

## “Making Full Proof of Their Ministry”: Women in Church of God Missions

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### The First Missionary

In November 1909 Rebecca Barr and her husband Edmond sailed from Miami to take the gospel to the British colony of the Bahama Islands. When they landed in Nassau, Rebecca Barr became the first Church of God missionary.<sup>1</sup> Although many of the details of their lives and ministries have been lost to time, the Barr’s story is an important chapter in Pentecostal missions.

Born in in 1865, Rebecca Clayton married Edmond Barr at the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Arcadia, Florida, in 1894. A native of the Bahamas, Edmond had likely come to the United States to find work. In May 1909 the couple attended a South Florida Holiness Association camp meeting on the Pleasant Grove Campground in Durant, Florida. There they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, joined the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), and received ministerial credentials as evangelists.<sup>2</sup>

In October 1909 the Barrs returned to the Pleasant Grove camp meeting, where they sensed a call to take the gospel to the Bahama Islands. As was their practice, camp meeting attendees raised funds to aid the Barrs on their journey.<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Evans, who led the camp meeting, determined to join the Barrs in the Bahamas. Evans, his wife, Ida, and the young Carl Padgett arrived in Nassau on January 4, 1910. Evans reported that his party “immediately hunted up brother and sister Barr..., who were making full proof of their ministry.”<sup>4</sup> Together these five worked as a team to preach the gospel and establish Church of God congregations throughout the islands.<sup>5</sup>

Although secondary sources have given little attention to Rebecca Barr, published reports of the work in the Bahamas reveal that she was an active part of the ministry team. The June 1, 1910 issue of *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* printed a letter from Rebecca about

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a day in her ministry in the Bahama Islands. The full day began early in the morning and ended with the washing of the saints' feet during an evening service. She reported,

After the sermon was delivered the Lord led me to read the thirteenth chapter of St. John and explain every verse until I got to the seventeenth verse, and then we went into the performance of the chapter, and the Lord Himself was there. Impressions were made on the hearts of the people such as had never been before in any of our services. I must say that the children of God are happier since they have obeyed the commands as given in Matt. 28:19 and St. John 13. O, it is glorious! I want you all to pray that we may make full proof of our ministry out here. Times are very hard, and forty-eight cents in the collection is considered large.<sup>6</sup>

Although it is impossible for us to know how typical this Sunday was for Rebecca, in that same issue of *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* an accompanying letter from R. M. Evans testified that "Brother and Sister Barr are making full proof of their call to this work...."<sup>7</sup> Other descriptions of her ministry also specifically affirmed that she was "making full proof" of her call and that people were being saved, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Ghost. According to Edmond, "God is just sending my wife to people who are rebellious against His words, and as she lays her hand of power upon them they go to the floor and stay until the Comforter comes in."<sup>8</sup>

The Barrs traveled to several islands during their stay in the Bahamas. They were especially instrumental in winning Arabella and W. V. Eneas, who went on to become leaders of the Church of God on the island of New Providence. The Barrs returned to Florida in 1911 and planted a church in Miami, which he pastored until 1916. They were also instrumental in establishing several other congregations throughout Florida for the Church of God and later the Church of God in Christ.<sup>9</sup>

The Barr/Evans team of missionaries demonstrated the early missions heart of the Church of God and the Pentecostal movement. Church of God missions historian Bill George divided the history of the denomination's missions ministries into three periods. Missionaries "going on their own" characterized the first period during which missionaries such as Rebecca Barr traveled on their own initiative and with no regular support. Resources were meager with local churches and the General Assembly sending occasional offerings. Missionaries often sent reports to the editors of multiple periodicals such as *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* and *The Bridegroom's Messenger*. Editors served as conduits for publishing reports of missionary work and forwarding offerings to those on the field. The situation improved somewhat in 1913 when

the General Assembly appointed a committee of three to develop additional structure. This committee recommended that local churches contribute a tenth of their offerings to missions work. Even with this recommendation, there were always inadequate resources to send and support missionaries. Despite limited support, several women successfully “made full proof” of their ministries during this period.

According to George, the appointment of a standing missions board in 1926 inaugurated the era of “mission board appointed” missionaries. This change moved responsibility for missions from the overworked general overseer to a board. Along with promotional and structural improvements, one of the first actions of the board was a recommendation to the General Assembly of a plan for every local church to send offerings to support missionaries. This plan greatly increased financial resources, but board policies also brought additional restrictions to women serving as missionaries.

A third era began in 1988 when primary responsibility for missionary support shifted to the missionaries themselves rather than dependence on the board. This change opened up significant new opportunities for missionaries and allowed for a “growing missionary force”<sup>10</sup> including the emergence of new opportunities for women.

### Going on Their Own

Rebecca Barr was the first of several Church of God women missionaries who went with no appointment or organized financial support. Reports that Rebecca “made full proof” of her ministry might be said of other women as well. Flora Bower (ca. 1868-1949) joined the Barr/Evans team in the late summer of 1910 for a few months.<sup>11</sup> She brought literature, a pump organ, and a willing spirit. She represents the first of numerous single women in the Church of God who responded to the call to take the gospel outside the United States.

Perhaps the most iconic of the self-directed itinerant missionaries was Lucy Leatherman (1863-1924). A divorcée from Greencastle, Indiana, a chronicle of Leatherman’s life is a “who’s who” of the roots of Pentecostalism. She was baptized by John Alexander Dowie in 1897 in Chicago’s Zion Tabernacle, visited A. B. Simpson’s school in Nyack, New York, met Alexander Boddy in Sunderland, England, visited Charles Fox Parham’s ministry in Topeka, Kansas, in 1900, and attended William J. Seymour’s Azusa Street Mission in 1906, where she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Estrela Alexander concluded that among those who went from the

Azusa Street Mission, "She traveled the farthest and most often to spread the message of Pentecostalism. Her ministry touched four continents and more than ten countries, landing her in capitals and remote cities with exotic names and cultures. She was unquestionably one of the most widely traveled persons—either man or woman—to go out from the mission."<sup>13</sup>

Allan Anderson noted that many early Pentecostal missionaries were drawn to the "Bible Lands" due to the eschatological emphasis of the movement. Yet the political instability of the region made it challenging for them to stay for long periods of time.<sup>14</sup> Leatherman's early missionary work was as an itinerant to Palestine, where she became the first Pentecostal to arrive in Jerusalem in 1907. Her travels also took her to Lebanon, Egypt, China, Japan, and the Philippines before returning to the United States in 1910. Leatherman left again for the Middle East in late 1911 and arrived in Jerusalem in March 1912. During that trip she also spent time in Lebanon and Egypt before being forced to return home due to the outbreak of war in August 1914.

Leatherman connected with the Church of God sometime during her travels in the Middle East. She officially joined the denomination and received ministerial credentials as an evangelist in February 1916. By December she was on her way to South America as a Church of God missionary. Part of this transition was a personal rejection of William H. Durham's "Finished Work at Calvary" doctrine that was sweeping some streams of Pentecostalism. Her journey to the global south included stops in Panama and Chile. She was the first Church of God missionary in Chile, where she connected with the Methodist missionary W. C. Hoover, who had come into the Pentecostal movement. Leatherman arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in early 1918 where she worked with Church of God missionaries F. L. and Nonie Ryder. The Ryders left Argentina in late 1920 and Leatherman returned to the United States in early 1921. She had suffered various illnesses during her journeys, and died from Bright's disease on June 5, 1924.<sup>15</sup> Leatherman's letters reveal the hardships early Pentecostal missionaries faced as they endured meager and unreliable resources, complicated and uncomfortable travel, rejection by non-Pentecostal missionaries, political upheavals, persecution, and illnesses. Yet, like Leatherman, they devoted their lives to their call.

Another of these early missionaries was Lillian Trasher (1887-1961). Although she is better known as an Assemblies of God missionary, the Church of God supported her early orphanage ministry in Assiout, Egypt. According to Charles W. Conn, Trasher was baptized with

the Holy Spirit and came into the Church of God through a 1909 revival in Dahlonega, Georgia.<sup>16</sup> The denomination credentialed her as an evangelist, and for a time she assisted Church of God minister Sam C. Perry in evangelistic work<sup>17</sup> as well as Perry's sister Mattie in her North Carolina orphanage. Trasher was the only named missionary in a committee report to the 1914 General Assembly recommending a general treasurer to handle missions funds.<sup>18</sup> Readers of the *Church of God Evangel* regularly sent support to Trasher, and her expressions of gratitude appeared frequently in the publication. Her support was never limited to the Church of God, however. Like many early Pentecostal missionaries who went on their own, she reported to and received support from the readers of numerous Pentecostal periodicals including *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, *The Latter Rain Evangel*, *The Weekly Evangel*, and *Word and Witness*. Gary B. McGee linked her to the Pentecostal Missionary Union (U.S.A.).<sup>19</sup>

By 1919 Trasher had shifted from the Church of God to the Assemblies of God. In a 1918 letter to Tomlinson, editor of the *Church of God Evangel*, she expressed her affection for the denomination. She wrote, "A few weeks ago I put all of the babies to bed and then all of the large children went in the school room for special prayer meeting, and then I told them all about the Church of God. They all wanted to join at once, but I said, 'No, I am going to see if you are going to live very close to Jesus, and we will have special prayer meeting every Tuesday night so as to help each other live right.'"<sup>20</sup> Yet, her last letter in the *Church of God Evangel* appeared in November 1918,<sup>21</sup> and she applied for appointment as an Assemblies of God missionary in November 1919.<sup>22</sup>

The lack of regular financial support as well as a dedicated corresponding secretary at the denomination's headquarters made a sustained relationship between missionaries and financial supporters difficult for first generation missionaries. This is particularly evident in the writings of Jennie Brinson Rushin (1887-1979). Rushin received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1908 and joined the Church of God in 1910. She accompanied her Baptist husband, Perrin Roy Rushin, to his missionary appointment in China in 1914. On their way to China, he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and not long after their arrival the Rushins and five other Baptist missionaries lost their financial support due to the "tongue heresy."

Jennie Rushin turned to the Church of God for an appointment and regularly solicited support from readers of *The Church of God Evangel*. For much of their ministry her husband worked a business job in Shanghai in order to sustain their mission work. Thus, most of the

management of their mission station in Tsinanfu, Shantung, China, fell to Jennie. From Tsinanfu they established other missions and congregations, operated a school, distributed clothing, supported Chinese evangelists, and took advantage of whatever opportunities for ministry they could secure. For a few months in 1917 and 1918 the Rushins worked in Manila among American military personnel.

Despite their successes, there were never sufficient financial and human resources. A 1922 tour of churches and camp meetings in the United States did little to help. Financial challenges and denominational leadership struggles in 1923 worsened the situation. Jennie seems to have despaired of receiving enough help and abandoned her Church of God connections. Although she remained in China until 1937, her relationship with the Church of God ended about 1926. The challenges of maintaining relationships with missionaries on the field likely influenced the Church of God's decision to create a missions board.<sup>23</sup>

#### Under Board Appointment

From 1913 until 1926, international outreach for the Church of God was channeled through a missions committee appointed annually at the General Assembly. According to George, "The committee proposed a systematic method of raising missions funds that asked each local church to contribute one-tenth of all offerings to missions work."<sup>24</sup> Yet, the oversight of missions remained one of the duties of an overworked general overseer.

In an effort to improve the Church of God's global outreach, in 1926 the General Assembly recommended a board to oversee the missions ministries of the denomination. One of the board's responsibilities was vetting missionary candidates,<sup>25</sup> and appointments by the board overwhelmingly favored missionary couples rather than single women missionaries.<sup>26</sup> The board and missions leaders became increasingly reluctant to send unmarried women to foreign mission fields and passed a policy to reflect this: "The Board, in some instances, will consider the candidacy of a single woman. In no case will it send to the field a divorcee."<sup>27</sup> Some have suggested that this reluctance grew out of a genuine concern for the women's emotional and physical safety rather than an attempt to exclude them from missionary service. The fact that several single women were sent as support workers in established mission areas lends some credence to this idea.<sup>28</sup>

Single women who went to the mission field were more restricted than single men, both personally and in ministry opportunities. According to the missions policy manual, if a single woman missionary married someone not under missions appointment, her salary and status ended immediately.<sup>29</sup> Vessie D. Hargrave, a veteran missionary who served as World Missions director from 1964-1968, defined ministry opportunities for women:

The Pentecostal churches are dedicated primarily to evangelization and church establishing: consequently, the lady missionary is limited to evangelizing children, youth and women's work, and to literature and education efforts. After all, what is the purpose of our mission endeavor? Medical missions, agricultural programs, secular teaching and social work have contributed greatly to the general acceptance of evangelical churches in many countries. Comparatively few people on foreign fields receive the gospel because of the efforts of missionaries not directly involved in evangelization. Therefore women's ministries must have soul-winning as the objective, and to that end each lady is appointed.<sup>30</sup>

By 1972 the number of officially appointed women missionaries had dropped to 51, with only four single women listed.<sup>31</sup> In 1982 the total number of women missionaries increased to 57, but the number of single women decreased to three.<sup>32</sup> Although the official number of single women appointed by World Missions was in decline, a call to missions service remained strong in women's hearts. Women discovered that ministry opportunities in foreign lands were possible without the board's approval.

Emma Dearstine (1891-1970) was one of these women. Standing 4 feet and 9 inches tall, this diminutive woman's determination to obey God and preach His Word amazed those who met her.<sup>33</sup> She was not a potential candidate for the missions board for several reasons: (1) she was divorced—her unsaved husband had divorced her because of her commitment to God; (2) she was older—she had accepted a call to missions at age 45; and (3) she was uneducated—her schooling had stopped at the eighth grade. Undeterred by her lack of qualifications, Dearstine worked to save money for missionary endeavors. She spent much time in prayer and fasting, waiting for God's direction. Whenever she heard His voice, she traveled wherever He told her to go.<sup>34</sup>

Her first trip was to Cuba, where she learned enough Spanish to preach on the street and hand out tracts. She then relocated to Texas in 1942 where she worked to pay for trips into Mexico. Over the years God's voice prompted her to travel to Indonesia, Chile, Germany, Russia, British West Indies, and Venezuela to share the gospel message. She stayed in each place

until she believed God told her to leave, and then she returned to the United States to work and save money for the next trip.<sup>35</sup> Her ministry efforts were eventually acknowledged by Church officials. In 1968 the World Missions board recognized Dearstine and appointed her as a missionary to Guyana where she worked until shortly before her death in 1970.<sup>36</sup> In her missionary travels Dearstine preached 6,629 sermons.<sup>37</sup>

Frances Evans Arch (b. 1927) was another unlikely candidate for missionary service. Raised on a farm in Montana, Arch completed one year of high school and married at an early age. Widowed at age 18 with a two-year-old son, she worked as a waitress, hotel maid, disc jockey, and housekeeper while completing her high school education through correspondence. At age 20 in 1947 she received the Holy Spirit baptism and a call to missions. Preparation for missionary service included a degree in religious education from Lee College (Cleveland, TN) and training as a data processing keypunch operator.

The missions board appointed Arch to Limon, Costa Rica, after she graduated from Lee, but when her visa was denied, the appointment never materialized. After a year, Arch decided to go to Costa Rica on her own. Accompanied by her 11-year-old son and missionary friend Mabel Mullins, Arch traveled by bus to Mexico City and then to Belize. She and Mullins conducted daily vacation Bible schools and revival services simultaneously for several months before taking a boat to Honduras, with a final destination of French Harbour on the Island of Roatan. Although not the destination she had intended, Roatan proved to be God's chosen field for Arch. From 1954 until 2009 she worked faithfully as a pastor, church planter, and school administrator/teacher on the islands of Roatan, Utila, and French Caye. The missions board appointed Arch as a missionary in 1960.<sup>38</sup>

While enrolled in the Church of God Bible Training School, Margaret Gaines (b. 1931) heard veteran missionary Josephine Planter during a missions service and opened her heart to Arab people. Four years later the octogenarian Planter invited the eighteen-year-old Gaines to join her as a missionary in Tunisia. Although the missions board would not send a single young woman to North Africa at that time, Gaines continued to do all she could to prepare. God miraculously opened doors, and on April 16, 1952, she arrived in Tunisia to assist Planter. One year later Gaines began her own mission. The missions board appointed her as a missionary and organized her mission as a Church of God in 1956. After ten years in Tunisia, political turmoil and dysentery forced her to leave for France.

Then in 1964 the board sent Gaines to Jerusalem, and she established a church and school in the nearby village of Aboud. She served as pastor of the Aboud congregation until 1992. Although a fourth heart attack forced her to relocate to Pell City, Alabama, in 1996, she continued to bless the people of Aboud with building projects, fund raising, and advisory leadership.<sup>39</sup>

The missionary ministries of numerous other women could be described at great length. Oline Morse (1920-2006) traveled to Haiti in 1949 to assist in the national office there. Feeling a call to be more than an office assistant, she returned to Lee College to earn the credentials to teach in the Bible school in Haiti. Remaining until 1981, she served in Haiti longer than any other Church of God missionary.<sup>40</sup> In 1960 a team of four recent graduates of Lee College paid their own way to Brazil to work with established missionaries there. Janet Carter, Mary Frances Poe (b. 1934), Millie Crosswhite (b. 1933), and Ruth Crawford (b. 1935) contributed to the educational and youth ministries of the country. The missions board eventually began to assist in their support. Of the four, Crawford remained for 13 years.<sup>41</sup>

#### A Growing Missionary Force

In 1988 a policy change in the funding of missionaries opened up new opportunities for women missionary appointments. With prompting from Missions Director Lovell Cary, a veteran career missionary, the missions board determined that missionaries should raise their own support. George noted, “Until that time, each missionary was paid from the World Missions office with funds . . . sent by local churches and money raised by traveling representatives. Immediately after acceptance of the new policy, the number of missionaries began to increase.”<sup>42</sup> This increase included both men and women missionaries.

The 1988 *Minutes of the General Assembly* listed 54 women under World Missions appointment.<sup>43</sup> Within 10 years the number of women under appointment had increased to 109.<sup>44</sup> These appointments included six categories of missionaries: career, associate, fraternal, short-term, approved minister abroad, and missionary to para-church groups.<sup>45</sup> The qualifications for each of the six categories as listed in the policy manual are not gender specific, which allows more opportunities for women in the various mission fields.

A personnel committee directs missionary placement service for the Church of God. This committee is composed of members of the missions board, the assistant director of world

missions, members of the office staff, and members who are involved in missions in the academic community.<sup>46</sup> This committee had always been comprised of men until 1989, when Lucille Walker (1924-2013) was appointed to the committee in an effort to increase the involvement and improve the status of women in missions.<sup>47</sup> An ordained minister with a missions background, Walker was an excellent choice for this appointment. Her missions experience included service with her husband, Herbert, in Mexico, Haiti, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East along with eight years in missions administration while Herbert served as assistant director and then director of the World Missions Department. Her academic experience included several years as a faculty member at Lee College. She had also worked with Crossroads Discipleship Training School with Youth With A Mission and had lived for a time in New York City where she ministered with Collegiate Urban Renewal Effort (C.U.R.E. Corps), an inner-city ministry of David Wilkerson.<sup>48</sup>

The wise counsel of this career missionary contributed to a more balanced approach to all missionary candidates, and her presence on the committee helped to create a less intimidating atmosphere for women missionary candidates. No longer was a Church of God woman missionary limited to evangelizing children, youth, and women's work, and to literature and education efforts. A broad expanse of opportunities for Christian service allowed both married and single women to obey their unique missions calls with the Church's blessing.

Gloretta Anderson (1936-2006) was a 55-year-old widow when she became an appointed missionary to Brazil in 1991. She had received her missions call in 1955 at age 19, but the call did not become a reality immediately. After marrying a Pentecostal minister, she worked with him in evangelism and new field work in Washington State and Arizona for 23 years until his death in 1980. At that time, her missions call prompted her to travel to Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji where she engaged in evangelistic ministry. She returned to the United States planning to go to the British Isles, but God reminded her of her call to Brazil. She began ministry there in 1986 and was appointed as a missionary in 1991. From 1991 until her death in 2006 Anderson's missionary endeavors in Brazil included evangelism, church construction, pastoring, conducting Sunday school, teaching music, and writing children's curriculum.<sup>49</sup>

Whereas in the early years the board only sent out career missionaries, most of whom were married, designating additional categories of missionaries opened up new possibilities for single women. Associate missionary status became an attainable goal for those who would have

been disqualified under previous restrictions. According to the *World Missions Policy Manual*, the Church “recognizes that some mission ministries may not require formal theological study and experience in full-time church related vocations. For this reason, ministers and laypersons are appointed as associate missionaries on a contractual basis for specialized ministries such as aviation, building, medical care, office administration, teaching, and social services.”<sup>50</sup> The associate missionary is held to the same spiritual, emotional, marital, and physical requirements of the career missionary, must demonstrate proficiency in the Word and in a skill, but is not required to have formal theological training. Additionally, although not specifically stated, the Church recognizes that divorce is not an automatic disqualifier for a missionary candidate.

Marcia Anderson (b. 1941) benefitted from the Church’s more progressive view of women as missionaries. In 1991 she became a missionary intern in Singapore at age 50. By 1988 she had traveled to 30 countries and lived in Iran, the Fiji Islands, and the Philippines with her diplomat husband and their two sons. Faced with separation from her husband, Anderson pursued a seminary degree and devoted herself to following a path of service to God by teaching in Church colleges and seminaries overseas. Anderson became an associate missionary in 1994. She moved to Manila, Philippines, in 1996 and ministered there until 2006, when she was assigned to Discipleship University in Eldoret, Kenya. Besides teaching several courses at the school, Anderson engages in travel to other countries in Africa and the Middle East for ministry.<sup>51</sup>

Jeanette Chesser (1934-2013) was a fourth generation Pentecostal who grew up as the daughter of a prominent minister in the Church of God. She received Christ at age 11 and was called to missions at age 16. However, some adult decisions that were not in line with Christian ethics alienated her from her call to missionary service. When she reached middle age, she received a dramatic baptism of the Holy Spirit and an unmistakable call to a teaching ministry. Her life was changed, and she began serious educational pursuits to equip her for the call. Maintaining her secular career as a bank manager, she became established in a local church and developed a ministry of teaching the Word of God.

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1990, Chesser became concerned about the evangelistic teams that were going into the former atheistic territory for short periods of time and then returning to the West without discipling their converts. Who would ground the new Christians in the Word of God? She earnestly prayed for God to send teachers to them. In

August 1992 Chesser traveled to Russia to check out the possibility of ministry there. God gave her a deep love for the people of the former Soviet Union. She returned home, relinquished her job, sold her possessions, and moved to Moscow, Russia, in early 1993. She was accepted as an associate missionary with the Church of God in 1994. For the next 17 years Chesser traveled extensively by train, car, bus, streetcar, and subway throughout the country. She moved from Moscow 700 miles farther east to Izhevsk, a large industrial city of over 650,000 and one of 20 secret cities not shown on any map during the Cold War era because of its high military production. Chesser taught at the Izhevsk Bible Institute four nights a week for six weeks each spring and fall. In addition, she conducted seminars in Bible schools and local churches and did personal counseling in 26 locations in Russia (eight in Siberia) and 11 locations in Ukraine.

When the Russian government decreed that foreigners would be limited to visits of three months and then must leave for three months, Chesser divided her time between Russia and East Africa, beginning in 2001. Her ministry in Africa included teaching at Discipleship University in Eldoret, Kenya, as well as conducting three-day seminars on the Holy Spirit for Church leaders in Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi.<sup>52</sup>

The acceptance on mission fields of women like Chesser helped dispel some of the misconceptions and fears regarding single women missionaries. Still, the missions administration discouraged single women from marrying while under appointment as missionaries. Over time, missions leaders accepted that some situations should be looked at individually rather than make across-the-board decisions. Today, it is possible for a single woman missionary under appointment to remain on the field when she marries someone who is not under missionary appointment.

Angela McInvale-Altamirano (b. 1975) went to Honduras as a young, single associate missionary in 1998. In 2000 she founded an orphanage called Hogar Esperanza (Hope House) in San Pedro Sula. The orphanage has purchased 25 acres of land with ongoing plans to construct a school, vocational workshops, a nurse's station, a library, a computer lab and cottages for up to 100 children. McInvale-Altamirano's missionary appointment was not affected when she married a man with non-missionary status. Unlike women missionaries in previous years, McInvale-Altamirano could continue her ministry to children in Honduras as director of Hogar Esperanza.<sup>53</sup>

In 2000 the World Missions Department sought to correct an economic disparity with regards to the missionary wife, who served under appointment with her husband. Salaries for couples had always been paid in the husband's name, which meant there was no record of employment for the wife as an appointed missionary. When she reached retirement age, the wife had no proof of employment and could not qualify for social security benefits apart from her husband. A change in policy allowed one-third of the salary to be paid to the wife, with the remaining two-thirds paid to the husband. The couple's salary did not increase, but the division of the money provided proof of the wife's employment.<sup>54</sup>

The missions board broke with tradition in 2002 when they approved a single mother with two young children for missionary service. Julie Martinez (b. 1963) spent four years in Zambia working with an orphanage called Emma's Kids. The board then appointed her as a missionary to Botswana, but it seemed as if God had other plans for her. In 2007 Martinez was reassigned to Cambodia, a new field for the Church of God, and she moved to Siem Reap with her children. Her work there has included being general manager of Common Grounds Coffee and Cyber Cafe, supervising orphanages and medical ministries, pastoring a church, and helping the Cambodians with micro-business ventures. Appointed as "representative" for Cambodia in 2012, she now oversees the ministries throughout the country.<sup>55</sup>

From 1926 until 2008, the missions board made all appointments and decisions without any official input from women. This changed in 2008 when Dee Raff became office manager for the World Missions Department, a position formerly known as administrative assistant and only occupied by men. The daughter of Church of God pioneer missionaries, Raff had worked in administrative roles for large companies both in Australia and the United States before joining the ministries of World Missions. In her role as office manager, Raff attends all board meetings as a non-voting member with the right to participate in discussions.<sup>56</sup>

Women's voices in world missions policy expanded further when Carolyn Dirksen (b. 1946) became the first woman to serve on the board in 2010. Dirksen, a native of Arizona with a Ph.D. in linguistics, had traveled extensively outside the United States for church and secular teaching opportunities. Her international experience included teaching English at universities in China and helping to open doors for ministry opportunities in that country. A leading member of Lee University's faculty since 1968, Dirksen was serving as vice president for academic affairs

at the time of her appointment. Her presence on the missions board offered a deliberative perspective that had been absent for 84 years.<sup>57</sup>

During its more than 100 years of international ministry, the Church of God has been blessed to have God-called women involved in its global outreach. Despite prejudices and policies that often restricted their ministry, Spirit-filled women have persevered to play a crucial role in the Great Commission. Women have proven to be vibrant messengers, instrumental in evangelization, church planting, discipleship training, Church administration, and putting action to the words of Jesus, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matt. 25:35-36 NIV). Orphanages, schools, medical clinics, feeding centers, prison ministries, and women's shelters are some of the good works initiated by Church of God women around the world as a vital part of the Great Commission.

Women have accomplished difficult tasks in their efforts to share the Good News. They have endured loneliness, danger, poverty, illness, physical persecution, and spiritual attacks in order to fulfill their Lord's command. The words of Rob Brynjolfson can be applied to women in the Church of God: "Women have contributed a remarkable legacy in the history of missions. Not always were leadership roles accessible in the missions structures, and some agencies started by gifted women eventually were taken over by men leaders. Missiology needs to affirm the gifting of the Holy Spirit in women and allow him to use his servants."<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Church of God women missionaries have "made full proof of their ministry."

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<sup>1</sup> Believing that both Edmond and Rebecca Barr were native Bahamians, the Church of God has considered Robert Evans as the first Church of God missionary because he took the gospel to a culture other than his own. Recent discoveries of documents related to Rebecca such as the 1920 U.S. Census and her death certificate reveal that Rebecca was born in the United States, thus she too took the gospel to a culture other than her own. See Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God, 1886-1996*, Tribute Edition (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2008), 116-17 and 129-32; and William T. George, *Until All Have Heard: The Centennial History of Church of God World Missions* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 2010), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the camp meeting see Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 114-17.

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Barr, "Nassau, Bahamas, West Indies," *The Bridegroom's Messenger* (January 1, 1910): 2.

<sup>4</sup> Evans' letter reported that the Barrs were preaching the "full gospel" but that many places of ministry were not open to them. He continued, "We obtained a cottage and began to co-operate with them . . ." R. M. Evans, "Missionary," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (March 1, 1910): 7.

<sup>5</sup> See Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 129-32. Evans was an ordained bishop and was appointed as the first overseer of the Bahamas in January 1911.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Barr, "Nassau, N. P., Bahama Islands. They 'Shall See Visions,'" *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (June 1, 1910): 6-7. Note that in 1911 the name of the Church of God publication was shorted to *The Church of God Evangel*.

<sup>7</sup> R. M. Evans, "Nassau, N. P., Bahama Islands," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (June 1, 1910): 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Edmond S. Barr and Wife, "Nassau, N. P., Bahama Islands," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (April 15, 1910): 6.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the ministries of Edmond and Rebecca Barr see Michael Swann, *The Holy Jumpers: A Concise History of the Church of God of Prophecy, Bahamas (1909-1974)* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> George, *Until All Have Heard*, 25-29.

<sup>11</sup> Flora E. Bower, "Nassau, N. P., Bahama Islands," *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (September 1, 1910): 5.

<sup>12</sup> Wanda Thompson LeRoy, *Lucy Leatherman: I Trust in God* (Cleveland TN: Church of God World Missions, 2012), 7-10.

<sup>13</sup> Estrelida Alexander, *The Women of Azusa Street* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2005), 71.

<sup>14</sup> Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 152-57.

<sup>15</sup> LeRoy, *Lucy Leatherman*, 16-31.

<sup>16</sup> Conn, *Like A Mighty Army*, 146.

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<sup>17</sup> S. C. Perry, "Field Notes," *The Bridegroom's Messenger* (November 15, 1909): 2. She is listed as an evangelist in Church of God, *Minutes of the 10th General Assembly* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 1914), 41; and Church of God, *Minutes of the 12th General Assembly* (1916), 37.

<sup>18</sup> Church of God, *Minutes of the 10th General Assembly*, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Gary B. McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 130.

<sup>20</sup> Lillian Trasher, "Assiout, Egypt," *Church of God Evangel* (June 15, 1918): 4.

<sup>21</sup> Lillian Trasher, "Assiout, Egypt," *Church of God Evangel*, November 9, 1918. Conn surmised that Trasher left the Church of God because "it could not or did not do more toward support of this magnanimous woman and her orphanage." Charles W. Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod: A History of Church of God World Missions* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1959), 16. Although she may well have been receiving more support from Assemblies of God congregations and members, it is also likely that her relationship with Sam C. Perry was a factor in her leaving the Church of God. Perry was excluded from the Church of God in 1919 due to his differences with the Church of God's changing ecclesiology and financial system. It is interesting to note that biographical accounts of Trasher's ministry do not mention her relationship with the Church of God. See as an example Lester F. Sumrall, *Lillian Trasher: The Nile Mother* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1951).

<sup>22</sup> McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism*, 160 and 290 n. 119.

<sup>23</sup> See Wanda Thompson LeRoy, *No Ordinary Life: Jennie Brinson Rushin McNair* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 2011); and David Bundy, "Jennie Brinson-Rushin: Pioneer China Missionary," *Church of God History and Heritage* (Summer/Fall 1999): 5-7. In 1926 the Rushins changed their name to McNair after his mother's family. According to an explanation in *The Church of God Evangel*, this was to avoid persecution because their name "Rushin" sounded like "Russian," and the Chinese people viewed Russians with disdain. See "Explanation," *The Church of God Evangel* (December 4, 1926): 2. Conn cites a 1926 letter from General Overseer F. J. Lee stating that the "work in China was lost because of its not being more thoroughly established and looked after in a more systematic way," but there are no other details known at this time. See Conn, *Like A Mighty Army*, 228-29.

<sup>24</sup> George, *Until All Have Heard*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> George, *Until All Have Heard*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> The first official listing of an appointed woman missionary was Mildred Case in Church of God, *Minutes of the 36th General Assembly* (1941), 48. Case was assigned with her husband, Hoyle, to India. Two women are listed the next year: Case and Maria Atkinson, whose husband was not appointed with her to Mexico. See Church of God, *Minutes of the 37th General Assembly* (1942), 30. The number of women missionaries reached a peak in 1968 with 74 officially appointed, 67 with their husbands and seven without. Church of God, *Minutes of the 52nd General Assembly* (1968), 64-71.

<sup>27</sup> World Missions Board, *Manual for Missionaries* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 1952), 25.

<sup>28</sup> Among these women were Virginia Green, Ollie Harris, Alice Josephsen, Odine Morse, Mable Mullins, Dora P. Myers, Frances Olsen, and Fay Singleton.

<sup>29</sup> World Missions Board, *Manual for Missionaries* (1952), 25. The policy required that all single missionaries who wished to marry while under appointment had to confer with the missions board before marrying. There was no stated policy that a man missionary would be terminated should he marry someone who was not under missions appointment.

- <sup>30</sup> Vessie D. Hargrave, *The Church and World Missions* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1970), 60-61.
- <sup>31</sup> Church of God, *Minutes of the 54th General Assembly* (1972), 74-78.
- <sup>32</sup> Church of God, *Minutes of the 59th General Assembly* (1982), 81-88.
- <sup>33</sup> Wade H. Horton, *Unto the Uttermost* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 1973), 72-78.
- <sup>34</sup> Wanda Thompson LeRoy, "Emma Dearstine: Led by the Spirit," *Church of God Evangel* (April 2013): 30.
- <sup>35</sup> Carolyn Dirksen, "Emma Dearstine: She Was Led by the Spirit," *Church of God Evangel* (November 9, 1970): 9.
- <sup>36</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>37</sup> Ministerial Files, Business and Records, Church of God International Offices, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>38</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>39</sup> Margaret Gaines, *Of Like Passions: Missionary to the Arabs* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2000).
- <sup>40</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions; and George, *Until All Have Heard*, 60.
- <sup>41</sup> George, *Until All Have Heard*, 153.
- <sup>42</sup> George, *Until All Have Heard*, 28.
- <sup>43</sup> Church of God, *Minutes of the 62nd General Assembly*, (1988), 21-28.
- <sup>44</sup> Church of God, *Minutes of the 68th General Assembly*, (1998), 300-316.
- <sup>45</sup> The change in missionary categories was introduced in World Missions Board, *Church of God World Missions Policy Manual* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 1984), Chapter 4, 1-7.
- <sup>46</sup> World Missions Board, *Church of God World Missions Policy Manual* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God World Missions, 2010), 72.
- <sup>47</sup> Three women presently serve on the six-member committee now known as the Missionary Resource and Analysis Committee.
- <sup>48</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>49</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>50</sup> World Missions Board, *Policy Manual*, 2010, 65-66.
- <sup>51</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>52</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>53</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.
- <sup>54</sup> Douglas LeRoy, interview by Wanda Thompson LeRoy, Cleveland, TN, March 8, 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.

<sup>56</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.

<sup>57</sup> Personnel Files, Church of God World Missions, Cleveland, TN.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in William D. Taylor, ed., *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 488.