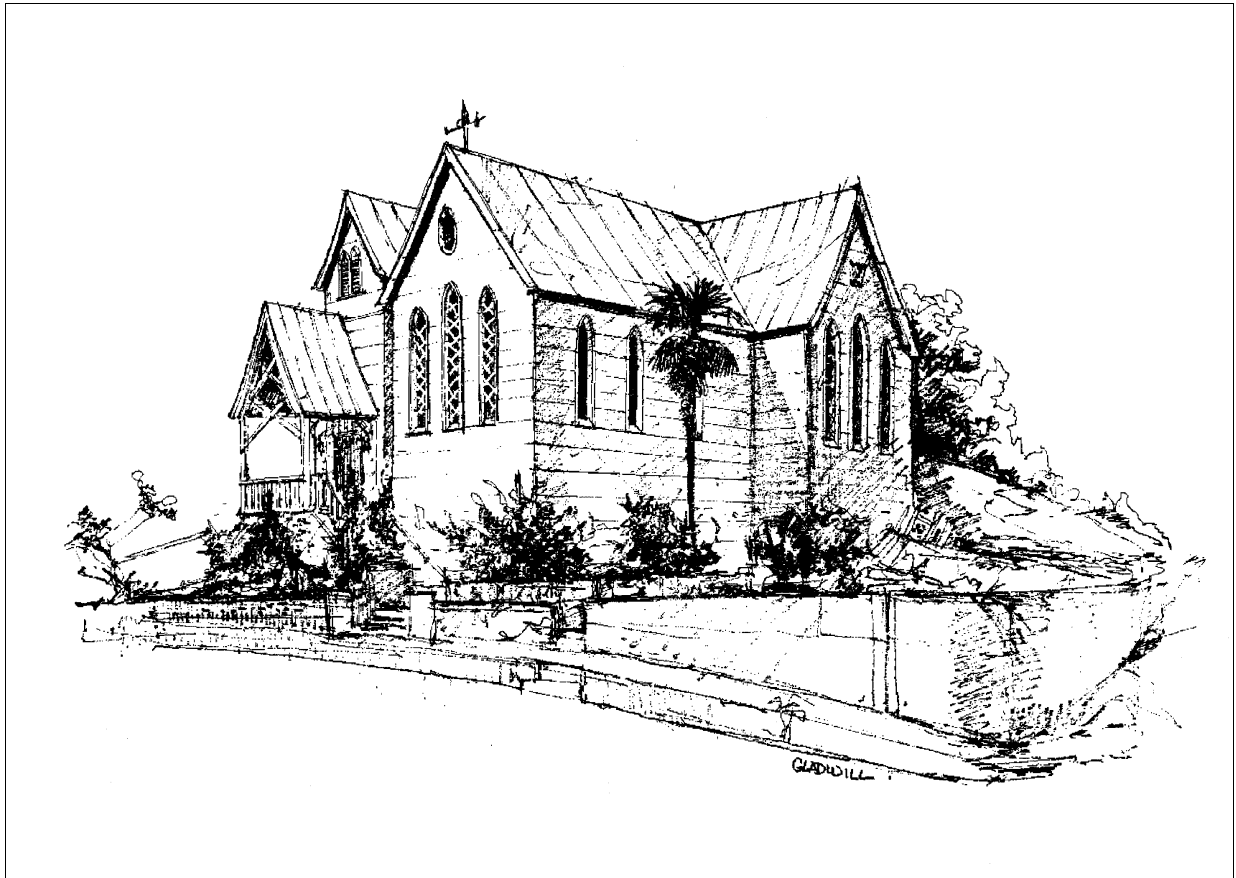


# EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR

Placerville, California



**Celebrating 150 Years**

**July 16 & 17, 2011**

*Dedicated April 14, 1865*



## **Introduction**

It is my honor and pleasure to introduce you, the reader, to the history of 150 years of the parish of Church of Our Saviour. There are many people who can be credited for the continual Anglican presence in Placerville and until recently, El Dorado County. Many of these people, these saints, are no longer known to us, but we rejoice in their contributions just the same.

Mr. Charles Caleb Peirce was such a forceful personality that it almost seems that he personally evangelized this part of El Dorado County after the founding of our parish. But when he was gone to hold services in one of the surrounding communities, there must have been someone or some persons who “held down the fort” at Our Saviour. We salute those unknown individuals.

In the decades after Brother Peirce’s death, it was lay people who kept Our Saviour alive. There were faithful people who made a point of worshipping God at Our Saviour. Without them, the parish could not continue. Later, in the twentieth century, lay people, with the help of clergy, grew Our Saviour so that it could become a self-supporting parish once again.

Throughout all this time, the people of Our Saviour lovingly maintained and enhanced the physical plant at Our Saviour. Nearly 150 years of effort made the parish building of Our Saviour a place of awe when people enter.

Celebrate with us our 150 years of Christian presence in El Dorado County, California.

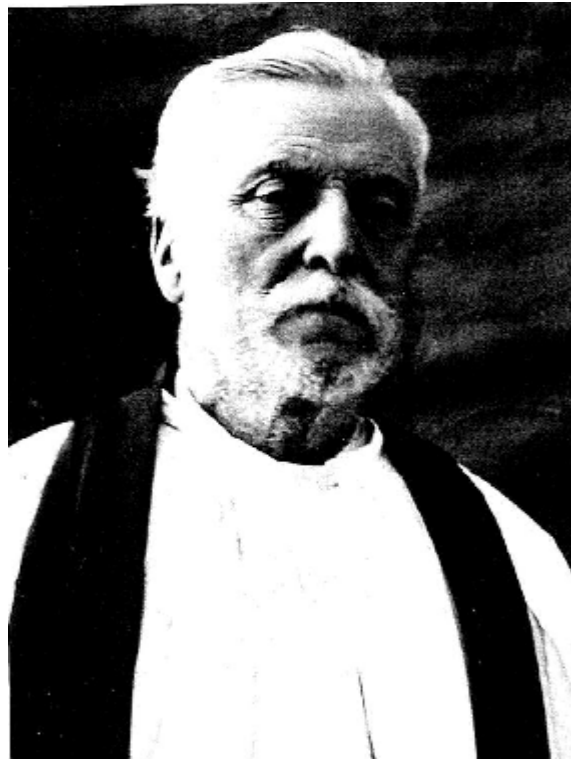
The Very Reverend (Rev) Craig Kuehn

## Forward

In the “ Churches of El Dorado County” by Will O. Upton, we learn that the Church of Our Saviour was not the first Episcopal congregation in El Dorado County. According to that writer, on January 24, 1855 the Rt. Rev. William Kip, Bishop of California, conducted services at the Court House in Coloma and in June of the following year the Coloma congregation completed the building of Emmanuel Episcopal Church. It is said that St. Mary’s Episcopal Church was organized in Placerville, but there is no record of its short existence and there was no Episcopal Church in Placerville when the Rev. Charles Caleb Peirce arrived in 1861. It is noted here that he was notorious for having people call him Mr. Peirce.

The story of the Church of Our Saviour falls naturally into two separate areas: the first covering the founding of the parish and the rectorship of the Mr. Charles Caleb Peirce from the organization of the congregation in 1861 until his death in 1903; the second covering the next 87 years.

The first forty-two years of the Church reflects the ministry of Mr. Peirce and the search for souls was a compelling and dominant principle to which his life was dedicated.



*The Rev. Charles Caleb Peirce*

## **Mr. Peirce Arrives**

Mr. Peirce was born of Quaker parents in Cincinnati, Ohio on November 2, 1825. He received his education in the city schools and following his graduation from Woodward College, he studied law and was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty-one. After some years he grew dissatisfied with the legal profession and entered the Episcopal General Seminary in New York City. He graduated and was ordained Priest on July 1, 1860. The next day he took passage by boat, via the Isthmus of Panama, for San Francisco arriving on July 25<sup>th</sup>. He accepted the rectorship of Grace Church. Discouraged by the materialism and worldiness of his urban surroundings, he resigned after eight months and left for the Sierra foothills. He arrived in Placerville on March 3, 1861 and on the following day, Easter, conducted an Episcopal Church service in the old Court House. He continued to hold services each Sunday and on July 20, 1861, the Parish of Our Saviour was organized.

Mr. Peirce immediately began his missionary travels and reports of his first year's work listing services held in Placerville, Coloma, El Dorado, and Diamond Springs with a combined congregation of about 250 and 25 communicants. A regular schedule of services was maintained in these communities; but in the following years, the field of his ministry was extended and "meetings" were held in public places and private homes throughout the area. The parish register records his journeys covering the western slope of El Dorado County. He officiated in over 40 cemeteries and preformed 772 baptisms, 597 marriages and 1385 funerals.

## **The Church Building Begins**

The new congregation used the old Placerville Court House as a place of worship until 1864 when a move to erect a church building was initiated. The ladies of the church on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July that year held a "Fair" and devoted the proceeds to building a house of worship. This was followed by a series of similar events, the final effort a three-day fair and bazaar in May, 1865 netting \$1200. At this time the lot on Coloma Street was purchased and work on the church building began. The Mountain Democrat in June, 1865 carried the following item:

"On Thursday last, June 22d, El Dorado Lodge #26 Free and Accepted Masons laid the corner stone of the Church of Our Saviour" in this city"; and December 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year, the following item appeared:

"The opening of the new, elegant and beautiful Episcopal Church of Coloma Street will take place this Saturday evening, with the annual distribution of books by Rev. C.C. Peirce. On Sunday morning the usual services will be given at half-past ten o'clock, and continue every Sunday following."

The new church edifice was designed by William Patten architect of San Francisco, and built by Mr. O. Taylor of Placerville. The building completed, costing about \$10,500 a very large sum for those days. Patten used local materials to create a true Gothic effect with a vaulted roof and a

second wall three feet inside the exterior wall, which gave the tall Gothic windows the appearance of being openings in a thick, stone wall.

The original bell with its rope pull still hangs in the bell tower and is used every Sunday. It was cast in Boston in 1850 and brought around the horn to San Francisco. All of the windows were leaded stained glass and today at least four are still originals. The window in the back of the nave was given by the Joseph Leonardi family.

Gifts of money came from many sources both within and outside the parish. Mr. Peirce looked for and found good in all men, and following excerpt from "Upton's The Churches of El Dorado County" accredited to Mr. Peirce, illustrates this fact of his character:

"...when my Church was building in Placerville \$1500 was still needed to complete the work, four saloon-keepers offered to canvass the town and raise money. On their offer being accepted, two canvassed Lower-town and two Uppertown, with the result that more money than enough was raised by them in one afternoon. There are some excellent and high-principled saloon-keepers as I can attest."

He never accepted a stated salary from the Church – his living expenses at the old Ohio House and other personal requirements were paid by the parish, and all moneys he received above his actual personal needs were used to purchase gifts for children or for charitable purposes. He served for many years on the Board of Education and as City Superintendent of Schools, but never accepted the \$300 yearly salary connected with the office. Nearly every day except Sundays was spent walking over the county, stopping in every settlement to hold religious services in halls or school houses, but never using the Episcopal ritual on these occasions. At these times Mr. Peirce was "the people's pastor having neither sect nor creed." These services were followed by a social period but religion was never mentioned unless some other person first approached the subject. On Sundays he held Episcopal services, but his life was dedicated to the missionary ministry. The preaching of the Gospel to those living in the outlying and remote regions of the county was, to him, of first importance.

Mr. Peirce was a member of several fraternal organizations, and his interest in the Masonic Lodge was second in importance only to his church. "The lodge-room is my home," Mr. Peirce often said. He was a member of the International Order of Odd Fellows and a charter member of Leona Rebekah Lodge No. 30, I.O.O.F., and served as their chaplain for fifteen years. Mr. Peirce also belonged to the Improved Order of Red Men. He served as secretary for the Trustees of Union Cemetery, joint property of several fraternal societies. He was also a member of El Dorado Lodge No. 26, Free and Accepted Masons where he served as a chaplain for thirty years, St. James Chapter, Royal Arch Masons, El Dorado Commandery, No. 4, Knights Templar, and a charter member of Fallen Leaf Chapter, No. 90, Order of Eastern Star. When Mr. Peirce died on March 14, 1903, schools and businesses closed in his honor. He was laid to rest in Union Cemetery in Placerville.



*Our Saviour Church as it looked at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

### **The 87 Years after Mr. Peirce**

The information about the years immediately following Mr. Peirce's death is very sketchy and there are blank periods in the Parish Register.

The first problem to confront the congregation in 1903 was to find a successor to the rectorship. With the congregation small, the parish loosely organized and serious financial problems, prospects surely must have been dim. The clerk's records covering the next thirty-odd years have been destroyed by some eager housekeeper who thought space in the vault was more necessary than "old church records." Rather than weave fiction into the story of early 1900's, we will fill in the gap with names and dates which appear in the Parish Register which is incomplete with exception of two and one-half years (1901–1903).

### **Several Rectors Serve for Short Periods**

The Rev. Charles L. Linsley was the first priest to follow Mr. Peirce and he remained for only one year.

There was a period of eight months without a resident priest and in May 1905, the Rev. Thomas Parker Boyd came to serve the parish for the next two years. The Rev. Charles Eiler Maimann next served for one year. Then following a vacancy of nine months, the Rev. Samuel Mill, B.A., was rector for the next three years. His longer tenure showed more favorable results as baptisms and confirmations increased during his rectorship.

The years 1912 to 1913 mark a difficult era of the parish's life as the church was without a rector. There were occasional lay services. The parish was under the charge of two Archdeacons who conducted services perhaps only once a month. In the register during this time, David E. Holt and Barr G. Lee's names appear as Archdeacons and Edwin Jukes as Priest-in-charge.



*The Sanctuary of the early church*

### **The First Restoration of the Building**

The period from 1923 through 1952 reveals signs that the parish won the long struggle to become a stable organized church. In November, 1923, the Rev. Thomas Maxwell arrived to take charge of the parish and his ministry of seven years resulted in substantial communicant growth. In 1927, work of the first restoration of the church building was begun. The cost of the

work amounted to \$10,000. The repairs included the complete overhauling of the undercroft of the church. The old supporting posts in the center of the parish hall were removed and replaced with steel I-beams, which were boxed in the form of a beamed ceiling. New foundations were put in and a new floor laid; a new kitchen was built under the narthex and a porch and restroom added. The northeast end was converted into a furnace room, locker, and storage space. The hall was replastered and a fireplace built. All windows on the south side of the church were repaired and new frames were made by Mr. Silvio Ronzone in the school shop where he taught. New siding was put on the east side and a new roof on the sanctuary. New cushions were purchased for the pews and much painting done. The old house which stood north of the church was purchased and torn down one half of that lot was sold to the owner of the adjacent home.

The parish was without a rector from 1930 to 1933 and Mr. Ronzone conducted lay services with Archdeacon Lee coming in for a Communion service once a month. During this period, in 1931, the Rev. John Barrett and his family moved to Placerville. He was recuperating from a nervous breakdown; and as his strength returned, he assisted in the services. In 1933 he was appointed Priest-in-Charge and served for the next four years.

### **The Second Restoration**

In 1938 the Rev. Rex A. Barron was brought here by Bishop Porter to take charge of the parish. The second restoration of the church building was undertaken with \$4000 being spent on the project. The outside of the building was repaired, two coats of paint applied, and the nave reroofed to the cost of \$385. The interior of the church also underwent extensive repairs. Celotex walls were installed and the covering and fitting of the material was done by Mr. Ronzone at the school shop. At this time a coal burning furnace was purchased and the brick work at the front of the church laid. While these projects were going on, Mr. Ronzone designed and installed paneling for the Sanctuary. Wally Meyers and Ray Lumley, boys of the parish, who were in his wood-working class, spent many hours helping. The altar-rail and the credence table are also the work of Mr. Ronzone.

The Rev. Messrs. Edwin Castledine, Edward Birch and Sydney Bennett were the next three rectors and their tenures were brief. During Father Bennett's ministry the organ was installed and the house next to the church was purchased for \$3000 to serve as a rectory. His rectorship was cut short due to a serious illness. While Father Castledine was rector, the oil burner was installed in the furnace. Father Edward B. Birch served the parish in 1942 but left during that year to serve as chaplain of a Canadian regiment in World War II.

### **Parish Status Is Achieved**

In October, 1945 the Rev. Dr. A.W. Sidders began his ministry in Placerville, and during the six years of his ministry, the parish enjoyed an increase in strength and developed a deeper spirit of

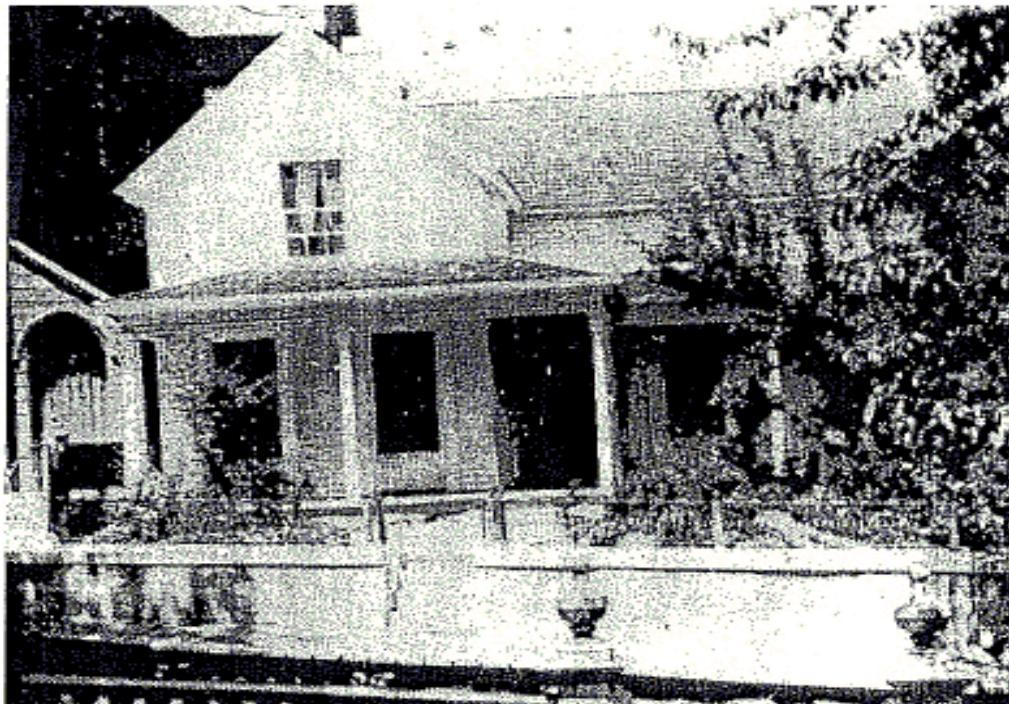
fellowship. At the Diocesan Convention of 1947, the petition for parish status was favorably acted upon and granted.

The Rev. Lesley V. Wiley was called as rector in April, 1952 and resigned in March 1954.

In 1955 the Rev. Wilbur L. Lear came to Placerville to fill in and shortly thereafter was called as rector. In 1957 the Peirce Memorial Chimes were given to the parish by Miss Edwin Pfund, of Sacramento, in memory of Charles Caleb Peirce, who baptized her, with the request “they be used as a living memorial, not only at weekly services, but on special anniversaries of Mr. Peirce’s birth Nov. 2 and death Mar. 14, the sole purpose of the gift being the perpetuation of the spirit of wisdom and humility, the soul of Christ’s ministry, which Mr. Peirce brought to the parish.”

The aluminum roof was put on, a ramp from Coloma Street to the side door entrance installed and the work of reconstructing the parish hall kitchen and restroom was started. Father Lear resigned on October 1960.

### **The Old Rectory Is Torn Down**



*The old rectory in the 1960's*

On November 22, 1960, the Rev. W.R. Baskin assumed rectorship of the parish, having been called from St. Paul's Church in Healdsburg. During his tenure, a new rectory located near Marshall Hospital was built by the parish. Father Baskin served until 1968 and since that time has returned on many occasions to fill in. By the time he left Our Saviour, the new highway 50 through Placerville was completed, forever changing the face of this old gold rush community.

In 1969, the Rev. Robert Hasseries became rector. During this period, the crumbling masonry and rock foundation under the sanctuary was replaced with concrete. In the six years of Father Hasseries ministry, the church doubled in size.

### **The Office and Classrooms Are Added**

In 1976, the Rev. Ellsworth Wayland arrived and the next six years saw many changes. The house which sat behind the church was purchased and demolished. The area was turned into a much needed parking lot. The old rectory next to the church was torn down and a new building erected with classrooms and office space. The old fireplace and brick chimney were removed and the current kitchen added. A new foundation was poured along the north wall of the church. During this time the church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural and religious significance.



*Sanctuary of Our Saviour*

### **Third Restoration**

1983 marked the arrival of Rev. Raymond Reid. During the seven years of his tenure, much was accomplished. New composition shingles were installed following a storm that blew off half of the old aluminum roof. The exterior of the church was totally restored with new metal siding similar to the appearance of the original. Steel and tile replaced the old wooden stairs. The stained glass windows were repaired and trimmed with aluminum frames covered with lexan. A new bathroom and robing room were added under the new stairs and porch. The Sacristy was rebuilt with cupboard and vestment armoire added. Concrete steps were installed leading in to the back door of the Sacristy and a wider door was installed at the front of the north transept. A new propane heater was added to the north side of the building, a commercial gas stove and commercial dishwasher were installed in the kitchen. Three elegant stained glass windows were installed and a beautiful Corpus hung on the plain wooded cross above the Sanctuary. The old celotex wall covering was replaced with sheetrock and painted. New wooden doors were hung between the narthex and the nave. The parish hall was re-carpeted and classrooms painted. An automatic irrigation system was installed. A copy machine and computer were added to the office equipment.

About this time two parishioners started the work of the beautiful Station's of the Cross that hang in the nave. Anne Gladwill, a well known local artist did the paintings and John VanVleck made the frames.

During Father Ray's tenure, a mission was started in Mt. Aukum. Attendance and outreach increased considerably under his spiritual guidance. In 1988 Father Ray enlisted the help of the Rev. Bud Torgerson, retired, who acted as Assistant Priest until his death in 1990. The Rev. James (Jim) Burnett joined the staff as Assistant Priest in late 1989.

When Father Reid left in 1990, Bishop Thompson appointed Father Burnett to be Interim Priest. Under his leadership a week long celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church was held and received excellent community recognition and cooperation. During this period of transition Father Jim, with his previous experience as an interim priest, was invaluable in guiding our parish family.

In 1992, the Rev. Charles Rines became rector. During his six year ministry, the church continued to grow, and he led the campaign to expand the classroom and office annex. The building was essentially demolished and a new two story structure was constructed with a capital funds drive raising about \$110,000.

The new building is a two story facility with approximately 3,800 sq. ft. It has four bathrooms, five classrooms/meeting rooms, a secretary's office and an office for the priest. It has a library in one of the rooms and will help us meet our goal of increasing community outreach by offering rooms for public and community organization meetings. The new building was dedicated and named Peirce Hall by The Rt. Rev. Jerry Lamb, Bishop of the Diocese of Northern California.

In 1998, the beautiful stain glass window of the Annunciation Angel was installed in the parish hall. The window was made and donated by the John and Terri Kessler family.



*Church of Our Saviour as it appears in 1998.*

The Rev. Craig Kuehn was called by the congregation late in 1998 to be its rector and began work in Feb, 1999. He was formally installed into the parish by The Rt. Rev. Jerry Lamb, Bishop of the Diocese of Northern California on April 18, 1999.

Father Craig is an inspiring preacher and teacher. He is especially adept at training people for lay ministry, motivating and helping individuals and groups to discern their Christian ministries, and coordinating their activities for effective change.

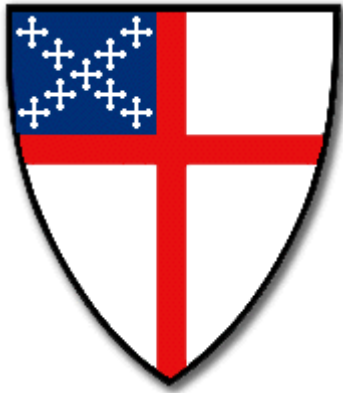
Under his leadership Education for Ministry and Pastoral Partners were introduced to the parish with great success. We have more Eucharist Ministers and Eucharist Visitors than ever before, a great outreach to the parish from lay people.

Upon the death of the Rev. Canon James Burnett in 2001 the parish gave the large stain glass window of the Ascension in the north transept of the church in his memory. This was his home church.

As there have been many priests in 150 years there have also been many lay people that served: vestry members, Christian education teachers, altar guild members, organists, choirs, church treasurers, and pledge secretaries to name a few. The women of the parish organized the first fund raiser and they still do it today. In the past the guilds of St. Agnes (had a bridge club) St. Martha (took care of the nursery) and the Episcopal Church Women served in many ways. The Order of the Daughters of the King, a lay order for women dedicated to prayer and service, was instituted at Our Saviour in 1989. The church continues to be involved in many outreach programs locally and internationally.

We give thanks for the old church structure and all those faithful people who have made it a visible symbol of love of Christ for the past 150 years. Our gratitude for treasures of the past is best expressed in our willingness to change just as our society changed to insure that the light of the message of the Gospel will be burning even brighter 150 years from now.





Episcopal Church of Our Saviour  
2979 Coloma St.  
PO Box 447  
Placerville, California 95667  
(530) 622-2441  
[www.oursaviourpv.org](http://www.oursaviourpv.org)

**Worship Services:** Holy Eucharist Sunday at 8 a.m. Traditional and 10:30 a.m. Contemporary.  
Celtic Services Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

**Directions:** The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour is next to Highway 50 near downtown Placerville. From Hwy. 50 westbound, take the Coloma Street exit; at the 1<sup>st</sup> stop sign, the church is on the opposite corner. From Hwy. 50 eastbound, turn left at Spring Street. (Hwy. 49); take the next right at Coloma Street and drive one block south to the church. Parking is on the street and in the rear, and (Sundays only) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the city parking structure across Highway 50, connected by a pedestrian overpass.