

Rolf McPherson, son of Aimee Semple McPherson, Dies at 96

✖ Rolf K. McPherson, son of Foursquare Church founder Aimee Semple McPherson and former head of the Pentecostal denomination, died Thursday at his home in Los Angeles. He was 96.

One of the few surviving witnesses of the early days of the Pentecostal movement, McPherson was born on March 23, 1913, and traveled with his mother as she led crusades across the U.S. In 1923 she opened 5,300-seat Angelus Temple in Los Angeles and in 1927 formed the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

"They used to bring ambulances and stretchers, and they left empty," McPherson recalled in a 1996 interview with *Charisma*. "Often Mother would-right in the middle of her message-go down and pray for somebody on a stretcher. They would get up off the stretcher, and the stretcher would be carried off empty."

After his mother's death in 1944, McPherson, then 31, took over the KFSG radio station Aimee Semple McPherson founded in 1924 and became president of the four corporate entities she established: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and . Bible College, now known as Life Pacific College.

McPherson, who attended . Bible College and the Southern California Radio Institute, also became pastor of Angelus Temple in 1944.

"I saw him as the kind of the caretaker of his mother's legacy," said Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan, dean emeritus of the Regent University School of Divinity. "He once gave me a kind of tour of Angelus Temple and showed me the artifacts and the dresses [Aimee Semple McPherson wore] and things. And he said that was the greatest revival that [Los Angeles] will ever have. He was kind of a custodian of his mother's legacy."

But Synan said McPherson was an influential Pentecostal leader in his own right. Under McPherson's leadership, the Foursquare denomination expanded into 63 nations and grew from 492 churches in 1944 to more than 12,000 by 1986, according to the *International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*.

Synan noted that while Foursquare president, McPherson led the denomination to join the National Association of Evangelicals and the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, and he served on several boards until the day he died.

"He had influence that no one could take away from him," Synan said. "He wasn't the founder, but he was the living link with the past until he died. So he had unique position in Pentecostalism generally. ... I can't think of anyone else right at this moment who was active back in the 1920s. So he may be the last of his kind."

McPherson retired from leadership of the denomination and KFSG in May 1988 and retired as pastor of Angelus Temple in 1997.

"Dr. McPherson gave of himself selflessly and faithfully for more than four decades as he carried on the work that his mother had begun," said Jack Hayford, president of the Foursquare Church, which has almost 60,000 churches in 144 nations.

“The blessing that we are currently experiencing is due, in large part, to the work that Dr. McPherson accomplished during his presidency. He laid a foundation that made it possible for the Foursquare Church to move forward around the world and take the Foursquare Gospel to many nations. He will be missed, but the legacy that he left will result in eternal blessedness for millions.”

McPherson is survived by his wife, Evangeline Carmichael McPherson; his daughter, Alicia McPherson Santacroce; two granddaughters, Heidi Ledesma and Leslie Young; a grandson, Ronald LaRue; a niece, Victoria Salter. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Lorna De Smith McPherson, and a daughter, Marlene McPherson LaRue.

A memorial service will be held at Angelus Temple, but the date has not been announced.