

Easton Presbyterian Church

Quasquicentennial



1886 – 2011

*Generation after generation stands in  
awe of your work;  
each one tells stories  
of your mighty acts.*

*Psalms 145:4 (The Message)*



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# Easton Presbyterian Church History 1886-2011

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It is with great joy that we celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization of the Easton United Presbyterian Church. As Jesus Christ has been faithfully proclaimed over the years, many have come into the Kingdom. For this we rejoice.

As we review the history and comment on the accomplishments of the people and pastors, let us remember to whom all of the glory must go. Whatever good has come and whatever progress has been made, all has been possible because of God's goodness to us. This has been coupled with committed people who have given themselves sacrificially to the work of the Lord.

## **“A Story of Love”**

*Written for the Quasquicentennial  
by Mark Lanford*

*This is a story of love.  
A Love so profound, reaching down, all around  
From a Source overflowing  
That never runs dry.  
This is the love that is Jesus.  
Spurring us on,  
    Becoming as one  
A people who are  
His hands and His feet.*

*Pointing a town to the Savior we’ve found,  
To a life everlastingly sweet.*

*South of the border in Santa Isabel,  
    With brothers and sisters, its God’s love we tell.  
A Tree full of stars, gifts for the poor;  
    Clothes for the children God loves evermore.*

*We sell odds ‘n ends to neighbors and friends  
    Twice a year, and a whole lot of money comes in.  
We give back to Easton with Awana each week  
    And send youth to camp where faith grows as they seek.*

*Together we sing, together we pray  
Together we love, together we stay.  
Forever we live, never to die  
Forever we give; love never runs dry, for...*

*God's love compels us, propels us, impels us  
To live out the Love that sets us all free  
Jesus who lives is at work in our lives,  
Sending us out so the blind might see.*

*Painting addresses on curbs in the street  
Pulling up weeds, we rake and we greet.  
Smiling we scoop some things left behind  
With acts of love, the love of God shined.*

*Parties with pumpkins, and songs in the air,  
Youth singing out in an evening so fair,  
Outstanding citizens rewarded and cheered  
VBS weeks in the summer each year.*

*We worship on Sundays with songs that fill;  
Sweet Sounds, and choir, and hymn-sings until  
The Word is preached, and all hearts stirred  
Telling the story... the story of love  
... 'til all have heard.*

*December, 2010*

In 1882 Messrs. Robert Smith, A.E. Smith, and James F. Simpson and their wives came from Salinas, California, and settled seven miles southwest of Fresno. A year later, Mr. J. B. McCormick and his wife came from Salinas and settled in the same neighborhood near what is now Easton. Initially these and other of the early families had no intention of living here, but only of making capital investments in land. The climate was considered to be malarias and the summer heat was thought to be unbearable. The tulle fogs of winter were regarded as too cold. The conditions of living seemed too crude to bring their families. In time, nine families were transplanted from Salinas and the United Presbyterian Church. For a time it seemed that the Salinas church might not be able to survive the loss of their elders, Sunday School teachers, prayer meeting attendants and principal financial supporters. Much, however, could be learned from these committed people. They remained members of the Salinas

church and faithfully sent financial aid to support the pastor and the Easton church.

***On May 28, 1886 the organizational meeting was held in the home of Robert Smith.***

The Rev. George McCormick, the pastor of the United Presbyterian Church in Salinas drove a

team of horses across country several times during the next few years to make pastoral visits, to preach sermons, to administer the sacraments, and to receive new members living in Easton into the Salinas church. The first sermon was preached in the Washington Colony School house on April 6, 1884 to a congregation of nearly a hundred. His text was taken from John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself."

In 1885, the General Committee of Home Missions appointed the Rev. W. W. Gordon to explore the Fresno area as to the advisability of opening a new field.

On May 28, 1886 the organizational meeting was held in the home of Robert Smith. Twenty six persons became charter members. They were as follows:



*Charter Members*

Robert Smith	Samuel Irwin
Mrs. Libbie Smith	Sarah J. Irwin
Miss Jean Smith	William Rambo
Alexander E. Smith	Mrs. Wm. Rambo
Mrs. Louise Smith	Mrs. Marianne Mckersie
James B. McCormick	John K. Kennedy
Mrs. Alice McCormick	Mrs. Lydia Kennedy
Mrs. Catherine Wight	Philip Hastie
Miss Tina Wight	Mrs. Jean Hastie
Alexander R. Telford	George Boyd
Mrs. Clara Telford	Mrs. Matilda Boyd
James Simpson	Mrs. Emma Wylie
Mrs. Maggie Simpson	John F. Kennedy



*Current Members who are Direct  
Descendants*

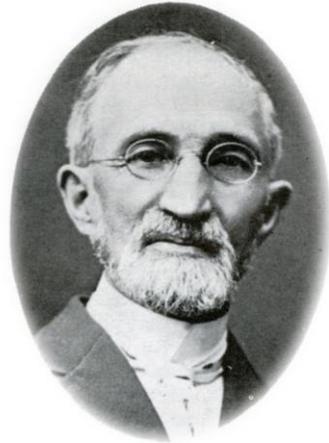
Mrs. Janice Statham  
*(Great Granddaughter of Mrs. Jean Smith Groves)*

Kristen Statham  
*(Great, Great Grand-daughter of Mrs. Jean Smith Groves)*

Russel Statham  
*(Great, Great Grand-son of Mrs. Jean Smith Groves)*

The congregation worshipped for a time in the Union Church in Central Colony and later in the Washington Colony School building. In November of 1886, plans were made to build a church which was completed and dedicated, free of debt, on February 20, 1887.

A call was extended to the Rev. W. W. Gordon, and on Feb. 21, 1887, he was installed as the first pastor of the church. Rev. Gordon continued as pastor of the congregation until January 1899. During Rev. Gordon's ministry, an addition was made to the church almost as large as the original building. The first organ was purchased about 1888 with some concern that it was an instrument of worship. As the first sermon of Rev. McCormick indicated, when Jesus Christ is lifted up, He will draw all men unto Himself. At the end of the first twelve years of the church there had been added 261 names on the roll!



**Rev. W. W. Gordon**  
*1887-1899*  
*First Pastor*

During the fall of 1899, the Rev. W. H. French, who had come to California from the east because of poor health, supplied the pulpit for several Sundays. He was elected and installed on December 1, 1899, and was known throughout the United Presbyterian Church as one of its ablest ministers.

During Dr. French's ministry, 82 names were added to the roll. By his life, sermons and work, he endeared himself to the whole community. He remained pastor until his death August 9, 1907. His body rests in the Washington Colony Cemetery.

Soon after the death of Dr. French, the congregation gave a unanimous call for the Rev. C. F. Crooks who was then in charge of a mission church at Agenda, near Salinas.

**Rev. W. H. French, D.D., L.L.D.**

*Second Pastor*

*1899-1907*



Dr. Crooks with his wife, Emma, began his work in Easton on November 1, 1907. He continued as pastor until his retirement in April 1936. At the request of the congregation he was made the Pastor Emeritus of the Easton church by action of the San Francisco Presbytery. In 1937, the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by his alma mater, Tarkio College. Mrs. Crooks graduated with a degree in music and played the piano and organ for the congregation and also taught the Women's Bible Class for many years.

During Dr. Crook's pastorate, 393 persons were received into the church. Around 1925 and 1926 the Swedish Methodist Church, the Easton Methodist Church, and the Oleander Congregational Church all disbanded. Many of these members chose to unite with the United Presbyterian Church. We find the names of a number of the future church leaders coming from these backgrounds. There had been a spirit of Christian unity among these groups as well as

with the Immanuel Lutheran Church which shares the same block of land.

In 1936, Dr. Crooks resigned after 27 years. He was asked to continue preaching for the church until a new pastor was found to replace him. He was paid \$15.00 a Sunday and his yearly salary had been \$1,400. His daughters, Katharine and Lois, were active members of the church and both played the piano and organ as their mother had in the past.

Dr. Crooks resided across from the church until his death in 1955 at the age of 91. He is buried at Washington Colony Cemetery. Dr. Crooks is remembered as having a fine singing voice and played the violin. He was a man of prayer and a gentle man of God, the fruit of the Spirit being very evident in his life.



**Rev. C. F. Crooks, D.D.**

*Third Pastor*

*1907-1936*

*Pastor Emeritus*

*1936-1955*

On April 15, 1936, the Rev. Harold S. Wilson with his wife, Helen, and year old daughter, Joyce, came from Prosser, Washington to assume the pastorate. Janet and James joined the family in the years to follow.

The church continued to grow under his leadership and many improvements were made to the church building. The sanctuary was remodeled and completely refinished through out. A new foundation was put under the church, and new porches and steps were added. The annex was remodeled, adding six more Bible School classrooms. The kitchen was

rebuilt, and a storeroom and basement were added. Three lots west of the church were purchased to provide parking space and allow for any future expansion. Because of his interest in electronics, the tower of the church was wired to allow for music to be amplified from it. The church became known as “The Church with the Singing Tower”.

Along with upgrading the facilities, zeal for the Lord’s work was evident. Mission giving increased and a concern for reaching out into the community for Christ was a high priority. Dr. Wilson was noted for his love of people. If a



**Rev. Harold S. Wilson, D.D.**

*Fourth Pastor  
1936-1949*

farmer needed help or work was needed on the church, he was there to offer himself in love and service. Many in our present congregation were young people during his ministry and their lives were greatly influenced by his love for Jesus Christ and his warm concern that encompassed the youth as well as adults. His children’s sermons held the rapt attention of youth and adults alike.

Loren Lewis began his seminary training at Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary in 1946 and several other young

people were laying plans for full time ministry.

In July 1949, Dr. Wilson resigned to assume the responsibility of Superintendent of Missions for the Synod of California. The following year he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from his alma mater, Sterling College. In 1981 after a stroke and three years in a rest home his wife, Helen, died. During Harold’s ministry she had been very actively involved in the Women’s Missionary Society.

We thank Dr. Wilson for the preservation of many of the historical records of our church. His contributions have been invaluable to this Committee. Dr. Wilson died in March, 1987 and is buried along with Helen at Washington Colony Cemetery.

Following the resignation of Dr. Wilson, a call was given to the Rev. Ralph Hawthorne. Rev. Hawthorne with his wife, Margaret, and two sons, Roger and Tim, began their ministry here in October of 1949. A daughter, Margaret Nell, was born just before they left Easton. They had formerly been at the United Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon.

When the Hawthornes arrived, plans for the building of our present sanctuary were in their infancy. Under Rev. Hawthorne's leadership, construction was completed and the building was dedicated March 30, 1952.



**Rev. Ralph R. Hawthorne**  
*Fifth Pastor*  
1949-1957

A young, musically gifted high school boy, Richard Cencibaugh, the grandson of former pastor, Dr. C. F. Crooks, secured the Hanford theater pipe organ for the church. Through his efforts and those of a number of volunteers, work began on the organ.

During Pastor Hawthorne's ministry, our missionary interest was at a high. Spring and Fall Schools of Mission were conducted. Thank Offerings were the largest in the history of the church and we began the pattern of exceeding our mission giving goals.

Several of the young people of the church entered full

time Christian work. Ruth Mary Alexander began her linguistic work with Wycliffe Bible Translators, Lois Bixby enrolled in the Department of Christian Education of Pittsburg-Xenia Theological Seminary, and Rodric Pence went to Korea with TEAM.

Ralph with his gentle spirit and Margaret with the gift of hospitality made a great team. She welcomed anyone who came to the door and was especially an encouragement to the young people. In August of 1957, Rev. Hawthorne accepted a call to the United Presbyterian Church in Albany, Oregon. After the death of his wife and his retirement, he now resides in Green Valley, Arizona.

Following Rev. Hawthorne, a call was given to the Rev. Dr. Dwight A. White who was serving the Ingleside United Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. He accepted the call and began his ministry in Easton in February of 1958 along with his wife, Jean, and children, Bill and Becky.

In 1958, the work which Richard Cencibaugh had begun on the pipe organ was completed and the organ was dedicated. With the fine quality of the instrument, the ministry of music was enlarged. During 1960, the pastor's study was added to the existing office and a secretary joined the staff. Work had begun on the 10,000 square foot Educational Building within a year after Pastor White arrived. Under his leadership, the fine structure that we have today was dedicated in June 1961.



**Dwight A. White, D.D., D. Min.**  
*Sixth Pastor*  
*1958-1966*

Church School enrollment reached 355 and the worship service average was 207. An effective youth stewardship program began and a youth club for pupils in the third through eighth grades began on Wednesday afternoons.

During this time, Alan Pence left for New Guinea to begin work with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Under Rev. White's leadership, the new manse on Eunice Street was completed in 1965.

In 1966 Rose Mary Talbot, a Christian Education worker, was brought here to give expert suggestions on making our adult and children church school more effective. She spent ten weeks having workshops and meeting with teachers and leaders of the church.

Pastor White was greatly respected and loved. Jean in her quiet way could always be counted on to do anything that she was asked to do. Dwight exhibited an outstanding gift of Administration and preaching as he led this church and served as Stated Clerk of Presbytery. The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on Dwight by his alma mater, Westminster College, and he earned the Doctor of Ministry from Drew University.

In May of 1966, the Whites moved to Indiana to serve as the Area Counselor for the Fifty Million Fund (1966-1967). Rev. White then accepted a call from the Presbyterian Church of Liberty Corner New Jersey in June 1967 staying for 21 years. The next three years were spent at the Old First Presbyterian Church of Newark New Jersey. In 1991 Dwight retired and they presently live in the family home in Ryegate, New Jersey.

The congregation voted to accept the Rev. Dale Bracey to be the new Pastor following Dr. White. In December 1966, the Rev. Dale Bracey and his wife, Barbara, and sons, Jeff and Todd, began their ministry in Easton. Rev. Bracey was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary and came

from a pastorate in Chittenango, New York.

Small Group emphasis began during Pastor Bracey's ministry. He and Barbara began a college PROBE (Person-Related-Open-Bible-Encounter) Group which grew and had great vitality during his tenure. They also began several experience centered SEES groups for Bible study and personal growth as well as a marriage enrichment group.

In 1972, two individuals along with Pastor Bracey received training in leading Transactional Analysis groups. Following the training, several groups began. Barbara Bracey was an excellent teacher and artist and worked alongside Dale with the young people who met in their home.

“Operation Interrobang,” a church-wide planning conference, took place in 1971. It was at this time that the church's statement of purpose was developed and approved by the Session.



**Rev. Dale Bracey**  
*Seventh Pastor*  
1966-1972

A financial milestone was observed in January, 1970 at the Annual Meeting when the mortgage on the Eunice Street manse was burned, and the church again became debt free.

A close bond of friendship developed between many who were strengthened in their Christian pilgrimage.

From Easton, Rev. Bracey and Barbara went to St. Peters by the Sea in Palos Verdes. He then went to Phoenix, Arizona where he became the Senior Pastor of the Orangewood Presbyterian Church. After retirement, they settled in Los Gatos, California.

After a long search, the Pastor Nominating Committee presented the Rev. Raymond Riese to the congregation. He was accepted as the eighth pastor of the congregation. Rev. Riese came with his wife, Margaret, and daughters, Merrilee and Robyn, to begin their ministry in January 1974. Their twin sons, Stephen and Mark, were enrolled in college elsewhere. The Rieves came from the Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington.

One of the first goals Pastor Riese set for himself and for the congregation was to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with each home in the Easton area. This remained a top priority to the end of his time in Easton.

In 1975, Gary Nesper was hired as a full time Youth and Choir Director, and Rev. Riese completed a Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1976.

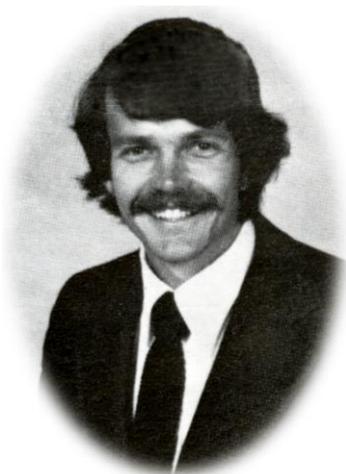
Over the years, Dr. Riese had been actively engaged in a jail ministry and trained several of the lay people. Basic Belief Classes were taught periodically in homes by Pastor Riese. These classes were for active and inactive members as well as non-members. Nearly 400 persons benefited from the series.

Margaret Riese was an excellent Bible teacher and was the lead teacher at the Interdenominational Women's Bible Study for the entire time they were in Easton. She taught the College Sunday School class and any number of other studies over the years. She was also active in the Women's Missionary Society.



**Rev. Raymond L. Riese, D. Min.**  
*Eighth Pastor*  
*1974-1986*

In 1978 the Session made the decision to add an Assistant Pastor to the staff. A call was given to the Rev. Daniel J. Price who had just completed his training at Fuller Theological Seminary. He came to Easton in August with his wife, Karen. As well as preaching once a month, Pastor Price was responsible for the youth ministry. The Easton Learning Center was started with it being a part of the church budget, but it soon became self-supporting as it is today. At the present time there is an enrollment of 32 children with three teachers.



**Daniel Price**  
*Associate Pastor*  
1978-1987

Two of the young men were studying for the ministry. Gary Foster had left for Fuller Theological Seminary in 1974. After he was ordained, he began his pastorate at the St. Mary's Presbyterian Church in Idaho. He continued there for his entire ministry. Philip Moran studied at San Francisco Theological Seminary and after his ordination, went to the Community Presbyterian Church in Vacaville, California. He has been in Boise, Idaho at the Covenant Presbyterian Church for twenty years.

In 1980, the "Sweet Sounds", a children's choir, was begun by Patty Musson. This was a tremendous outreach to the community.

Frank Thompson was added to the staff as an Administrative Secretary. This enabled the church office to remain open five days a week and provided opportunity for the pastors to devote their time to ministry.

Two refugee families were sponsored by the church.

This was a rewarding experience to see the families become self-supporting and to receive two of the individuals into the membership of the church.

In 1981 under Dan Price's leadership, the first Mission to Mexico was taken. This mission has continued each year during Easter vacation, and has been a life-changing experience for many youth and adults.

In 1985, Pastor Riese began to train 10 individuals in the Bethel Bible Series. The congregational phase began in October of 1986 with Lilace Turmon leading it.

Under Dr. Riese's leadership plans were made for the third and final phase of the over-all building program. The ground breaking for the Family Center took place on March 2, 1986. The \$640,000 structure was built by David Hoff and Hoff Construction Co., and was dedicated November, 1986. Norman Covell was the Chairman of the building committee in the initial stages and Carol Westernen took over when he moved. Five stained glass windows were made by John Banas. The window in the church office was made by Jeanne Gardner. Each window was purchased to honor various family members. The Family Center included a full kitchen, offices, full basketball court, restrooms, and storage rooms. It has opened many new opportunities for ministry to the community.

In 1986 Mark Lanford, a son of the congregation, was hired as Choir Director and continues to the present time.

During his time in Easton Pastor Riese studied at San Francisco Theological Seminary for his Doctorate in Sacred Theology. Perhaps Dr. Riese's strongest gift was that of Pastor. He had a heart for God's people that was especially evident in his visitation ministry. He had a good sense of humor, was a music major in college and joined instrumentalists in the congregation on his violin. He had a beautiful singing voice with which he blessed the congregation by using it on occasion as a part of a sermon.

***Easton Presbyterian Church***

*by Rachel Dack*

*Written for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

*Rooted in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,  
They banded together to grow  
In wisdom and truth as they worshipped the Vine,  
Whose branches we are, bowing low.*

*In wisdom and service, with Spirit-filled lives,  
Their fellowship blossomed with love.  
They shared of their struggles as well as their joys  
While God gently guided above.*

*Through tumult of wars, through changes and growth  
And failures so common to man,  
We've witnessed Christ's purposes winning the race,  
As He works out God's great sovereign plan.*

*Our heritage great—those saints who've gone on,  
In answer to their dear Lord's call;  
That great cloud of witnesses cheering us on,  
Brings courage and strength to us all.*

*Sons and daughters remain and unions take place,  
Bringing children to add to His Church;  
These children are jewels in our precious Lord's sight,  
For each one represents a re-birth.*

*Our church must grow on in the years yet to come,  
Reaching out to the needs of all man;  
That need is the Lord to dwell in each heart,  
So we'll witness and share all we can.*

*God knows our future—we trust Him to guide,  
To bless and to show us the way.  
We'll trust in His leading; with courage move on,  
Until that Great Homecoming Day*

**“A Centennial of Love”**

*by John Dack*

*Song written for the Centennial*

*A centennial of love. A gathering of faith.  
Our hearts unite as one to sing and celebrate.  
All glory be to God whose Holy Word we trust.  
We thank our God for this centennial of love.*

*One hundred years before us,  
This Easton church began,  
When twenty-eight believers  
Believed the Lord's command.*

*Through years of growth and changes  
And struggles on our way,  
His binding spirit kept us,  
For here we are today.*

*Go ye among all nations,  
We've heard the great command.  
We 'ye, sent our missionaries  
To teach and lend our hands.*

*And locally around us  
We've tried to be a light,  
To share the truth-to love  
And do the work of Jesus Christ.*

*Who could know our future,  
But God who knew our past.  
As long as we abide in Him,  
Our fellowship will last.*

After almost thirteen years, the congregation was saddened to see Pastor Ray and Margaret answer a call to the First Presbyterian Church in Yakima, Washington. In September, 1986 the Farewell Reception was held as the first event in the Family Center. After retirement, they moved to Shoreline, Washington and Ray took a part-time position at Calvin Presbyterian Church and preached frequently in that church and many others who needed a substitute pastor.

A Pastor Nominating Committee was formed to take on the task of replacing Pastor Riese. Because Rev. Price was still on staff, he took over the responsibilities of the church providing stability while an interim pastor was found.

Dan taught many Communicant Classes for the youth and Sunday School classes for the adults during his ministry here. With Karen, he facilitated Small Groups and several Marriage Communication classes. Karen received her Doctor of Psychology in Marriage and Family while they were in Easton and had a counseling office in the Education Building. This was a wonderful asset to Dan's ministry. Youth ministry is difficult in these times. We appreciated Pastor Price's commitment to the Lord, to the youth and adults of this church. To have had him on the staff enlarged the ministry of the entire church.

The Prices left in early February of 1987 with their son, Michael, for Aberdeen, Scotland, where Dan would begin his advanced theological studies. He received his Doctor of Systematic Theology in 1991, followed by three years as a pastor in Zurich, Switzerland. They had a daughter, Heather, born while in Scotland. He is currently the Senior Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Eureka, California.

The church was fortunate to have the Rev. William Antablin come on board in early 1997. His wife, Florence was a blessing also and became an immediate friend to everyone. They were familiar to many of the congregation. Bill was the pastor at University Presbyterian Church when it

was organized as a yoked church with a Methodist church. He had also served as interim pastor in several churches in the San Joaquin Presbytery. They had served in Saudi Arabia and had a world view and a special interest in missions.



**Rev. S. William Antablin**  
*Interim Pastor*  
1987-1988

The youth ministry was a high priority, and Will and Barbara Reimer were secured to fill the need. Pastor Bill taught a number of classes in Sunday School and during Lent on Wednesday evenings. Florence taught an interpersonal relationship class called “Growing Closer” which drew a sizeable number of young couples. Lilace Turmon taught the Bethel Series on Sunday evenings.

It was during this time that the final payment on the loan for the Family Center was paid. It was debt free!

The opportunity opened to distribute food to low income families through the EOC program. The Family Center was an excellent place for this ministry. The 16 to 20 volunteers often served two hundred or more families every month. The ministry continued until 2006. A smaller food pantry, supplied by the Deacons, continues to provide for walk-ins.

In 1987, Eva Poytress and her husband, Rod, became Dinner’s Chairmen. Then Eva and Willetta Ennen became Co-Dinner Chairmen. Eva was asked later to be Kitchen Supervisor to oversee the many people inside and outside the church who use our excellent facility.

A call was given to Doctor Lee Hicks. After serving twenty six years in four different parishes in Nebraska, Doctor Hicks and his wife, Barbara began their ministry in Easton on January 1, 1988. They left behind their son, Kirk, and daughter, Kerry.

During Pastor Hicks' seven years here, the Prayer Chain was re-activated. With the administering of ashes, Ash Wednesday was observed. It was during this time that the Deacons began a Children's Clothes Closet. It remains the only clothes program that serves just children in all the Fresno area.

At the request of Pastor Lee and Barbara, the congregation voted to sell the manse to them for \$35,919 with the understanding that the church would have the option to buy it back when they left Easton. Since most pastors prefer to own their own homes today, it was decided to allow the Hicks to sell the house.



**Dr. Lee Hicks**  
*Ninth Pastor*  
*1988-1994*

The Stephen's Series Lay Counseling classes were taught by Pastor Hicks with a sizable number of individuals taking advantage of the instruction.

He brought Prof. Henry Schmidt from the Mennonite Seminary to do an evaluation of the present method of decision making in the church. He recommended the "Commission" system rather than the present "committee" method. This eliminated the former committees and the larger number of individuals serving on them. It was to be

evaluated after a year.

An “Easton Hispanic Probe” began as a joint venture of Easton Presbyterian Church and Immanuel Lutheran Church. The Probe showed that the Jehovah Witnesses had gotten a number of Hispanics to join them and many more were attached to the Roman Catholic Church. The Rev. Edmundo Hassentenfel with volunteers went door-to-door and gathered two small groups—one for worship and one for Bible study. This church helped financially and the Lutheran church had the meetings in their facilities. After approximately two years the effort was discontinued.

In May of 1990, Will and Barbara Reimer, the Youth Directors, resigned. Scott and Nerissa Nielsen filled the slot in June.

Steve and Kim Hiatt (both veterinarians) with their children went with Christian Veterinary Missions to Cambodia from 1993-1996.

Tom Klein, CPA, was hired as Church Administrator following Frank Thompson who had given himself sacrificially to the work of the church. Liz Faccinto became the receptionist/secretary following Carol Westernen who had been secretary for approximately ten years.

Two worship services began; one contemporary and one traditional.

It was decided that it was not economically wise to do anymore fixing of problems on the present organ. An electronic organ was brought in to see if that might be a good replacement, but it was agreed instead to have Richard Cencibaugh look for a suitable pipe organ. He found a Wicks organ in a Catholic Church in Pacific Beach near San Diego. Richard rebuilt it using selected parts of the former organ. It was set into the old console shell and refinished to match the sanctuary. The Antiphonal organ located in the balcony plays from either keyboard. John Moran and Bob Jeffries did a

vast amount of work helping Richard. Many volunteers helped Nathan Lichti do the reconstruction of the chancel of the church while the organ was being rebuilt and the pipes were being assembled. The former wooden railing separating the choir was removed. Extensive rewiring and lighting was done, and the chancel and risers were constructed to allow for the new organ. After months of worshiping in the Family Center while construction was underway, the congregation was happy to get back to the sanctuary. Pamela Milhorn was the chairman of the project.

After seven years, in December 1994, Doctor Hicks submitted his resignation in order to become a “Pastor to Pastors” under E.S.A. in the Fresno area. Rev. Hicks served as an interim pastor in Covenant, Millbrook, Terra Bella, Strathmore, and the First Armenian, all Presbyterian Churches. He was the interim executive for the San Joaquin Presbytery and later as the interim executive for the Boise Presbytery. Lee and Barbara now reside in Boise, Idaho.



**Rev. Chase Stafford**  
*Interim Pastor*  
*January 1995—June 1996*

The congregation welcomed the Rev. Chase Stafford as Interim Pastor along with his wife, Harriett Grace. There were a number of people in the congregation who knew the Staffords years ago when they served at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Fresno. Pastor's wives are very important to a congregation. Again we were blessed with Harriett Stafford who was an able teacher. The two of them immediately fit in with the congregation. Chase was a gifted preacher and teacher and Harriett a wonderful

encourager as she would drop in to people's homes with some home-made bread or cookies and a gift of joy. They gave the church a sense of stability and a smooth transition.

The final details for the organ were completed and arrangements were made for the dedication. Richard Cencibaugh invited Ronald McKean, a renowned organist and composer from the First Presbyterian Church of Oakland to play for the dedication concert on October 22, 1995.

Routine activities of the church were carried out during the time that Chase was Interim. He resigned June 30, 1996 following a heart attack. Several pastors filled the pulpit until the new selection would come in September. The Staffords returned to their home in Santa Rosa, but came back to officiate for two funerals just before the new pastor would arrive. Both of the Staffords died within a few years after leaving Easton.

After what seemed like a long search, the congregation welcomed Dr. Ronald C. Owens and his wife, Juanita, and daughters, Kelsey, Rachel, and Jessica. Before the new pastor was ready to start his first day, he was asked to conduct the funeral for one of the members. He began officially on September 22, 1996. He had eleven years of pastoral service and came to Easton from the First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View, California. The Owens purchased a home in the area, and later added an addition for Juanita's



**Dr. Ronald C. Owens**  
*Pastor*  
1996—Present

mother, Beatrice Sevold.

“The Church You Always Longed For” campaign had over a hundred in adventure groups, working to look ahead to what we could do, and be, in this church. Many of our men attended Promise Keepers. In 1997, two worship services were tried again, one contemporary and one traditional. In 2001, the Billy Graham Crusade was held in Fresno, with many of our people helping and attending. Due to a financial short fall, both the business manager and secretary positions were eliminated in late 2002. Tireless volunteers staffed the office until finances improved and a more cost effective staff arrangement was designed in 2004. Three quarters of the congregation met in small groups following the worship service to study the five purposes for our lives, as laid out in Rick Warren’s book, “The Purpose Driven Life”. Two of the home groups continued with this study, in order to dig deeper.

Ruth Mary Alexander of this congregation was honored for her fifty years as a linguistic missionary to Mexico. She developed two written Mixtec languages, translated the New Testament into both, and wrote grammars, dictionaries and children’s stories in the Mixtec languages.

In 1998, Ruth Musson, from this church, went to Pakistan to home school missionary children. From 1999-2003, she attended Fuller Theological Seminary, and was ordained in 2007. She worked as a Chaplain with Nancy Hines Hospice and recently became Mrs. David Clayton. In 2003 Patty Musson directed the last Sweet Sounds performance. She faithfully worked with hundreds of children, in the twenty-three years since starting the group. Many lives were touched and many were drawn to the church, as she allowed God to do far more than she could have imagined in the beginning.

After serving since 1990 as Youth Director, Scott Nielsen was made coordinator of Outreach, Discipleship, and

Youth in 2001. In 2002 he developed a skate park that brought non-churched youth for skateboarding and basketball. The skateboard competition brought a hundred children, to cheer on their friends. He started the pumpkin party, and breakfast with Santa. He taught communicant classes for the youth and Sunday School classes for adults. Each year that he was with us, he and his wife, Nerissa organized and led the Mission to Mexico. Tim Warden and Adam Knudsen served as Youth Interns.

Steve and Kim Hiatt and their two children went for a second term to Cambodia under Christian Veterinary Missions from 2002-2005.

Martha Dean Moran accompanied the congregation on the piano and organ for fifty-six years. The congregation honored her with a retirement dinner in 2003. She rarely missed a choir practice or worship service. She always took time to encourage and practice with young people and was a marvelous example of commitment to the Lord and His church. Following her retirement, Juanita Owens accepted the position of pianist/organist.

Another of our faithful servants is Joan Calder who has been the Janitor of this church for forty years. She has also served for many years as a teacher for the beginners in Sunday School. If anyone is in doubt about where to find something, Joan is the one to ask.

2004 was a time of major staff changes. Cortnee Brewer was hired as Administrative Assistant and continues to be a blessing with her kind and cheerful presence in the office. Scott left to return to teaching, and Mike Allen came as Youth Director (2004-2005). Kim Hoff was hired as Director of People and Program Development. She developed and directed the Community Awards which highlighted outstanding individuals in the community who contributed to making Easton a great place to live. It was during this time that we returned to one worship service.

In 2004, building was again in the forefront. The flat walkway between the sanctuary and the educational building was replaced by a breezeway that complimented the architecture of the sanctuary. It was at a cost of \$118,760. Michael Tellian did the designing and Bob Dack's firm, Advanced Structural Design, did the construction.

In late 2005 the Memorial Garden by the Sanctuary was started. Besides lovely plants and flowers, bricks were purchased honoring the pastors who have served this church and the deceased members.

In 2006 Kim Hoff brought the Awana program to the children of Easton. It has proven to be an excellent outreach program with faithful volunteers who have worked as teachers, cooks, games and crafts. Kathy Gabel headed it up following Kim. Mary Louise Oliver and the Outreach Commission began a yearly yard sale to fund Awana and other needs of the church. Mary Louise's exemplary work has brought in approximately \$35,000 to date and she is now the director.

Adam Knudsen (2006-2007) and Rob Rose (2006-2008) filled the position of Youth Director. Rob had recently finished seminary. During his time in Easton, he received his ordination and then followed a call to pastor a church in the east. Adam had also been ordained during this time.

With the number of Hispanics in our neighborhood, the desire of the Session was to again try a ministry to our neighbors. Eliecer and Abby Barrantes (2006-2010) were hired to begin the difficult task of calling in homes, praying with families, having special events to encourage the people to join them for bible study and worship. When Rob Rose left, the Barrantes directed our youth program. Eliecer is now studying at Fuller Seminary. The youth ministry was taken over by one of our own young women, Sarah Esquibel and the Hispanic ministry has been discontinued.

The adult Sunday School class gained new enthusiasm

with a study of the book of John led by Robb Culp.

Since 1986, the church continued to minister to those in need through the EOC food distribution. In 2006 as the need became greater, over 250 families were served monthly. We requested that another facility take over. It had required over twenty volunteers to register families, sack the groceries and distribute them. The Deacons now maintain a Food Pantry for walk-ins.

The congregation was pleased that another of our young people, David Dack, son of Bob and Priscilla Dack, was preparing for the ministry at Pittsburg Xenia Theological Seminary. He will be graduating in June of 2011.

In 2010 a “Faith in Action Sunday” was held in which eighty to ninety children and adults went out into the community to pre-assigned families to do various kinds of work that the individuals were not able to do themselves. They cleaned yards, repaired porches, planted flowers and painted addresses on curbs. The children and a number of adults went to the Rest Home where they conducted a worship service and the children gave the patients a craft that they had made. Those who went out and those who received the help were equally blessed.

In bringing this history of the pastors and the ministries accomplished during their tenures, we are very aware that there have been countless lay people who have given themselves faithfully in the Lord’s service to make these ministries successful. Each pastor who has been a part of these 125 years has been unique in his giftedness. Each has carved a special place in the hearts of many people. Pastor Owens’ gift of teaching has been evident as he communicates in preaching and teaching and continues to bring this congregation the message of God’s great sacrifice and love for us.

## **A Note from Pastor Ron Owens**

Even as this history is being written, Easton Presbyterian is in the process of changing denominations. At the founding Easton Presbyterian was a part of the old United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA). This broadly conservative group joined with the larger Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1958. But within a decade tensions started to be felt within the congregation toward their new denomination, as it became exposed to more liberal elements of Presbyterianism than previously known. In the ensuing decades, the denomination moved increasingly toward un-Biblical policies. After several years of deliberation, the Easton Session decided in 2010 to seek dismissal to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) began in 1981. Many of the congregations of EPC are churches that departed the mainline Presbyterian denomination over the last 40 years. As a result this small group of approximately 300 churches bears some similarities to the old UPCNA. The EPC is similar in its commitment to God's truth while forbearing differences in nonessential matters. Its motto is "Truth in love in essentials, unity in non-essentials, liberty, in all things charity." While conservative, this newer denomination is not rigid or fundamentalist. For example, congregations enjoy freedom in the matter of electing officers, which means churches may choose whether or not they desire to place women in leadership. Making the move to EPC, Easton Presbyterian is joining seven other churches in the San Joaquin Presbytery that have made the change.

## A Closing Note

A few years ago we created a slogan for our website. Easton Presbyterian Church we said, is a church “where Christ is our center, the Bible is our guide and people matter.” It’s a snapshot of who we are. Whether we remember our beginnings as a Sabbath School, the many who deepened their relationship to Jesus on “Walks to Emmaus,” or the hundreds of community children we touch with gifts at Christmas, it’s more than a slogan. Jesus, the Bible and people is what we will always be. It’s why we do Sunday School for all ages. It’s why we run a weekday Bible Club that’s bigger than our Sunday School. Jesus and the Scriptures is why we are transitioning into a new denomination. Christ, His Word and people—our own families or strangers we can love in His name—these are God’s call for our church into the future. So listening to Scripture and relying on God’s Spirit, Easton Presbyterians will keep connecting to our Savior while reaching around us to neighbors with His love.



## **Leona Carlson Thompson**

*Member of Easton Presbyterian Church for 84 Years*

Leona Carlson moved to Easton with her parents, Anton and Hilda Carlson from Coalinga, California. She was six years old and came with her brother, Dick and sister, Doris. Her parents were members of the Swedish Methodist church before joining the Easton United Presbyterian Church. Leona became a member in 1927.

She went to Washington Colony Elementary School and Washington Union High School where she was crowned May Day Queen in 1935 and dated her future husband. She graduated from Fresno State College and received her teaching credential.



In 1940 she married Frank Thompson. During WWII she taught for a short time at University Colony School and they had their first child, Louise, in 1944. Charles and Carol arrived by 1948. When the children were young, Leona did substituting in a number of elementary schools. Later she taught fifth grade at American Union Elementary School. As well as teaching in public school, she was a very special Sunday School teacher in this church. The children looked forward to being in her class. Her leadership has been invaluable in many areas of the church. She hosted and led many Missionary Society meetings in her home and helped to organize the Women's Ministry. She was ordained a Deacon. The number of acts of service and kindness amaze us. In her nineties she helped the children in the Awana program, is presently the head of one of the teams of four women who distribute clothes to needy children who come to the church for help. She faithfully calls on shut-ins, is on the Prayer Chain, attends worship and Sunday School regularly as well as a weekly bible study.

We are delighted to honor Leona for her eighty four continuous years as a member of Easton Presbyterian Church. We thank her for her example of faithful commitment to Jesus Christ and His church.

## Items of Interest—Past and Present

THE FIRST BUILDING including cost of lots, carpet and furniture was \$2,373. This amount was given by local members. In 1891 with a grant of \$600 from the mission board, the north addition was built at a cost of \$1,763, making a total cost of \$4,136. The Annex (called the Social Hall) was purchased in 1924. It had been one of the temporary halls built for Washington Union High School following the fire.

THE FIRST COMMUNION TABLE belonged to the ancestors of Janice Statham, the Robert Smith family. One Sunday morning in 1887, Mr. Smith carried it to the spring wagon. Libbie, his wife, wanted to know, “Why?” He replied, “We need a table for the Communion bread. I’ll bring it back.” This marble top table remained in the church until after the sixtieth anniversary when it was returned to Mrs. Jean Smith Groves. Janice is sharing it with us on this occasion.

THE PRESENT COMMUNION TABLE was dedicated in memory of Mrs. Emma Crooks on Easter of 1942. It was a gift from the Women’s Bible Class which she had taught for many years.

THE BRASS CROSS on the Communion table was given in memory of Dr. C. F. Crooks.

THE FIRST ORGAN was purchased about 1888 with some concern about whether it was proper to have an instrument in worship. Mrs. Marianne McKersie was the first organist.

THE HAMMOND ORGAN was purchased in 1947 in honor of those who had served in WW II. A set of Maas CHIMES were added to the organ by the Thompson family in memory of John (Jack) Thompson, their son and brother who was killed in the war. Those chimes are still a part of the present organ.

The Wurlitzer PIPE ORGAN came from the Fox Hanford Theatre and was installed in 1958. It was a two manual organ. Richard Cencibaugh did the work of procuring the instrument and

making it into an excellent instrument.

THE ANTIPHONAL ORGAN was constructed by Richard and dedicated in honor of his father, Bolen Cencibaugh. It is located in the balcony and can be played from any of the Keyboards. Remains from the old organ were used.

THE PRESENT ORGAN was built in 1951 for a church in San Diego. Our last organ was in need of extensive repair or replacement, so the decision was made to purchase the Wicks organ and have Richard rebuild it using selected parts of the former organ and reinstall it. It has a completely new solid state control-set into the old console shell. It is on a moveable platform allowing it to be positioned anywhere in the front of the sanctuary. This organ has five divisions and consists of 29 ranks of pipes, 1,843 pipes, controlled from a console of three manuals. We are grateful to Richard for his continued interest and work for his home church.

Many of THE EARLY SERVICES were disturbed by the nickering of horses and the jingling of chains. The horses were tied to trees or to the hitching posts.

The WASHINGTON COLONY CEMETERY was originally owned by this church. There was a need for a cemetery closer than Fresno. The Trustees purchased ten acres from Robert Smith, one of the Charter Members, for \$625. Subscriptions of \$395 were received in return for which lots were to be exchanged at the rate of \$25.per lot. In 1894 the cemetery was deeded to the church and in 1938 taken over by Fresno County. The first burial took place in 1890.

THE PRESENT SANCTUARY which was built in 1952, including furnishings, was built at a cost of \$63,474. The PICTURE WINDOWS were given as memorials at a total cost of \$4,500. The GETHSEMANE WINDOW was purchased with gifts given by the Sunday School children at a cost of \$625. FRANK THOMPSON and BILL BLACKSILL were the building chairmen. Many volunteers spent countless hours in making the concrete blocks and working on the building.

THE EDUCATIONAL BUILDING was completed in 1961 at a total cost of \$118,000. EDGAR DACK was the building chairman. Volunteers again did a great deal of work.

THE EUNICE STREET MANSE was built in 1965 at a cost of \$32,500. OTIS FREEMAN was the building chairman.

THE FAMILY CENTER was constructed by David Hoff and David Hoff Construction Company at an estimated cost of \$640,000. The Co-chairmen for this structure were NORMAN COVELL and CAROL WESTEREN.

THE BREEZE-WAY was built at a cost of \$ 118,76.14. A friend of Bob Dack, Michael Tellian, designed the structure and Bob supervised his company, Advance Structural Design, in building the beautiful addition.

## Elders

J. B. McCormick	Mrs. May Almgren	Ann Alemania
Robert Smith	Robert Dack	Lilace Turmon
James A. Miller	Dennis Westeren	Ray Jackson
James W. Kennedy	Paul Mesenheimer	Stan Leisle
Thomas David Reed	Nathan Lichti	Robert Statham
James McClurg	John V. Martin, Jr.	Tom Pallas
Charles Miller	Richard Milhorn	Priscilla Dack
Andrew Currens	Philip Moran	Robb Culp
James Rarnage	Loren Johnson	Larry Warden
W. L. Giffen	Carl Nash	Tim Warden
Ira Pannett	Peter DeGroot	Robert Turmon
Bissell Garrett	Chris Jorgensen	Sue Ruiz
Claude Rogers	Mrs.Katie Denman	Floyd Moore
Wayne Huggins	Albert Bixby	Mrs. Lynne Jorgensen
J.D. Alexander	Mrs. Carol Westeren	Loran L. Lewis
Mrs. Janice Carstens	Gordon Feaver	Phillip Musson

Roy Calder	Marvin Stollar	Frank Thompson
Verna Ward	Harold Pence	David Hoff
G.N. Steyer	Doug Myovich	Henry Lichti
David Barber	Reid Knight	Craig Bowden
Edgar Dack	Velma Barber	Bowlen Cencibaugh
Art Contreras	Otis Freeman	Verla Workentine
John Moran	Pete Holmes	Robert Alexander
Mary Louise Oliver	Phillip Van Meter	Freda Kaprielian
Bob T. Lanford	Pam Milhorn	E.R. (Bud) Pallas
Larry Maddox	James Freeman	Grace Foster
Carl Paulsen	Earl Hughes	James Johnston
Ruben Ruiz	Edward Ehoff	Dennis Harris
Melvin Harris	Becky FINDERUP	Irwin Keithly
Darren Hoff	Galen Hiett	Tony Mattos
E. Lloyd Cunningham	Phyllis Nielsen	Mrs. Lena Eckard
Robert Jeffries	Mrs. Margart Markarian	Ted Davis
E.W. (John) Musson	John Esquebel	Norman Covell
Tim Paulsen	Gary Foster	Donald Nielsen
Daniel Freeman	Carl Alemania	Frank Moore
Nerissa Nielsen		

## 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee

Celebrating the 125<sup>th</sup> year of Easton Presbyterian Church has been a time of remembering our past, honoring our heritage, and looking forward to a future of bringing Glory to God through our ministries here. The year of celebration in 2011, included several events and activities which were coordinated by members of the planning committee (listed below). Of course, there are many more volunteers that helped than can possibly be listed. Thank you all, for helping to make this a wonderful anniversary year.

Coordinator	Juanita Owens
Advisors	Dr. Ronald Owens Ted Davis
Kiosk Construction	Don Nielsen
Kiosk Displays	Marsha Esquibel Janet Flores Joan Calder
Anniversary Banner /Graphic Design	Janet Flores
Heritage Luncheon and Fashion Show	Phyllis Nielsen Marsha Esquibel
Anniversary Weekend Banquet	Linda Stout Priscilla Dack
Banquet Decorations	Kim Hoff
Banquet Master of Ceremonies	Bob Dack
Sweet Sounds for Worship Service	Patty Musson Sue Ruiz Kathy Gabel Mark Lanford
Music (Banquet and Worship Service) Coordinator	Mark Lanford
Anniversary Song	Richard Cencibaugh
Worship Service Organist	Kim and Ted Davis
Anniversary Weekend Sunday Lunch	Julie Grant
Anniversary Cookbook	Jane Culp Peggy Mattos
Ice Cream Social	Sue Ruiz Sarah Esquibel
Gethsemane Window Magnet and Graphics for History Book	Joe Ruiz Ron Owens
History Booklet Author	Millie Alexander
History Book Layout	Juanita Owens
Creative Assistance	Cortnee Brewer