

AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF NORTHRIDGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The story of Northridge Presbyterian Church begins in 1905. In that year, 21 members from First Presbyterian Church Dallas, along with about 50 others from East Dallas, petitioned the Dallas Presbytery to charter them as the “East Dallas Presbyterian Church.” At that time, life expectancy in the United States was 47 years. Now it is 77. In 1905, there were only 8000 cars in the whole country and only 144 miles of paved roads. Only one in seven homes in America had bathtubs in 1905, and just one in twelve had a telephone. Only 6% of Americans had earned a high school diploma. The average wage was .22 cents per hour, and at that time, 95% of all births took place at home.

114 years, three sites, five buildings, 15 pastors, and several thousand members later, and by the grace and power of God, Northridge survives and thrives. After incarnations at the intersections of Washington and Gaston, and later Swiss and Carroll, the Congregation moved to our present 6-acre site on Bob-O-Link in 1950, taking the name “Northridge Presbyterian Church.” By the mid-1990s, membership outgrew our facilities. After a capital campaign and a lot of prayer, construction began in January 2000 on the present sanctuary and fellowship hall (now “Quillin Hall”). We dedicated the new structures in March 2001. By 2018, and another capital campaign ... and more prayer ... work began on a new educational wing, scheduled for completion in August 2019.

Our survival and success were not pre-ordained. There have been tough, soul-searching times, most notably in 1956. In that year, after the Deacons discovered irregularities in the finances of the Church, the then-minister attempted to take the membership and the property away from the Presbyterian denomination over the protests of a loyal minority. The loyalists, including nonagerian members Mark and Lucille Goode and Al Topham, hired one of Texas’ finest trial attorneys, Henry Strasburger, to fight to keep the church and property in the denomination. The church custodian named the dispute the “dumalolly,” a descriptor that survives to this day. Ultimately, the Court system sustained the loyalist position and we stayed “Presbyterian.”

Our heritage embraces many firsts that shed light on who we are. We have a passion for mission and devote a sizeable percentage of our operations budget, plus time and talent, to helping others. In the 1970s, Northridge youth traveled to Mexico, the first of dozens of Youth Mission Trips. In the 1980s, a group of

Northridge adults inaugurated the first of the now annual adult mission trips, a trip to the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere – Haiti. In 2010, and about a 100 years late, Northridge called its first fulltime associate pastor. In 2011, Northridge launched a new mission outreach, “Northridge Without Borders,” working with the International Refugee Committee to welcome and to minister to immigrants fleeing political oppression in their home countries.

Why the history lesson? So we can remember our church DNA and the legacy bequeathed to us. The Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians saluted the congregation in Thessalonica for their “work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfastness of hope” It is with this same sense of gratitude Northridgers give thanks for our predecessors’ faith, hope and love that have brought us to this moment in our history: an exciting search for our next Senior Pastor/Head of Staff.

At the rear of our Sanctuary – above the exit doors – a phrase reminds all who depart to “Go out into God’s world in peace.” The quoted phrase is an excerpt from the “Northridge Charge,” a challenge Northridgers recite in unison at the end of every worship service. The “Northridge Charge” is the best encapsulation of who we strive to be as a community of faith:

“Go out into God’s world in peace. Have courage. Hold onto what is good. Return to no one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the suffering. Honor all persons, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

With the faith embodied in the Charge, Northridge sets the course for an exciting future and looks forward to welcoming ... and loving ... our next Senior Pastor/Head of Staff.