

A Short History of First Presbyterian Church of El Cajon

May 6, 1883: The Presbyterian Church of El Cajon was organized under the auspices of the Los Angeles Presbytery with the following members: Uri Hill, Mrs. Renette Hill, William E. Flynn, Mrs. S.E. Flynn, Mrs. C. McFadden, Mrs. A. Clark, M. Perkins and Illa M. Knox.



1886: A church was built on Highland Ave just north of Camden.

Circa 1901: A Sunday school building was added on the church property, but shortly afterwards it all burned down.



1902-1903: A new church was built on Farragut Circle on land donated by Uri Hill.

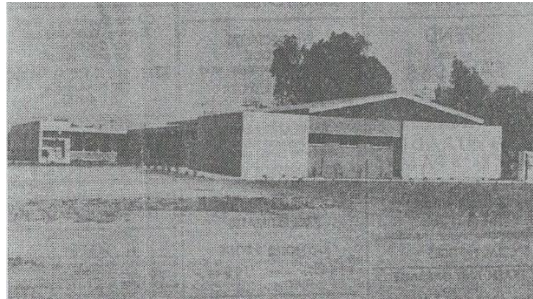
1911: A manse was built on the same property.

May 6, 1923: In celebration of the 40th birthday of the church a 500 pound bell was installed and rung 40 times. Total cost was \$562.

1930s: The Friendship Center was built on the east side of the sanctuary, and included a kitchen, restrooms, and one large room which could be made into two with a folding door. This building was used for Women's Association, youth groups, church dinners, and Sunday School classes.

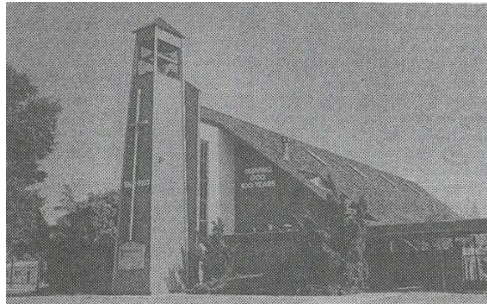
1949: Westminster Hall was built. It had a chapel, a library, and Sunday School rooms. It was retained when the 1960 church demolition began, and was later remodeled to house offices, a library, a nursery, a conference room and Sunday School rooms, plus a small kitchen and restrooms.

1953: The membership had outgrown the current building and a two part building plan was implemented. Property was acquired across the street from the church on the corner of Prescott and Camden.



1957: Richardson Hall was completed with a dining hall and classrooms. It was named in honor of the Rev. Charles Richardson, pastor of the church from 1913 to 1932. It was in this building that services were held each Sunday during the construction of today's church building.

This is also the year Wave Jorgenson started Circle Preschool - the first preschool in the El Cajon valley. The preschool was housed in Westminster Hall.



May 28, 1961: The new sanctuary was dedicated. It was built to seat 500. The choir was seated in a loft at the back and the parishioners faced the chancel and a south wall of black marble with a large gold cross. At that time the church had two pastors, the Rev. Rolland Stone and Dr. James Veneklasen. Andrew Yatsko was director of music and Mrs. Margaret Stone directed the Crusader Choir. Delores Bates and Leone Dyer were organists. Mrs. Wallace Detwiler was office secretary and Carroll Wight was custodian.

November 1973: The new bell tower was completed and the 500-pound bell was re-installed. The bell rededication ceremony was conducted by the Rev. Robert Bigler, pastor, and was modeled after the one held when the bell was first installed. The bell had been taken down in 1960 when the wooden church building was dismantled to make room for today's edifice. Somehow the bell

disappeared. The bell and part of the yoke were found in a Lakeside salvage yard. It was stored until the new bell tower was completed.

March 1977: The two stained glass windows at the front of the sanctuary were installed in honor of Merrette Laffoon, son of Cart and Helen Laffoon. The windows were made possible through gifts to the Living Memorials Foundation by family and friends following Merrette's death by drowning in Vermont where he was attending the University of Vermont Graduate School. As you look at the windows, the one on the left (east) depicts the burning bush and the Law tablets, themes for the Old Testament; while the one on the right (west) incorporates the bread, wheat, grapes and chalice, symbols from the New Testament.



November 1982: For the first time we entered a float in the Mother Goose parade. The theme was "Here is the Church, Here Is the Steeple." A replica of the 1886 church dominated the back of the float. The people on the float were youth of the church, depicting a wedding scene, in fashions of the late 1800s. An open book at the front of the float showed the float theme in large letters.

February 1983: Under the direction of Elva Colbeth the church library was reopened. It had been closed for the remodeling of Westminster Hall.

December 1983: A year of celebrating our centennial was culminated with the burial of a time capsule.

July 1984: The new organ built by L W Blackinton and Associates was installed. There is more about the organ in a separate document.

January 1986: The new stained glass windows were dedicated. They display Christian symbols, vines and branches. The glass-maker was Finn Antofte.

January 1989: Fire in Westminster Hall destroyed much of our extensive library collection. Thanks to donations from the San Diego County Church Library Association and others, Elva Colbeth was able to rebuild our collection.

1992: Remodel of Richardson Hall included a Youth Room, remodel of kitchen and bathrooms and relocation of front entrance.

November 2004: Dedication of Bailey Hall. This semi-circular addition to the sanctuary was built for use by the chancel choir and the bell choir. It has storage for choir robes, bell equipment, music director's office, kitchen and restrooms. It has been useful for classes, small memorials and many other events. It was named after Modena Bailey, a longtime active member of the church and chancel choir.

November 2004: Jack Van Mourik donated an 1896 Victorian piano to be used in Bailey Hall. It is now the piano in the sanctuary.



2008: The year was filled with activities celebrating our 125th year. Our second float was entered in the Mother Goose Parade with the theme of Noah's Ark. It won the Mayor's Award. A soft covered book was created with the history of our church and information about many of the members and activities. There are copies of this book in the church library.