

Heritage Sunday service

Matthew 7:24-27

July 19th, 2015

Rev. Jeong Park

Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

This morning, we are going to celebrate our church community from a historic perspective: Family dynamics, church life cycle, moment of birth, and growing and developing as a spiritual body toward spiritual maturity in Jesus Christ. It is fun to revisit your old memories finding old pictures and remembering your young days. It will be fun to explore and revisit our church's old memories through our testimonies, pictures and historical documents. This will be an opportunity to know who we are, and where we are on our spiritual journey. I have invited three families to share their special memories. "What makes us unique in our spirit?" Let's look at our history. Please look at the slides upon the screen.

History:

In the 1890s, this church and faith community was organized in Fair Oaks Old Village (corner of Watkins and Sacramento Streets). The early congregation of our church was pioneer stock, coming here at the end of the century to form a new settlement. Most of them were hard working Midwesterners who were stubborn in their determination to make Fair Oaks a God-fearing community with a solid foundation in Christian ethics.¹ In the 1890s, the number of Methodists increased in Fair Oaks. So it was determined to build a Methodist Church. Everybody was willing to help with the construction. The Howard-Wilson Company donated the site. In the summer of 1899 services were held in the completed church which cost \$1700.

In 1906, Mrs. U.B. Watkins who taught a Sunday school class of Japanese boys, helped raise money to purchase a bell. Just after the turn of the century, the Presbyterians organized a Sunday school and in time united with the Methodists in the use of the Methodist church building. In 1919, it became a federated church shared by the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists because none of the groups could afford their own church. From 1919 to June 15, 1952, for 33 years, our church remained as a federated church.

As I research our church information, I found an old Sunday bulletin printed on June 21, 1936. It said, "Morning worship at 11:00 a.m. and evening worship at 8:00 p.m." And interestingly, the boy scouts and cub scouts met there. They had outdoor meetings and such activities like overnight hikes. Another bulletin of November 11, 1934 described fellowship month. Every member was

¹ History of the Presbyterian Church of Fair Oaks, California as remembered by Mairan E. Hecht

asked to find new contacts. The pastor wrote, "If you know of new people in the community or any without church connection, please invite them to church and give their names and location, in writing, to me." The bulletin quoted, "The church that is to prosper needs the layman on the job."

When the Presbyterians left our church, they took our church bell in 1952. In April 21, 1954, our church chairman of the Board of Trustees sent a letter to Fair Oaks Presbyterian church with a request. The letter said, "...when the present Presbyterian Church is dismantled, the bell will be returned to the Methodist group." June 4, we received a letter from the Presbyterian Church saying that "...we cannot comply with your request."

In 1954, we moved from Fair Oaks Village to our present location. Our church was officially chartered to the Cal- Nevada Annual Conference on June 6, 1954 with 78 chartered members. For the temporary time, our church office, Spencer building had been used for Sunday services until we consecrated this current sanctuary in June 1957. In 1959, a parsonage committee was appointed to plan and construct a new parsonage. The parsonage was completed almost entirely by layman's volunteer labor in May 1960. In 1992, our congregation voted at its Church Conference to become a "Reconciling Congregation". About 50 members were present for the vote; 48 voted in favor with 2 abstaining. In March, 1993, the Sacramento Bee published an article on the decision, titled "All God's Children".

The local Sunday Neighbors Newspaper reported on our church by interviewing pastor Steven Smith and other members in 1995. Examples are: "Fair Oaks was the 30th United Methodist congregation in the nation to publicly declare its intention after it was asked to voluntarily do so by the denomination." Pastor Steven Smith said, "We turned a few people off but the roof didn't fall in. It added a radically new dimension to who we are."

Jim and Lora Allen talked about our church saying, "We like the smaller congregation, it seems pretty friendly. It's really like a family. It's an addition to your life." Bernice Meyer, a church member for 30 years, said Fair Oaks United Methodist Church has "always been a friendly...church home".

Now, I like for some of our members to share their remembrances of our church with you.

Wrapping up our messages:

For long years, our Church has stood in the storms of life. There were moments of life changes and challenges. None of the chartered members are alive, but we are still here as a church family. And in 1992, we declared ourselves as a progressive congregation. As a result, we lost some members who left our congregation in protest. It was quite a risk-taking decision and a bold act of Christian faith. We thank God that we still gather every Sunday as a spiritual and accountable family for one another. As our Scripture reading

describes, the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. Jesus said that a wise man built his house on rock. Our rock is Jesus our Christ and Savior. No matter what challenges we had, we never gave up two things. We are the church and family putting our trust in Jesus. And we are a progressive congregation believing in God who loves everyone regardless of race, creed or sexual orientation. Let us continue to stand on this spirit of Christian mind in our ministries as our church has responded to the needs of our community in the past. Amen.