

THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB
of
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

Founded January 24, 1895

Meeting #1999

October 3, 2024

4:00 P.M.

Assembly Room, A. K. Smiley Public Library

THE CHURCH OF MANY NAMES

**The Story of the 111-year-old Presbyterian
congregation at the corner of Webster and Union in
North Redlands**

Ronald I. Duvall

SUMMARY

Every church has a unique story. This paper presents the story of the Presbyterian church on the corner of Webster Street and Union Avenue, a location that was once the heart of the *barrio* in north Redlands, California. It traces the church's 111-year history, highlighting the tight bonds of church community and placing it in the context of the development of the city of Redlands and of the neighborhood around the church.

Markers of the church's evolving nature may be found in the succession of names adopted by the congregation – hence the paper's title, "The Church of Many Names." It was first known, in 1913, as *Iglesia Presbiteriana Mexicana de Redlands* (Mexican Presbyterian Church of Redlands), denoting the ethnic and religious heritage of its founders. In 1946, as the makeup of the *barrio* changed, the church dropped its narrow ethnic designation and became *El Divinio Salvador Iglesia Presbiteriana* (Divine Savior Presbyterian Church).). By the late 1950s, when Spanish was no longer predominate in the congregation or in the neighborhood, the church's name was simply translated into English, Divine Savior United Presbyterian Church. A controversial change soon followed when English began to be used exclusively in worship and other church activities, with the loss of some long-time members.

The late 1960s saw a cataclysmic upheaval in the church. Higher courts of the Presbyterian Church determined that the ministry of Divine Savior, which they were financially supporting as a "Mission Aid Church," was no longer effective, which eventually led to the establishment of an entirely new church in the same location and with some of the same members. IMPACT Presbyterian Church was designed around a new model of ministry, which focused intensely on the needs of the community. For various reasons, that model played itself out by the early 1990s, and the congregation adopted its fifth and latest name, Community Presbyterian Church of Redlands.

Currently, the small and aging congregation has a doubtful future, but its long history of joyful community and resilience in challenging circumstances suggests there is likely to be more to its story.

Introduction

This paper presents the story of a 111-year-old Presbyterian congregation. It has been called by a succession of names, each one reflecting the identity and purposes of the congregation as it has evolved over time. Yet for over a century, the church has been centered at one single location, the corner of Webster Street and Union Avenue in north Redlands, California. It is a story, shared with the stories of many churches, that finds its inherent power not in buildings or programs or even doctrine, but in people. It is a story of persistence and of frequent joy and celebration in the face of constant challenge from social, religious and cultural pressures and expectations. It is a story that unfolds alongside the story of the city of Redlands, although it is not widely known. It is a story that snagged my imagination after catching a hint of it as a “drive-by preacher” (occasional guest pastor) leading worship there earlier this year. It is a story that deserves to be heard.

I had available to me an indispensable source as the foundation for this paper. “Our History” is an unpublished book researched and written in 1995 by W. Willis Cadwallader, a member of the church, an account which was then supplemented in 2013 by his daughter-in-law, Donna Cadwallader, at the 100th anniversary of the congregation’s founding. Copies are available at the A. K. Smiley Library in the Heritage Room and the “stacks.”

Why This Story

If you drop in on a current Sunday morning worship service, you will probably not think there was anything remarkable about the congregation. You will sit in a comfortably padded stackable chair among 15 to 20 other worshippers who are a near-equal mix of Hispanic and Anglo seniors along with one regular-attending Black couple that together fill about one third of the available seats. There is no organ, but a talented and personable young man who recently received a Master’s degree from the School of Music at the University of Redlands leads the hymns and provides other service music on a well-kept baby grand piano. The service is led by a designated lay person, and an ordained Presbyterian minister usually preaches the sermon. Seemingly nothing you will not find in any numbers of small churches. However, if you stay for the fellowship time afterward and listen to and talk with those present, you will begin to sense the incredibly strong bonds that have been formed over many decades, bonds that draw people in their 90s back to worship from their current residences beyond Redlands’ borders. This church is a special place with special people, and this paper is one attempt to tell their story.

The Setting

As the 19th century rolled into the 20th, Redlands had been incorporated for barely 12 years. The city had long attracted wealthy Easterners – first as vacationers and retirees, coming to the region for its beauty and reputedly healthy climate, and then as entrepreneurs and investors. It was well on its way to being recognized as the “Jewel of the Inland Empire,” or even the “Pasadena of San Bernardino County.”

Central to Redlands’ area economic development was the burgeoning citrus industry and its related infrastructure. Due to their relatively fragile skins -- a cut or nick could cause the whole fruit to spoil -- oranges and especially lemons required hand-picking and packing, creating huge labor demands filled primarily by Native Americans at first, and then by Chinese and later Mexicans. Yet, as indispensable as these workers were to the prosperity of the region, they were often poorly treated by their white employers and neighbors. They were paid the lowest possible wages, were unwelcome in many parts of town and relegated to live in substandard, isolated communities.

Coming Together

Into this setting came the people who began the first chapter of our story, five families in particular. First, in 1898, came the Zamarripas – Silverio and his wife, Patrocina Romero de Zamarripa, and his brother, Bernardino – along with brothers Jesus and Joe Herrera. They were farm workers who picked produce ranging across the Coachella Valley to Redlands. Then came the Romeros – Ramon and his wife, Ramona Herrera – who immigrated to Redlands from Mexico in 1899, joining family already in Redlands (his sister, Patrocina Zamarripa, and her brothers, the Herreras). Traveling with the Romeros was their nephew, Gavino Trevino. A few years later, Trevino returned to Mexico to bring back to Redlands Diega Villanueva; they would marry in 1904. The Enriquez family was also a part of this earliest group.

What distinguished these families and drew them together, in addition to close family connections, was their unique experience as Mexican Presbyterians. Presbyterian missionaries from the United States had been active in Mexico since the 1860s, with a more concerted outreach taking place in the latter quarter of that century. To be a Protestant of any stripe in Catholic Mexico marked them out as a minority in their own country, and while there is no evidence that any of our families personally suffered religious persecution, there are documented historical accounts of Protestants suffering at the hands of the dominant Mexican

church and its followers. Our families would certainly have known discrimination if not outright harassment or violence.

These Presbyterian immigrants found a significantly more welcoming religious atmosphere in the Redlands area. A Spanish-speaking Presbyterian church had been established as early as 1888 in Los Angeles. In 1903, around the time our families came to Redlands, *El Buen Pastor* (Good Shepherd) Presbyterian Church was organized in San Bernardino. Initially, the five families worshipped with Methodists in Redlands, but soon desired to practice their faith as Presbyterians. They joined *El Buen Pastor* in San Bernardino, but because of the difficulties that travel to San Bernardino often entailed, as often as not they met and worshipped in one of their Redlands homes, with some of the men taking turns at leading worship, and everyone studying together. Occasionally, a visiting pastor would preach to the group and administer the sacraments of baptism and Communion.

Attendance at these “homemade” services grew, and a larger meeting place was needed. A small chapel, *La Capillita* (“The Little Chapel”) was built by the men of the group to accommodate all who wished to participate. *La Capillita* was constructed on land that was part of the Gavino Trevino homestead, donated by him to the fellowship. Its location -- the corner of Webster and Union, four blocks west of Orange Street and two blocks north of Colton Avenue, squarely in the middle of the *barrio* – is where the church still resides today.

Throughout the nation, the location of railroad tracks through a city or town divided the more affluent residents from the less well-off. Redlands in the early 1900s was no exception. Both the Chinese and Mexican neighborhoods developed north of the Sante Fe rails, separated from the city’s downtown and southern hills. While the Chinese community dwindled and eventually disappeared due to intense racial animus, the Mexican community expanded further to the north. The *barrio* was characterized by a shared language (Spanish), a shared culture (embracing the food, music and traditions of Mexico and other Latin American countries) and the shared experience of living as an ethnic minority amid a more powerful, frequently antagonistic, majority. The *barrio* was often the only place where lodging or more permanent housing was available to an immigrant. This *barrio* was where these recently arrived Presbyterians took root.

The desire intensified among the group to organize their own Spanish-speaking Presbyterian church, especially after three more families – the Valdez, Garcia and Ayala families – joined the gatherings. There was already a Presbyterian church in Redlands, First Presbyterian Church on Vine Avenue and Fourth Street near downtown, organized in 1887, but that congregation was

not a realistic option for the Mexican group. The same elements that created the *barrio* – the attraction of shared language and culture coupled with the lack of acceptance by the majority – sadly existed in the church community as well. And in such circumstances, the added benefit of having a pastor who looked and spoke like the congregation was especially important. The Mexican Presbyterians did not want to join the downtown church, which would not have welcomed them at that time, in any event.

The process of developing a new Presbyterian church required several steps – it was not enough simply to declare that such a church had come into existence, but it took approval by a collection of Presbyterian churches in the region, which was known as the Presbytery. The Mexican Presbyterians in Redlands petitioned the Presbytery of Riverside, which had jurisdiction over Presbyterian churches in San Bernardino and Riverside counties. They found a champion, among others, in the pastor of the San Bernardino church where they were officially members, the Rev. Cipriano A. Frausto.

A little over a decade after their arrival in Redlands, on March 18, 1913, the new congregation was born and christened with the first of its many names, *Iglesia Presbiteriana Mexicana de Redlands* (Mexican Presbyterian Church of Redlands). The name succinctly described the congregation – it was Presbyterian, its heritage was Mexican and its language was Spanish. Rev. Frausto was installed as the first pastor, moving over from the San Bernardino church to guide the fledgling organization. Twenty two of the 34 charterer members were from the eight families that were the first to come to Redlands. They were soon meeting in a small, newly constructed sanctuary on the Trevino property, which housed the congregation until the 1930s.

The Early Life of Iglesia Presbiteriana Mexicana de Redlands

The congregation saw slow but steady growth. Although Rev. Frausto stayed for only a year-and-a-half, the next minister, Rev. Heliodoro Pure, pastored at *Presbiteriana Mexicana* for eight years, splitting his time with the Riverside Mexican church for much of that tenure. When he left in November, 1922, to serve the San Gabriel Mexican Church, membership had risen to 51. (That number, however, does not demonstrate the dynamic nature of membership activity – during his ministry, 87 people had joined the church, 50 had been passed on to other churches, 12 had dropped away and 8 had died. It was clearly a vibrant congregation.)

A note about membership in a Presbyterian church. Becoming a member was a formal process. A person needed to indicate their desire to join the church, often classes in Presbyterianism and

basic theology were required, the Session (the congregation's elected ruling board) would vote on the application of each potential member, and with Session's approval, the person would be accepted into the official membership of the church, usually recognized in a Sunday worship service. Terminating membership was equally formal – a person could have their membership transferred to another church or be taken off the rolls if they so requested or were no longer participating.

Over its first three-plus decades, *Iglesia Presbiteriana Mexicana de Redlands* was served by nine ordained ministers, most serving from one to five years and two lay leaders, who served four and five years each. By 1945, its membership recorded 95 active members. The congregation enjoyed a remodeled and expanded sanctuary and hall, built on the original property and dedicated in 1936.

This congregation, founded in the heart of the *barrio* by Mexican immigrants for other immigrants and Spanish-speakers, faced struggles over its early life rarely experienced by the big Protestant churches located near Redlands' downtown. The downtown churches were established with a sound financial footing, enabling them soon to construct large, well-appointed sanctuaries and other buildings and fund a wide variety of programs to attract new members and to do ministry in the community. By contrast, the people of *Presbiteriana Mexicana* were a minority population, made up for the most part of skilled and unskilled laborers and domestics who were often employed by members of the downtown churches. In addition, belonging to a Protestant church in the middle of a Catholic population made them again a minority within a minority – a significant ministry, as envisioned by the earliest members as “present[ing] Christ the ‘Protestant Way’ to friends and neighbors who were strong Roman Catholics,” but not a prosperous ministry.

The congregation's tight finances affected every aspect of their life together. Solvency was a constant concern. There was little money for anything beyond basic buildings or programs. Pastors could not be offered adequate compensation, and as a result, many were officially part-time, often taking other part-time positions elsewhere, as did Rev. Pure and other pastors who succeeded him. While pastoral turnover was not excessive in the first 30 years or so, these pastors generally served for shorter periods than did the pastors of the downtown churches, introducing an instability into the life of the congregation.

The Presbytery recognized the need from the very beginning to give the church financial support. While the support was welcome and necessary, it also served to diminish the

congregation's autonomy, as they were forced to gain Presbytery's approval for any major improvement or undertaking.

However, one advantage growing out of the congregation's challenging situation was a heightened experience of community. One was not likely to come to the church simply to make important business contacts or enhance one's social status. The church began as a community of immigrant families, and the ties of community continued to be its strength as new people were welcomed and nurtured. Community – an organic connection between people – has been a mark of the church throughout its history.

Becoming *El Divino Salvador Iglesia Presbiteriana* ...

By 1946, after 33 years of existence, the congregation acknowledged an important change had taken place in the surrounding community, and that that change needed to be reflected in the representation of the congregation to the public. The *barrio* had become home to Spanish-speakers from various Latin American countries, and so the congregation voted to remove the narrow, ethnic designation of "Mexican" from the church's name. In its place, the heart and focus of the church was spotlighted – *El Divino Salvador* (The Divine Savior, Jesus Christ) *Iglesia Presbiteriana*. The name remained in Spanish, demonstrating the language of church life and worship, and it still identified the church as Presbyterian. ("*Unida*" ["United"] is added to "*Presbiteriana*" in some histories, but the national denomination's name was not changed until a merger of two major Presbyterian denominations in 1958, and so it is unlikely that *Unida* was part of the church's name in 1946.)

The post-war years saw more frequent turnover in pastoral leadership, with pastors generally serving for shorter periods, and pulpit supply by non-ordained leaders more often utilized. Nevertheless, by mid-century, membership had surpassed the 100 mark.

... and then Divine Savior United Presbyterian Church

During the ministry of Rev. Jaime O. Quinones, who served from 1957 to 1964, the congregation made another significant transition. World War Two had thrown Latinos and whites into closer contact – Latino servicemen were not segregated into their own units as were African Americans, and stateside Latinos worked in essential jobs that often placed them

in the company of white workers – and while that exposure did not eradicate the discrimination directed toward Latinos, it did tend to foster increased tolerance and acceptance. In addition, many families of Latino heritage enjoyed improving circumstances and no longer felt confined to the *barrio*. As a result, the demographics of the community surrounding the church underwent a gradual but steady change. Spanish-speakers were moving elsewhere, and whites and African Americans were moving in to take advantage of affordable rents and home ownership.

By the late 1950s, the number of strictly Spanish-speaking people had declined both in the church and the community, replaced by bi-lingual and English-only speakers. In response to this changing community and with the desire to remain connected to its neighbors, the congregation voted to approve another name change. They chose to translate the church's name from Spanish into English, thus becoming Divine Savior United Presbyterian Church ("United" had been added to the denomination name as a result of the 1958 merger mentioned earlier).

In tandem with the name change came a major change in congregational life and identity. It was one thing to render the name of the church in English, but that accomplished little if the language of its worship and other activities remained Spanish. With an eye to increasing effectiveness in the changing community and to accommodate the congregation's children who had become more comfortable with English (an increasing number spoke little or no Spanish at all), the congregation agreed to hold two services each month in English. It was an apparently small change that quickly came to upset many, as it seemed to strike at the very history and heritage of the congregation founded so passionately by the Mexican immigrants nearly 50 years before. Some people left the church because of it.

Despite these difficult but necessary changes, the congregation failed to thrive. According to some who were members at the time, incorporating more English into the life of the congregation did not inject new energy or participation. English-speaking youth did not return in any appreciable number, nor did people in the neighborhood show increased interest in the church. Rev. Quinones left in 1964 and was followed by a string of pastors and temporary pulpit supply, only one of which stayed for a full year. While membership (officially) remained steady at just under 120, the life and mission of the church was slowly withering away, in contrast to the swelling memberships and activities that marked the 1960s in the large, downtown Protestant churches (which, of course, were operating under much different circumstances, drawing from a majority population still enjoying the booming post-war years).

Even before Rev. Quinones left, the Presbytery of Riverside, which, along with the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, had been underwriting the church as a Mission Aid Church, began to question the value of the church's ministry as it was then constructed – at stake was continued financial support. The money that the church relied upon from the higher courts of the denomination gave those courts more authority over Divine Savior than over non-supported churches. Questions such as, "Was the church effective in its mission to the community? Was it necessary have a Spanish-speaking pastor or to conduct any of its worship and other activities in Spanish?" were starting to be asked. And the unthinkable was suddenly being spoken out loud – should Divine Savior, this lovingly built, close-knit congregation with a history of more than 50 years, be dissolved and replaced by an entirely new church? Thus began a tortuous five-year journey that led to an upheaval that blindsided many: the dissolving of the established congregation – meaning the church known as Divine Savior United Presbyterian Church would cease to exist – and initiating in its place, using the same buildings and with some of the same members, a bold, new vision for ministry.

The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, USA (the ruling body of the denomination), had been in the process of reevaluating its support of Mission Aid Churches to determine if that model was achieving its intended goals. Divine Savior in north Redlands was one of approximately a dozen churches nationwide chosen as a candidate for the adoption of a new, experimental form of "being the church," centered less around traditional forms of worship and study which were largely focused inward on the members and more toward looking outward to address the needs of the community and its people.

Such a momentous change did not come easily, and the process generated both great excitement and tremendous pain. Terminating the church was discussed in meetings as early as 1965. In March of 1967, the Presbytery proposed dissolving Divine Savior and establishing a New Church Development in its place. However, before that could happen, pastoral leadership needed to be in place to usher the congregation through the death of one church and the birth of the next.

Rev. Harold (Hal) Hudspeth was called to Divine Savior in late 1968 to be the organizing pastor of the new church. Congregational meetings were held at Clement Junior High School in June and November, 1969, to move the process forward. Anger burned hot from those who felt they were being robbed of the church in which they grew up, were married and raised their children, while feelings ran equally high in those who believed the church needed to be thoroughly remade in order to remain alive and relevant to the community. It was at the November meeting, with 22 Divine Savior members attending (enough to constitute a quorum which

validated the actions taken), that a motion passed to bring Divine Savior United Presbyterian Church to a close and to charter a brand new Presbyterian church in its place.

IMPACT Presbyterian Church

The newly established church was chartered on December 5, 1969, at a gathering in the Clement Junior High School auditorium. Its beginnings were in marked contrast to the founding of the original congregation at Webster and Union. Then, the church arose organically out of a community of like-minded, Spanish-speaking Presbyterians, brought into being by the passion of their vision and commitment to each other and the people of the *barrio*. The new church was initially the action of people outside the congregation and the *barrio*, people who controlled the purse strings that enabled the congregation to operate. The expressed intent, however, was similar in each case – to serve the spiritual and basic life-needs of the surrounding community, which, as previously noted, had itself undergone significant change in the intervening six decades.

The name of the new church development boldly described its dream, as had the names of the congregation that had preceded it. It was to be IMPACT Presbyterian Church – “IMPACT” being the acronym for “In Mission Pursuit And Community Thrust.” Its model was the ministry of Jesus, who according to the Gospels spent far more time out among the people than in the Temple or synagogue. Thus, it was not surprising that one dramatic change involved the way the church sanctuary was used. It became a workspace to coordinate the developing activities of IMPACT – the pews were removed and replaced by folding chairs which could be configured to meet any immediate need; the organ, too, was stored; and the stained glass window, donated and installed in the then newly constructed sanctuary in 1936, was boarded up for its protection. Worship services were moved off-site to a residence on Colton Avenue and then to Clement Junior High School. A rented building on Colton served as office and meeting space.

The membership of the church underwent a dramatic transformation, as well. Only 36 of the 118 members on Divine Savior’s final rolls became charter members of IMPACT, while the new church drew a steady flow of faculty from the University of Redlands and their families intrigued by its unconventional ministry. The church achieved financial independence during this time and was no longer considered a “Mission Church” (and it has proudly maintained that independence ever since). IMPACT Presbyterian Church became the site of non-stop community activity over the years ranging from drug and alcohol counseling services, a YMCA Nursery School, a campaign center to elect a Northsider to City Council, a branch library, an

incubator of anti-Vietnam War protests, a meeting place for a wide variety of community groups and a polling place (among other things).

Yet even as the dream gained momentum, it collided with more pedestrian concerns. It was very soon apparent that the new enterprise was underfunded, and in 1973 Rev. Hudspeth's pastorate was cut from full- to part-time and he took on the added role of part-time Executive Presbyter (Lead Administrator) of the Presbytery of Riverside. The ministry also required more people to make it work than were regularly available. As excited as the congregation was to undertake this unique and vital ministry, it proved to be more challenging and exhausting than anyone had anticipated or provided for.

Rev. Hudspeth left in June, 1978, and was followed by Rev. John Wichman, who served IMPACT part-time while an Assistant Pastor at First Presbyterian downtown. He was especially attuned to the importance of the "social mission" (bringing the Gospel to bear in the lives of hurting people in the community) having grown up acquainted with mission to the Chinese in San Francisco. After Rev. Wichman left at the end of 1981, a succession of temporary pastors and guest preachers served the church for the next two-and-a-half years.

Lack of consistent pastoral leadership takes a toll on a congregation, regardless of how competent the temporary pastors have been. The church was at a low ebb by April, 1984 – only 15 adults were present in worship to vote on a potential new pastor – and the church was once again in danger of being closed. Yet with the call of Rev. Joe Beltran, the door opened on a decade of new life and a revitalized ministry.

During his time at IMPACT, Rev. Beltran worked full-time as a chaplain at a center for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities in Costa Mesa. Yet despite the fact that the church received only a fraction of his time and attention, the congregation grew during his ten-year tenure, new educational programs were established for both children & adults, upgrades were made to the physical plant and the church declared itself a "Sanctuary" for Central American refugees.

The momentum could not be sustained, however. Rev. Beltran left in February, 1994, and the oft-seen cycle of weekly pulpit supply commenced anew, leaving congregation leadership in the hands of the Session. In seeking to call a new pastor, the church was required to prepare a document called a Mission Study to describe themselves, their work and their vision to a prospective pastor. In this course of self-examination, the question was asked as to whether the

name IMPACT still reflected the church's identity and, after due consideration, the fifth and current name of the congregation at Webster and Union became Community Presbyterian Church of Redlands.

Community Presbyterian Church of Redlands

The congregation once again embarked on an extended period of steady pastoral leadership, first with the call in 1995 of Rev. Jamie Mathias for a predetermined two-year term, and then under the leadership of Rev. Sylvia Karcher, who came to the church in 1998. Interestingly, Rev. Karcher had attended the church back in 1969 when she was on the faculty of the University of Redlands, having been invited to the church by other faculty members. She was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry in 1985, and 13 years later returned to pastor the church she once attended. She served Community Presbyterian Church until her retirement in 2007.

During this time, the church settled into a ministry that met the needs of its members for worship, fellowship, education and service. The latter included participating in the Share Ministries food distribution, hosting Vacation Bible School for children in the neighborhood, choir singing for residents of Plymouth Village and other groups and providing an office and volunteers for Habitat for Humanity. Church buildings served as a long-time home for a Chinese congregation and a Spanish-speaking Seventh Day Adventist group. Membership was stable, drawing on the networks and families of church members as well as University of Redlands faculty.

Immediately following Rev. Karcher's departure, Jan Opdyke, a (non-ordained) Commissioned Lay Pastor, assumed the pastoral reins. Congregational life continued much as before, until Pastor Opdyke was forced to resign in 2023 after 16 years with the congregation due to serious health issues.

Karcher and Opdyke provided leadership and stability, but they also are illustrative of the severe challenges faced by small congregations in acquiring pastoral leadership. Neither were full-time at the church; Opdyke had a full-time position at Redlands Community Hospital as the head of the hospital's Foundation. In addition, neither lived in the community – Karcher commuted from Hemet, where she and her husband resided, and Opdyke lived with her family in Cherry Valley. Larger churches are able to provide adequate salaries and housing allowances to allow their full-time pastors to move into homes near the church. Not so with churches like

Community, a situation which adversely affects the ability of the small-church pastor to minister at peak effectiveness.

Today, Community Presbyterian Church, in the assessment of one of its members, is “holding on by its fingertips.” Its aging membership is declining. Of the 30 people listed in the most recent church directory, only two reside in north Redlands. Fifteen live elsewhere in Redlands; seven live outside the city, ranging from Beaumont to Colton; four have moved out of Southern California and two have passed away since the creation of the directory.

Yet the glue that has held this congregation together throughout its long story is the same force that brought the first families together 111 years ago – the profound pull of community and shared experience – and it is what sustains Community Presbyterian Church of Redlands today. A couple that was married in the church 75 years ago celebrated their recent anniversary in company with most of the congregation. A 90th birthday party enjoyed a similar attendance just a few weeks ago. People genuinely care about and take care of each other. It is an attractive group of people that is warm and inviting.

The future of the church is not promising, and the path ahead is murky. There is little to draw families with children who might grow up in the church and stay for an extended time. The possibility of merging with First Presbyterian Church downtown is discouragingly small due to long-standing differences in the heritage and culture of these two churches.

Yet some light glimmers. Community had sufficient funds to call Rev. Karcher, who now lives in Redlands, out of retirement to fill a quarter-time position and to add another quarter-time position for Rev. Matthew George to attend to pastoral care. A midweek gathering at Plymouth Village to watch and discuss episodes of the television series, “The Chosen,” a critically acclaimed dramatization of the ministry of Jesus, has pulled in people from outside the church who may, in time, come to participate in the life of the congregation. Certainly, no one is giving up. The church has prevailed repeatedly against overwhelming odds in its long life – there may very well be more chapters to be written in its story.

References

Cadwallader, W. Willis & Cadwallader, Donna, *Our History*, Redlands, California, unpublished, 1995 & 2013.

Cervantes-Ortiz, Leopoldo, "National Presbyterian Church of Mexico begins 140th anniversary," May 14, 2012, Presbyterian Church, (U.S.A.), <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2012/5/14/national-presbyterian-church-mexico-begins-140th-a/>

Jenkins, Benjamin T, *Octopus's Garden: How Railroads and Citrus Transformed Southern California*, Lawrence, Kansas, University Press of Kansas, 2023.

Mudge, LeOra, *Celebrating 125 Years of Worship in Redlands*, Redlands, California, Redlands Area Interfaith Council, 2013.

Vasquez, Antonio Gonzalez & Carpio, Genevieve, *Mexican Americans in Redlands*. Charleston, South Carolina, Arcadia Publication, 2012.

Wikipedia, "National Presbyterian Church in Mexico," accessed July 9, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Presbyterian_Church_in_Mexico

Williams, Laurie, "A Full Century of Worship, Praise," Redlands Daily Facts, July 13, 2013.

Plus extended conversations with the following people, who also reviewed the final draft of the paper:

Cadwallader, Donna, church member for 50 years

Karcher, Rev. Sylvia, first called as pastor in 1995, then again in 2024

Soto, Manases & Anita, church members for 80+ years (married in the church in 1949)

Vieten, Donald (Pat), first involved with the church in the late 1960s, transferred membership from First Presbyterian Church in 1994

Thanks also to Andrew Coyazo, a member of the Fortnightly Club of Redlands, whose roots go deep in the Mexican American community in Redlands, for reviewing the final draft of the paper