

I COMMEND TO YOU OUR SISTER

Dr. George O. Wood

In the scripture we learn that God is an equal opportunity employer and the Assemblies of God is as well and I've been asked to address the historical role of women in ministry in the Assemblies of God. This is quite an assignment and I'm not sure within the time that I can even begin to do it justice. What I've decided to do instead of trying to give kind of a technical history, to instead look through the lenses of a number of women, representative women who are now with the Lord who God has greatly used in ministry in the Assemblies of God.

Since I am primarily a Bible teacher I can't begin any message even though this one is not an exposition but I must begin with a text. So my text is Romans 16:1 where Paul says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe." He could say also as well, I commend to you our sister Priscilla or our sister Mary or a host of other fellow workers in the gospel with him.

Today I want to commend to you the example of six women in the history of the Assemblies of God as representative of the women who have streamed into the ministry in this church.

I would have to begin of course with my mother, Elizabeth Wideman Wood. My mom went to northwest China at the age 26 as a single missionary in the year 1924 with her sister Ruth. Ruth's daughter, my cousin Mary is here in this auditorium today all the way from Singapore. My mother and my Aunt Ruth both represent a host of women who have served the kingdom and this fellowship unheralded and unsung.

My mom was ordained for 55 years prior to her death at the age of 81. In going to China she road a difficult train. She road a boat that was pulled upstream by manual labor. She slept out on the banks at night. She rode the ox carts. She was a city girl from Cleveland, Ohio and rode the horses. She ministered effectively for the Lord. I loved to hear her preach.

My most enduring memory of my mother is as a young teenager after we had come home from China and my folks were pioneering a work in southern Indiana and to supplement the family income I took a paper route and my mother took an Avon route. You would have to be an historian of the Assemblies of God to understand that in the mid 1950s the Avon calling was not exactly the preferred occupation for an Assemblies of God pastor's wife. My mother would come home and I would say to her, "Mother, have you been out pushing that lipstick again?" She would say very defensively, "I don't push the lipstick. If they ask for it, I sell it. But Avon has many other fine products."

Along with my dad, my mom laid some of the foundation of the church in Northwest China today that numbers over ten thousand believers. She would say to me frequently, "Georgie, when we stand before God, he will not ask us if we have been successful, but if we have been faithful." Every morning of her life she prayed two hours and she stayed cheerful her whole life. On her tombstone we put the words "God's faithful servant." To me she represents all the unknown and unheralded people whose names don't get in life but whose work for the Lord is noted by him. I commend to you our sister, Elizabeth.

I point to another woman in our ranks, Marie Burgess Brown. She probably holds the record for length of services as a pastor. Founding and pastoring Glad Tidings church across the street

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from Madison Square Garden in New York City for over 64 years from 1907 till her death at the age of 90 in 1971.

Her story begins like many Pentecostal stories with a healing linked to conversion. As a teenager in an Episcopalian family she came down with tuberculosis. She left school, her strength was depleted and one night she had a vivid dream about heaven and hell and she cried out to the Lord in that dream to be delivered from that awful pit. She said, All at once there stood at the foot of my bed Jesus. He asked me if I was willing to give up the world and sin and follow him. I said, "Lord, not only willing but gladly will I follow thee." Shortly thereafter she began to have improvement in her health until it reached complete healing. She went to Moody Bible school but because attracted to Alexander Dowrey's Christian Catholic Church in Zion, Illinois – an early experimental charismatic socialist community if you will. There were great healings that occurred in that city and in that church and in the front of Alexander Dowrey's tabernacle were the words "Christ is all," formed not by a paintbrush but with crutches, canes, braces, bandages, medicine bottles and cigar boxes donated by those who had claimed healing.

Zion was off limits to Moody Bible students but Marie went anyway. In October 1896 on her 25th birthday she had desperately sought for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and she had tarried through all of the day and into the evening and around 10:30 she was suddenly overwhelmed with an insight. She said, I had worked so hard. Now it was time for me to rest and allow God to work. So I started over. I just lifted my hands and said, "Lord, I receive this wonderful gift, the baptism of the Holy Spirit as if I hadn't tarried at all," and then she began to thank him. For an hour she sensed the presence of God and then began to speak in other tongues. For several hours in other languages the Holy Spirit took her around the world to China and to Japan and to India and Africa in intercessory prayer. Finally that experience came to rest at 4:00 in the morning.

A few months later she reluctantly agreed to Charles Parham's request that she help establish Pentecost in New York City. She didn't want to go. She was only 25 years of age. But she put out three fleeces and they all came back wet, to use her language. So on January 7, 1907 with the help of another woman she arrived in New York City. She came to a Holiness mission that first evening. The pastor invited her to share the baptism of the Holy Spirit. People began to get saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. The meeting ran for four weeks until the pastor felt he had better shut it down. But she stayed. The pastor didn't want Pentecost – she did.

She wanted to leave New York City and she had invitations to go elsewhere but she was unable to find two cents for postage to mail a letter back accepting the invitation. All the time people were bringing her food she said, Such I had never had were brought in and cakes and pies but as for cash the Lord did not trust me with a bit, not even two cents with which to mail my letter.

She opened a mission, Glad Tidings Hall on 42nd street seating 96 people that year early in 1907. Fifty dollars a month. She invited a young Wesleyan minister, an immigrant from Ireland who had donated an organ. Out of gratitude for that donation she invited him to preach on the first Sunday morning of that mission, May 5th, 1907. She invited him on Sunday morning because that was the lower attendance and she spoke in the larger meetings on Sunday afternoons and evenings. He preached from Luke 19:5. Two drunks that day came from the audience were saved and became decades long members of the church until her death.

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Brown had a spiritual experience he described as Spirit baptism and in spite of his sympathy with Marie Burgess's efforts he did not consider himself a candidate for Pentecostal Spirit baptism. He said, Not all the demons in hell nor all the men and women on earth can convince me that I haven't already received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He said that at her mission. She replied "Never mind, someday all the women on earth will convince you that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is real." So on January 11th, _____ he preached himself into the experience and the night he received the baptism of the Spirit he said to Maria, "I do not say that you will marry but I do say if you ever marry it will be to Robert Brown." Amazed she replied, "Why Brother Brown, I am surprised at you. I should think that on this wonderful night of nights for you your mind would be entirely on the Lord." They were married in 1909 and continued their ministry as partners until 1948. He didn't know it was going to be his last sermon but his last sermon was the same text as his first, "Zacheaus come down." He died that week suddenly. She was in the pulpit the next Sunday and continued so until her death 23 years later.

They bought a church, they paid for it in four years. In the course of a forty-year period they gave a million and a half-dollars to foreign missions, which was an astronomical sum in those days. Glad Tidings for years led the Assemblies of God in foreign missions giving. The church grew to around 2000 believers, many well-known ministers preached in her pulpit. Marie – Burgess was the fifth daughter born of her parents. It was the son they had prayed for to become a minister of the gospel. But they never had a son who became a minister. Rather they had a daughter who ended up toughing the world with the power of the gospel. Marie Brown never had children but she had many spiritual sons and daughters. I commend you my sister Marie, an example of pastor and church planter.

Another woman, Alice Luce. I begin her story by telling of a man who was my Sunday school teacher in this church when I was 15 years of age. At that time he was a retired missionary. I knew nothing about him. I'd only learn much about him later. He began his ministry at the age of 14. Shortly after his conversion he began knocking on Mexican homes in Texas, giving in Spanish the only words he knew. When questioned in Spanish by a surprised recipient of this message the boy would only smile broadly and say again "Sunday afternoon in the schoolhouse." To any inquiry in English he simply responded "Come and see." Since he did not know how to give the hour in Spanish he would add, "When you hear the school bells ring, come." He'd been saved only a few days when he called that first service. That Sunday afternoon he waited, rang the bell and waited hopefully. Finally a man came and looked curiously at the young preacher. He rang he bell again and soon a Mexican woman arrived. Fearful lest they might leave, he ushered the two into the schoolroom and began the service. Enthusiastically he sang in his newly learned Spanish the only song he knew. "We praise thee o God." He had practiced reading the Lord's Prayer in Spanish but after the song he knelt and began to pray. Halfway through the prayer he looked cautiously through his fingers. His congregation of two watched him closely but certainly they displayed no sign of reverence. The prayer over, he rose and repeated his song. Not knowing how to read Spanish, he handed the Bible to the man who declined the Bible because he couldn't read. He handed the Bible then to the woman and she read a little bit. She only had a third grade education so she handed the bible back.

Then quite to the surprise of this young fourteen-year-old preacher the two began having a conversation, which lasted for thirty minutes. He didn't understand a word. Finally he sang his one song that he knew in Spanish for the third time and dismissed the congregation by pointing to the door. They rose, shook hands, departed. Within a few months the woman was saved and

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filled with the Holy Spirit. And the young man closed his fourteenth year knowing enough Spanish to pastor his first church with eleven members and a Sunday school attendance of thirty.

At this point of the story I introduce Alice Luce. She was born to Anglican priest in England in 1873. She served 16 years as a missionary in India with the Episcopal Missionary Society. Near the end of that time in 1910 in India she experienced the Spirit in baptism. She had tropical fever in 1912 and was forced to return to England. Two year later resigned the missionary appointment. In 1914 she came to California and immediately identified with the then newly founded Assemblies of God and committed herself to fledgling missions work in Mexico. She was ordained by the Assemblies of God in 1915.

That brought her to Texas in 1916 where at the age of 43 she links up with the enthusiastic then 20 year old H. C. Ball. Ball, who had never attended Bible school, struggled to learn Spanish. She was well educated and spoke five languages. Together Alice Luce and H.C. Ball laid the groundwork of Hispanic ministries in the Assemblies of God in the United States. The seven Hispanic districts and nearly 2000 Hispanic churches in this movement, arise out of the seminal work of Alice Luce and H. C. Ball and those who were gathered around them.

She was the strength administratively for H. C. Ball and the guiding light theologically. Her goal was to evangelize Hispanics through establishment of strong indigenous churches. Her contribution to this movement is three fold. First education training for Hispanic ministers. She found Berean Biblical institute in 1926 in San Diego. Served that school until her death some 29 years later at the age of 82. The school became known as Latin American Bible Institute, really one of the great Hispanic schools in the fellowship. As part of her work at that school published courses in Spanish.

Secondly, she was a writer and a tireless spokesperson for the Flames of Latin Americans on English speaking congregations. She called repeatedly for Anglo Pentecostals to recognize the existence of Latin American congregations in their own or in neighboring communities. She called for identifying with "the strangers within our gates." She published in her 20 some years at LABI most of the curriculum material, including writing books and developing lecture notes. Other Latin American institutes used her courses. Her literary output was enormous.

Her third contribution was also one of her greatest was a missionogist. In the year 1914 the Assemblies of God committed itself to world evangelization but it was Alice Luce who helped formulate the strategy. Thirty-two years before Melvin Hodges' landmark book The Indigenous Church, which set the Assemblies of God on a course of producing self supporting, self propagating and self governing churches, Alice Luce had articulated those principles in the first ever principles of principles on indigenous missionary work published in the Pentecostal Evangel a series of articles called "Paul's Missionary Methods." She went out of assert: When we go preach the full gospel are we going to go expecting an experience like that of our denominational missionaries or shall we look for the signs to follow. She helped lay the tracks which the foreign missions enterprise of this church has run on for all of these years which has brought us to a fellowship in 170 countries with 35 million believers in 215,000 churches.

In addition to her writing and education work she devoted herself to evangelistic outreach, open air services, teaching, Sunday school work, house to house visitation, visitation of the sick, distributing tracks. She was a tireless worker for the Lord. I commend to you our sister Alice and her example as an educator and theologian.

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Hattie Hammond, another woman wonderfully used of the Lord in the history of the Assemblies of God. The Assemblies of God has been blessed with great women evangelists over the years. The great thing about this fellowship is that each of the categories are so many women I could have chosen from. But I focus on Hattie Hammond.

She was ordained in 1927 at the age of 20 and continuously was ordained for the following 67 years until her death at the age of 87 in 1994. I looked up her ordination application. Some of the questions. We had a two-page ordination application in those days, sometimes I wonder if we wouldn't be wise to return to such simplicity.

How much of your time, she was asked, is concentrated to your call? She was 20 years of age. She answered: All.

How long have you been in this ministry? Two years part time, three years full time. She started just as she turned 16.

To what office of the ministry were you ordained? Evangelist. She kept that for 67 years.

She was born in Williamsport, Maryland in 1907. She always was aware of the call of God on her life. She first wanted to be a missionary. When her cousins would come for a visit they would play Sunday school and church, converting and baptizing all the dolls in the neighborhood. She would preach to the cows and the chickens and to herself in the mirror. That's one of the great things about our emphasis upon women, is that our daughters can get the vision that they also can preach the gospel. At school she gave out tracks and she knew more about the map of Africa than she knew about the map of America. When she was twelve she was stricken with typhoid fever and not expected to live. But a pastor anointed her with oil and prayed and soon her fever broke and she began to get well.

But during her early teens she backslid and began to sneak off, as she puts it, to take part in worldly activities. At the age of 15 on her way back and forth to school everyday she passed a tent which Bethel Assembly in Hagerstown Maryland had erected to hold evangelistic services. One Friday she went into the tent and sat down on the back seat. There was a prayer meeting going on and she heard a voice coming from the front of the tent. The person was saying, "Oh God! Oh God!" She said every time he would say "Oh God," it would go through every part of my being. "It just seemed to feed me somehow, bring something to me and I said to myself, 'That's what I want. Whatever that man has that's what I want.'" The pastor praying "Oh God," was a pastor named Jeffries. The visiting evangelist saw the teenager girl in the tent and went over and sat beside her. That visiting evangelist's name was John J. Ashcroft, the grandfather of attorney general John Ashcroft a member of this church.

She said I looked up and I said to him a sentence and I did not know what I was talking about. I turned to him and I said, "Brother!" I have never called anybody "brother" in my life. But I said to him, "Brother, I am interested in the salvation of my soul." Ashcroft said, "I've held meetings all over this country and I've never had anyone say that to me before." She said, "I hardly knew I had a soul and I did not know to say that I interested in the salvation of my soul. I did not know what that meant. But I knew I wanted God and I waned what that man had." She was gloriously converted and baptized in the Holy Spirit. She became a bold witness in school and at the age of 16 dedicated herself to full time gospel ministry.

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Soon after while she was still 16, brother Ashcroft invited her to accompany him and his wife to Martinsburg, West Virginia where he was conducting services. Night after night Brother Ashcroft preached but nothing seemed to happen. Just before the service one Saturday night he'd been busy all day and he asked Hattie to preach. He led in some songs. Hattie began to get desperate. She had never preached before. She prayed, "Dear Jesus, what am I going to do? I don't have a sermon." She said the Lord dropped these words into my heart: "Oh foolish Galatians who has bewitched you that you would turn from serving the living God?" That would be an unusual text to preach from for the very first time.

She paused for a moment after she had read the text not knowing what to do. Nothing else came to her so she said to the congregation, "I'm going to read these words again." So she read them again. "Oh foolish Galatians who has bewitched you that you should turn from serving the living God?" She waited for the Lord to give her another word but nothing came. She said, "Friends, if you get nothing else from the service tonight except the word of God, I want you to get the word of God so I'm going to read this verse again. So for the third time she read the text, "Oh foolish Galatians who has bewitched you that you should turn from serving the living God?" At the end of this third reading a backslid lady cried out "O God! Have mercy on me!" Hattie looked at her and said, "Return to me and I'll return to you, says the Lord." The woman got up and ran forward. With that the power of God hit the congregation and everything began to happen.

Hattie said later there was no need for a sermon that night. Jesus was the sermon. Revival broke out in the community and lasted for many months. She soon began full time ministry as an evangelist. Remarkable miracles of healing took place. In the early years she was known as the girl evangelist. By the 1930s when she was still only in her 20s she had become one of the most powerful speakers in the Pentecostal movement. Her message was simple, inspiring total abandonment and consecration to God. Once while ministering in Oakland, California she said she had 7 in her evangelistic party. The Father, Jesus, the angel of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, witness, mercy and self.

I talked to _____ and he said he'd had Hattie minister in his church many times. Powerful evangelist, Bible teacher, conference teacher and a woman of prayer. A marked influence on her generation. I commend to you our sister Hattie and her example as an evangelist, a Bible teacher and a person to whom the gift of healing and miracles flowed.

The fifth woman on my list, and I have six, is Alice Reynolds Flower. The first time I was ever on the platform at Central Assembly was as a 15-year-old teenager in this church. It was in the old west chapel. We'd had a class with Pastor Vanmeter, the CA College of Biblical Knowledge which dealt with courtship and marriage. The teenager with the best notes would get the prize. The prize was coming up on the platform and receiving from the pastor, Alice Reynolds Flowers then newly published book The Home and Divine Sanctuary. Only one of the many books and pamphlets over the course of her long life she wrote.

Like the other women I've talked about she shares a common powerful experience in the Holy Spirit which launched her in ministry in the Pentecostal movement. This is a common thread of women in ministry and a powerful experience in God.

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The year was 1907. From Azusa Street a minister by the name of Glenn Cook had arrived at Reynolds Christian Missionary Alliance church in Indianapolis. A few months later an English Methodist who had embraced Pentecost at the Azusa mission also came. At the age of 16 on Easter Sunday in 1907, Alice Reynolds went with her mother to church. In her own words: "I was filled with the Holy Spirit and for the first time in my life I felt the mighty surging of God's power as I lay prostrate on the floor. During this time I spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. Friends present at the mission understood several of the languages I spoke which included German and Zulu." The people praying with her that night were the parents of J. Roswell Flower. They said, "We wish God would give Roswell a girl like that for a wife." The two had not yet met. A few Sunday nights later J. Roswell Flower who was studying law and was not serving the Lord came into the service and to pick up Alice's own words "While the testimony meeting was in progress, Tom _____ sensed the undercurrent of God's moving. Twice he asked the man who was testifying to keep quiet and let God have his way. When the brother finally understood he stopped speaking. There was a low murmur of sound from several directions in the congregation. This grew in volume until 6 people including me stood and began to sing in rich harmony a song in the Spirit. Our eyes were closed but without any confusion we moved from our various locations to the front of the hall where we stood together and sang in beautiful unison. Then we harmonized parts. The sensation was like being a pipe from which poured forth wonderful melody from deep within my being. Without effort singing in the Spirit. Without effort the heavenly music flowed freely reminding us of the words of Jesus when he said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Roswell Flowers standing in that crowded hallway listened in amazement and returned to the services the next week and dedicated his life to Christ. In 1911 the two were married. In 1913 they began the Christian Evangel which now of course is the Pentecostal Evangel which has been published continuously since 1913. It was they Alice Flower and her husband J. Roswell Flower who through their paper and through Bell's paper The Word and Witness gave the call to the first convocation of the Assemblies of God in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914. It was the Flowers who helped the fledging Assemblies of God locate its first headquarters in Ohio, move to St. Louis, Missouri and in 1918 here to Springfield. They left Springfield in 1926 where Roswell Flowers became a pastor in Pennsylvania and later District Superintendent and with her husband founded Valley Forge Christian College. They came back to Springfield where for years she served as General Secretary. Her important contribution came through speaking and teaching and writing.

She raised 6 children, one of which died while preparing for the mission field as a student at CBC. Her five living children all became ordained ministers with the Assemblies of God and have served Christ with distinction. She went to be with the Lord in 1991 shortly after her 100th birthday. She's the only one I know in the Assemblies of God who was given the title by all – "Mother". Mother Flower. The mother of six wonderful children. But really also the mother of a movement – the Assemblies of God.

I commend to you our sister Alice Reynolds Flower. She exemplified for us that women write, inspire, teach and even found a denomination.

Last a frail wisp of a woman I had the joy of meeting late in her life. Florence –Sliddel. Representative of our mission family, so many women have served this fellowship as missionaries. Florence Sliddel was born in Illinois and raised in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas and Missouri. If you don't believe that God can use what's in your past look at sister

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Florence. Her father rented a 3000-acre farm. With her sisters and brothers she learned the dairy business, how to plant corn, to plow, to work in the garden, to ride horseback and to drive cattle. She learned how to fix a fence, to feed the cattle, the hogs, the sheep and the goats for the winter. She learned how to shear 600 sheep and nearly 1000 goats every spring. She learned to pick and can fruit and vegetables and run farm machinery and sow crops and gather the harvest.

At the age of 27 while praying the Holy Spirit showed her a strange country where dark skinned people were needy and helpless and crying in agony. Why is nothing being done to help them? She asked. She sensed the answer: No one was available. Then she said, "Not me, Lord. You know I'm timid and uneducated. I have only an eighth grade education. You can't mean me."

But the vision continued to unfold and she finally admitted, I knew I could help those people and bind up their sores. She fell asleep with this wonder of a call filling her heart. In a dream that she had as she fell asleep she saw a house in Africa that would be hers. She saw woven mats on the floor. The arrangement of the rooms and the stairway that led to the attic. She knew the vision meant she would minister to the sick. So she finished her high school education by attending night school. For four years she did nurses training at Missouri Baptist hospital. Then she enrolled in Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and finished her biblical studies three years later in 1932 at the age of 35. She was now ready to go to Africa.

But while waiting for her ship to sail in New York City she was staying at Mizpha Missionary Rest Home and all the other missionaries staying there were Assemblies of God. They began to share their experience of Spirit baptism with her. She began to grow hungry for a deeper experience with the Lord. She attended Glad Tidings church where Marie Brown was pastoring and at Glad Tidings received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. With her drastically changed outlook she immediately applied to the Assemblies of God for foreign missions appointment and she didn't even have to come to Springfield to meet with the missions committee. They sent her the appointment in New York where she was. Just because we have more red tape today doesn't mean we're doing things better!

In 1935 she arrived in Liberia, West Africa to work with another single missionary at a girls' school. Ava took her to the house where they would be living and working together. In amazement Florence said, "I've seen this house before. Years ago I saw it in a dream. There's an attic isn't there?" From the mats on the floor to the arrangement of the room the attic itself the house was exactly what the Lord had shown her 9 years earlier.

In addition to her work with girls her training as a nurse became known. Lepers began coming. Africans with claw like hands and paralyzed facial muscles and impaired eyesight, ulcerated feet and infected soars. She learned that many children became lepers before 15 years of age. After 2 missionary terms a vision began to form in her to build a town where lepers could live and be ministered to. But while home during World War II on furlow in 1942 she learned that she was suffering from an acute tuberculosis infection. She went to Mount Vernon sanitarium 35 miles west of Springfield. For the next 15 months recovered from tuberculosis. Upon her release from Mt. Vernon she came back to Springfield and enrolled in Central Bible College for the sole purpose of taking a course in elementary building construction so that she could teach the lepers to build a town for themselves.

In 1947 at the age of 50 she began New Hope town in Liberia with \$100 and the labor of lepers. A tribal chief gave her 350 acres of land in the middle of the jungle for the brand new town. To

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clear away the trees and the brush would have been a stupendous task for even a strong man but God had a woman instead. She appealed to the lepers and they were willing to do the work. In spite of crippled hands and feet the task of cutting jungle trees and digging stumps was slowly accomplished. They had the most primitive tools with which to work in those early days. Not a single leper knew how to mix cement, plane a door, or raise the framework of a house. But Florence did and she taught them.

On April 24, 1947 the first house was begun and when it was completed 68 happy patients moved in. She never stopped building. Over the next 15 years she oversaw the construction of 70 permanent buildings and the development of a well-laid out town with 6 main streets. She oversaw the planting of 2500 rubber trees so that the colony could be self-sufficient. In 1956 she oversaw the building of an 18-mile road connecting the town in the jungle to the nearest government road, an 18-mile road that included 25 bridges over streams and rivers. The development of New Hope town was complicated by 380 inches of rain each year. The accessibility of the place itself. And more that 50 tribal languages spoken in the town. She trained lepers to become carpenters, weavers, tailors, brick makers, clinic workers, farmers. All the furniture used in the village was designed and built by the patients. She taught the town to be self-sufficient. New Hope town came to house and treat more than 800 lepers at a time. They had separate housing and education facilities for the children of the lepers who had not contracted leprosy. With the treatment with drugs it took an average of four years for a leper to be cured of the disease. Each year approximately 100 people received symptom free certificates indicating they had been symptom free for one year and they left New Hope Town when they were symptom free. Ninety percent of those leaving New Hope Town had been saved and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

At the age of 64 she was not done. She had one last year left. She didn't know it but she had only one year left. In that last year she built a Bible school and at her death 71 students were preparing for the ministry.

Liberia has been a politically ravaged country now for a number years. With the development of modern medicine lepers have been able to receive treatment where they are rather than journey to a central place. But New Hope Town has remained right in the heart of the war area of Liberia. Florence Sliddel's work gave credibility to the Assemblies of God in Liberia and throughout Africa. Gave the Assemblies of God credibility with government and with culture. Her work helped make the Assemblies of God in Liberia the strong church that it is today. I commend to you.

I remember how frail she was that's why it's so amazing. Sister Florence, missionary for the Lord. Builder, founder of the town and community.

So many stories can be shared from our history as a church. In summary what can we learn?

From my mom I learned that there are no little people and no little places.

From Marie Brown we learn that God can use a woman to plant and pastor and church in a great city.

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From Alice Luce we learn God can use a woman to found a school for the training of ministers and be a cutting edge theologian whose work lays the foundation for the development of a whole church.

From Hattie Hammond we learn that God can use a woman as a powerful evangelist with a biblically insightful ministry to the church.

From Alice Reynolds Flower we learn that God can use a woman to help form a denomination, to found a magazine with world wide influence, write devotional and practical Christian living books and articles to greatly enrich the body of Christ.

From Florence Sliddell we learn that God can use a woman to cross an ocean, a language or a culture to evangelize, disciple and nurture the lost, the least, the last, the leper, the untouchable.

All these women were marked by a powerful experience in the Holy Spirit, which launched them in their ministry. With many additional sustaining experiences in the Spirit throughout their lives. May this conference and this time at Springfield be one of those turning moments for you in which the Spirit speaks to you about your part in his great plan of redemption. He has a place for you. A calling for you in his church. Amen.