

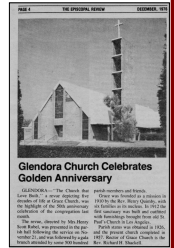
Grace  
Centennial

Memories  
of the  
Church That Love Built

Lovingly compiled by  
Chester Churchmouse, Esquire

## Memories of *The Church That Love Built*

*A few of the Centennial Celebration attendees have been asked to write a snippet of their memories of our early Grace Church. The parents of these early Grace members were valued vestry members and the backbone of the church. Their names appear again and again in the minutes of the vestry, in newspaper articles and church advertisements, in the archive books, in the Diocese of Los Angeles archives, in Grace's memory book, and in the Communicator.*



### "Love Blooms at Grace"

By Winifred Brace Robinson

Arthur and Mattie Venberg were married in 1918 and came to Glendora in 1919. They joined Grace while it was located on Vista Bonita and remained members after it moved to Mountain View Avenue. Art served on vestry and as treasurer. Mattie was active in the Women's Guild.



Arthur and Charlotte Venberg

George Charles Brace and his wife Charlotte came to Grace in the late 1920s. George was an accomplished landscaper and became friends with Heinz Rubel, who asked him to join the vestry in 1936.

Sadly, George Brace died in September of 1972, as did Mattie Venberg in July of 1977.

Charlotte Brace, a widow, and Arthur Venberg, now an eligible and highly sought-after bachelor, continued attending services and other functions at Grace. With time, Charlotte and Art were drawn to each other. They would meet for coffee and laugh together. After a while, they traveled to Hawaii together, where they married and lived happily ever after—much to the chagrin of the spurned ladies of Glendora.

*Carol Thum Treacy, currently a member of our church, returned to Grace in 1998 after she retired from teaching. She is the daughter of John and Louise Thum (Lawton).*

### "Gags to Gospels"

by Carol Thum Treacy

My early church memories were of traditional church liturgy as a foundation for humor, bazaars, and excitement—all mixed together. Difficult to explain, yet it worked for us.

These church experiences were my introduction to society, to the world outside the home, and to other children, as we lived on an orange grove with no close neighbors.

Our congregation at the time was too small to support a fulltime priest, so our priest, Heinz Rubel, was a half-time clergyman. The other half of his work was as a gag writer and songwriter in Hollywood. So you see, we had the best of both worlds, and I can tell you, there was never a dull moment!



## “The House That Laughter Built”

by Dorchen Rubel Forman Van Dyke

When we moved into the house at 200 South Vista Bonita, I was seven and Chris was four. We were excited about the stairway and spacious landing. The garden had an old avocado tree, an asparagus bush, and artichokes. I thought all good things started with A, though the orange tree was also prized by all of us.

Mother was busy removing the glass-covered black-and-white photos in the front hall that showed choirs in their vestments, long-forgotten ministers and bishops, vestrymen, and a horse. The huge moth-eaten, cross-eyed moose head that hung over the fireplace was put in the barn-garage.

Soon, the van arrived with the furniture that had come all the way from New Jersey. Boxes and boxes: oriental rugs, mahogany tables, precious oil paintings, and my dolls. Mother had bought a needlepoint chair “on time,” which meant she must pay a monthly fee. King Louis the 16th was a needlepoint collector and sponsor, so we called the chair “the Louie.” Daddy didn’t approve and wouldn’t allow anyone to sit in it until it was paid for. He kept saying, “The chair goes back to Louie *on* the 16th.”

Finally the house was in order, and it was time to meet the good ladies of the Church and Altar Guild. Our housekeeper prepared little sandwiches and tea. I was dressed up and instructed in my duties. The screen door opened and in came a crowd of gloves, hats, stockings, flowers, and chatter. Everyone found a place to sit, and there were lots of greetings. My mother was known as a Broadway Star, so she was at her best—learning their names and making them comfortable.

There was a silence when one woman asked where the moose head was. She said Father so-and-so had shot it, and its antlers were a prize. Then someone asked where all the photos had gone that had so carefully been mounted for the history of the church. Even as young as I was, I could sense Mother stiffening.

After the tea party, when everyone was gone and Daddy had rejoined us in the living room, Mother started to cry, saying that she couldn’t make us a home when it belonged to all those parishioners. Daddy stomped out the backdoor and rehung the moose head, which he then decorated with garlands, making it look silly. He rehung the photos in the hall and, on the glass covers, drew moustaches on all the faces. When mother came downstairs, she started giggling. Much relieved, we all had a good laugh. Daddy always made Mother laugh.

Daddy drew the symbols on the altar he hoped the vestry would carve. He had nothing but praise for all the skills the parishioners demonstrated. One of the ladies needlepointed the prayer rug at the altar. She was a staunch Southerner, and when the Junior Choir sang *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, she stomped out, banging her cane on the wooden floor.

The painting of St. George and the Dragon was huge and was put into the stone garden behind the stone altar. It is now at the Castle. Everyone was called upon to help refurbish the pews. The vestry carved the door. It was exciting to see the church become more comfortable and pleasing.

There was a Boy Scout Troop in our church. There were choir practices and choir robe repair groups. The parish hall and kitchen were always in use: for fundraisers, for dance classes taught by Mother, and for vestry dinners. The activity was constant and everyone enjoyed being busy and forgetting the Depression. Mr. Arthur owned the bakery on Michigan Avenue and lived right across the street from Grace Church. He would bring fresh loaves of bread at the end of his

working day. Mrs. Kisling would often bring a stewed chicken. My parents were overwhelmed by the bounty and generosity of Glendorans.

The little Church was terribly hot in the summer so the early service was packed. The farmers came early in their bib overalls before going back to change the water stands in their groves. Grace Church prospered as everyone pitched in to help. It was a very happy, thriving parish.

Such sweet memories! Grace was truly “The Church That Love Built.”

## “Pipes and Doors”

By Heidi Allen

The little church on Vista Bonita, originally a mission, was the center of my life as a child. I have many vivid impressions of my years in attendance.

In the little church on Vista Bonita, the bathroom was right on the other side of the wall from the credence table, on the same wall as the kitchen plumbing. Every time the toilet was flushed, it could be heard throughout the church. When the water in the kitchen was turned on—and there always seemed to be air in the pipes—a banging sound could also be heard throughout the sanctuary. This was such a consternation that when the time came to plan our new church, everyone suggested that the altar and plumbing be separated, which is probably the very reason why there is no plumbing in the church proper at all! It was not an oversight, just over-compensation... I think.



In 1938, the Great Oak Door at the Chapel entrance was designed and executed in memory of my grandfather, Harvey Samuel Riser, by my mother (Harvey Riser’s daughter) and my father, Mary and Ernest Hannington. The door was carved on the dining room table in our home. I have the working drawing of the Diocesan Seal. My sister, Ellen Brownell, and I did the waxing by sliding back and forth on the door, with wax-soaked cloths tied to our hips.

***On December 26, 1956, Barbara Landon Campbell (the daughter of Frank and Florence Landon) and Robert Campbell became the first couple to be married in the newly built Parish Hall (now called Baxter Hall) on Mountain View Avenue. Barbara and her groom moved to Woodland Hills after the wedding.***

## “Special Times”

by Barbara Landon Campbell

I have wonderful childhood memories of our little church on N. Vista Bonita Avenue in Glendora. We moved to Glendora in 1935 from Berkeley, California to a little house at 1010 E. Foothill Blvd., just west of Lorraine. We started attending Grace Church immediately and met the Rubel and Thum families, who had children the same ages as our family. We felt instantly welcome and connected to the community. And Grace Church was a very important part of our lives.

Our Sunday School classes were held in the Parish Hall, and my mother played the piano for our children’s service. Mrs. Thum was the Sunday School Superintendent. We went to different parts of the hall for our classes, according to our ages, and one of my early teachers was Monica Kauth,

whose daughter was Melanie. I was baptized and confirmed at Grace Church, and my Godparents were Heinz and Dorothy Rubel and Auntie Baxter. There are so many others that I remember like Mary Hannington and Nana Riser, Uncle Bill Arthurs, the Venbergs, the Rubels, and Mrs. Lawton (Louise Thum). At the end of each Sunday School session, as I recall, we children would process into the main church to participate in the communion service with our parents. We even had our own wooden cross to lead the procession.

We used the Parish Hall for everything from Scouting to ballet lessons and a multitude of other activities. We loved the family potlucks, either inside the Parish Hall or behind the church on the paved area—weather permitting.

Holiday times were always special at Grace Church. There would be wonderful bazaars, lots of pageants requiring costumes, and happy music at all the events. At Christmas we would decorate a huge Christmas Tree and then enjoy a gift exchange. We made many of our Christmas gifts from arts and crafts. We were so proud of our creations! Christmas Pageants were an annual event, and I wore everything from angel's wings to shepherd's robes. We sang carols and shared the Christmas story. Easter Sunday is also a special memory, especially because, following the service, we would all go to the home of Nana Riser and Mary Hannington for a wonderful Easter Egg hunt in their beautiful gardens. I always looked forward to this annual event.

There were many children who grew up together in the church and who remain friends to this day. Our church was the center of our lives and truly was "the church that love built."

### "A Hunger for Religion"

By Steve VanDenburgh



I was nine years old when we moved to our citrus ranch between Glendora and Azusa in early 1945. Within a few weeks, Heinz Rubel convinced my non-Episcopal parents to join Grace Church. By the time Wallace Essingham was rector, in about 1948, I was old enough to serve as an Acolyte at the VERY early first service on Sundays in our small and delightfully rustic chapel.

However, religious fervor was not precisely what drew me to that crack-of-dawn task. Instead, it was the wonderful breakfasts that Mrs. Essingham prepared for us at her North Michigan Avenue home after the services. No doubt, this confession, more than six decades later, will significantly diminish my chances of getting to heaven; yet those heaven-on-earth breakfasts makes the risk worthwhile!

### "Giggling on Duty!"

By Jack Hastie, borrowed from the March/April 1998 issue of *The Glendoran Magazine*.

I spent each Sunday morning attending Grace Episcopal Church Sunday School and then serving as a choir member and cross or flag bearer during church services with one of my best friends, Frank H. Brown Jr. Frank's mother, Leose, and my mother—also choir members—tried their best to keep Frank and me from giggling at inopportune moments, especially when Earl Comstock's booming bass wandered off-key.



## “Junior Choir Highlights”

By Barbara Lewis

I remember the little brown church as an extension of our family and as an important part of my family’s social life. Especially memorable were Junior Choir practices with Mrs. Essingham (the wife of our pastor). Besides Sundays, we gave special performances, such as

Dorchen Rubel Forman’s wedding, and the blessing ceremony at the house that belonged to Sally Rand’s mother.

## “My Time in the Church That Love Built”

By Lavon Gardenhire Rubel Urbonas

I had never attended an Episcopal service before I met Christopher Rubel in 1948, both of us sophomores at Citrus Union High School. On August 1, 1952, Chris and I were married at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. The local observance of our union was a reception in 1953, organized by Dorothy Rubel at the original Grace Church on Vista Bonita, where Chris’ late father had been rector. (Here’s a coincidence: my father, Vaughn Gardenhire—neither a Glendoran nor an Episcopalian—worked for Bob Dilworth Construction and was involved in the building of the new church on Mountain View.)

Chris and I were not active in Grace Church during Chris’ military hitch and later attendance at Redlands University. While he was stationed in Japan, I lived with Van and Mildred VanDenburgh, worked at Venberg’s Department Store, and attended Citrus Junior College. As a hobby, I took tap dancing lessons from Roberta Stong and danced on the stage in Baxter Hall.



Chris, Lavon, and Dorothy Rubel

On July 28, 1957, the first children christened in the Henry Scott Rubel Memorial Chapel were our first son, Scott, along with his cousin, Peter Forman, third child of Dorchen Rubel Forman.

From 1963-1968, while living in the Rubel family home, Chris and I were active in Grace Church. My closest friend was Jane Ettling. Jane and I worked together on a number of church projects, the most memorable being the annual Parish Meeting in 1967. We co-chaired the entertainment committee and headlined three Hollywood personalities, a milieu reminiscent of the shows created by Dorothy and Heinz.

Jane and I published *The Communicator* for one year during Father Colburn’s tenure. One of the columns we originated was “Chester Churchmouse, Esquire.” Chester Churchmouse reported personal news about church members, such as accomplishments, celebrations, and other notable tidbits. Jane and I found ourselves in trouble one month when Chester, having overheard some dissension among parishioners, wrote, “I’m not going into the vestry again! There are cats in there!” *The Communicator* was printed and ready for distribution when Fr. Colburn called Jane and me into his office; the two of us, repentant, spent the evening there, blacking out that line on every single copy, while Fr. Colburn suppressed his amusement.