

First Church Selected Highlights: 1869-2009

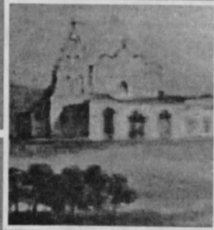
Compiled by Richard Peerson, Rev. Mark Trotter
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Narrative by Richard Peerson

Can you believe that San Diego did not have one organized Protestant church in 1868? Father Junipero Serra founded the Mission de Alcala in July of 1769. San Diego did have some Protestants in 1847, when members of the Morman Battalion arrived in Old Town. The Baptists,

1769 Father Junipero Serra founded the

Mission San Diego de Alcala.



1847

Protestants arrived in Old Town (the Morman Battalion).



1850-60

Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Methodists held informal worship

and Sunday Schools in homes.

Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Methodists conducted Sunday Schools and had informal worship in various homes and buildings during the 1850s and 60s. In 1868, the old U. S. Army Barracks, built in 1851 and located near today's Seaport Village, became a meeting place for the various Protestant believers.

Alonzo Horton, who came from San Francisco, sailed into San Diego Bay in 1867. The same year he bought 960 acres by the bay, (downtown San Diego) and subdivided his holdings into lots which he sold. Mr. Horton was anxious to have people buy lots and settle in "New" San Diego.



1867

Alonzo Horton bought/planned "New" San Diego

1868

Protestants met in old U.S. Army Barracks (Seaport Village). Mr. & Mrs. Henry Daugherty organized a Methodist Sunday School there.



Since he was a Protestant believer, he thought it wise to have some churches in his new development. In 1868, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Daugherty (both school teachers) organized a Methodist Sunday School and began meeting in the old barracks building. In January, 1869, Mrs. B. A. Case worked with the Daughertys to publicize around "new" town, that a

Methodist prayer meeting would be held in the old barracks on February 6, 1869. During March and April of the same year, Methodist meetings were held in various buildings on 5th Street, and on May 12, 1869, the First Methodist Episcopal Church of San Diego was organized.

A. H. HORTON,
Proprietor of "Horton's Extension of New Town,"
SAN DIEGO,
WILL sell Lots and Blocks in "Horton's Extension," to suit those who desire to settle and improve them, upon the most
Reasonable Terms.
Always to be found at New Town,
SAN DIEGO.
(see 10 ff.)

1870-88

Feb. 17, 1870 - First Methodist Episcopal Church built and dedicated. 3 additional Methodist churches founded by First Church.

First Methodist Episcopal Church of San Diego founded.

Mr. Horton donated 2 lots at 4th and Broadway to the Methodists.



May 12, 1869

During the summer of 1869, the Methodists were given two lots by Mr. Horton, located on the corner of 5th and "C" streets. Later that year, Mr. Horton advised the Methodists that it would be wise to trade the two lots and acquire lots E and F, block 36 of Horton's addition, today located at 4th and Broadway. The lots were located East,

across the street, from the Horton House Hotel (today's U. S. Grant Hotel) which Mr. Horton had just completed. The Methodists were really up town now! A white frame church that would seat 300 people was completed, debt-free, and dedicated on February 17, 1870. First M. E. Church worshiped and served the community for 17 years in this

1885-86 The Methodist Block Brick Square church built.



building. From 1870 to 1888, three new Methodist churches were founded by First Church.

In 1885-86, plans were made to move the white frame church to another location and on that property, construct a three story brick building, with an auditorium (balcony on three sides), pipe organ, space for six rental shops on the ground

floor, five story clock tower and Sunday School rooms upstairs. It was called the The Methodist Block or The Brick Square...considered to be one of the finest buildings in downtown San Diego, and was dedicated in 1888. San Diego had grown in population to nearly 30,000 people. However, the Panic of 1893, caused much hardship for the church and the entire

1890s

Panic of 1893 caused foreclosure threats – church saved by women of the church selling lunches.



1905 Brick Square church sold. 9th & C property purchased.

community. Finances of the church became nearly impossible and the threat of foreclosure loomed several times during the 1890s. The church was saved by the women of the church serving chicken lunches and dinners, and everyone worked very hard to keep paying down the church debt. In 1905, the Brick Square Church was sold and the congregation purchased property at 9th and "C" Streets.

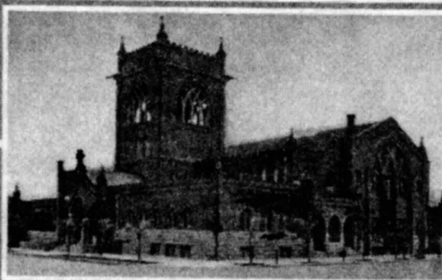
Irving Gill designed the new church in "Gothic Revival" style. The auditorium could seat 1500 persons and the Hook and Hastings Pipe Organ from the Brick Block Church was enlarged by Murray Harris of Los Angeles. The church was dedicated on May 5, 1907. In 1908, a set of eleven cast bronze bells were given to the church and are still in use today. The

May 5, 1907

Irving Gill-designed, 1500 seat church dedicated.

Hook and Hastings pipe organ enlarged.

Dedication of Christ Window.





1908

Hartupee Bells installed.

church was the scene of many events, worship and Sunday School on Sundays and became known for outstanding preaching, music and service to all of San Diego. Membership grew and soon the church was out of debt for the first time since 1888. Much loved ministers such as Dr. Lewis T. Guild 1907-11, Dr. Richard Hollington, 1912-16,



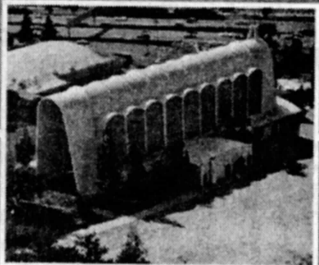

Dr. Lincoln A. Ferris, 1917-24, and Dr. Frank Linder 1924-35, served with great distinction. It should be mentioned that the members of First Church also served well – the thousands of people who worshiped, worked and sacrificed downtown made possible the great and bold move of First Church to Mission Valley in 1964.

1924-35	Dr. Frank Linder kept the church alive through the Great Depression.		1935-39	Dr. Walter John Sherman assigned during pre-WWII.	
			1940-48	Dr. George Warner opened church every day and night during WWII providing fellowship and worship for members of the armed forces.	

Parking was a problem in the 1940s and 50s and the leadership knew that the old brick church was suffering from age, not to mention new earthquake standards and safety regulations. It was under the leadership of Dr. Stanley McKee and Dr. Noel C. LeRoque and a dedicated group of laypersons that the groundwork was put in place so that the


church could plan, purchase property, gain the necessary approvals, hire a church planner, enlist an architectural firm, and figure how to finance the entire project. The new church campus was completed and a Service of Consecration was held on November 22, 1964.


Dr. C.A. McClain, Jr. arrived in July, 1965. The main theme early on was to grow


1958-65	Dr. Noel LeRoque carried out the move to Mission Valley.			
1948-58	Dr. Stanley McKee laid the groundwork for moving to Mission Valley.			

the church membership, continue outstanding preaching and provide services to members and the community and pay the monthly mortgage payments of \$5,300 a month. On October 27, 1965, the congregation responded to Reverend McClain's request to increase their giving so that the monthly payments could be made. The turning point had

been made in the finance department and things looked bright for the new church in Mission Valley. New worship opportunities were started, outreach programs, music, the Cultural Events Series, and Christian Education expansion occurred. Things were on the move at First Church.

1965-76	Dr. C. A. McClain, Jr. grew membership from 8th to 1st in the Conference.	1973	Cultural Events Program founded.	1976	Assignment of Rev. Mark Trotter.	
1969	On one Sunday in 1969, 100 new members were received.	1970-72	Gallery pipe organ installed.	1975-76	Memorial Bell Tower completed.	






The Reverend Mark Trotter

was assigned to First Church in 1976 and even more wonderful programs came into being. New buildings were constructed, the church sanctuary


and building itself was refurbished, pipe organ completely rebuilt and expanded, and the Memorial Garden came into being. Two former office buildings to the East were purchased. The San Diego School

1978-83



Creation of Linder Hall and church offices.

1981



1st Thanksgiving Eve Service with Congregation Beth Israel.


1985

SDSCS

San Diego School of Christian Studies founded and Children's Growing Center opened.

1984

New Life Counseling Center opened.



of Christian Studies was started, social concerns were addressed, missionaries were assisted. Christian education, youth activities, The Growing Center and many more opportunities to serve our members and

the community were provided and expanded. The Covenant Circle was formed in 1992 and the First United Methodist Foundation of San Diego was incorporated in 1998. And as always at First Church, preaching was the hallmark.

1986-89

Installed Tree of Life stained glass.



1995-96

Restored Hartup- Irwin bells, now 15, & built new steel frame.



1998-99

Remodeled and refurbished education buildings.



1992

The Covenant Circle formed.

1994

Mission Outreach Thrift Store opened.



1999

Purchased two office buildings east of church.




In 2000 Dr. Jim Standiford

began his tenure at First Church and programs to serve others were instituted, outreach for members and nonmembers alike were created. Small groups

started in the 1980s and 90s continued to thrive and neighborhood awareness and programs such as the Cove Worship Services, tutoring, mentoring and assisting our neighbor United Methodist Churches

2000

Church web site launched.




March 25, 2001

Dedication of Krause United Methodist Center.


2001

Water's Edge contemporary worship begun.




2002

Choir performed at Carnegie Hall. 1st participation in Russla Initiative.



John Wesley 300th birthday. 1st mission trip to Russia. Food Ministry founded.



2003





2004

1st post-Thanksgiving Jazz worship.

were begun. Missions at home and abroad and social concerns continue to receive our attention. Two buildings were constructed and furnished. A new pipe organ is on order for Trotter Chapel. The future lies ahead with its challenges and in ten short years, our

church will have been serving San Diego for 150 years. With inspired leadership, both lay and ministerial,

change will be the *watchword*
and *service* will be the *cornerstone*.

<div>2005</div> <div>Rededication of Christ Window</div> <div>Prayer Quilt Ministry founded</div>		<div>2007</div> <div>1st Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialog</div> <div>Fire in Sanctuary meeting room</div>		<div>2009</div> <div>ChristCare Groups launched</div> <div>Rev. Vetter led Cal-Pac</div>	<div>Restoration of fire-damaged Christ Window</div> <div>Holy Land Ministry founded</div> <div>1st Martin Luther</div>
<div>Church bus purchased</div> <div>1st eNews blast</div>	<div>1st Hurricane Katrina work team sent</div> <div>Consecration of Trotter Chapel and Sutherland Family Music Center</div> <div>2006</div> <div>Big Mission Project begun</div>		<div>2008</div> <div>Delegation to General Conference</div> <div>1st online daily devotional debuted</div>	<div>King, Jr. Interfaith Day of Service</div> <div></div>	