, Jennifer Watson, Cherlene Jones, Ben and Jennifer (O'Neal) Bynum, and Harold and Anita Powell.

The faithful and devoted service of Sylvia Stephens has invested more than a quarter of a century ministering to babies in the nursery and serving as preschool superintendent of the Sunday School.

First Assembly has been blessed with other people, not mentioned previously, who have shared their musical talents with us. Choir directors and worship leaders, along with those accompanying on piano and organ, included Betty Russell, Pat (Callahan) Rogers, Marie Folsom, Sister Brankel, Jacqueta (Brankel) Cantrell, Velvie Howard, Marsha Tatham, Marilyn Jernigan, Lu (Bagley) Wilson, Rhonda

Woodward, Bertha Land, Michele Morris, Laraine Hood, Clifton and Beth (Land) Phelps, Leanne (Polvado) Benton, Marilyn Barger, and Suzi Land.

Many have been called to the ministry while sitting under the teaching of our pastors. This includes Denver Callahan, James Morris, James Eubanks, James Sutton, Ray Land, Jim Land, Jim Franklin, James Woodward, Beverly Spilman, Tim Land, Jeromye Jackson, Dayna (Tomlin) Goines, Chresten Tomlin, Jeremy Trevier, Craig Osburn, Sonny Morrison, James Hardbarger, Ben and Tonya Storie, Tom and Teri Leedom.

In January 2007, Pastor Polvado announced to the church his calling and vision for developing a program to train “transitional pastors” within the Assemblies of God. He defined a transitional pastor as one who would not only fill a pulpit left vacant but also guide a congregation through an intentional transitional period, including reviewing its history, evaluating its needs, and determining the direction it should take **before** beginning to find a new pastor. In summary, the purpose of the transitional ministry is to prepare the church for new, long-term leadership.

Pastor Polvado explained that this necessitated his resignation as Senior Pastor. He requested the privilege of making this congregation a pilot project by serving as their Transitional Pastor for six months. The church body voted to enter into a “Covenant of Relationship” with Pastor Polvado, approving the plan. The Polvados’ final Sunday is scheduled for August 12, 2007.

Currently serving on staff with the Polvados are the following:

Worship Leaders - Ben and Tonya Storie

Children’s Pastors - Tom and Teri Leedom

Youth Pastors - Jeff and Candy Ainsworth

Ministers of Outreach - Tom and Karen Hawkins

Virginia Brewer serves as Church Treasurer.

Board members are Ken Callahan, Arnold O'Neal, Harold Powell, Dennis Sprouse, and Harold Tomlin.

Through the strength of the Lord and the endeavors of the servants He puts in place, the First Assembly can stand ready, as it has throughout the years, to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to shine as light in true Pentecostal fashion. This church, established more than three-quarters of a century ago, is blessed by God.

Eighty years . . . and the best is yet to come!

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