



ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A ministry of the Presbyterian Church USA & SF Presbytery
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A Historical Sketch on occasion of the Church's 50th Anniversary (1956)

In 1906, a group came from the University Mound Presbyterian Church in the Portola District and started a Sunday School in Visitacion Valley. The School was held in the Bayshore Hall, located where the present library is. In February of the year Dr. Lynn T. White began contacting adults of the community, seeking to interest them in the building of a church. The people of Visitacion Valley responded, and a church was built on the present property located on Leland Avenue. The Sunday School was then moved from the Hall to the new Church Building.

A need was felt for more facilities of a different kind, and on February 7, 1908 an entertainment program was held in the Bayshore Hall to secure funds to build a gymnasium at the rear of the lot. To help in this project, the Board of National Missions granted \$500.00 in aid. To help in the project, being organized as the St. James Guild. However, this organization dwindled in the years following as people moved away, and then disbanded.

On April 26, 1908, the St. James Presbyterian church was organized with 69 charter members.

In 1912, the Women's Missionary Society was organized to take the place of the disbanded St. James Guild. From that day to the present (1956), these women have an unbroken record of service to their church and to their Lord.

In 1945, the Presbytery began a war-time church program in the Candlestick Cove under the direction of Rev. George Searles. In 1951, the two churches, St. James and Candlestick Cove were untied and the two Sunday Schools maintained until 1954, when the construction of the freeway made closing of the Cove Sunday School necessary.

In 1949, the name was changed to the Women of St. James. At that time, it was reorganized into the Circle Plan, and today we have four circles with 62 members.

In 1917, some additions were made to the church building including a kitchen and rooms for the Seminary Students coming to us on the weekends.

But the facilities of the church still were not adequate, and in 1922, the plans were completed for the older portion of our present building. A \$2,800.00 in grant aid was given by the Presbyterian Board of National Missions towards the building that cost about \$9,500.00. On March 13, 1923, the present Sanctuary was dedicated. Through the depression years that followed, the members of the church struggled to pay off the debt. It was not until April 1946 that the church was debt-free.

In 1947, the men of the church were organized as the Valley Churchmen. Through the following years, they have carried the heaviest part of the load of repairing and

improving the church property through their volunteer labor. At the same time, they have witnessed to their faith in Jesus Christ to the men of the community.

Again, the Sunday School became too large for the building, and plans were made to raise the money for an addition. In 1955, the plans came to fulfillment and the pledges were raised to build the present addition. Two and a half years later, as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, we are dedicating it. The result of \$29,000 and over 3,000 hours of donated labor from our friends and neighbors stands before us.

Through the past 50 years, the St. James Presbyterian Church has grown gradually, until today we have 221 members. We look forward today to years of new and greater service to the community of which we are a part. We see the need of reaching more lives in the community for our Lord, so that they too might find the spirit, the life, and the faith that has guided our paths in the past and in the path our Savior ("Saviour" originally in the 1956 document) will lead us in the years ahead.

Note: This was written sometime in 1956 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of St. James Presbyterian Church.



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A Brief History on occasion of the Church's 102nd Anniversary (2010)

Dedicated members from the University Mound Presbyterian Church in the Portola District conducted Sunday School extension classes in Visitacion Valley in 1906, which was housed at the Bayshore Hall (now a library, at the corner of Leland and Desmond). Dr. Lynn T. White simultaneously gathered dedicated adults in the community and nurtured them in the faith. They built a small church building on the present Leland property in February of the same year, and continued to hold their Sunday schools and services in the place. The church was founded.

Two years later, on April 26, 1908, an official recognition of the congregation by the Presbytery with 69 charter members was handed down. Our celebration today of the 102nd Anniversary therefore spans the years of the **real gathering** and the **official recognition** of the gathered people of St. James who served then, and the years of dedicated ministry of the present membership.

Renovations of physical facilities for the growing membership of St. James were done through the years, with leadership of the **St. James Guild** (later called The Women of St. James), who sought the needed funds for construction, and later the **Valley Churchmen** (now called the Men of St. James), provided the labor for most of the construction.

On March 1923, the present Sanctuary was completed and dedicated. Sunday School classes continued to grow in the following years that all available spaces on the ground and upper floor were occupied by 1952. This was due to the uniting of St. James and the **Candlestick Cove** congregations.

Peter Burnett, the first American Governor of California, lived two blocks from the church site. One of his daughters actively taught Sunday School at St. James, and the family was present in the services of the church.

Before World War II, Visitacion Valley was a middle- and upper-class community. After the war, it became multi-ethnic and economically less affluent. Real estate values went down. In the 70s, St. James suffered from decline of membership and financial resources. Many of St. James regular worshipers, especially the young married couples, sold their homes and moved away. These families are now attending other churches and left the Church with limited resources. In spite of such decline in resources, St. James continued in its social ministry. The Hearst Gold Medallion, the highest service award in the Bay Area had only been given to two clergy men, the Pastor at St. Anthony's Dining Room and St. James' pastor during that period.

A population shift occurred in the mid-70s through the 80s, bringing in Filipinos, Pacific Islanders, and migrating Afro-Americans to the Visitacion Valley. This population

generally belonged to the blue-collar economic bracket. St. James continued to minister to these groups, but was not able to add significantly to its human and financial resources.

In the late 80s, a move to place St. James under the Redevelopment Program of the Presbytery of San Francisco was conceived. The target population at the time was the Filipino community, which was thought to have potential and skill for growth, although a big Chinese population started to move into the community. The vision of the Presbytery of San Francisco included establishing the first Filipino Presbyterian ministry at St. James. The first Filipino Pastor of St. James, Rev. Dr. Jeremias Resus, was installed in 1990 to help in the revitalization of the congregation, and in developing its neglected ministries. After sixteen years of service, Rev. Resus retired in December of 2006.

Today, St. James Presbyterian Church continues the ministry handed down by God through the generations of the faithful who lived, served, and died in the heart and spirit of the community. The Church will continue to face the future with faithful members and friends who are willing to extend the resources needed to carry on the witness for Christ. You are needed in this enterprise.

Note: This was written sometime in 2010 to commemorate the 102nd Anniversary of St. James Presbyterian Church.