

A Bit of Centennial History

a collection of articles by Karen Orlando
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June 2022-December 2023



A Little Bit of CPC Centennial History

from June 2022 Mission Bell

And so, our story begins...

In 1918, a seed of faith was planted in a small farming community fifteen miles northeast of Sacramento, called Carmichael Colony. Three mothers, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Champlain, and Mrs. Ellithorpe found the need for their children to attend Sunday School, but the nearest church was five miles away on nearly impassable roads in Fair Oaks. Against heavy odds, these mothers organized a local Sunday School in the nearby schoolhouse on Sutter Avenue, which had been built the year before (the plot of land is now where Carmichael Elementary School is located). For two and a half years, a young

woman in the community, Marie Shumate, hitched up an old horse to her father's long bed wagon every Sunday morning and drove down the dusty roads in the community picking up the children for Sunday School. By the time the Sunday School discontinued in 1920, there were fifty to seventy-five children coming regularly, but no adults.

The Sunday School started by these devoted mothers ended after Marie was married and went elsewhere to live, but while that

seed of faith seemed to go dormant, God was watering and waiting. It didn't take long for that seed's roots to grow. In 1923 a retired Methodist minister, the



Carmichael Community Church Sunday School class c. 1925

Rev. J. W. Babcock, spoke to the Carmichael Community Club reminding them of the need for an organized Sunday School for the children.

By October, that seed had become to blossom into an organized church with a ratified constitution. It was called, "The Carmichael Community Church." In November, the weekly pledges hit a high point of \$12.63. On December 2nd, 1923, with a board of administration

and trustees organized, a congregational meeting was called extending the position of part-time minister to Rev. Babcock at a salary of \$25.00 per month. On December 2nd, 1923, the basic elements of church existence were at last in place. And with that our story began. The foundation for what would become Carmichael Presbyterian Church had commenced.

- excerpt from Heritage of Faith: A 75 Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church, by Margaret Herman, Marie Segur, and Faye White

Today, we call Carmichael Presbyterian Church our home. Its members and friends are our family. We can't imagine our life's journey without the relationships and experiences we've had together here at CPC and in each other's homes.

Our church's upcoming Centennial is the perfect opportunity to honor and recognize the people and programs who live out the Gospel in word and deed. The year-long celebration, starting in January, includes the publishing of a commemorative book for not only our current members and friends but for future generations, and CPC visitors.

Let's honor those dedicated women who started the Sunday School and the many women and men who we can thank for our church home and legacy.

A Bit of Pre-Centennial History

from July 2022 Mission Bell

“Lots for Sale in Carmichael, California – 10-acre tracts for \$1,500 with 10 percent down on terms of \$10 a month at 6 percent interest.” Sounds too good to be true in 2022 and it would be. That advertisement appeared in the early 1900s in area newspapers and in the national press, including *Sunset* magazine. It continued: “In the shelter of rolling foothills secure from frosts the Woods hereabouts are stocked with game birds, quail, and the streams are stocked with trout for rod and ducks for gun.” 100 years or more later, Carmichael is not only home to game birds, fish, and assorted wildlife, but it is home to nearly 80,000 residents, and of course, Carmichael Presbyterian Church.

Long before it was ever called Carmichael, the Maidu Indians inhabited the land dating back to 1,000 BC. They were forced to leave the area when white settlers began farming around 1860. In 1907, Charles and Mary Deterding became the first permanent residents of the region when they purchased 425 acres beside the north bank of the American River. The Deterding Ranch, known as San Juan Meadows, is

now Ancil Hoffman Park. About that time, a man from Atlanta, Georgia who had settled in Sacramento with the intent of developing land in the Sacramento Valley came along. The man was Dan Carmichael.

“Big Real Estate Deal” was the headline in the *Folsom Telegraph* newspaper on October 1, 1909. The story was about



Carmichael School, the first school in Carmichael, was built in 1917.

Daniel Carmichael who purchased 3,000 acres in two transactions of land from the San Juan Mexican Land Grant. He

then sold 10-acre parcels for \$1,500 each. By 1918 he had sold 35 parcels. With the war ending, a feeling of prosperity had come to the community. Party line telephone service had reached Carmichael Colony and H Street (what is now Fair Oaks Boulevard) was paved, making it possible for workers to commute the 15 miles from Carmichael into Sacramento.

Education was an initial need in the community. The earliest school, San Juan Ele-

mentary, was at the corner of Dewey Drive and Winding Way. Families demanded another school and Dan Carmichael agreed to donate ten acres as long as the school was named after him. The two-room schoolhouse was built in 1917. Carmichael School at Sutter and California Avenues, still in use today, quickly became the center of community activities.

And this is where the story of Carmichael Presbyterian Church begins, with a fledgling community in 1918 called Carmichael Colony, a two-room schoolhouse used as a community center, and three mothers with a desire for their children to have a Christian Education.

(Excerpt and Source information from: Carmichael Chamber of Commerce, *Heritage of Faith – A 75 Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church*, and *Images of America, Carmichael* by Kay Muther)

A Little Bit of Centennial History

from August 2022 Mission Bell

In 1923 as Carmichael Community Church was officially established, Carmichael Grammar School on Sutter Ave, was its home. The trustees of the Carmichael School District considered the usage of the school for a place of worship as a perfectly logical use of the facility. In fact, the school played the critical role of a community center. As the school grew from a single two- room building to double its size,

the enrollment of the church grew as well. In 1923 almost 90 people attended church, and the Sunday School had 134 kids. All four rooms of the school and an outbuilding called the music room were fully utilized on a Sunday morning. For the first time since its formation the church began to consider building its own permanent place of worship.

True to Presbyterian form, a committee was formed to spend untold amounts of hours examining the issues. By the following December \$2,500.00 was in the building fund and an architect was commissioned to draw up a blueprint for a building that would be approximately 28 feet

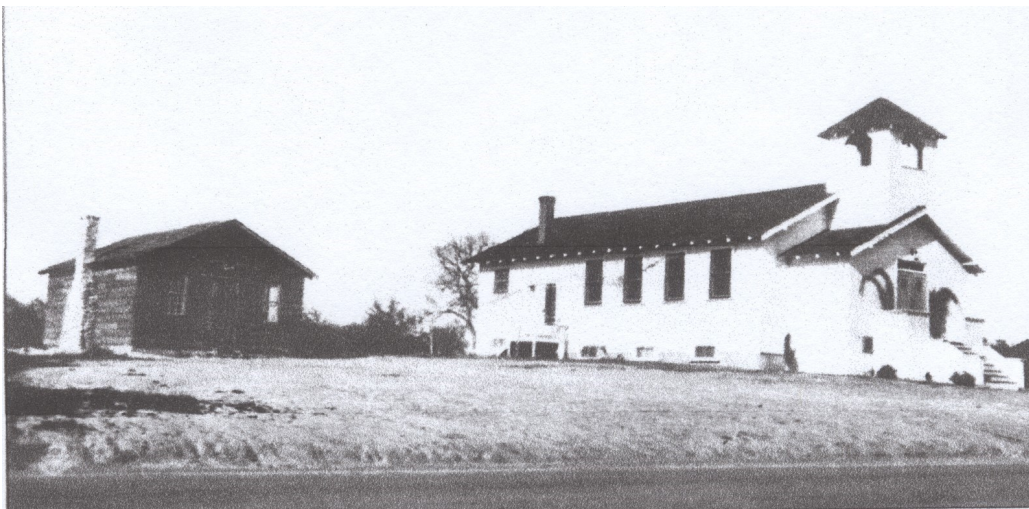
by 50 feet in size.

With plans in place, it was time to find a site for this new church. Not without controversy, the Church Building Committee waited almost two years before selecting the final

lot occupied by the present church building on Marconi Avenue, as a gift with the privilege of purchase of (the) adjoining lot on the west. The church accepted the offer.

Legend has it, when Mr.

Hobbs presented the land to the church, he said, "I haven't been able to make a thing grow on this piece, but maybe a church will grow



Stoner Lodge and the original sanctuary of Carmichael Community Church, c. 1927.

site. Three different properties had been proposed, with each site favoring a different section of Carmichael. The first site was a half-acre of land beside a filling station located at the bend of Fair Oaks Highway. The second site was a piece of property offered by Mrs. Warren on Palm Drive. The third property was the property of Mr. H. A. Hobbs on Marconi Ave. 1926 had seen the paving of Marconi Avenue. One can only imagine that paved roads might have helped the committee move forward on a decision. The *San Juan Record* reported that Hobbs donated the land on May 11, 1927. Hobbs offered the site, the

there." Pastor Jim Clark received a letter in 1992 from Hobbs's niece, Betty, reaffirming that statement. She said, "I can remember hearing many times that Uncle Henry donated that land to God's work since he could never get it to 'work' for him." Call it a legend or call it fact; legend became truth as God's work started to grow at 5645 Marconi Avenue for Carmichael Community Church in 1927 and has flourished for nearly 100 years.

Our church story to be continued...

Source: *Heritage of Faith: A 75-Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church*

A Bit of Our Centennial Story

More About Our Church Building

from September 2022 Mission Bell

With the church site on Marconi Ave. in place from the donation of Mr. Hobbs, the work was on. Notably fund raising had begun. A far cry from our recent Legacy of Faith campaigns, a door-to-door canvas of the community was held. Of course, the community wasn't as densely populated as it is now. Jim Dickson was one of those who solicited funds for Carmichael Community Church, literally going to every house all the way down to Mission Ave. "There were very few houses and most without money." Barbara McAllister recalled in 1988. "My father gave him a hundred dollars and told him he could not be interested in joining the church as he was involved in Westminster. Jim never forgot that he gave." Having become an affiliate of the Presbyterian Church in 1925, they were able to secure a \$1,400.00 noninterest loan and a \$400.00 grant from the Presbyterian National Board of Mission. Creativity played a big part of the fundraising as well. The Carmichael Ladies Circle raised money playing bridge, holding dinners, and with a series of dances. They raised over \$500.00 with much of that money set aside to pay for the concreting of the basement floor.

The site of the new church had been an olive orchard. Except for a few trees removed to dig the basement, the olive or-

chard remained. Legend has it that due to the hard pan soil, a few of the men had some fun and used dynamite to get that basement dug. Trees or no trees. In the lean years of the depression, the olives were harvested and sold. All of the olive trees in the patios as of 1998 were original trees from the orchard.

This was the first church to be built in the Carmichael Colony. Everyone in the community shared a great sense of pride in the building. The church on the newly paved Marconi Avenue would be a landmark building in the center of a growing, prosperous town. Carmichael would have a communal center besides the school on Sutter Ave. Throughout the summer the people in the community watched the daily building of the church. People helped wherever they could. One young girl remembered sitting in the Gambs house, "looking across the way they were in the throes of putting the frame up in the church." On hot evenings as the Delta breezes began to blow, neighbors would stroll past the church, stopping to see what progress had been made that day.

It was a big day in the community when Clark and Hughes brought the bell from

Elk Grove to Carmichael. The bell came from a Methodist church in Elk Grove. People stood and watched, while others grabbed the rope on the jury-rigged pulley to help lift the heavy bell up to the cupola. The joke for years was that the bell still rang a little bit Methodist while being Presbyterian. More good fortune landed upon our little church as they were able to purchase pews, as well as the pulpit furniture, from Westminster Church for \$344.00. Later, when the time came to build a lodge for the Scouts, the wood came from a Buster Keaton movie being filmed on the Sacramento River. They had several log cabins made of pine slabs with the bark still on. They were persuaded to let the church have sufficient slabs to build the scout lodge. As the days grew near to the completion of the church building, the building committee suggested that a silver-grey colored paint be used in the interior of the church. With paint, pews, and a bell to ring the community into worship, the choir practiced, and a dedication was planned.

With great pride from members to the community, the Carmichael church building was finally finished. On a beautiful warm sunny afternoon, Sunday, October 23rd, 1927, the church,

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A Bit of Centennial History

from October 2022 Mission Bell

What is a church if not a place to worship God, a place to grow and experience God's grace,

and a place to celebrate the milestones of our lives.

As it was with Carmichael

Community Church with a newly dedicated sanctuary in 1927. On December 26, 1927, Evelyn Clark and Glenn Hughes were married. This was the first wedding in the little church. Even in California, flowers are not easy to find at Christmas, but Mrs. George Baldwin found enough rose petals in various yards, so Evelyn Clark walked down the aisle on the bride's traditional flower strewn path. The Clark family arrived in Carmichael in 1920 from South Dakota. They eventually settled on a parcel with orange trees that the current Milagro Center occupies. Glenn came to Sacramento in 1923 also from South Dakota where he was a friend of the family. Glenn told the story of standing with Bill, Evelyn's father, when the Clark family home was under construc-



Photo courtesy of Red Hughes
Glenn Hughes and Evelyn Clark in 1927, the first couple to be married at Carmichael

tion. It was there he asked Bill for Evelyn's hand in marriage. Glenn said that his father-in-law was so stunned he nearly fell into the open basement. A few months later, Carmichael Community Church had its first wedding.

Meet Red Hughes, the 93-year-old son of Evelyn and Glenn. I had the opportunity

to sit



Photo by Karen Orlando

Red Hughes (above) recalls growing up in Carmichael, including his father operating the Sunnydale Garage (right) and his time at Carmichael Community Church.

down with Red in his Carmichael home on a hot August day to talk about his life, family, and recollections of Carmichael Community Church. Red and his sister grew up on California Ave. His father, Glenn, operated the Sunnydale Garage at California Ave and Fair Oaks.

His mother worked at Hales Department Store on 9th and K St. His family were charter members of the church. Red drove the church bus "Ermintrude" when it was time for Christmas Caroling in the later 40's while his grandfather dressed as Santa. When the chapel was built, he hauled in the dirt, while Drew and Jim Dickson were the masons and Drew did all the wood carving.

Red and his wife Marilyn were married in 1951. He joked that his was a three-denomination wedding. At the time he was working as a Methodist choir director, he was married by a Presbyterian minister, James Comfort Smith, at a Bap-



Photo courtesy of Red Hughes

tist church because the chapel at Carmichael Community Church was too small. They moved into a small apartment on the Pefley's property on Palm. Red was in the Navy and eventually became the band director at El Camino High School, having a

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A Bit of Our Centennial Story More About Our Church Building

from September 2022 Mission Bell

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beautifully decorated with roses, zinnias, and chrysanthemums, was dedicated. The bell began to ring tolling out the arrival of a church in Carmichael Colony. “Crowded to capacity, the church was filled with people of the community, adjoining communities and people from Sacramento.” Late arrivals continuing to crowd into the new sanctuary claimed they heard the bells ringing as far away as Mission Ave. Under the leadership of Roy Sullivan, the choir sang – “Rock of Ages,” “Give,” and “Come, At Times, A Stillness.” A male quartet sang an original song aptly named, “Dedication.” The quality of the music was such that many people came to church just to hear the choir. The Fair Oaks Progress reported that the dedication of the Carmichael Community Church represented: “...the spiritual work of a community, culminating the efforts of five years...” In truth, the spirit of God had been at work for more than five years. It had started with the three mothers in 1918 wanting a Sunday School for their children.

Source: *Heritage of Faith: A 75-Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church*

A Bit of Centennial History

from October 2022 Mission Bell

long career in the San Juan Unified School District. A moment of pride was taking his El Camino Band to the 1960 Olympics at Squaw Valley. The school borrowed enough warm boots so that all the band members would have dry feet for the snowy event. Red met Walt Disney who orchestrated the opening ceremonies, and a few of his band students made it on the cover of Life magazine. While Red and his wife joined the Unitarian Church upon the return from the Navy, he’s stayed connected to CPC through his deep roots in the community.

Sitting in Red’s kitchen, listening to the many stories of his life, I’m reminded what church is: life! It’s Red’s life embedded in the history of Carmichael Community Church when his parents became the first couple to be married on Marconi Ave. It’s all our lives. God’s hand shaping our lives and intertwining our history as we worship together and serve together at Carmichael Presbyterian Church.

A Bit of Centennial History

from November 2022 Mission Bell

The 1920's were prosperous in Carmichael, but as the 20's came to a close, times were about to change.

Roberta Gibbons Oldham, a daughter of one of the church's founding families remembered: "I had ridden our horse to my piano lesson. When I returned home, mother said, 'The Stock Market crashed today.'

I had no idea what that meant. This was like the day President Kennedy was killed. Everybody remembers where he was when we heard the news. We soon learned the full impact of the depression. It was horrible."

A young Carmichael School student remembered: "... the price of watermelons was so low that it didn't cover the cost to pick them. Acres were left on the Deterding Ranch to rot in the fields. But many of them didn't rot because we kids would pick up a giant melon, reach in and pull out the heart...then go on to the next.

A glance at the church's bank



The Gibbons children, including Roberta Gibbons Oldham (far right) c. 1930.

balance in the 1933-34 budget attests to the strained fiscal affairs of the time. The bank balance was \$14.39. In today's dollars that's roughly \$325.00. The financial hardship was magnified when Fred Hertzog agreed to become custodian for \$5 a month if there was money to pay him. To put this in perspective, the salary of Reverend Barkman in 1930 was \$2,000.00 per annum. One veteran elder remarked wryly, "We had a champagne appetite but only a beer pocket-book."

Adding to the worry of

those early 1930's, one of the most significant events for Carmichael was the freeze of 1932. The freeze hit in the darkest period of the Great Depression at a time when many fruit growers had barely

been able to weather the disastrous economy. For several days, the temperature dropped to 18 degrees. The 1932 freeze wiped-out the community as a

major producer of citrus in California. At the church, meanwhile, pipes froze, then broke, and thawed. For six days water ran into the basement before it was discovered. When it was found, the piano was floating, and hymn books bobbed all over like boats seeking a landing.

Then once again in 1939 disaster struck the church that was fighting to stay alive. On the evening of January 29, 1939, an apparently self-generated gas exploded in the furnace in the basement of the church, blowing open the fire doors and threatening to destroy the building. However, the fire was discovered early and extinguished without any serious damage, only the basement badly blackened



Photos courtesy of Betty Schei

When watermelon grown on this Carmichael farm could not be sold, locals ate it rather than leave it to rot.

by coal smoke and soot.

Yet, if withstanding the depression, a devastating freeze, and a potentially disastrous fire

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weren't enough, the fledgling Carmichael Community Church faced a schism in 1929-30 considered the stormiest episode of its brief history. Remember that despite the affiliation with the Presbyterian church, the congregation included a broad spectrum of the community with equally broad beliefs and theological interpretations. The simplistic explanation is that a pastor, Samuel Holsinger, had a narrow, conservative, fundamentalist stance. With differing opinions in theology, at a church meeting during the controversy, Holsinger walked down the aisle and exclaimed. "Christ will never be in this church again." The Presbytery requested Holsinger modify his theological views and end certain relationships. Holsinger replied that he lived according to the Bible and could not abide by a man-made organization. Ultimately, Reverend Holsinger and Carmichael Community Church parted ways. The congregation of 94 members was almost evenly divided on the issue. Eventually, Reverend Holsinger founded what would become Carmichael Bible Church. A great deal of troubled soul-searching and tears marked the time. However, moderation and denominational ties prevailed over fundamentalism and autonomy.

As the decade of the Depression ended, the church, like the country, had survived what must have felt like disaster upon disaster. In the Christmas Sunday church bulletin of December 24, 1939, entitled "Worthy of Praise" it stated: "Let us rejoice today! For we are at last free from debt and the church is on the way to greater advance! God has rewarded us for our faith and has shown His power to work all things for good...May this new joy at our liberation remind us more keenly of Christ who came in the world not to be ministered unto but minister and give His life a ransom for many!"

(These stories and more can be found in *Heritage of Faith, A 75 Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church.*)

A Bit of Centennial History

from December 2022–January 2023 Mission Bell

As we venture through the 100-year history of Carmichael Presbyterian Church, how fortunate we are to have personal recollections from different times in our past. A few come from our own members.

Carolyn (McAllister) McGregor grew up at the rural area of Fair Oaks and Jacob Lane. Her grandfather came to Carmichael in 1910 and was a hops farmer along the American river, what we now call American River Drive. She recalls being able to stand on her back porch and see the orange school buses leaving Arden School (now Arden Middle School) as there were so few trees between them to block the view. The family attended Westminster Church in Sacramento, but in

1944 Carolyn's father joined the Navy and went off to war. Her mother Barbara, struggled with gas rationing. She soon decided she needed to look for a church local to the family. It was then she found Carmichael Community Church up at Fair Oaks Blvd and Marconi Ave. The community church, although with diverse denominational interests, was affiliated with the Presbyterian

faith. It soon became the home for the McAllister family.

The mid 1940's to the mid 50's saw prosperity returning to Carmichael and its community



Longtime Carmichael resident and CPC member Carolyn McGregor shows off the Bible presented to her as a child at CPC by Rev. James Comfort Smith.

church. Under the leadership of Rev. James Comfort Smith, there was an expansion of the church facilities. The chapel, parlor, center wing, and the sanctuary were built during that time. Carolyn remembers that when Rev. Smith came to the church, he rented a room above a neighbor's garage. In those days with no air conditioning, he left his windows

open. She was six years old when she asked her mother why Rev. Smith was hollering. Her mother explained that he was practicing his sermon. He was known for his resonating voice.

Carolyn's early childhood memories include a celebration of George Washington's birthday in the basement of the old church. Her job was to put little silver hatchets at each place setting. What she remembers was the terrible smell. Her mother, Barbara, saved one of the hatchets. When her father was finally home, they all realized the reason for the bad smell

was the hatchets were painted with the lead paint used on airplanes. When she was in her early teens the youth group wanted to have a dance in the building that had once been the sanctuary. The youth went to session to seek approval for the desired dance. Despite the fact the building

was no longer the sanctuary, session said no to the dance request on the grounds that the sanctuary had once held sacred events such as weddings and a dance there would just be inappropriate.

In 1958, Gordon and Carolyn were married by Rev. Dr.

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Pyron McMillen. The wedding cake was set up in the Mahogany Room. She still has the linens given to her by Mrs. Hertzog, who was her mother's constant companion in the church kitchen.

In the mid 60's they joined a Mariners' ship. They also taught a ram-bunctious third grade Sunday School class along with friend Dorothy Morrison. Carolyn and

Dorothy were the first two ladies to shockingly wear pantsuits to a Sunday service. Dorothy's was solid pink and Carolyn's a pink pattern. Rules of fashion being stricter those days, her mother was the last lady to wear a hat and gloves to church. Carolyn has her mother's ensemble beautifully stored in a Weinstock Lu-

bin box. Among the other things she has saved is the childhood bible that was presented to her by Rev. Smith.

As the years have gone by, Carolyn has worn many hats at CPC. From those early days as a Sunday School teacher to helping faithfully at SOS, and



Top: Gordon and Carolyn McGregor cut their wedding cake in the Mahogany Room at CPC in 1958,

Bottom: Carolyn has kept her mother's church ensemble, including hat and gloves as a reminder of the fashion of the times.



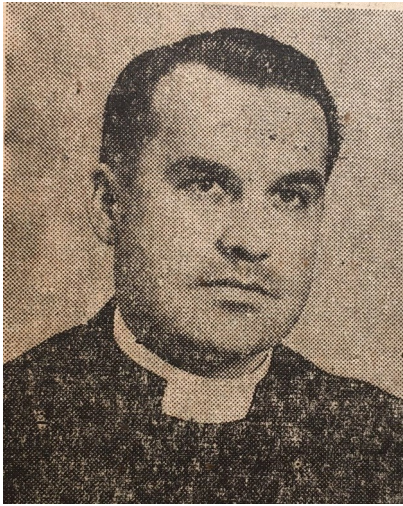
now leading Presbyterian Women. The stories are plentiful. The memories they represent are bursting with happiness and love. Times of friendships and family, all centered around a faith filled journey decades in the making. Some might say, the journey continues.

A Bit of Centennial History

from February 2023 Mission Bell

Over a 100-year period, Carmichael Presbyterian has had many beloved pastors. In May of 1943 the future of one of them, James Comfort Smith, became permanently entwined with Carmichael Community

Church. Smith was a seminary student at San Francisco Theological Seminary. When Rev. Edward Wicher resigned that May, Smith agreed to fill the pulpit vacancy for that summer, work part time during the school year and upon graduation commit to one year's service. Little did he realize that his two-year commitment would stretch to eleven years. He recalled about



Rev. James Comfort Smith, CPC's pastor 1943-1954.

his first visit to Carmichael "Nobody had gasoline in those days, unless you were a doctor or an ordained minister, neither of which I was at that point. So, I took the train to Sacramento ... Olive Davis came to meet me at the station and drove me out into the country, and it was country ... We fi-

from the outside. And sitting on the aisle also was Kathy, the first time I'd ever seen her, and that kind of made me want to come back to church again...and that's the way it began." On June 6, 1944, Smith was ordained and installed by the presbytery. In July of 1944, he, and Kathy Kelly (the prettiest girl in church, according to Carolyn McGregor) married. He was known for his deep resonant voice and his dynamic delivery.

He'd lead the service and then step into the choir and sing the anthem, before completing the rest of the service. As a young pastor, he was popular with the youth and was recognized for



CPC youth made about 3,000 of the 12,000 total bricks used to build the Chapel and original west wing.



CPC's chapel under construction c. 1945

nally arrived after eight or ten miles at this little community of Carmichael. I was woefully unimpressed with the simple building. But the next day, Sunday morning, they took me to church, to the service; I was very impressed with some of the people who were there. It was obviously not what it appeared

building strong and vital youth programs. For the first several years, Smith was the only staff person. It wasn't until the late 40's that the church hired a full-time secretary. Most notable of his achievements was the expansion of the original facilities to accommodate growth.

Growth and expansion were the dominant characteristics of

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both the church and the community over a nearly 30-year period starting in 1943. In 1930 there were only 700 people living in Carmichael, by 1940 the number grew to nearly 2,000. Prior to 1940 the community had no central business district and only a handful of businesses. As Carmichael grew, businesses clustered around Marconi and Palm Avenues. Bob Marchal built the Carmichael Shopping Center on the corner of Marconi and Palm. He then went on to open the first bank, Suburban Bank, in the 40's after he drove to Washington, D.C. to obtain a bank charter from Crocker Bank. Crocker Bank took over the service of the bank in the 1950's. Additionally, the military bases in the community expanded during WWII bringing an increase in population to the area, and Aerojet's arrival was just around the corner in the early 50's.

By the time Smith arrived in 1943, a building committee had been in place for three years. It would take three more years to complete construction on the west chapel. Although the most immediate need was a larger sanctuary, the wartime conditions caused the federal government to limit expenditures for church buildings. With that in mind, the decision was made to

postpone the new sanctuary and start on the west wing. The choice to build in the Spanish mission style was dictated by the war time restrictions on building materials. Nicholas Tomich, the architect, commented on the decision to use adobe..."during WWII ...there was a shortage of steel, and really none for building. That's why we were thinking about adobe. And they used secondhand timbers for the roof structure. The tile was not deemed to be critical material." Smith and Tomich visited California missions to be sure the architectural details for the new building were authentic. At San Juan Bautista, the two asked for one of the old adobe blocks and brought it home where it was installed in the chapel by the north door. According to Smith, the youth made about 3,000 of the 12,000 total bricks used. It was said that many romances began, and flourished (or sometimes withered) over the pile of adobe bricks. The remaining materials required were postwar materials that were no longer needed at McClellan Air Force Base, purchased for the price about the cost of hauling them away. Volunteers were used whenever possible. On the list of those volunteers laying adobe and installing a doorway was Pastor James Comfort Smith.

To be continued...

(Source – *Heritage of Faith, A 75 Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church* - available for purchase from the church office; Carmichael Chamber of Commerce.)

A Bit of Centennial History

from March 2023 Mission Bell

“Construction is well under-way on what is predicted to be the most unique and beautiful church in the West.” *Sacramento Bee*, September 21, 1945.

James Comfort Smith was born March 17, 1917. He came to Carmichael

Community Church in 1943 by the way of San Francisco Theological Seminary. One of his former professors, who happened to be the father of the retiring church pastor, had recom-

mended him for an interim position

while he finished seminary. What was meant to be a short stint lasted a bit longer. Arriving in the small but growing Carmichael Community, Smith stepped right into a developing building phase. Within three years of his arrival, the Chapel held its first service on Christmas 1946. The remainder of the west wing was completed in 1947 and remarkably paid off in 1948. With the end of the war and prosperity ushering in community growth and

church attendance, it was time to undertake the building of a much-needed new sanctuary.

Reading through church history and reviewing old newspaper clippings of Pastor Smith’s years in Carmichael, it’s



Rev. James Comfort Smith and local dignitaries lay the cornerstone for the Sanctuary on June 3, 1951.

clear that he was actively involved not just in the church community, but the greater community. He created non-denominational partnerships and was heard on both KCRA and KFBK, where he cohosted a program called “Invitation to Church.”

That period of growth saw youth programs flourishing and 850 children in Sunday School attendance. He also advocated on behalf of the greater church communities to ban alcohol at

establishments near the church and wrote a letter of protest to a local paper condemning Ingrid Bergman’s 1950 movie *Stromboli*, denouncing Ms. Bergman for her calm and cold infidelity that was on display to the public. His sermon topics were repeatedly

announced in local newspapers, and not only did he sing in the church choir, but he also sang in musical concerts in the Sacramento area. Under his leadership, the church was a socially active group. Community

BBQs and Thanksgiving dinners, church potlucks, and trips to Zephyr Point were regular occurrences.

Yet, history best remembers Pastor Smith for the amazing period of construction and growth of the church campus. The west wing and the relocation of the original wooden church competed in 1947, with groundbreaking for the new sanctuary in January of 1951. Under the supervision of John

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Knapp, a church member and retired local contractor, the building project was completed in a record 12 months' time. Knapp displayed great skill and ingenuity in coordinating the work with workman during the week and volunteers on Saturdays. Drew Dickson's son described the volunteer time, "There was a lot of work on those walls. You didn't have hoists in those days. Everything had to be handed up...And the buckets of concrete, we had to bucket it up." When it was all said and done, it was reported that the total cost of the sanctuary, exclusive of architect and building superintendent fees was \$62,827.87. The post war building boom was in full swing in Sacramento County. Between 1951 and 1954 membership rose 75%. If you build it, they will come, and in those days they did. (For details and notable facts about the building of the sanctuary, see *Heritage of Faith, a 75 Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church*.)

With all the significant expansion and accomplishments, it is not surprising that not all the church problems were solved. Smith commented in his address at the 1954 annual meeting his concern regarding the congregation's fellowship and connectivity. He asked, "What will we do

about finding a more effective fellowship around the table than our monthly family potluck dinners? Are we ready to extend our world outreach? Are we ready to face the need for more buildings? He finishes with the comment, "... I think we will face all of these problems with the faith and foresight which have been characteristic of Carmichael Church through all the years." After nearly 11 years of pastoring in Carmichael, in February of 1954 James Comfort Smith accepted a call from St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley.

A Bit of Centennial History

from April 2023 Mission Bell

When James Comfort Smith and his wife departed Carmichael in February of 1954, it was a blow

to many in the congregation.

There was a great deal of discussion about his potential return, despite all knowing that he would

not. What wasn't known

then was the next beloved pastor was virtually on their doorstep. By the time Pyron McMillen was installed as pastor in September 1954, he had eighteen years of ministry behind him. He was first ordained in 1936 in Wheaton, Illinois. He was sent to Santiago, Chile by the Board of Foreign Missions where he started several churches. From Chile, he returned to the Bay Area for a master's degree with work in Fowler and a staff position in the Synod before he and his wife, Polly, arrived in Carmichael. When asked about Pyron McMillen, Jimmi and Phil Mishler described him as the epitome of what a pastor should be. He was very caring

and supportive of the staff and his colleagues. Polly and Pyron were a team. She was actively

involved in Presbyterian Women and influential with Pyron as he helped change the attitudes regarding women in the church.

Progressive for his time, he implement-

ed study programs for women. It was said that Pyron McMillen's door was always open to all.

Much like the period before him, his nineteen years at Carmichael Presbyterian were marked with growth and building. Fundraising allowed for construction of the east educational wing, the social hall (later named McMillen Hall), and paving of the parking area, doubling its space. These projects were completed in 1957. During this building phase, Whitson Cox, a member of the church and architect for the project said of McMillen, "Pyron was not only the soul of the church but the implement-

or of all good things."

In 1959 the church purchased additional land, bringing the total property to six and a half acres. By the end of 1960, there was more paving, and completion of the church school rooms on the top of the social hall. With growth continuing, in 1961 session approved a move to three services on Sunday mornings, which included two separate choirs with their own directors. During the peak year of 1968, the church held 6 Easter services.

Although worship services changed little under McMillen, the terminology became more formal, and he demonstrated early on his deep interest in world mission. Always biblically based, his sermons frequently spoke to the current human condition. During the 1964 election, he spoke out against Proposition 14 (a measure allowing for segregation in housing). His sermon speaking of justice, race, and discrimination entitled "Liberty and Justice for All" was published in the *Fresno Bee*. In March 1965, as Moderator of Synod, he participated in the civil rights march in Selma, Alabama. Even though this action was controversial, he felt strongly that it was his duty to participate in this great demonstration of unity among people of faith on an issue of such significance

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Polly and Pyron McMillen in the 1963 Carmichael Presbyterian Church Directory.

A Bit of Centennial History

from April 2023 Mission Bell

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to the nation.

McMillen demonstrated his church commitment in the choice of his location of his and Polly's residence. When the Smiths were married in July of 1944, the church purchased a manse about a mile and a half away. The McMillen's were never comfortable living so far from the church. In May of 1957, the church authorized the sale of the manse and allotted a housing allowance in its place.

Polly described the matter as follows – "You see, all pastorates he had ever had ... [we] lived next door to the church until we came here. ... Pyron came in the house one day and said, 'You know something, I bought a house. ... The nursery school needs a playground, and this house has a wonderful piece of ground that we could cut off and make the playground out of, and we can

remodel the house and live in it and live next to the church.' ...

We bought that little house across the street [on Myrtle Lane] and remodeled it. And the children got their playground. ... The last thing Pyron [would do] before he went to bed, he went around the whole church to see if any lights were left on that shouldn't have been, wasting electricity." Up-



Harry Smith, Ian Young, Merrill Follansbee, Pyron McMillen, Whitson Cox, John Knapp, Fred Links, and Seth Parker mark the completion of CPC's east education wing in 1957.

on his retirement in 1972, he and Polly sold the house, but continued to live in the Sacramento suburbs. Pyron McMillen passed away November 20, 1980. His children and grandchildren now live on the Myrtle Lane property.

A Bit of Centennial History

from May 2023 Mission Bell

The names Wehmeyer, Honnold, and Buck might be familiar to you. These families, along with hundreds more, are part of the rich history of Carmichael Presbyterian. The Wehmeyers bought property on Sutter Avenue in Carmichael in the later 1940's, but continued to attend Westminster Presbyterian downtown. Finally, Leroy

Wehmeyer questioned why he was driving all the way downtown when there was a perfectly good church a few blocks away. They joined CPC in 1955 with Roberta becoming active in the women's organizations and Leroy fixing whatever needed fixing. The young families were social and it wasn't long before the Wehmeyers became one of the founding members of the Kon Tiki marinership. There were BBQ's, potlucks, camping trips to Point Reyes and even a mariner convention at Red Rock. Roberta and Leroy were close friends



A photograph in the "Women's World" section of the October 13, 1966 edition of The Courier is captioned: "SPACE RACE PACE—Preparing for the eighth annual tasting luncheon of the Women's Council of Carmichael Presbyterian Church are cookbook committee co-chairmen Mrs. Ted Croghall, left, and Mrs. Gordon McGregor. The luncheon, to be held at noon, Tuesday, at the church, is entitled in deference to times when life was simpler — "Cooking — Grandmother's Pace to the Space Race."

with Pyron and Polly McMillen. Polly made Carol (Wehmeyer) Honnold a blanket for her wedding in 1966 that is still on display in her home.

Even before the church found its home on Marconi Ave., the women of the community were well known for their fundraising. Roberta, along with Lillian Buck and other church ladies were involved in a program called "Tasting Luncheons."

Carol playfully remembers it as a "Dime a Dip." Tickets were sold to these lunch events that were frequented by neighbors and businessmen alike. Often with up to 30 different dishes to choose from, for every spoonful of food you had on your plate you paid a dime, thus a dime a dip. Sounds like a bargain now, but the ladies were able to raise money they sent to charitable organizations both local and out of state.

Carol Honnold has fond memories of her high school years at the church with her friend Donna Buck. Donna had sheep and was involved with 4-H. Carol thought that was great. The high schoolers met in the old library, our Gathering Place now. The youth group leader was Miss Edna May Mosley. Miss Mosley came to Carmichael in 1955 after a special re-



LeRoy and Roberta Wehmeyer and their daughter Carol Wehmeyer (now Honnold) circa 1956

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A Bit of Centennial History

from May 2023 Mission Bell

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quest from Pyron McMillen to help when the children's education attendance increased to over 600 kids. A deeply religious woman (the kids thought she was a spinster), the boys often played pranks on her. There were dances with youth from other churches that were approved by session having Miss Mosley playing a record player. The high school kids even went on a camping trip to Bodega Bay with Mr. Heinrich leading. He was a science teacher at American River College. Carol remembers him telling the kids they didn't need to take things to eat when they could forge the land. They picked sea snails off rocks and cooked them over a campfire in tin cans of boiling salt water, eating the snails with toothpicks. Thankfully, she also remembers having hot dogs.

Bette (Buck) Johnson was a few years younger than her sister Donna and her friend Carol. The Bucks bought property on Kenneth Avenue in 1949. Her mother, Lillian, was church secretary from 1961 to 1974. Bette has the

lovely letter **Pastor Bill Johnson** wrote thanking Lillian for all her years of service. Her grandparents would come from the Midwest in the winters and watch over Bette and Donna while her mother was at work.



Lillian Buck served as CPC's secretary 1961-1974.

Lillian, always the example of discretion, would count the offering plates on Mondays as part of her clerical duties. She took it very seriously and would sometimes grumble to her family when

she thought the offering plate wasn't quite full enough. Her parents were active in the Kon Tiki marinership. Bette remembers most of her family's social time spent with the other families in church.

Carmichael was still rural when the Bucks bought their property. Most houses did-

n't have fences. When the Bucks would hear the church bell ring on Sunday mornings, they would start walking to church. In the summer the church doors would be open to help beat the heat. One Sunday morning, Bette remembers sitting in the church pew and hearing a tick, tick, tick sound coming down the aisle. Much to Bette's surprise, their dog, Shep, had followed them to church and was searching the pews to find his family.

When Bette married at CPC, Roberta Wehmeyer, quite an accomplished seamstress, helped Bette make her wedding dress. Our church history is etched with the names and lives of its members. If you see Bette or Carol, make sure you ask them to tell you more of these wonderful stories.



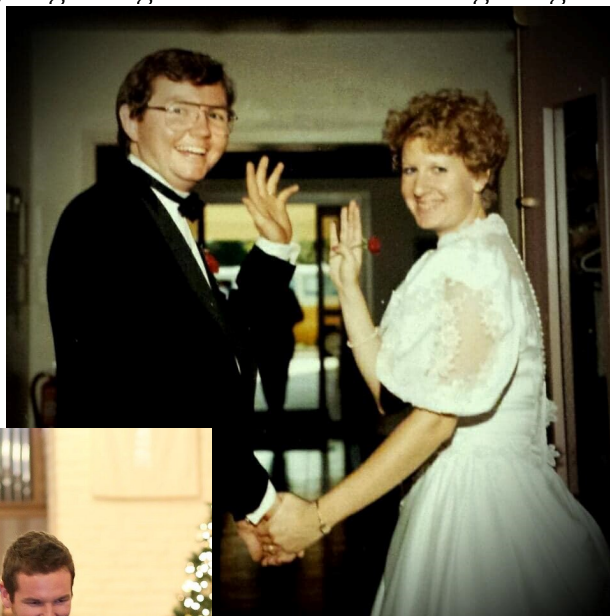
The Buck Family, complete with their church-going dog, Shep, Easter 1958.

A Bit of Centennial History

from June 2023 Mission Bell

As springs rolls onto summer, June becomes a month filled with celebrations. Graduations, Father's Day, and traditionally, June is a month filled with weddings. The strong tradition of church weddings at CPC dates back in our history to the first wedding in December of 1927. Weddings over the decades have changed considerably from the 1927 beginnings. It was often customary to invite the entire congregation to a church wedding. Receptions were held in the social hall with cake and punch being the primary refreshment. CPC, with its beautiful mission style building, has been a popular spot for couples to join their lives together. So much so, that in the mid 1970's it wasn't uncommon to have four weddings in one day. 75% of those weddings were not church members. Session eventually ruled that one Saturday a month there were to be no weddings so staff could have free time. And while we think of the minister as the central figure beyond the bride and groom, in

the background, a hardworking wedding coordinator tips the scale for a successful wedding. A multitude of these hardworking people have ensured happy beginnings for hundreds of couples at CPC.



an unflappable lady that wanted every reception to be as perfect for the bride as possible. Dawn would go up to the balcony to get a head count of at-

tendees during the ceremony. She could then tell the committee if the cake needed to be cut into bite size pieces or large pieces, making sure there was enough to go around. With no air conditioning in the social hall, in one instance, the cake started to topple before the pictures were taken. Dawn literally held the cake in position until the photographer was ready with the bride and groom to take photos.

In the later 1950's, Dawn Cowan served as wedding hostess with assistance of a committee. Carolyn McGregor remembers Dawn as

She would let go of the cake and back out of the picture and then rush in and grab the cake between shots to keep it from falling apart.

Bette Johnson remembers helping her mother, Lillian Buck, when she served as wedding hostess on top of her church secretarial duties. Bette liked helping with the decorations and putting the white bows on the pews. Lillian always added extra flowers to the bows to match the brides flowers, along with putting out the white runner down the center aisle. Bette would assist at the punch station making sure there were enough cups and napkins. Bette's sister,

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A Bit of Centennial History

from June 2023 Mission Bell

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Donna Buck, was maid of honor for Barbara (Bell) Lee's wedding. Recently, Barbara had the chance to tell Bette that at her

1963 wedding, Lillian wouldn't let Barbara have the secular music she wanted. Lillian had to explain, at that time, if you were

marrying in the sanctuary only traditional church music was allowed.

When Carole Jacobi was wedding coordinator, she managed the largest wedding the church saw. With close to 600 guests, many stood outside. Different colored flowers denoted the guest's relationship to the couple. Customarily, brides would dress in the parlor, but without a covered walkway in the 70's, weather could come into play. During one terrible storm, the bride had to dress up on the balcony and stay there for an hour until the ceremony began.

Viki Tozier told the story in the mid 80's of a wedding where the bridesmaids all wore white linen. Their bouquets were filled with ripe strawberries. They rode to church with

church. Thank you to all the wonderful souls that have held the cake together, added the extra flowers to the bows, managed to keep the dresses clean, offered safety pins, hair spray, and panty hose, held nerves in check, allowed for love to say I do, and memories to be made.



the bouquets in their laps during the heat of summer. When they arrived, there was strawberry juice all over their dresses. Much sponging with cold water saved the day.

The joining of lives together with God as witness to this celebration of life is part of the beautiful threads that continue to make up the tapestry of what we call



A Bit of Centennial History

from July 2023 Mission Bell

On June 4 we celebrated Youth Sunday with our kids providing a joy-filled service. The format for worship was

based on Godly Play, which is a program Rev. **Sherry Sauer** introduced to CPC in the 1990's. We experienced music and communion with our youth and reveled as high school graduates were cloaked in the love of hand-made quilts.

There can be no doubt that one of the defining legacies of this church is its devotion and care for the children of the community.

In 1918 mothers in the rural community of Carmichael saw the need for Christian education for their children and started a Sunday School held at Carmichael School. Children walked, rode horses, or were picked up by a horse drawn wagon to attend. By 1923 there were 113 children regularly attending Sunday School. That year, the kids took on a community service project presenting two carloads of fruit and nuts to the Sacramento Orphanage.

In 1925 the first Daily Vacation Bible School was held with an attendance of 75. DVBS was such an important event, the

at CPC. Brenda's family moved to Carmichael in 1947. They soon began participating at Carmichael Community Church.



Christmas Candlelight Services were an annual CPC tradition for many years.

When the new sanctuary was built, she remembers a Christmas Eve service where the teenage girls wore wreaths of candles in their hair. She and her sisters attended Sunday School and Bible school in the summer. In high school she belonged to Chi Sigma. According to Brenda, it was the only thing

church committed \$25 to fund the endeavor. In the mid 1940's Rev. **James Comfort Smith** continued to build the youth programs. He felt that the children who had been raised in Sunday School needed something more as they reached adolescence. He organized a high school group called Chi Sigma and a college group called the Philians. Those early years established a foundation for the Christian education programs that have lasted ten decades.

Lifelong friends, **Brenda (Beers) Mock** and **Jan (Sjolund) Olson** have strong memories of their time as youth

“going” in town. There were overnight ski trips to Soda Springs and dances. One semi formal dance of note was called “Blue Magic.” It was the first dance in the new social hall. High schoolers from the community were invited and the ARC faculty band played. One of the boys designed a fountain in the middle of the hall with a pump that allowed for blue dyed water to flow back into a child size wading pool. Sometime during the dance, the pool sprung a leak and blue water ran out onto the new cork floor. As one might imagine, the new floor

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A Bit of Centennial History

from July 2023 Mission Bell

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was stained blue. Rev. **Pyron McMillen** told the kids, sometimes these things happen.

Jan arrived in Carmichael three days before the start of her freshman year at El Camino High School. At the end of the first day, the bus driver refused to take her home because her street was not yet on a published map. In new shoes and 109 degrees, Jan could only cry. A girl in one of her classes, Priscilla, came to her rescue, taking her back to her house for cookies. Priscilla's family was a military family, and her mother's motto was to always find a church with a youth program. As Brenda said, Carmichael Community Church was the only game in town.

Soon after, Priscilla asked Jan to a Chi Sigma event. Jan was hooked. Chi Sigma met on Sunday nights at 6:30 with 100 kids in attendance. The kids would hold a worship service, which they designed and implemented. Jan remembers that they were given responsibilities and learned leadership and speaking skills. She was active in youth presbytery, and she even flew to Southern California for a youth synod meeting.

Pyron McMillen was very supportive and called them "his

Kids." Unlike many of the kids, Jan's parents did not attend the church. When she experienced the devastation of her parents' divorce during her high school



years, the church became her refuge. She felt that the youth group and the support she received from McMillen and other parents sustained her through

those difficult times. Carmichael Community Church was her home. After she married and returned to Carmichael, her boys attended the church youth group in the 1980's.

By 1962, CPC's Christian Education enrollment had reached 1,436 students with 127

teachers. Today it is hard to imagine those numbers as church membership has dwindled. Yet, whatever the numbers might be, as the years went on, wonderful

memories have been made for the kids attending CPC youth programs. Whether making adobe bricks for the chapel and sanctuary, going on mission trips, or the plethora of meaningful opportunities provided, thousands of youths over our 100 years have treasured the church home where



A youth group meeting and a youth sponsored ice cream social circa 1967.

they found a relationship with God and a safe place to be nourished and mentored in a Christian community from loving youth leadership. That is the strong legacy of Carmichael Presbyterian Church. Praise God.

A Bit of Centennial History

from August 2023 Mission Bell

Right from the start, the people of Carmichael Community Church have been a social group.

In 1924, less than a year after the official founding of the church, the first women's circle was formed. When it was time for the original sanctuary to be built, the



Crestriders event c. 1953

Carmichael Ladies Circle held bridge socials and dances raising over \$500. Neighbors and church members would routinely gather in the evenings and on weekends to follow the progress.

In the 1940's, Rev. James Comfort Smith recognized the need for connectivity. During his tenure monthly potlucks were held for the congregation. Many clubs and social groups were formed during this time, often based on age and marital status. There were the Crestriders, made up of married couples whose combined ages were 75 years and more.

They had their own monthly newsletter. Mature or senior members of the community could join the 39er's recreation-



Mariner workday c. 1955

er as young Christian couples and have fun without the need to spend much money. According to Ella Knapp, "We met in

the social hall and had some great parties. Lots of costume parties. Come as books, come as that. Gene was practically stark naked one night and

won the prize. He was the last of the Mohicans... Well, when he walked in there people just flipped. But you know, that makes a party good."

Dave Beeby's parents, Bob and Marge Beeby, were active members of the Schooner Club having come to

Carmichael in the early 1950's. Ultimately, they aged out (graduated). Dave recalls his parents being a touch rebellious and forming TDO, the Too Damn Old Foundation.

In May of 1956, Rev. Pyron McMillen called a small group of couples together and

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Friendship 1950s themed auction event September 2019

al program. In 1943 a young couples club was formed and by 1949 it transformed into the Schooner Club following the format of other Presbyterian churches. Schooner member couples needed to have a combined age of less than 75 years. The primary purpose, according to Smith, was to get togeth-

A Bit of Centennial History

from August 2023 Mission Bell

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asked them to organize a Mariner ship, using the national Presbyterian Mariners manual as a guide. The Beeby's were founding members of the Windjammers ship. Thus began the formal formation of the Mariners at CPC. Over the years some 33 ships were formed with about half of them being combined or decommissioned along the way. The goal of each ship is to fulfill the Mariner purpose:

"Mariners encourages Christian faith and practice in every home. They offer fellowship. They act as a service organization. They develop leadership. They inter-

est people outside the church in becoming active. Symbolism of Mariners:

Christ shall be our Pilot. The Bible shall be our Compass and the church shall be our Anchor." In the early 90's, there was still active involvement and interest in the ships, but the affiliation to the national organization came under question because of increased dues. Many of the ships chose to

form a Carmichael Fleet and now are under the care of the Fellowship and Nurture division of session.

Sharon MacLean describes over 35 years of Mariner participation as being part of a family. She says, "Like family, we're not perfect and don't always agree, but we have experienced similar life experiences, we have celebrated and grieved together, grown together spiritually, supported each other and have been there for each other through sickness and health, and life's ups and downs. They are a group of people we love, count on and are truly brothers and sisters in Christ."

chael Presbyterian Church. If you are interested in finding out more about the Mariner program or joining a ship, contact Fellowship and Nurture chair Lara Moborez at larakathe-rine@yahoo.com.



CPC has long encouraged its members to find a community socially and spiritually. The Mariner program is one way that hundreds of Carmichael members have created lifelong bonds of friendship.

Currently, there are seven active Mariner ships at Carmi-

A Bit of Centennial History Food Closet Celebrates 50 Years

from September 2023 Mission Bell

Working at the Carmichael Food Closet can be an interesting dichotomy. This is an institutional

program with rules about usage and a matrix of distribution based on family size.

The morning shift takes calls that, among other things, allow the afternoon volunteers to pack grocery bags and load them into client's cars. But all at

once, as former food closet director **Terryl Summers** reminds us, someone asks for a birthday cake and now it becomes personal. The gift of the cake is what brought Terryl joy during her five years as food closet director. The food closet gets the one-off cakes from local grocery stores. On any given morning, a client will ask – “do you have a birthday cake?” That afternoon a volunteer will provide the cake that's been set aside for the one out of 25 family visitors that day. Terryl said, “The smile on a parent's face when they knew there would be that special treat for a family member was so heartwarming.” Institutional goes out the door and the food closet becomes a place where love is shared.

In 1969 CPC acknowledged the growing concern of hunger in the community by collecting canned food. Congregants donat-

ed on quarterly Communion Sundays. High schoolers gath-



*Food Closet volunteers **Emily Moulton, Barbara Morgan, and Paula Cope** prepare groceries for families in 2016.*

ered and kept the inventory. Deacons distributed the food to the County Department of Social Welfare and other agencies. Ultimately, this led to the formal establishment of the Carmichael Food Closet in 1973. **Mary Nelle MacRostie**, a nutritionist and member of the congregation, developed a menu and general plans for the project, which was patterned after an existing program in South Sacramento. People who needed food would contact the Social Welfare Department, which would direct them to resources such as the Carmichael Food Closet. Groceries were distributed out of the church office. Demand increased quickly and it pushed the project to an enclosed section of the back porch of the then McMillen Hall.

The Sacramento Food Closet

Coalition in a note for the CPC time capsule in 1983 optimistically wrote, “Hopefully, as you read this in the year 2000 the food need will no longer exist and will be only a matter of history.” But by 1986 Federal Food Aid had been cut, affecting food closets statewide. As a result, **Marie Segur**, then executive director of the Coalition, and others worked with the *Sacramento Bee* on a series of articles on hunger that was published in nine installments in 1987. After the articles, Marie was contacted by **Joyce Raley-Teel** of the grocery store chain and became an advisor to the store as it developed what became the Raley's Food for Families program.

Another blow to the hungry occurred in 1989 when Sacramento County eliminated 22 of their 24 welfare counselors and established the Community Information Center, with only one phone line to take requests for food. At this time, Carmichael Food Closet established its own dedicated phone line for clients to request food. The increased volume of calls prompted reaching out to other local churches for assistance. Celtic Cross, Grace, and Northminster Presbyterian churches, among others, joined CPC's ministry by providing volunteers and funds. In 1993 over 130,000 meals were provided. In the later 1990's CPC's food closet

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A Bit of Centennial History

Food Closet Celebrates 50 Years

from September 2023 Mission Bell

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team helped develop concepts with both San Juan Unified School District and KCRA for canned food drives benefitting the county's food closet programs.

CPC was actively involved in a building phase in the late 1990's and early 2000's. A new free standing food closet building was part of the project. In a letter **Ken DeYoung** wrote to **Pastor Keith DeVries** in August of 2019 he says:

"... it became necessary to make decisions that were not pleasant. One of those decisions was to delay the construction of the food closet building due to change orders and unforeseen construction expenses on Phase 1 of our project. ... Shortly after that decision was made, I was approached after a worship service on Sunday morning by **Jim Shullanberger**. ... Ken, he said, what would it take to get the food closet building built? I replied that all it needed was money. He responded, Would \$100,000 help get it built? I told him that amount of money would be a game changer and that I would take that infor-

mation to Session ... they agreed to accept that donation and incur some additional

fund the food closet building was simple obedience to tithing that God asks of us." It's important to note that while the letter specifically names Jim, the donation came from Jim and his wife, **Carolyn Biggers**.

Over the decades, the food closet has experienced solid leadership, dedicated volunteers, changes in clientele,



*(Clockwise from top) 1) The original Food Closet on the porch of the old McMullen Hall. 2) Construction of the new Food Closet building in 2001. 3) After supervising the construction of the new building, **Ken DeYoung** celebrates with Food Closet director **Don Weaver** at an open house on June 22, 2002.*

debt to get the food closet built. A short while later, Jim approached me again and said he wanted to share something with me. He began by telling me when he was a young man, he experienced a period in his life when he had gone hungry. He added that it was not good for anyone to go hungry."

Jim went on to explain to Ken that he had made a considerable amount of money. "Jim said, as such his donation to help

streamlining of its processes and innovation, and more. What hasn't changed is the goal to help the hungry here in our community. Currently, the food closet serves on the average 645 families a month providing three days' worth of groceries. There are 130 community volunteers with two directors. Groups of young adults who are developmentally disabled work faithfully every week, along and one Saturday a month the Sheriff's Work Program sorts groceries and cleans the warehouse.

A Bit of Centennial History Music, Music, Music!

from October 2023 Mission Bell

The early members of Carmichael Community Church had read and taken to heart the Biblical verse, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," for no congregation ever loved and enjoyed music more than the little church in Carmichael. In the days when people of the Christian world transcended denomination, music was the common

bond. Seldom had any church been more blessed by so many musically talented people. Their early skill and enthusiasm began a tradition that continues today.

John Shumate is remembered as the first director of singing at the schoolhouse. His daughter, Marie, drove the horse pulled wagon through the community to pick up the children for Sunday School in 1918. John had a beautiful tenor voice and was well known for singing solos and duets with his daughter,

Gladys. Shumate was respected not just for his musical talents, but also for overcoming adversity. In 1926 he was stricken with smallpox during one of the

rect the music for the Daily VBS in 1926. When the Bible school was completed, **Pastor Holsinger** asked her to take charge of the music of both the

Sunday School and Church. A few months later, she transferred her directorship to her husband Roy. In 1927 he started out with 23 choir



Choir practice with director Fred Links in 1949.

local epidemics in the community. He survived the illness but suffered a severe hearing loss. He wore a device around his head and shoulders as a hearing receptor. Despite his hearing loss, Shumate continued singing. It is believed he directed the young people's choir until 1927.

Roy and Mary Sullivan were early members of the church. They developed a music program for the church that continued for almost twenty years. Mary was invited to di-

rect the music for the Daily VBS in 1926. When the Bible school was completed, **Pastor Holsinger** asked her to take charge of the music of both the Sunday School and Church. A few months later, she transferred her directorship to her husband Roy. In 1927 he started out with 23 choir members. One of the original 23, **Olive Davis**, was still singing in the choir in the 1960's and lived to be 104 years old. Roy held the position of choir director until 1945.

Roy taught voice lessons in the area and performed with the Municipal Chorus. The Sullivan family came to Sacramento by train from Chicago in 1918. Mary's sister, Mrs. Wentz, was the first superintendent of the Sunday School and a presiding officer of the first Ladies Circle.

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A Bit of Centennial History Music, Music, Music!

from October 2023 Mission Bell

(Continued from page 28)

The Sullivans built their home on 17 acres located on San Juan Ave. at Lincoln. Roy was a trained musician but obtained work with a blasting contractor.

His daughter, Miriam, remembered an occasion when her father was preparing the dynamite, caps, and fuse in his usual carefree way when something

went awry. Suddenly, he catapulted into the air and when falling back to earth found himself skewered on his auger which had been stuck in the ground upright. It entered his shirt tail and out his collar as he struck the ground. He needed only to unbutton his shirt to free himself. His back was barely grazed.

Fred Links became interim choir director in 1949. He was assistant director of the California Department of Finance by profession. Self-taught, he had

been directing choirs as an avocation since he was a young man. In reflection, some might have called him a stickler. He instituted a program requiring singers to apply and be interviewed for choir membership. He was insistent on promptness and attendance. He propped up a large sign against the lectern at rehearsals that said, "You are on time," on one side and, "You

the year parties with attendance awards.

In 1952 he initiated the Candlelight Christmas Service. Contemporary and traditional carols were sung as the Christmas story unfolded from the scriptures. When the choir recessed, all sang "Silent Night" and departed in silence. Fred not only made a lasting impression with the music of the church,

but as the new sanctuary was built in 1951, he contributed by making the chandeliers that are still hanging today.

They are constructed of lathe-turned wood and pipe. He enrolled in a night school carpentry class to have access to the machines and advice on details of putting the chandeliers together. He had help from Henry Kinzel who welded the metal parts. In 1952, when a second

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CPC's choir c. 1960;

are late," on the other, and it was flipped over on the dot. If one were absent without notifying him in advance, they received a phone call the next morning. He held contests with rewards ranging from candy to jars of honey. The tenors and basses were usually the big winners. He also held end of

A Bit of Centennial History

Music, Music, Music!

from October 2023 Mission Bell

service was added, Links continued to direct the chancel choir and Harry Morse took on the duties of directing the new second service Cloister Choir. After 48 years of directing choirs, 13 of them at Carmichael Church, Fred Links retired in 1962.

The music of CPC to be continued...



Christmas Candlelight Service in the Sanctuary with chandeliers made by choir director Fred Links.

A Bit of Centennial History More Music, Music, Music!

from November 2023 Mission Bell

In the years 1962 to 2023 CPC saw fifteen sanctuary choir directors. This does not include all the

manage seven choirs. Fortunately for Brown, volunteers were plentiful, including his



Ken Brown (far right) served as CPC's music director in the 1970s and 1980s and rang with CPC's handbell choirs for many years after.

talented individuals that led the children's choirs, handbells, youth and young adult choirs, accom-

wife, **Jean Brown**. Jean di-

ble leadership. On July 16, 1981, for Brown's 50th birthday, the choir surprised him by performing *Missa Brevis*, a mass in English that he had composed for his master's degree. He had never heard it performed before. Jean, secretly rehearsed it with the choir for several weeks on the pretext that she was practicing with a women's ensemble. In the early days of CPC's handbell choirs, Ken Brown was a ringer. At one of their outings to a school during the holidays, the little children in the front row were giggling. As it turned out, the ringers were all wearing red



CPC's choirs and bell choirs c. 1987 with Music Director Keith Atwater.

panists, instrumentalists, orchestra, and praise band. That's a lot of talent!

Ken Brown took over the directorship of music in 1973 when the pastoral staff was in flux. Consequently, he settled in to a job that required him to

rected the children's Christmas pageant for 12 years. According to Ken, when Jean approached **Pastor Bill Johnson** about doing a pageant, he said he didn't want to see any kids running around in bathrobes. The choir performed many challenging selections under Brown's capa-

hats and with his white beard, the children thought Brown looked like Santa. Brown left in 1982 but came back twice as an interim.

The 1980s saw variety in music leadership, including **Keith Atwater**. Long time church

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member **Dave Studer** stepped in to direct the choir for a period and **Trina Torgerson Spivack** directed the high school & college-age Carillon Choir for a year as well as arranging and adapting much of the music for the Living Water group. In 1988 **Ron Standring** became the choir director, spending four years at the job. Ron was known as a good leader. If a group needed help, he would assist by singing out the side of his mouth.

Sopranos and basses on the left side of his mouth; altos and tenors on the right side of his mouth. During the 80s, there were jazz concerts, a musical ministry called "Sounds Alive," handbells, an ensemble group, a band, and an orchestra. Music was a robust part of these years.

Finally, in 1995 the future of CPC's choir and music depart-

ment was set in place. A new organist was hired named **Randy Benfield**. The *Carmichael Times* reported "...The son of missionaries, Benfield

cold Sunday morning only to find that **Jack Hatfield** had turned the heat on for him earlier so that he was welcomed by warmth. A highlight according



CPC's orchestra and Sanctuary choir under the direction of Randy Benfield, c. 2007

was born and spent 15 years in Brazil...He studied music at an early age and began performing in recitals and concerts at the age of seven..." Shortly after Randy was hired as organist, **Roberta Sullivan** left as choir director and Randy seamlessly stepped into that position. Randy fondly remembers the start of his directorship with arriving at church early on a

to **Bob and Doris Beckert** included one of Randy's favorite composers, **Craig Courtney**, coming to a choir retreat at Zephyr Point Conference Center and directing the choir during a regular Sunday service. They also fondly witnessed the blooming romance and eventual marriage between the orchestra's first violinist, **Marsha Bird-**

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sall Benfield, and Randy. After nearly 30 years of dedicated service, Randy retired from CPC in the spring of 2022.

The church, although deeply grounded in traditional music, offered changes in style to represent shifts in worship trends in the 1990s. Under the musical leadership of **Mark and Chris Studer**, rock and folk style music became part of worship and the contemporary service became a popular choice. When Mark left for seminary and then Chris left for music school, **Jenny DeVries**, who was already with the group, took over the responsibilities of leading the praise band. With Jenny's retirement after 21 years of service and changes in demographics in a post-COVID environment, contemporary music was blended into the traditional worship service in 2022 and is now in the capable hands of music director, **Keith Atwater**.

For many who have participated in the choir over the years, singing is, well, more than just singing. Doris and Bob Beckert commented that you, "Sing once and you pray twice," emphasizing

ing the spiritual nature and intimacy of the music experience.

While the congregation is experiencing the beauty of an anthem, the choir is truly glorifying God in song. The Beckerts, who have actively participated in CPC's music programs for nearly sixty years, represent the type of devotion that exempli-

fies not just a love of music, but the desire to praise God.

CPC's one hundred years of music is a landscape filled deeply with generations of this kind of devotion and praise. Psalm 100:1 tells us to make a joyous noise to the Lord. This church and its members have made that joyous noise for one hundred years;

may they continue to do so for the next one hundred years.



The Living Water Ensemble with director Trina Torgerson Spivack c. 1987



CPC's Contemporary Worship Team with director Chris Studer c. 2006

One Last Bit of Centennial History

from December 2023–January 2024 Mission Bell

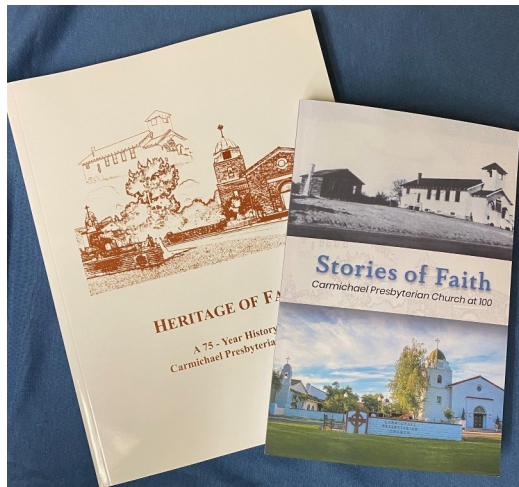
“...The great comfort we can take from our history... is to realize that we have traveled this way before and that God works when and where and how He wills.”

–Pyron McMillen

Carmichael (Community) Presbyterian Church is truly a culmination of its history. Starting from that seed of an idea that children needed Sunday School in 1918 to becoming a stronghold of the community on Marconi Ave. The lives touched, and the stories of the people echo from every corner of each building. Thankfully, over these decades faithful members have compiled and kept meticulous records of our history. To all those saints we owe a great debt of gratitude. One of these saints was Dr. **Bill Davis**, who was former Chief of California State Archives and our official church historian. In the latter part of 1994, he presented to the Heritage Committee the idea of publishing a history book. Plans to publish a book for the church’s 75-year anniversary were approved by Session in March 1996. This project provided an oppor-

tunity to showcase all the activities that the Heritage Committee, under the direction of **Jimmi Mishler**, had been compiling and indexing for ten years. Ultimately, three dedicated women stepped up to write the content – **Margaret Herman,**

Marie Segur, and **Faye White.** This amazing writing feat was then proof-read by **Stan Gilliam**



CPC has published two history books covering 100 years.

with **Phil Mishler** doing the enormous computer work to prepare the pages for the printer. Two years, hundreds of hours of research, meetings, and writing was accomplished by a multitude of volunteers. The self-published *Heritage of Faith, A 75 Year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church* was introduced to the congregation on December 6, 1998, and is still available for purchase.

Five years ago, when the centennial wasn’t even a blip on the radar, **Pastor Keith** approached **Susan Herman** with an outrageous request to write

the last twenty-five years of church history. Susan has worked professionally in editing for almost 20 years. With Pastor Keith twisting her arm, how could she say no? The simple telling of this story is that Susan, along with a handful of helpers, created a plan in early 2020 to start interviewing church members to develop oral histories that would lead to content of the “new” book. Despite COVID’s efforts to halt progress, 56 interviews, plus our archives, the 2019 PneuMatrix Study, a ReVision Plan, annual reports, multiple mini histories, past sermons, more volunteer contributions, and determined hard work allowed Susan to utilize a format for the book based on the church’s mission statement. The heaviest amount of writing by Susan, 700 plus hours, took place between June of 2022 and June of 2023. Completed chapters of the book were sent out for church members and friends to proofread before returning to Susan for reworking. A professional copy editor was hired to review and edit the completed version of the book. This fall, the finished book was uploaded to Ingram Sparks and is available for purchase online from Barnes and Noble, bookshop.org, and Amazon.

A reception and book sign-

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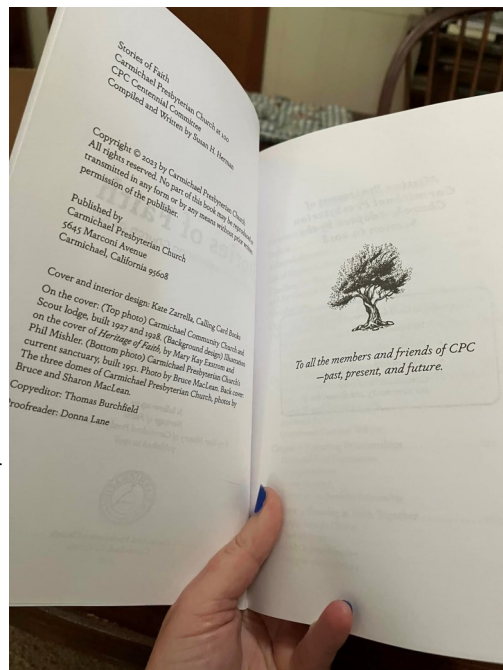
(Continued from page 34)

ing for *Stories of Faith: Carmichael Presbyterian Church at 100* is planned for December 1 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Gathering Place. Books will be available for purchase at the event for \$16.00.

For the last eighteen months it has been my privilege to scratch the surface of this church's history and tell the stories of the people that make up its body. While you have indulged my story telling, I have found this time to be a gift, meeting and talking with many of you that make up the great foundation of the history of CPC. Thank you for sharing your stories with this community. Thank you also for the constant patience and proofreading of **Karen Gray**, who provided most of the photos for these articles. I walk away from this task truly believing that church is people and the love we share for our community as we grow in our discipleship in Jesus Christ is a beautiful path that we will continue to travel for the future to come.



The team behind Heritage of Faith: a 75-year History of Carmichael Presbyterian Church, (L to R) Margaret Herman, Faye White, Marie Segur, Phil Mishler, and Jimmi Mishler, receive the first published copy in 1998 at Carmichael Printing.



*Reflecting how times have changed in the past 25 years, author **Susan Herman** “unboxed” her advance copy of Stories of Faith: Carmichael Presbyterian Church at 100 and shared photos on Facebook.*



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