

Centennial Moments

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda

The first church connected with the original Sanitarium and school was formed in the parlor of the old hotel-turned-Sanitarium on January 6, 1906. There were 16 charter members who named it the Loma Linda Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The first two names of the charter members, not surprisingly, were John Burden and his wife, Ella. John Burden was named the first elder and continued to serve as a pastor for several years. After meeting in the parlor of the Sanitarium for a time, services were then held in the log assembly building.

Groundbreaking for the first church building, given the name Loma Linda Chapel, was held in October 1909, with the first service held by June 1910. The church was a wedge-shaped wood structure that had a seating capacity of about 750. The inside was brown, stained with crude oil mixed with kerosene. The exterior was a dark green color, and it stood across from the present Campus Hill Church where Lindsay Hall now stands.

The Heritage Room has on display the original podium from this first church. Ellen White spoke on several occasions at Loma Linda Chapel. While Mrs. White thought it was a lovely church, she had commented that it had poor ventilation and was not long enough. At the time of her comments, attendance usually did not reach 300.

Mrs. White, one of the founders of Loma Linda Sanitarium and school, had faith in the growth of the institution. History shows that the member-

ship did grow, and by 1928, there were about 1,000 baptized members. The worn and tired Chapel was usually filled beyond capacity for services.

Church records reveal a variety of challenges that had to be dealt with in the years ahead. In 1919, a fly committee was formed to deal with the pesky insects. It was agreed to screen windows and doors, and hitching posts were relocated away from the Chapel.



Water to fill the baptistery in those days came from Big Bear Lake. Not only was the water muddy, but also small fish could occasionally be seen swimming in it. In 1923, the church board voted to negotiate for well water from the Sanitarium.

Of concern in 1924 was “the matter of some of our young people racing cars up and down the Sanitarium hill....”

On December 29, 1928, the College Church of Loma Linda was formed with 284 charter members. It was the second con-

gregation in Loma Linda and located on the college campus. It first met in the assembly room in West Hall but rapidly outgrew the space available. They soon built a multipurpose building for church purposes, class lectures, and college chapel services. Burden Hall, named for John Burden, was dedicated on October 6, 1934, with a capacity for 500-plus people.

Burden Hall is still standing, located just north of the Del E. Webb Memorial Library. The main floor, where services were held, is used for classes, and the basement houses the office of University relations.

Soon after its dedication, Burden Hall was filled to overflowing. Various stories are told of the shortage of space in Burden Hall. Even with two services there was inadequate room.

In 1953, Elder Charles W. Teel became pastor. It was decided that a large church should be built to accommodate the membership. The University Church was built, and the first service was held there on September 10, 1960. Today, the church has a membership of more than 6,000.

Of the initial 284 members forming the College Church, 240 transferred from the original Loma Linda Chapel Church, leaving 680 members on the hill. Space continued to be a serious problem, so plans were laid for the building of the present Campus Hill Church.

The final service in the old sagging and deteriorated Chapel was held on Christmas Day 1937. From the Campus Hill Church and the University Church many other churches have been created.