

East Whittier Presbyterian Celebrates Centennial

The year was 1907. The town of Whittier was 20 years old when a small group of Christians gathered for prayer and worship in one of their homes. They had the courage to believe they could build a church and the vision that their church would serve the Whittier population for many years. A sanctuary for the "Little Brown Church" was officially dedicated on September 24th, 1911.

The church officially federated with the Presbyterian Church of Whittier in 1930. In 1951, the two churches merged, and a new facility was dedicated on September 30th. The name was officially changed to East Whittier Presbyterian Church in 1960.

Over the years, the church has grown and flourished through the efforts of its pastoral staff and members. Executive Presbyter Steve Yamaguchi says: "The congregation has remained faithful in witness, spirituality, mission involvement, and commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They have always sought and still seek to impact lives and win the world for Christ. The vision of its founders lives on at East Whittier."



A Centennial celebration will be held on Sunday, March 11th. Rev. Yamaguchi and Rev. Jeff Rumble, Pastor, will conduct the worship services and festivities.

Focus On: Canyon Hills Presbyterian Wonderful Staff and Congregation Define Church's Vibrancy

What makes a vibrant congregation? According to Pastor Michael Landreth, the answer for Canyon Hills Presbyterian Church in Anaheim is a "wonderful staff" and "enormous" congregational involvement. This is reflected in its worship and education, but especially in its music, youth, and mission.

Canyon Hills started with 80 people in 1979 and now has more than 550. Rev. Landreth has been the church's only pastor. "I'm absolutely stunned by the willingness of the members of this congregation to be part of the life of the church."

The Sunday worship services and education program are complemented by men and women's bible study during the week and a weekly program for "Moms and Tots". The music program includes a praise band of 15 members, a children's choir program of 20, a youth choir of 30, a chancel choir of 30, and a hand bell choir with a dozen members.



The congregation of Canyon Hills welcomes youth as active participants in the life of the church. The Senior High Youth and Youth Council are lay leaders throughout the year and are responsible for three worship services – a baccalaureate service for high school seniors in the community, a September service where they share the impact of summer conference activities on their lives, and the Thanksgiving Eve service.

When Associate Pastor Lissa Smith came to Canyon Hills 18 years ago, about only a handful of youth were involved in youth activities. Now, there are about 50 youth active in the senior high group, 20 in junior high, and 20 in the college and young adult group.

During spring break each year, as many as 90 high school and college students and adult leaders travel to Tijuana where they work with local organizations building homes. College students

undertake a similar mission trip on an October weekend. In 1996 and 2002, about 28 and 34 young people respectively spent 25 days traveling cross country to New York City and Washington DC, stopping along the way to participate in mission projects.

Mission is an important dimension of Canyon Hills. The church has sent representatives to Los Ranchos' sister Presbytery of Limuru in Kenya three times since 1995. Last summer, seven members were part of the Presbytery's delegation to that region. Elder Helen Harwell says the purpose is to help the residents create self-sustaining projects that build "jitea mea," which means "self-reliance" in Kenya. Next summer the church will send another delegation.

The commitment to mission extends to the local community and involves the entire congregation. The church is involved in local projects and organizations that reach out to the homeless and working poor. The church facilities are available to scouting programs, philanthropic organizations, many youth sports programs, and training for the staff of a home for severely abused children. Many members of the



Elders Jana Kidd and Helen Harwell unveil a plaque at a water well dedication in Kenya that was established with the help of their church, Canyon Hills Presbyterian.

church also are active in community organizations. In fact, Rev. Smith even serves on the school board of the Orange Unified School District.

Rev. Landreth says the congregation has an "understanding that we're pastors of each other - always present in time of need and together in joy and sadness - as well as being there for those in the community around us who are in need."