



the designer of Kenwood Plaza Park in the 1990s, hired by church member Violet Swanson to create a garden in memory of her mother. A plaque dedicating the garden can still be seen on the back garden wall. The Memorial Alcove in the garden (left), was designed and built by Bob and Linda Salomon, to display plaques dedicated to past saints of the church.

A Community Meeting Place

Over the years, the church and adjacent Fellowship Hall, built as a parsonage in 1920 (right), have been a community meeting place for various organizations, from the original Womens' Guilds and local quilting group, to two chapters of P.E.O., a womens' philanthropic organization that raises funds for scholarships for womens' education.



For a brief time just prior to 1960, while Kenwood School was being built, the church served as the local elementary school: both the Pastor's Study behind the Sanctuary and the former Parsonage were filled to the brim with local school children. In 1981, the church was designated Historic Landmark 82 by the County of Sonoma. After 9/11, the church was opened to members of the community who gathered there for solace and companionship. Following the wildfires of 2017, the church again offered a meeting place, this time for those affected by the fires who wished to share their stories and support one another during the period of recovery afterward.

The Present

Today, the church still stands as a beacon of faith in the Valley of the Moon. All are welcome to attend worship services, and the church provides a place for memorial services as well as being a popular venue for "Wine Country Weddings". Church members actively support local benevolences with donations of their time, talents, and monies: Redwood Empire Food Bank, F.I.S.H. (Friends in Sonoma Helping), Catholic Charities, La Luz Center, Social Advocates for Youth, and The Living Room, among them. Church members offer support to local families affected by fires, illness, or adversity through donations of home-made meals, clothing, gift cards, Christmas gifts, and visits.

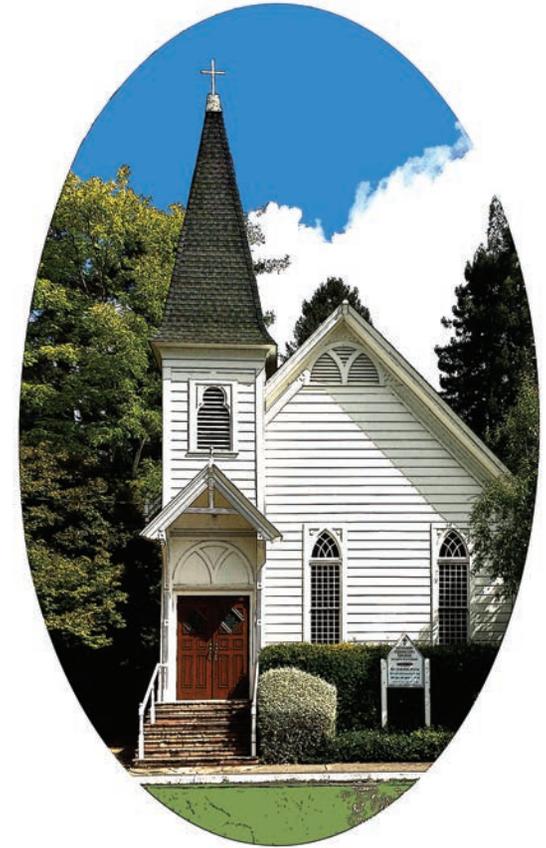
The church has always been self-supporting. Originally, Women's Guilds raised funds to help the church by making and selling embroideries and other handmade items. Today, the annual Fourth of July Pancake Breakfast and Silent Auction are the main source of funds raised (in addition to the weekly Offering) to support the maintenance and ministries of the church. It is on solid ground, active, growing, and looking forward to serving the Kenwood Community for another hundred years.

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Founding & History of Kenwood Community Church

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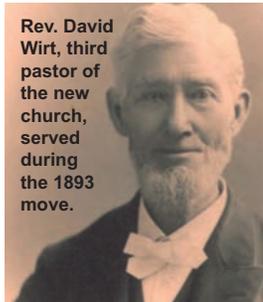
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A welcoming wine country landmark since 1888

Founding & History

The Past

Since 1887, when its founders first met at the old Kirkwood Hotel, Kenwood Community Church has been at the heart of the Kenwood community. Twelve Congregationalist ministers wanted to create a beacon of faith in Sonoma Valley, which at that time was swarming with land speculators anticipating the coming railroad. Originally called the First Congregational Church of Los Guilicos—from the Spanish land grant after which the town was also first named—it later became the Los Guilicos Congregational Church, then finally Kenwood Community Church.



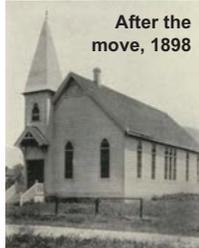
Rev. David Wirt, third pastor of the new church, served during the 1893 move.

The church was originally built in 1888 at the corner of Los Guilicos and Laurel Streets, but the site was too close to the edge of Kenwood Marsh, and winter rains turned the ground swampy. So, in 1893 a lot was acquired on Channing Row; the church was put on logs and rolled across a narrow bridge by a team of horses. What a sight that must have been!

Inspired by the classic white New England-style church of its day, this church was built in the Carpenter Gothic style, with white clapboard siding, a tall steeple, stained-glass win-



First photo, 1888



After the move, 1893

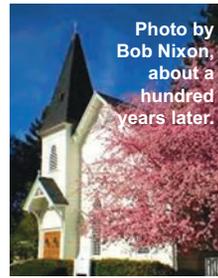


Photo by Bob Nixon, about a hundred years later.

dows, and plenty of white gingerbread trim inside and out. The bell, which still welcomes worshippers each Sunday, came from the Kenwood train depot. One of a series of mission churches built across California, today the Kenwood church is only one of two sanctuaries in northern California that remain from that era; the other is in Pescadero on the Pacific coast.

Historic Treasures Inside & Out

There are many treasures inside. Instead of pews—which one might typically expect—there are comfortably-cushioned Windsor-style chairs, and light from the stained-glass windows fills the sanctuary.

In 1944, artist Alphonse Sondag donated the painting above the Narthex doors—a reproduction of Michaelangelo's "The Holy Family" (*right*)—as a gift to the town of Kenwood.



The impressive front doors (*below*) were built in memory of Pastor Moffat Dennis and his wife Sue, who served from 1957 to 1992. Moffat's brother Phil and son Paul built the doors on Pendar Island in Canada of Oregon Oak. Another son, Mark, designed the stained-glass window inserts representing Alpha and Omega (the beginning and the end, referring to Jesus Christ). The windows



were made in Edinburgh, Scotland, then inserted into the doors before they were installed in the church by Dave Crockett. There is an inscription on one of the doors that was one



of Pastor Dennis' favorite quotes. He and church member Zoltan Vasvary designed and built an elaborately-carved table base for the altar in the Sanctuary (*left*), which uses motifs of intertwined grapes and grape vines and, once again, the symbols for Alpha and Omega.

Longtime Kenwood resident Fran Threewit tells of her parents, John and Catherine Hitchcock, who made a rubbing of a commemorative brass marker while in London, England, which they later framed and donated to the church. It now graces the Narthex (entry hall; *right*).



Throughout the Sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall next door are framed works by late Kenwood photographer Bob Nixon, whose black and white works, in particular, have been likened to those of legendary photographer Ansel Adams.



His widow Eleanor is considered the matriarch of the church—today, at 98-years-old, she is still an active member of the congregation. Bob Nixon and daughter Debra built the original backyard garden (*above*) in 1992, based on plans created by

We are an Open and Affirming Congregation ~ No matter who you are, or where you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here.