

# Barnett to Pastor Historic L.A. Church

**Matthew Barnett will pastor Angelus Temple, founded in the 1920s by Aimee Semple McPherson**

In a historic move that will make partners out of two of Los Angeles' most prominent Pentecostal churches, Matthew Barnett, pastor of the Assemblies of God-operated Dream Center, has been named pastor of Angelus Temple, the founding church of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. His appointment took effect Nov. 1.

Barnett, 27, will continue to pastor the Dream Center, whose operations will not change—and which will remain under the authority of the Assemblies of God (AG). Angelus Temple remains under the authority of Foursquare.

It is possible that Barnett may be granted some sort of affiliated or credentialed status with both denominations, though such a move would require approval by high-level committees in both denominations.

The Foursquare-AG partnership is strongly endorsed by leadership in both denominations. Also supporting it is Rolf McPherson, Aimee Semple McPherson's son, who is the former president of Foursquare and the retired pastor of Angelus Temple.

"This is one of the biggest honors of my life," Matthew Barnett said. "I read Aimee's books the first few years I was pastoring, and it shaped my thinking. The greatest way to honor history is not just to tell its stories but to make the

founder proud by doing the same thing she did.”

Angelus Temple has operated continuously, though not always robustly, since it opened on Jan. 1, 1923. In recent years a Hispanic congregation of 1,000 has met in an adjacent auditorium on the property. The main congregation dwindled and stopped meeting in the famous sanctuary altogether. Matthew Barnett replaces pastors Ed and Ivy Stanton, who served at Angelus Temple for nearly three years.

The Temple remains a stunning piece of architecture—part sanctuary, part theater—and is a national historical landmark. New renovations won’t change major features, including the dome, stained-glass windows, a mural and a restored pipe organ.

Inside the building, workers in hard hats have torn up much of the ground floor to enlarge the seating capacity. On Easter of this year, the drumming of jackhammers will yield to the singing of praise songs when the church under Matthew Barnett holds its first service in the sanctuary.

Until then, Sunday services are being held in the Angelus Dream Center, pastored jointly by Matthew and his father—Tommy Barnett, pastor of Phoenix (Ariz.) First Assembly—occupies the former Queen of Angels hospital just six blocks from Angelus Temple in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

The massive campus and towering building are home to a vibrant church and 200 ministries that feed thousands every week and have become a worldwide model for urban ministry.

Leaders in both denominations say the move will increase the effectiveness of both institutions, with the Temple being revived as a soul-winning engine, and the Dream Center acting like a discipleship campus where the gospel is put into action.

Current Foursquare president Paul Risser told Charisma: "We are elated to have this relationship with the Assemblies of God, and I think it brings our churches even closer together. We see us working together in a great cause that will benefit the kingdom of God."

Thomas E. Trask, general superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, hailed the partnership in an October statement. "In this new partnership between the Dream Center and Angelus Temple, the strengths of both ministries will combine to effectively reach many thousands with the gospel," Trask said.

Tommy Barnett has patterned his ministry after that of Aimee Semple McPherson, a fact that endeared him to Foursquare leaders. Like McPherson, he uses illustrated sermons and huge holiday pageants to draw unbelievers to church.

The sanctuary of his Phoenix church has two balconies and even a white domed roof similar to the Temple. The Barnetts consider it their mission to feed and evangelize poor and forgotten people—perhaps the most important factor to Rolf McPherson, 88, who remembers his mother feeding millions during the Great Depression.

"We love the way Matthew loves the neighborhood, how they visit people in their homes," McPherson told Charisma. "It

reminds me of my mother's ministry because of her love for people. She didn't care where they came from. If the city needed this when my mother was alive, it needs it 10 times as much now."

The unique partnership couldn't come at a better time for the Dream Center, which, for all its space, lacks a large auditorium. Services there always have been held in a gymnasium, which seats 700, but city codes and the absence of a large, open space prevented the building of anything significantly larger.

All agree Matthew Barnett's appointment is a step in the right direction.

"We have had prophetic words for years about the Temple returning to its glory days when it was packed to capacity several times a day," Risser told Charisma. "For us to be able to see the Temple filled to capacity again will be a thrill to everybody who knows the history of the ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson and Angelus Temple."

**-Joel Kilpatrick**