



*Our Beginnings...and  
Our Heritage*

*A Short Story*

*By Susan Fillon*

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 1:3-6

The Apostle Paul is speaking these words to the Philippians with thankfulness and prayer, remembering that what was begun by the Lord will continue on because God began that work and He is the one that will see it through to the end....Amen!

So, with these few humble words, we remember the beginnings of our church, the one that we gather in each Sunday to worship the Lord, New Hope Christian Center Community Church. This place, this building, this church, that was started by people that have long been gone, but who ushered in the Holy Spirit's presence here and allowed that same Holy Spirit to saturate these sacred knotty pine walls. Those same walls that resounded with glorious uplifted voices in the past and now do the same, will live on in us as we glorify God in this place. God began a work here in 1931 and is completing it in us until the day of Jesus Christ.

New Hope Christian Center Community Church, the building that houses our church, was constructed in the early 1930's by a group of people that had their beginnings in what is referred to as "the first church of Lomita." This was not our church building, but another church constructed on 245<sup>th</sup> Street off Narbonne Ave. It was incorporated in 1909 and was known as the Evangelical Union Christian Church of Lomita. In 1917 the church leaders consulted with the Presbyterian church because they wanted to become more mission minded and they needed help to fund a building expansion at that time. In 1918 the Superior Court granted the request of the congregation for a change of name to the First Presbyterian Church of Lomita and the building program began in earnest. The charter membership role listed forty-nine people who became the new members of that church. In 1921 the congregation decided to rename their church Community Presbyterian.

During the “roaring twenties” something hit Los Angeles in a big way. The Pentecostal movement came to the area when in January 1923 Aimee Semple McPherson founded Angelus Temple in Los Angeles. Home radios all over Southern California tuned in to her gospel message. Before long a branch of Angeles Temple was started right here in Lomita. It shared space with other groups in an old frame building in Lomita. Mrs. Mildred Trotman, mother of Dawson Trotman, founder of the worldwide organization called The Navigators, and other members of Community Presbyterian began attending meetings there. Peeking into that old frame building one day, a woman saw that there were several people holding a meeting and was surprised to note that it was a Pentecostal service that was happening in that old frame house. She noticed that there were quite a few others from the Community Presbyterian church including a couple of women sitting on the floor, speaking in tongues. This woman had discovered Lomita’s branch of Angelus Temple and she left before anyone noticed her. She brought this to the attention of the Pastor and these people were removed from the rolls of the Community Presbyterian church. They were considered to be “fundamentalists.” Of these people were Mrs. Trotman, her son Dawson and her daughter, along with Irene Mills and Laura Thomas who were public school teachers and others. Years later Irene Mills would tell Dawson Trotman’s biographer that Rev. Clark, the pastor at the time, had relieved them of their leadership roles with the young people because of their fundamentalist teachings. This Pentecostal beginning was the beginning of our heritage as well, because these are the people who became the builders of our church that we now worship in. We share a rich and blessed history of serving the Lord in a Pentecostal environment.

#### ***MORE HISTORY TO BE PROUD OF...***

In 1926 Dawson Trotman returned to the Christian Endeavor Society at Community Presbyterian. He had been gone since his high school graduation three years earlier. Dawson credited the Christian Endeavor Society and Misses Mills and Thomas for leading him to a saving knowledge of Christ. It is believed that Irene Mills lived in the little house next to our church. This house is mentioned in *Lomita...A Century Remembered*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Jim Cole, as having been built in the 1920’s.

Before leaving the Community Presbyterian church, Dawson Trotman was instrumental in leading many youth to the Lord. He worked with junior boys and started a boys' club in 1927. He worked tirelessly with the youth of Lomita bringing the count of young people up to almost 300. But around 1931, Irene Mills, Laura Thomas and Dawson Trotman were asked to resign their positions but they had already prayed about and were steadfastly intent on starting a new church in Lomita. They rented a hall at first, but the "South Lomita Church" was launched and later the new congregation started building our church on 255<sup>th</sup> Street in 1931. Rev. Vernon V. Morgan, who served as a supply pastor for Community Presbyterian became the pastor of this newly formed church. From then until now it has always been a "house of God." It hasn't always been Pentecostal, as in the beginning, but has always been here in this community to be a beacon to those who are lost and need the Lord.

After leaving the Presbyterian congregation and while serving at the South Lomita church, Dawson Trotman continued to work with the Fishermen Boys' Clubs. In 1933 he began a ministry with servicemen first known as Servicemen's Bible Clubs; later in 1934, the ministry was called the Navigators. Dawson's idea was that discipleship could spread throughout the world starting with one person who reached out to another person who reached out to still another person, and so on. In 1943, the Navigator organization was incorporated in California and is now an international organization in more than 100 countries. And to think that this man came to know the Lord here in Lomita, led back to Him by the two school teachers living right next door, and worshipped the Lord within the doors of our church. How grand to know this.

### ***"I BUILT THIS CHURCH!"***

Pastor Sam was praying one day in the sanctuary of New Hope and an elderly gentleman walked in. He was dressed in a plaid shirt and overalls and came in the front door and started to look around. He began to tell Pastor Sam that he was the one who built this church. He remembered that it took about four years to construct, what with material and labor all donated. He recalled how the people used to hold services on the slab after it was poured and before they had any walls up. He said they used to praise the Lord with up-raised hands and singing out loud in the open. I can imagine that there probably were just a few homes around

the church property during that time, but Lomita was burgeoning and more and more people were choosing this little farm town to spend the rest of their lives in. He also remembered the material that was used, like the steel tie rods in our ceiling that were from a ship building yard, probably from San Pedro or Wilmington ship yards. What Pastor Sam gained from talking to this old gentleman, and which was most important, is that these people that came together to build this church, all those many years ago, were filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Again, God had started a work and now He has brought all of us here to continue that work until He comes again.

We came here in 1976 and have seen many, many people come through the doors of this church, all touched by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Some stayed a long time, some stayed just for a few years, but all were touched by God here. In the late 1970's and early 80's we had over 120 people in our congregation. Lots of young people and lots of willing hands to do the work that needed to be done. When we bought this property in 1976, it was such a blessing even though when we walked through the empty building, we realized that we had lots of work in front of us. The people that were our first congregation were so generous, we actually needed everything. The sanctuary was empty down to the slab floor. There was no tile or carpeting. God provided all that. A family within our church put the carpet in the sanctuary. We needed chairs to sit in and a family provided folding chairs and a few tables for the dining room. Every time we had a dinner, we carried our sanctuary chairs into the dining room and carried them back with the dinner was over. We sat in those chairs until we purchased the pews. Every family bought one, some bought two. The kitchen needed a stove and refrigerator and that also was provided, although these appliances were used, they were new to us. We kept those for many years. We had an old Roper restaurant stove and it prepared lots of breakfasts (it had a big griddle), lunches and dinners for us in those days.

What was so wonderful was the way everyone came together to do their part. We held services on Sunday morning after we had spent an hour in our respective Sunday School classes, everyone from the very youngest to the eldest person at our church attended. We had Wednesday evening services and Friday Recreation where the youth of our church came

together for volleyball, basketball, table tennis, etc. We played together and we prayed together....we were a family! It was rare for someone to miss coming to church in those days. They came to worship the Lord who was everything to them.

All in all, over the years, we have done the work of the Lord and He has blessed our efforts. We have a rich and sacred history and we are not finished writing the narrative of New Hope Christian Center Community Church yet. This is our story and as such we all should be honored to play our part in the continuation of this eighty-six year old history.

Excerpts from: ***Lomita's First Church...A Century Remembered*** by Nancy G. Knapp

***Daws – A Man Who Trusted God*** by Betty Lee Skinner

***Lomita...A Century Remembered*** by Jim Cole