



## **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HANFORD**

### **ATTACHMENTS TO OUR CHURCH INFORMATION FORM:**

#### **Part 3: Church Characteristics**

##### **21. Mission/Vision Statements**

Mission Statement: To make disciples of Jesus Christ who make others disciples of Jesus Christ.

We seek to accomplish this through celebrative worship, active service and outreach, meaningful fellowship, and life application of God's word. Beyond this, we also seek to be a community of faith that is authentic in the way we live our lives – we seek to live and love as Christ did, biblical in the way we address life's issues and difficulties, and relevant in the way we reach out to others. First Presbyterian Church Hanford is an inter-generational church that is focused on honoring God through worship, outreach, and ministry to the entire family, our community, and the world. We are united in the bond that we share through Christ.

We are the 400<sup>th</sup> church to join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inerrant, divinely inspired written Word of God, and God's revelation to a fallen and broken world. We further believe that the Bible is our sole authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son. He is fully human and fully divine – God incarnate and the Word of God made flesh full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

We further believe he is the sole and unique Savior of the world (John 14:6), and that we must place our faith and trust in him as Savior and Lord in order to have a relationship with God, the Father. Scripture tells us that:

- Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2).
- All have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).
- The consequences of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus (Romans 6:23).
- When we profess Jesus as Savior and Lord, our sins are forgiven and we will receive eternal life (Romans 10:9).

## **Part 5: Church History**

### **1. What do you consider to be the three most important events in the history of your church?**

- 1) First Presbyterian Church Hanford is the proud owner of the second oldest M.P. Moller Pipe organ still in use this side of the Mississippi River. It was brought to Hanford by rail in 1912, installed in 1913 and is still in use weekly. This organ was chosen by the congregation because of its ability to present the sounds of many instruments from one console and fill a large building with a sound that was unparalleled. They wanted only the best for worship. The bellows were pumped manually, often by our youth, until 1940 when an electric blower was installed. In 1979 the church had another decision to make, a new sanctuary was being built, what should be done with the organ? The congregation decided to upgrade the organ and install it in the new building. In order to maintain the beauty and integrity of this amazing instrument, First Presbyterian Church decided to refurbish the organ again in 2014 to add even more options for our organ.
- 2) First Presbyterian Church was founded in 1878 and has undergone several building projects. The church built in 1912 stood until our current structures were built in 1981. After much deliberation on the needs of our congregation and community, in 1979 it was decided to remain in the downtown Hanford area and rebuild to fit increasing needs of the congregation instead of moving further north to a 20-acre property First Presbyterian Church owned. The sale of the 20 acres paid for most of the construction of the new church.
- 3) Our transition from PCUSA to the EPC was met with much prayer, excitement from some and push back from others. Talks of changes in the PCUSA regarding scriptural integrity began at First Presbyterian Church Session meetings in 1997.

Our Session closely watched General Assembly ratifications and pronouncements. Feeling that PCUSA was straying further from true Scriptural integrity they asked the congregation in January 2009 about leaving the PCUSA. A survey was passed out and at that time the vast majority did not want to leave PCUSA; the Session did not pursue leaving but waited for further General Assembly decisions.

In 2011 when General Assembly passed the amendment allowing the ordainment of those who have committed adultery and LGBT, our Session voted unanimously to reject this General Assembly discernment and affirm the clear biblical teaching and standards. Session brought the General Assembly decision and Session's rejection before the congregation, saying the overriding issue was not necessarily the ordination standards, but it is was the abandonment of the authority of Scripture. Several options were presented to the congregation: remaining in the PCUSA and do nothing to try to change these ratifications; stay in the PCUSA but engage the church at regional and national levels to try and effect changes; or leave the PCUSA for another denomination.

Session was aware from many congregational meetings and individual discussions that the congregation was split on the decision and either way may cause some members of the church to leave. After much prayer, Session began the initial process of leaving PCUSA in the summer of 2011. A few churches from our PCUSA Presbytery had already left at this time with some going to EPC, which was relayed to the congregation.

First Presbyterian Church informed San Joaquin Presbytery (PCUSA) on September 27, 2011 that they intended to disassociate with the PCUSA and begin a new association with another reformed body of denomination. Through negotiations with the PC USA San Joaquin Presbytery, our church successfully left the denomination keeping all properties and finances intact. At the April 2012 Session meeting, discussions were held on which reformed denomination to move to, ECO or EPC. After deliberation, it was decided to pursue membership into the EPC. First Presbyterian Church officially joined the EPC on October 11, 2012.

Between 1997-2010 we saw several families leave over time for multiple reasons, not just the split from PCUSA issue. From 2009 our membership of 233 dropped to 151 by December 31, 2012. While we are a smaller church now, we are a stronger, more unified congregation.