

What is the history of the Church of the Nazarene First (170 Reservoir Ave)?

The Church of the Nazarene First is a tiny, red brick building structure on 170 Reservoir Street. It is only slightly bigger than most buildings in the area and does not stand out as many churches tend to do. You could walk right by it, distracted by the other structures outside: the new Unisex salon and Reservoir Avenue School with a bold caption by Allen Shawn Feinstein gracing its wall. On a Sunday afternoon, the board outside the Church informs me of the Sunday school at 10 am, morning service at 10:45 am, Fellowship meeting at 4 pm and that the Spanish Service in the evening was cancelled. It was 10:20 am when I arrived and after a friendly introduction to an elderly woman, the pastor led me straight to the basement where his wife was leading a bible session with four girls around my age.

The conversation at Sunday School and the later service referred frequently to the metaphor of doors and building walls, the superficiality of places versus what was inside. That it was the community that one created inside the church that mattered more than anything else, and the youth at Sunday School reflected on how to keep the doors of the church open and get more people interested. They had recently organized a yard sale outside to get more people to notice it as they walked by. This intrigued me, as earlier my only knowledge of the Church had been its tiny structure, and now I slowly wandered in its depths.

The room had two projectors, and the service followed the outline that the pastor had on a power point presentation. The service consisted of a lot of music, the pastor doubled up to play the drum set and the electric guitar too. It had a really modern feeling to it, however right near the pulpit hung a banner that read "1887 First People's Church, Association of Pentecostal churches of America, RI." This confused me as I knew that it was not a Pentecostal church. Also, although it looked modern, in reality it was ancient and had been around for a long time.

The First Church of Nazarene is not a Pentecostal church in the same sense as we think of the word Pentecostal today¹. It is a Nazarene Church, a movement that came out of the Holiness movement in the early 1900's. This church, however was established in 1887, before this domination was born. Therefore, it is truly one of the first Nazarene churches in the country, the other one located in Texas. Why did this movement strengthen in Providence is the next question that comes to mind?

The answer to this question comes by understanding the origins of the Holiness movement that led to the formation of the Church of Nazarene and giving credit to the lives of two men. John Diaz and Fred A Hillery.

The Wesleyan Holiness movement or Revival started in Britain in the 18th century as a general revivalist movement with John Wesley, his brother Charles and George Whitfield being notable figures in this movement. The Wesleyan phase of this revival was characterized by three theological landmarks: regeneration by grace through faith, Christian perfection or sanctification and the witness of the Spirit to the assurance of grace². In the 19th century the new holiness movement began in Eastern United States with Phoebe Palmer of New York and Timothy Merritt serving as national leaders. A lot of independent holiness entities vied to join with this movement.

Amongst these, the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America was one. "On July 21, 1887, the People's Evangelical Church was organized with 51 members at Providence, Rhode Island, with Fred A Hillery as pastor." Fred A Hillery was a key member in the north-east holiness movement and helped found many churches in New England. At this time the Church was located at 163 Oxford Street in Providence and only moved to its current location more recently. The Church of Nazarene was strengthened as an institution throughout the 1890's and finally in 1907-08 the Association of Pentecostal churches of America, the Church of Nazarene and the Holiness Church of Christ all united under the banner of the holiness movement. In these years Rev. John Diaz, who had been

¹ P 63, Historical Dictionary of the Holiness movement

² Historical Statement, Attached in Appendix

one of the crucial founders of the holiness movement in Providence, left on a missionary movement to Cape Verde. As the movement strengthened, so did it spread further and further³.

What is its role in the neighborhood?

No one who I spoke to in the church knew about the Mashapaug pond. This surprised me as it is just down the road from the church. It seemed like many people were not very familiar with the space around the church. What brought all these people with different connections to this place together in church?

Churches often form important meeting places in communities. At this church, people sing, pray, talk and eat together. There were only around 30 people at Sunday mass even though the church had capacity for much more. I was told that since the church was so old, a lot of its older members had moved away or passed away. What was apparent in the church hall was that there were people of many different ethnicities. At the lunch right after mass I met people from Haiti, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Nigeria and from many different places in the US. In the congregation, some people lived down the street, some drove in from other places in Rhode Island such as Kingstown and some, including the pastor were from Massachusetts. I was told of a couple of Brown students had joined the congregation every year⁴. Every time a new person entered the church, such as me in this case, the mass said a special welcome out loud to this person and sang a song welcoming them in.

There are many churches of various denominations within a 1-2 mile radius of the pond. The role of the Church of Nazarene first in this neighborhood is small as it does not serve the majority of the community. However, for the few people who it does, it helps them make connections with other people from further away. The night before I visited, everyone had celebrated Fall Festival with almost 300 people of different Nazarene Churches in Rhode Island (2 Portuguese ones in East Providence, one in Wakefield and another one). The masses do tend

³ Historical Statement, Attached in Appendix

⁴ Stephen Harris a Brown graduate, now a senator was someone who gave me a some information about church.

to serve people of various language groups, and hence are appealing. A lady from Nigeria told me that she used to attend the African church earlier, but felt that it was too big and she came here for the intimate community that it was. The Church of Nazarene in theory also has a huge policy of service in community and missionary service in other countries. I do not know if this is practiced in this church.

Bibliography:

“Providence First Church of Nazarene,” <http://www.pfcotn.org>

Historical Statement of Nazarene Church (unsure source as document was given by Pastor at Church)

William Kostleby, *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness movement* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2009)

Conversations in the church with people and email conversation with Brown Alum. Stephen Harris.

Appendix:

These are some documents Pastor Almeida at the Church me:

FROM CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

The following letter is from Rev. John J. Diaz, Pentecostal missionary to Brava, Cape Verde Islands, who left Providence for his field of labor November 17:

Island of S. Vincent, December 18, 1900.

My very dear Brother F. A. Hillery

With joy in my soul I write these few lines desiring that they find you and all the brethren and sisters in the People's Pentecostal Church enjoying the best gift of the Holy Ghost and fire. I am at this present moment saved, sanctified and kept by the power of the Holy Ghost. Glory to God, to know that Jesus abides within.

I arrived here safely this morning after a 24 days' voyage. I held services on board; all the passengers came up and listened with great attention. Pray for me and for them.

Salute all the Pentecostal people; tell them that I live up on the mountain, you know, Thanksgiving avenue, where we get fresh breezes from heaven.

I expect soon to be at Brava, only twelve hours' sail from here, then I will write all the history. We had bad weather on the way, but still God took care of us. Praise ye the Lord! "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." I wish all the readers of the BEULAH CHRISTIAN to pray for me that God may continue to favor us with salvation of souls and sanctification of the believers. Yours in Christ.

JOHN J. DIAZ

(Taken from Beulah Christian, January 1901.)



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The following excerpts are from the *Beulah Christian*, August 1901.
Pentecostal Mission of Brava, Cape Verde Islands, June 12, 1901.

Rev. F. A. Hillery, Providence, R.I.:

This is my first report for the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. I am well and enjoying full salvation, praise the Lord. I praise him for the blessings bestowed upon us in the meetings, and in my soul.

I have excluded from my letters the past six months details of how the world uses us who are not of the world. Everywhere we go, by all classes of people, of all ages, we are called all kinds of names calumnious, without the slightest foundation, touching the character of ourselves and our brethren and sisters. These calumnies are passed from one to another, and believed by many, and threats of violence to us individually, or as we are gathered together, are rife, varying in force from time to time....

...Last Sunday we saw some efforts to put a stop by violence to all our work. A great rabble made up of the worst elements from every part of the island gathered about our mission and made such a noise that it was impossible to hold a service. The crowd was furious, and we feared they would kill us with their sticks or stones or knives. But, thanks be to God, our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and we are escaped; our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. I sent twice to the chief of police before he would come to give us any protection. He accompanied us until our sisters were within a safe distance of their

homes; but he had difficulty in keeping the crowd back from us. But it was nearly impossible to keep them it was so large, about 500 or more. Brother Julius Gonsalves, who is with us, and who will soon return to America, will tell you more of this very trying day....

I am glad to report twenty-three members and six young converts. We wish your prayers. No one of ability is willing to come out and take the part of right and justice in our behalf. With those in authority bent on doing us harm, our only hope and trust is in the arm of the Lord....

I want your prayers constantly, because we stand alone without protection. I feel the fire of holy love burning in my soul. All the Pentecostal people of Brava are well, and salute the churches. Yours in the bond of perfect love.

JOHN J. DIAZ

HISTORICAL STATEMENT

**Historic Christianity
and the Wesleyan-Holiness Heritage**

One Holy Faith. The Church of the Nazarene, from its beginnings, has confessed itself to be a branch of the "one, holy, universal, and apostolic" church and has sought to be faithful to it. It confesses as its own the history of the people of God recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and that same history as it has extended from the days of the apostles to our own. As its own people, it embraces the people of God through the ages, those redeemed through Jesus Christ in whatever expression of the one church they may be found. It receives the ecumenical creeds of the first five Christian centuries as expressions of its own faith. While the Church of the Nazarene has responded to its special calling to proclaim the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification, it has taken care to retain and nurture identification with the historic church in its preaching of the Word, its administration of the sacraments, its concern to raise up and maintain a ministry that is truly apostolic in faith and practice, and its inculcating of disciplines for Christlike living and service to others.

The Wesleyan Revival. This Christian faith has been mediated to Nazarenes through historical religious currents and particularly through the Wesleyan revival of the 18th century. In the 1730s the broader Evangelical Revival arose in Britain, directed chiefly by John Wesley, his brother Charles, and George Whitefield, clergymen in the Church of England. Through their instrumentality, many other men and women turned from sin and were empowered for the service of God. This movement was characterized by lay preaching, testimony, discipline, and circles of earnest disciples known as "societies," "classes," and "bands." As a movement of spiritual life,

its antecedents included German Pietism, typified by Philip Jacob Spener; 17th-century English Puritanism; and a spiritual awakening in New England described by the pastor-theologian Jonathan Edwards.

The Wesleyan phase of the great revival was characterized by three theological landmarks: regeneration by grace through faith; Christian perfection, or sanctification, likewise by grace through faith; and the witness of the Spirit to the assurance of grace. Among John Wesley's distinctive contributions was an emphasis on entire sanctification in this life as God's gracious provision for the Christian. British Methodism's early missionary enterprises began disseminating these theological emphases worldwide. In North America, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784. Its stated purpose was "to reform the Continent, and to spread scriptural Holiness over these Lands."

The Holiness Movement of the 19th Century. In the 19th century a renewed emphasis on Christian holiness began in the Eastern United States and spread throughout the nation. Timothy Merritt, Methodist clergyman and founding editor of the *Guide to Christian Perfection*, was among the leaders of the holiness revival. The central figure of the movement was Phoebe Palmer of New York City, leader of the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness, at which Methodist bishops, educators, and other clergy joined the original group of women in seeking holiness. During four decades, Mrs. Palmer promoted the Methodist phase of the holiness movement through public speaking, writing, and as editor of the influential *Guide to Holiness*.

The holiness revival spilled outside the bounds of Methodism. Charles G. Finney and Asa Mahan, both of Oberlin College, led the renewed emphasis on holiness in Presbyterian and Congregationalist circles, as did revivalist William Boardman. Baptist evangelist A. B. Earle was among the leaders of the holiness movement within his denomination. Hannah Whitall Smith, a Quaker and popular holiness revivalist, published *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875), a classic text in Christian spirituality.

In 1867 Methodist ministers John A. Wood, John Inskip, and others began at Vineland, New Jersey, the first of a long series of national camp meetings. They also organized at that time the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, commonly known as the National Holiness Association (now the Christian Holiness Partnership). Until the early years of the 20th century, this organization sponsored holiness camp meetings throughout the United States. Local and regional holiness associations also appeared, and a vital holiness press published many periodicals and books.

The witness to Christian holiness played roles of varying significance in the founding of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (1843), the Free Methodist Church (1860), and, in England, the Salvation Army (1865). In the 1880s new distinctively holiness churches sprang into existence, including the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) and the Church of God (Holiness). Several older religious traditions were also influenced by the holiness movement, including certain groups of Mennonites, Brethren, and Friends that adopted the Wesleyan-holiness view of entire sanctification. The Brethren in Christ Church and the Evangelical Friends Alliance are examples of this blending of spiritual traditions.

Uniting of Holiness Groups

In the 1890s a new wave of independent holiness entities came into being. These included independent churches, urban missions, rescue homes, and missionary and evangelistic associations. Some of the people involved in these organizations yearned for union into a national holiness church. Out of that impulse the present-day Church of the Nazarene was born.

The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. On July 21, 1887, the People's Evangelical Church was organized with 51 members at Providence, Rhode Island, with Fred A. Hillery as pastor. The following year the Mission Church at Lynn, Massachusetts, was organized with C. Howard Davis as pastor. On March 13 and 14, 1890, repre-

sentatives from these and other independent holiness congregations met at Rock, Massachusetts, and organized the Central Evangelical Holiness Association with churches in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. In 1892, the Central Evangelical Holiness Association ordained Anna S. Hanscombe, believed to be the first of many women ordained to the Christian ministry in the parent bodies of the Church of the Nazarene.

In January 1894, businessman William Howard Hoople founded a Brooklyn mission, reorganized the following May as Utica Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle. By the end of the following year, Bedford Avenue Pentecostal Church and Emmanuel Pentecostal Tabernacle were also organized. In December 1895, delegates from these three congregations adopted a constitution, a summary of doctrines, and bylaws, forming the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America.

On November 12, 1896, a joint committee of the Central Evangelical Holiness Association and the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America met in Brooklyn and framed a plan of union, retaining the name of the latter for the united body. Prominent workers in this denomination were Hiram F. Reynolds, H. B. Hosley, C. Howard Davis, William Howard Hoople, and, later, E. E. Angell. Some of these were originally lay preachers who were later ordained as ministers by their congregations. This church was decidedly missionary, and under the leadership of Hiram F. Reynolds, missionary secretary, embarked upon an ambitious program of Christian witness to the Cape Verde Islands, India, and other places. *The Beulah Christian* was published as its official paper.

The Holiness Church of Christ. In July 1894, R. L. Harris organized the New Testament Church of Christ at Milan, Tennessee, shortly before his death. Mary Lee Cagle, widow of R. L. Harris, continued the work and became its most prominent early leader. This church, strictly congregational in polity, spread throughout Arkansas and western Texas, with scattered congregations in Alabama and Missouri. Mary Cagle and a coworker, Mrs. E. J. Sheeks, were ordained in 1899 in the first class of ordinands.

Beginning in 1888, a handful of congregations bearing the name The Holiness Church were organized in Texas by ministers Thomas and Dennis Rogers, who came from California.

In 1901 the first congregation of the Independent Holiness Church was formed at Van Alstyne, Texas, by Charles B. Jernigan. At an early date, James B. Chapman affiliated with this denomination, which prospered and grew rapidly. In time, the congregations led by Dennis Rogers affiliated with the Independent Holiness Church.

In November 1904, representatives of the New Testament Church of Christ and the Independent Holiness Church met at Rising Star, Texas, where they agreed upon principles of union, adopted a *Manual*, and chose the name Holiness Church of Christ. This union was finalized the following year at a delegated general council held at Pilot Point, Texas. The *Holiness Evangel* was the church's official paper. Its other leading ministers included William E. Fisher, J. D. Scott, and J. T. Upchurch. Among its key lay leaders were Edwin H. Sheeks, R. B. Mitchum, and Mrs. Donie Mitchum.

Several leaders of this church were active in the Holiness Association of Texas, a vital interdenominational body that sponsored a college at Peniel, near Greenville, Texas. The association also sponsored the *Pentecostal Advocate*, the Southwest's leading holiness paper, which became a Nazarene organ in 1910. E. C. DeJernett, a minister, and C. A. McConnell, a layman, were prominent workers in this organization.

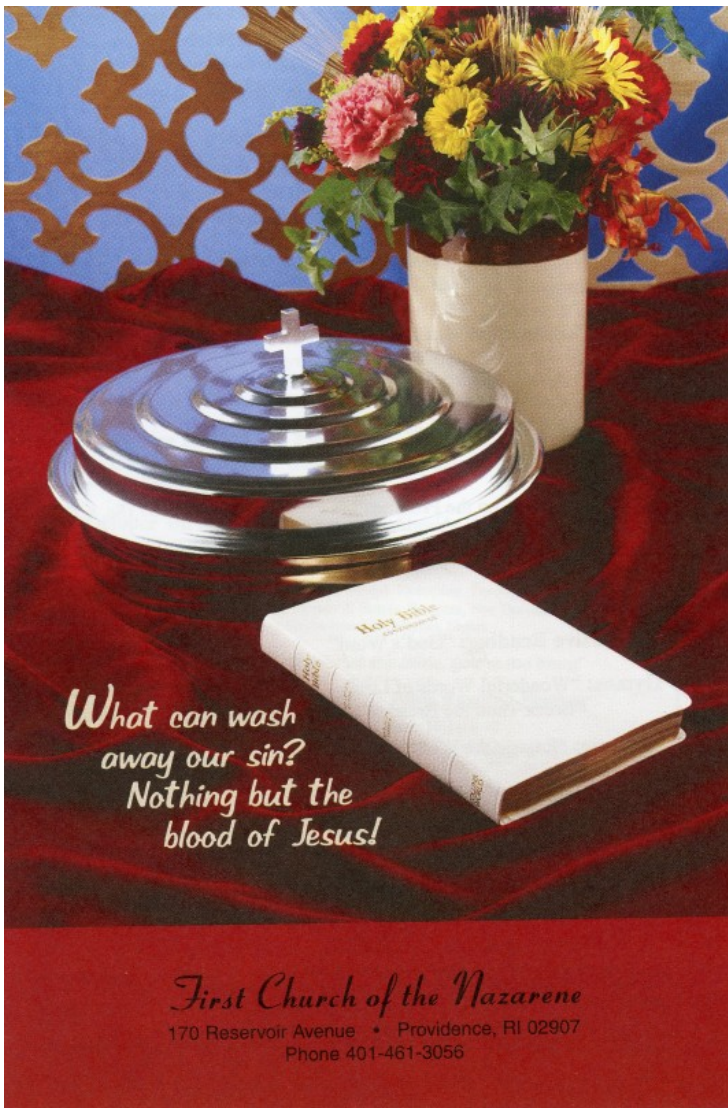
The Church of the Nazarene. In October 1895, Phineas F. Bresee, D.D., and Joseph P. Widney, M.D., with about 100 others, including Alice P. Baldwin, Leslie F. Gay, W. S. and Lucy P. Knott, C. E. McKee, and members of the Bresee and Widney families, organized the Church of the Nazarene at Los Angeles. At the outset they saw this church as the first of a denomination that preached the reality of entire sanctification received through faith in Christ. They held that Christians sanctified by faith should follow Christ's example

of time and money should be given to Christlike ministries for the salvation of souls and the relief of the needy. They organized the church accordingly. They adopted general rules, a statement of belief, a polity based on a limited superintendency, procedures for the consecration of deaconesses and the ordination of elders, and a ritual. These were published as a *Manual* beginning in 1898. They published a paper known as *The Nazarene* and then *The Nazarene Messenger*. The Church of the Nazarene spread chiefly along the West Coast, with scattered congregations east of the Rocky Mountains as far as Illinois.

Among the ministers who cast their lot with the new church were H. D. Brown, W. E. Shepard, C. W. Ruth, L. B. Kent, Isaiah Reid, J. B. Creighton, C. E. Cornell, Robert Pierce, and W. C. Wilson. Among the first to be ordained by the new church were Joseph P. Widney himself, Elsie and DeLance Wallace, Lucy P. Knott, and E. A. Girvin.

Phineas F. Bresee's 38 years' experience as a pastor, superintendent, editor, college board member, and camp meeting preacher in Methodism, and his unique personal magnetism, entered into the ecclesiastical statesmanship that he brought to the merging of the several holiness churches into a national body.

The Year of Uniting: 1907-1908. The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Holiness Church of Christ were brought into association with one another by C. W. Ruth, assistant general superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, who had extensive friendships throughout the Wesleyan-holiness movement. Delegates of the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Church of the Nazarene convened in general assembly at Chicago, from October 10 to 17, 1907. The merging groups agreed upon a church government that balanced the need for a superintendency with the independence of local congregations. Superintendents were to foster and care for churches already established and were to orga-



*What can wash
away our sin?
Nothing but the
blood of Jesus!*

First Church of the Nazarene
170 Reservoir Avenue • Providence, RI 02907
Phone 401-461-3056

**First Church of the Nazarene
Providence, RI**

Pastor: Rev. Silas E. T. de Almeida

October 9, 2011 – 10:45 AM

"The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our Fortress" Psalm 46:7

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship: "The Bond of Love" No. 682

Invocation

Songs: "Living Hope" (Jesus, You're My Firm Foundation)
"Shout to the Lord" (My Jesus, My Savior)
"Take up Your Cross"

Prayer Chorus: "Be Still and Know" No. 630

Pastoral Prayer

Hymn: "Standing on the Promises" No. 687 (Sp. # 321)

Worship through Giving:

Duet: "Hosanna" Lisabeth and Jessica Almeida

Responsive Reading: "God's Word" No. 688

Hymns: "Wonderful Words of Life" No. 692
"Break Thou the Bread of Life" (Verses 3, 4) No. 693

Message: "Engage the Word" Nehemiah 8

Hymn: "Break Thou the Bread of Life" (Verses 1, 5) No. 693

Communion

Closing Chorus: "The Bond of Love" No. 87*

Benediction

* Denotes chorus book. All other numbered songs are in the hymnal.
Pianist: Evelyn Thompson Song Leader: Iris Lyles Organist: Paul Leite

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*We extend a warm welcome to all visitors on this Lord's Day.
We trust that the service will be a blessing!*

- ❖ **Today:**
 - **Fellowship Meal** following the Worship service. Everyone is invited.
 - **Church Board Meeting** after fellowship. Please, plan to attend.
 - **No Evening Service** (please, see schedule below).
- ❖ **NMI (Nazarene Mission International) News:**
 - **Next Sunday – 6 pm:** It's the "Jesus Is the Pilot" Program.
 - **L.I.N.K.S. Missionaries:** Robert & Frances Collins; Fernando & Liliانا Almeida
 - Please, see Sister Ilsy for your NMI \$5 monthly contribution.
- ❖ **SDMI Emphasis** on "Engage the Word" – a 40-day Bible reading texts. See planner below. (SDMI: Sunday School & Discipleship Ministries International)
- ❖ **Upcoming Activities & Events.**
 - NMI "Jesus Is the Pilot" Program – Next Sunday, October 16th – 6 pm
 - NYI Service – Sunday, November 6th – 6 pm
- ❖ **October Birthdays.** Silas Filipe de Almeida (10th), Soraya Barros (19th) Sharay Ramos (23rd). *Happy Birthday!* Anniv. Roberto & Ilsy (27th)
- ❖ **Prayer Requests.** Mary Counnas, Evelyn Thompson, Dorothy Carter, Mary Brederson, Muriel Proulx, Roberta Randall, Therese & Ronny Garganta, Nya Dorval, Phoebe Leal, Alvaro Andrade, Rev. Autilio Da Costa, Shulterbrandis, Churches, Nation.

"If you're too busy to read the Bible, you're too busy"

"Engage the Word" – Bible Reading Planner

- 15. Sun. Oct 9th – David – 1 Sam. 16:1-18:16
- 16. Mon. Oct 10th – Covenant with David – 2 Samuel 5:1-7:29
- 17. Tues. Oct 11th – Psalms – Psalm 103:1-22
- 18. Wed. Oct 12th – Suffering Servant – Isaiah 51:1-53:12
- 19. Thurs. Oct 13th – Jeremiah's Call – Jeremiah 1:1-3:5
- 20. Fri. Oct 14th – Daniel in Lion's Den – Daniel 6:1-28
- 21. Sat. Oct 15th – Jonah – Jonah 1:1-4:11
- 22. Sun. Oct 16th – Beginning – The Word – John 1:1-18

Our Denominational Mission: "To Make Christlike Disciples in the Nations"

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study / Sunday School – 9:45 AM
Morning Worship – 10:45 AM
Evening Service – 6:00 PM (except on the 2nd Sunday)
Wednesday: Praise & Prayer – 7:00 PM



Photograph of family of John Diaz (found at the church)