

OUR STORY

On February 5, 1916, the Rev. John Kellner was called from his home in New Castle, Pennsylvania, to minister to a small group of people who were conducting prayer meetings in private homes in the city of Binghamton, New York. He had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, had experienced the healing power of the Great Physician, and had begun preparing himself for the ministry.

He had expected to stay but a few weeks, but that ministry lengthened into a total of 28 years.



The following year Pastor Kellner married Miss Olive Youngs of Binghamton. Later that same year, on May 28th, the tiny congregation became affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

The General Council was also a very new organization. A general conference of all Pentecostal ministers had been called in 1914, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to address several issues. Twenty states and several foreign countries were represented. At this same meeting, the General Council was established.

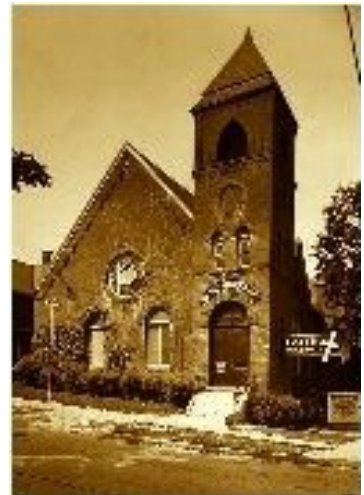
For the next several years, the small Assemblies of God Mission in

Pastor and Olive Kellner

Binghamton, known as Faith Pentecostal Society, grew larger. So it became necessary to move many times. Pastor Kellner wrote ... *"We had moved from place to place like the Tabernacle in the wilderness. But praise God, the blessings of the Lord followed us in every place for some were saved from sin, others were healed of their diseases and some received the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, Hallelujah!"*

It did not take long to become tired of all the moving, so they began to work toward buying their own building. It culminated on December 19, 1919, when they purchased a three story brick building at 34 Tayntor Avenue (presently named Lisle Avenue).

Our church has always been a church that looked beyond its own doors in the community and the world. So it happened that during the summer of 1922, tent meetings were held. When summer ended, the people returned to the Mission and became convinced of their need for a larger place of worship. The church was incorporated February 12, 1924.



It wasn't until April of 1928, that the church succeeded in selling the old Mission and relocating once again. The congregation purchased the former High Street Methodist Church, located at Conklin Avenue and High Street. The church could seat 550 people and also came with a parsonage, which would be used for Sunday School classrooms. They changed their name to Faith Tabernacle, and remained there until 1957. From 1930 to 1934, during the interim in

Faith Tabernacle

John Kellner's ministry, the work prospered under the direction of the Rev. O.P. Brann. In 1934, Pastor Kellner was again called to pastor the Binghamton flock. The healings that the Lord performed and the public baptismal services held at Sandy Beach during Pastor Kellner's ministry were reported in the local paper. Pastor Kellner was succeeded by Rev. John Jenkins who ministered until September, 1950. Following him, the Rev. Paul Bills and his wife, missionaries in Alaska, served as an interim pastor.

In October of 1950, we welcomed Pastor R.D.E. Smith and his lovely wife, Goldie. The ministry of Faith Tabernacle again expanded under this man of vision. Soon after his arrival he began the radio program, *The Voice of Pentecost*. Within five years of his arrival, Pastor Smith was looking for a way to cope with a church that had outgrown its facilities. Pastor Smith wrote, "The past few years have seen a great awakening all over the world, which has been reflected in our own work. We have been forced into city auditoriums because of the limited size of our own auditorium."

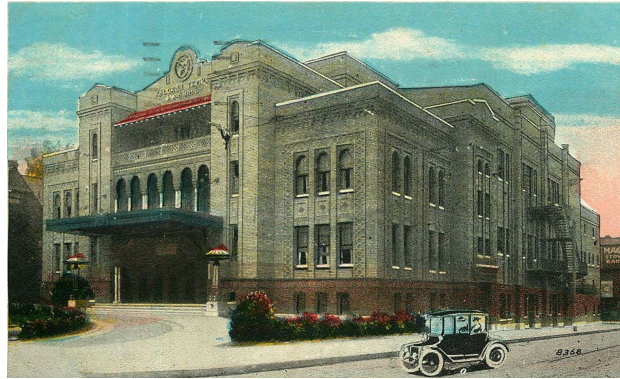


**Pastor R D E and
Goldie Smith**

This time the plan was to build a sparkling new building on the corner of Westland Court and Leroy Street. One of the features would be an electronic chime tower with a searchlight a mile high. Did it actually happen? No. Although the site was purchased and

prepared for the work, the Lord had other plans.

In constructing that wonderful new building, the church would have spent an estimated \$330,000. But instead, they bought the much larger Kalurah Temple at 255 Washington Street in downtown Binghamton for \$112,500. Pastor Smith wrote, "Extensive remodeling has made the new building into one of the most adequate church structures in the fellowship." The new building was dedicated on May 5, 1957. At that time, the church name was changed from Faith Tabernacle to First Assembly of God. Rev. C.M. Ward, the voice of *REVIVALTIME*, was in Binghamton for the



**Kalurah Temple becomes First Assembly of
God**

dedication. The sanctuary could seat approximately 1,000 people. No one, except Pastor Smith and perhaps a few others, ever thought that it could actually be filled.

Perhaps the most notable local outreach of First Assembly in the early 1970's was the Turning Point Coffee House. The coffee house reached out into the community with regular street witnessing teams and Jesus festivals complete with marches through downtown Binghamton.

In 1973, Pastor and Goldie Smith made the decision to retire. They remained in Binghamton as our Pastors Emeritus.

After the Smiths, Rev. Ernest and Miriam Steffensen pastored First Assembly from 1973 to 1975. We reached a Sunday School attendance of 300, and had to take the adult Sunday School classes to the Boys & Girls Club because of lack of space in the church. Next to come as interim pastor was Rev. Edward Simmons and his wife who had been missionaries to Liberia.



**Pastor Ernest and
Miriam Steffensen**

In February of 1976, we welcomed to Binghamton, Pastor Ronald Piedmonte and his wife, Sally. In 1978, Pastor Piedmonte reached out to the community by beginning the television program, *It's A Wonderful Life!* on Channel 40. Over the next several years, we renovated various parts of the building



**Pastor and Sally
Piedmonte**

more than once as we struggled to provide needed space for classrooms and nurseries. Office space was added as our staff expanded to meet the growth demands.

In 1980, we finally had enough space to house the adult Sunday School back in our own building, but not for long. Two years later we needed the Boys & Girls Club space again. Also in 1980, our first Youth Pastor came to join the Senior Pastor and Assistant Pastor on staff. In 1982, we added the positions of Minister of Music and Minister of Outreach.

The records show that we considered purchasing a lot and building a new and larger building in 1983. The decision was made to try to purchase an existing structure near us. When the Godfrey Music Store across the street became available, we bought and renovated that building. March of 1984, it was opened as the A/G Learning Center. We moved the children's Sunday and Wednesday night programs into this facility, and once again brought the adult classes back into our own building. We now had the challenge of seating all the people in the sanctuary each Sunday. The solution was to add an 8:30 AM early morning service, which was successful.

As early as 1975, we had our eye on the Elks Building next door. We put bids on the building from time to time, but none were ever accepted. In August of 1987, they finally accepted our offer. We named it the Family Center and then promptly remodeled the basement and first floor. It also provides space and kitchen facilities for large fellowship groups and church meals. The next three floors were renovated and completed by 1994. In the 1980's Home Fellowships, School of Ministry and Wee Care Nursery School were a vibrant addition to our outreach and discipleship ministries.

In October of 1988, we were approached by the Council of Churches asking if we would assist in the resettlement of a Pentecostal refugee family from Russia. We accepted and the first family arrived in early 1989, with more families continuing to come. A World Relief office operated in the church, until relocating to the NY Penn Trade Center, to assist in resettling Vietnamese into the Binghamton Area with the Welcome Home program for Amerasians. As the new families were coming they desired a place to worship; from 1989, and for the next four or five years, there were Ukrainian and Spanish services meeting weekly in our facilities.

In the early 1990's, and with every holiday, our Minister of Music presented productions with our own cast and music that were well attended by the community and enjoyed by all. One of our members opened her home in March 1995 to minister to women in crisis. This later became the Teen Challenge ministry in this area. Rev. Ronald Piedmonte retired in June of 1997, after being Senior Pastor for 21 years, and remained in Binghamton as our Pastor Emeritus.



Rev. William Kirk, then Pastor of First Assembly of God, Niagara Falls, New York, was called to First Assembly to be our Senior Pastor. We welcomed Pastor Kirk, his wife Laura and their family in June of 1997. Pastor Kirk envisioned being debt free and paying off the mortgage on the Family Center, which was approximately \$750,000. To do this he instituted the principal of the Joash Chest. The first Sunday of May for the next three years was designated for the Joash Chest offering, and on May 13, 2001 the mortgage was burned in the Sunday morning service. In the fall of 2001 Life Groups were started throughout the community and everyone was encouraged to attend one, several still continue. During the

**Pastor Bill and
Laura Kirk**

early months of 2002 the third floor of the Worship Center was renovated to accommodate offices for the growing Youth Ministries.

The Worship Center's aging heating system needed to be replaced and the projected cost of this system was \$268,000. With the generous offerings during the summer months, the heating system was installed, paid for and test fired on September 17, 2003. The children's ministries are always an exciting place to be, in Sunday School, Kidz Zone & Club 56 (Children's Church), Jr. Bible Quiz, summer outreach and the Wednesday night programs of Royal Rangers and Missionettes. The all new Bible Land in the preschool is an area you won't want to miss.

Today's world is rife with unholy opportunities and temptations for children and teens. As with the children's ministries, our ministry to teens is vital. Not only for their well-being before God, but the well-being of the future church. We at First Assembly take very seriously our responsibility of passing on the faith entrusted to us to the next generations. Our teen department has many young people who are being disciple under the dedicated leadership of ministerial and lay leaders.

The need for an Evangelism & Discipleship Pastor to lead in a witness to the general population became apparent. In the fall of 2004, Rev. Brandon Samuel and his wife, Katie, were interviewed for the position and they accepted. At District Council in May 2005, Pastor Kirk was asked to serve the New York District of the



**Pastor Brandon and
Katie Samuel**

Assemblies of God as Assistant District Superintendent. He accepted and began his duties in Syracuse, NY, in August. Upon Rev. Kirk's departure, Rev. Ronald Piedmonte was asked to serve as interim Executive Pastor, and Rev. Brandon Samuel served as Preaching Pastor.

On September 18, 2005, Rev. Samuel was overwhelmingly elected Senior Pastor at First Assembly. Pastor Samuel reached out to the community with TV recorded live from the 11:00 AM Sunday morning service and broadcast on four stations during the week. During his tenure a new and exciting way to connect the church body and the community at large became a reality when in 2006, the Learning Center ground floor was transformed as The City Light Café. In 2009 the Church Board gave approval for construction of a bridge connecting the Family Center to the Worship Center creating indoor access between the two buildings. The first floor of the Family Center was then renovated to house the Nursery and Pre-School Departments. We are now able to house our entire Children's and Teen's Ministries in the Family Center providing better security measures. Pastor Samuel served as our Senior Pastor for six years. In July he announced to the church that he and his wife, Katie, felt the leading of the Lord to accept the pastorate of Commonwealth Chapel, Richmond Virginia. He preached his last sermon at First Assembly on August 14, 2011.

After six months without a Senior Pastor, Rev. Lance Perry was joyfully elected as Senior Pastor of First Assembly on January 29, 2012. He had served as Lead Pastor at New Life Assembly of God in Crowley, Texas. Pastor Lance and his wife, Linda, have a daughter,



Laken, and four sons, Landon, Lane, Luke, and Logan. He is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary, holding a Master of Arts in Christian Education and a Doctor of Educational Ministry.

Pastor Lance brought a renewed sense of vision for reaching the inner city. Under his leadership we began to enlarge our local outreach ministry. In the spring and fall

there were many Adopt-a-Block Saturdays where people went out to clean up city yards and sidewalks, greeting folks with love in the name of Jesus. The old kitchen and downstairs of the Worship Center were renovated to give us a nice commercial kitchen and a large gathering area.

Our Meals Ministry began in March of 2014, serving a free weekly community meal on Wednesday evenings. A weekly Sunday community breakfast began in August of 2014. The first year we served 12,990. In 2015, we served 16,950 meals. We started our food pantry in April of 2015, serving an average of 55 families per month. Our Thanksgiving dinner was held **Pastor Lance and Linda Perry** the Saturday before Thanksgiving both years. The first year we served 620 meals; in 2015, we served 580 meals. In 2014, we gave away 300 turkeys and bags of groceries, last year 325. We also prepare and serve dinner at the Rescue Mission on a monthly basis

We began to partner with an existing local ministry, The Impact Project, desiring to: Save Souls One House at A Time. Several local houses have been restored in one Saturday, all work and materials having been donated. In November of 2014, the Sanctuary was renovated with new carpet, painting and the church pews were reupholstered.

In August of 2015, the Perry's resigned their position here to accept the call to pastor The Every Day Christian Fellowship in Cibolo, Texas.

At the advice of our District AG, the Church Board extended an invitation to Pastor Jerry and Laura Qualls to come and be our Interim Pastors. Their first Sunday with us was September 20, 2015. Pastor Jerry has pastored in seven churches in different parts of the country. He retired in 2012, from full-time pastoring. He currently preaches, conducts seminars, and has served as an interim pastor in several different churches. His ministry experience includes founder and host of *Heart to Heart* from 1981-2015, a live daily call-in counseling program and founder and director of counseling centers in Richmond and Virginia Beach. His wife Laura has partnered with him in ministry for more than 50 years. He is ordained and she is a licensed Minister with the Assemblies of God. We are blessed to have their help and direction as we begin the search for a new Lead Pastor.



Pastor Jerry and Laura Qualls

Today thousands of people have experienced life change through the ministry of Binghamton First Assembly of God. We cherish our past and rejoice at what God has done. At the same time, we know that God desires and will do even more today and in the future.

God is at work at First Assembly of God! We invite you to see for yourself how exciting church can be when the focus is God inspired and people are free to go after God with passion! Our heart is to connect people into authentic relationships with God and to make a difference in our cities, our nation and our world. We're a thriving, multicultural church that has a passionate, life-giving environment where people of all ages, races and backgrounds can grow closer to God and build flourishing, vibrant lives.