

Pentecostal Fire Still Driving Assemblies of God Growth

If you read the new issue of *Charisma*, you know that some good things are happening in the Assemblies of God under the leadership of George O. Wood. If you didn't read the article, [click here](#).

Last week, the General Council of the Assemblies of God, held every two years, took place in my hometown. I've attended sporadically over the years because I grew up in the Assemblies of God. (I was born in its headquarters city of Springfield, Mo.). Both my father and my wife's father were ordained Assemblies of God ministers. My maternal grandmother and grandfather were ordained in the Assemblies of God in 1914 and 1919, respectively.

Wood gave an especially stirring speech during the General Council, which you can watch [here](#).

A Jewish writer representing the Religion News Service called me last week to ask why the Assemblies is growing even (if only by a few percentage points) when most of the other denominations are declining. There are many reasons, and while I have my opinions, I'm sure that I don't fully grasp why that is. This year, I saw a vibrancy that indicates an excitement that translates into growth. There were many young people in attendance and more ethnic minorities than I can ever remember seeing before. In fact, most of growth in the Assemblies of God is actually coming in the ethnic community or in older churches that appeal to them.

I told the reporter that there is entrepreneurial spirit in the Assemblies that goes back to its early days. Pioneer leaders had vision. They planted churches and established

Bible institutes—many of which have evolved into respected universities. They sent missionaries all over the world.

Today, the Assemblies has one of the largest missions organizations in the world, and it has grown worldwide to be the largest Protestant denomination, with 65 million members. This is an increase of about a million over the previous year. Consider these statistics:

- There is one new believer every 25 seconds in an Assemblies of God congregation.
- One new AG church is planted every 39 minutes.
- By 2012, the Assemblies of God had planted 362,791 churches throughout the world.
- There are currently Assemblies of God churches in 252 countries and territories.
- Worldwide, there are total of 377,000 Assemblies of God ministers.
- There are 2,708 world missionaries and associates.
- Over \$200 million was given to Assemblies of God World Missions in 2012.

Here are some statistics in the United States:

- There were 23 years of consecutive adherent growth in the denomination from 1989 to 2012.
- There are now more than 3 million adherents in the United States, including 56,000 new adherents—an increase of 1.8 percent from 2011.
- Forty percent of the adherents in the Assemblies of God are under 25 years old.
- Forty-one percent of adherents in the Assemblies of God are non-white.
- There are a total of 7,815 women who hold ministerial credentials or ordination with the Assemblies of God.
- There are 21 ethnic language fellowships in the denomination.
- There are 2,463 United States missionaries and

associates (including interns in the United States) in the denomination.

But while all these statistics are important, the real statistics are the ones that show the number of lives that are changed:

- In the last five years, there have been 1,597 new AG churches established in the United States.
- There were 453,500 conversions in the AG in the last 12 months.
- There were 131,713 people baptized in water in the denomination.
- There were 81,345 who reported receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the belief that the power of the Spirit is for today caused the Assemblies of God to start in 1914—only eight years after the Pentecostal revival broke out at Azusa Street in Los Angeles. From talking to leaders, experiencing the services and my firsthand knowledge, I believe this Pentecostal fire is still important and fueling the growth.

Sure, there are many problems with the Assemblies, including how to cope with worldliness that inevitably creeps into the church as well as a drift toward liberalism, modernism, complacency and denominational bureaucratic lethargy. But there is still a desire and a fervor for that Pentecostal power and a desire to reach the world that seems to embody what is happening in the Assemblies of God in 2013.

For the last 38 years, *Charisma* and its many offshoots have been serving the wider body of Christ. But my family is AG. And most readers know that *Charisma* started at Calvary Assembly in Orlando.

After attending General Council, I praise God for the progress cited here. I was encouraged by what I saw and experienced at

General Council, and I thank God for leaders such as George O. Wood and many others who are moving boldly ahead during uncertain times.

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