

# An Unlikely Leader

by Dr. Gary B. McGee



In the William J. Seymour chapel at AGTS, a stained glass window donated by the Ohio District Council of the AG features Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission.

“[When] we get the baptism

with the Holy Ghost and fire...we get Christ enthroned and crowned in our hearts,” said William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922), leader of the 1906 Azusa Street revival. “If men and women today will consecrate themselves to God, how the Holy Ghost will use such people.” Azusa Street—best known of the early formative Pentecostal reviv-

als—uniquely displayed Christian unity through its interracial character. “No instrument that God can use is rejected on account of color or dress or lack of education,” reported the *Apostolic Faith* newspaper. Early Pentecostalism showed the world how the Lord can utilize such people.

Born to former slaves in Louisiana, Seymour was an unlikely candidate for stardom. From waiting tables, he became a preacher and then ventured to California to pastor a small holiness church in Los Angeles. The commonly shared spiritual hunger of the radical evangelicals who gathered with him at the Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street and their reception of Pentecostal baptism contributed to an awakening that had already begun to transform modern Christianity. People still celebrate the memory of this gentle man for his humility, concern for racial reconciliation and desire for world evangelization. As one historian noted, Seymour arrived on the scene “for such a time as this.”

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