

**LAS PLACITAS PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
MISSION STUDY
2019**

INTRODUCTION

The Las Placitas Presbyterian Church (LPPC) Mission Study 2019 was created by members of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) in the summer of 2019. The purpose was to review the history, current status and the future vision of the membership discerned in a prayerful process to define the 'story' that LPPC tells about itself. The effort also will help to establish the characteristics and vision which will aid the PNC to fulfill its mission and guide the new pastor in leading LPPC to fulfill its destiny.

The 2019 Study is an update of the 2009 Mission Study, created by the Mission Study Task Force (MSTF) in 2008 and 2009. The MSTF conducted a number of studies and church membership meetings to determine LPPC's status and projected needs. In 2019, the PNC conducted a new survey and discussion groups to confirm or update the contents of the 2009 Study and to determine key interests and priorities of the congregation at this time. The PNC confirmed the major themes identified in 2009, but added one new area on the environment:

1. LPPC is a resilient Church Family community (heritage/ setting/ identity)
2. LPPC is diverse and inclusive
3. LPPC holds worship and music in high regard
4. LPPC has a heart for mission
5. LPPC has a strong sense of community
6. LPPC supports its youth and families
7. LPPC supports the environment

Additional material used to develop the 2019 study come from other primary sources that include:

LPPC 2018 Church Statistical Report, July 2, 2019.

Suzanne S. Forrest, (2016), *Century of Faith: One Hundred Years in the Life of Las Placitas Presbyterian Church*. Originally published in 1995, this edition has been updated and was republished by LPPC in 2016.

Ann M. Philbrick, (2014), *New Beginnings Assessment, Las Placitas Presbyterian Church*, Placitas, NM. Presbytery of Santa Fe. This was a special 48-page study conducted and produced by a Contract Assessor from the Office of Church Growth and Transformation, Presbyterian Mission Agency. It was a detailed assessment examining the church status and needs and projected future directions for the relatively new Pastorship of Rev. Drew Henry.

U.S. Census_data and other online sources derived from the research of 2019 PNC members.

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LPPC IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lying at the northern foothills of the Sandia Mountains, between Santa Ana Pueblo and the Rio Grande to the west, San Felipe Pueblo and state capitol Santa Fe to the north and Sandia Pueblo and Albuquerque, New Mexico's largest city, to the south, is the historic Village of Placitas. Its origins emerged during the Spanish Colonial period in New Mexico (1540–1821) when Spanish settlers reestablished their communities after being routed and exiled by the Pueblos in their war against Spanish authorities in the late 1600's. The *San Antonio de las Huertas* land grant was established by the Spanish Crown and given to 21 founding families in 1767. The village of Las Placitas (Little Towns) was founded around the 1840's. Like many other northern New Mexican villages, Placitas has maintained much of its unique Hispano cultural heritage, and Colonial Spanish language, for almost 180 years. Even today, many Hispano families in these communities are descendants of the original Spanish settlers, and thus identify more with Spain and its culture than with Mexico and its culture, just across the border.

As a result, Las Placitas Presbyterian Church is unique in many ways because it was established within the context of some unusual historical conditions. It was an exclusively Spanish speaking church when it was first founded in 1894, and remained so until the 1960's. A recurring theme in church history is the congregation's ability to adapt to change and to embrace new populations, new missions and new challenges while retaining local Hispano culture. This ability to adapt to change can be attributed in large part to the rapid cultural changes that occurred following the US occupation of the region during the US Territorial period (1848–1912). The US established a treaty relationship with Mexico after the American/Mexican war to take control of the region that included most of the western US today. The terms of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo committed the US to support Native American and Hispano-American communities in the region by adopting many of the Spanish colonial policies that granted citizenship, recognized established land and water rights, and respected the sovereignty of the Pueblo nations that continue to this day. The result is a thriving multicultural population, the uniqueness of which can only be found in New Mexico.

The establishment of Protestant religious institutions, and especially the LPPC, in a remote, exclusively Catholic region of Colonial Spain arose primarily from three historical events.

First, in 1821 Spain pulled out all ordained Catholic priests in its colonies in an attempt to squelch the rise of independence movements. The withdrawal of priests who represented both the church and Spanish rule, left the former colonies, and especially what was to become New Mexico, in a religious vacuum without any Church leadership for almost 30 years. Even the newly independent Mexico, struggling to establish its nationhood, ignored the remote province and thus had little if any impact on the area.

Second, the Catholic Diocese headquartered in the US reestablished the Church during the US Territorial period. However, US-oriented Catholic Church policies and customs generated so many cultural and religious conflicts for the Hispano communities that many simply rejected the Church's efforts to reestablish religious control. Placitans grew frustrated with the Church's lack of interest in serving the community.

Finally, the US Territorial Government was keen on introducing Protestantism as a means of helping acculturate the Hispano and Pueblo populations into their new and very different cultural context as a US colony. Thus, the arrival of the Presbyterians, among other protestant organizations, played an important role in bringing in the outside world in the form of education and new opportunities that were lacking in Placitas, a formerly self-sufficient farm-based economy.

These events finally led Don José Gurulé, a descendant of early Placitas settlers, to take the journey to Bernalillo in 1882 to meet with José Ynés Perea, the first Presbyterian Spanish minister ordained by the Santa Fe Presbytery in New Mexico. Rev. Perea accepted Gurulé's invitation to hold services in Placitas, then left the work to be continued by John Menaul of Albuquerque. Menaul organized an 80-member church that eventually dissolved. However, in February 1894, the church was officially re-established with 95 people voting to found Las Placitas Presbyterian Church with 39 charter members. John Menaul immediately ordained newly elected elders Francisco Trujillo and Juan Baros, and Reverend Perea.

By the time the region officially became the State of New Mexico in 1912, most of the area was still being used for farming, grazing, hunting and wood-gathering, continuing to resemble the Spanish colonial economy for many decades. One downside of the opening up of Placitas to the outside world was the exposure to wars, economic depressions, and impacts on the younger generations. Many descendants of the founding families left to serve in the military and to find work outside the village, causing deeply held conservative traditions to begin to fray. As depopulation increasingly impacted the founding families of LPPC, new families arrived to join the little Presbyterian Church in the village.

Financial realities and changing demographics led to major adjustments on everyone's part. Having grown throughout its early history as a mission church under the Board of National Mission, Las Placitas Presbyterian Church, with her sister church in the Alameda area of Albuquerque's North Valley, became independent and self-sufficient on January 1, 1963. A wrenching change for the old timers came with the introduction of the Presbyterian-wide system of rotating Elders. Gentlemen who had held these prestigious positions for a lifetime were now expected to make room for newcomers. Pastors who came to serve Las Placitas in the 50s and 60s were known to switch back and forth between Spanish and English during worship, depending on which members of the congregation showed up. Unfortunately it was increasingly difficult to find Spanish-speaking pastors at all.

It was the 1960's–1970's counter-culture back to the land movement, led by hippies who established several communes in the area that brought an influx of the first 'Anglos,' or non-Hispanos, into the community. At first a few original LPPC members were concerned about the newcomers changing the traditions. With time, however, the newcomers became like family to the village and LPPC. The newcomers honored the traditions and learned to speak Spanish.

However, as the Anglo population increased, and new lifestyles were introduced, the Hispano congregation of LPPC began to drift away from its Spanish traditions with a series of pastors who spoke only English. In fact, in 2011, Pastor Drew Henry was the first bilingual pastor to serve the church in 40 years. Although there are fewer Spanish speakers today than in the past, there are a large number of Spanish readers in the current congregation who continue to celebrate this language tradition. In honor of LPPC's congregational Hispano heritage, it still includes Spanish in every service, with Spanish hymns, Spanish scripture, and often the Lord's Prayer and portions of Communion in Spanish. An English translation of the Spanish immediately follows in the Sunday Service bulletin.

Clearly, the LPPC experienced many of the cultural upheavals that had disturbed the wider communities. Yet, the congregation survived, adapted, grew, and continued to preserve its cherished traditions—a legacy derived from tumultuous lessons from the past.

LPPC & COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

According to US Census data, in 1940 there were only three Anglo families living in Placitas. In 1951, at least ten Anglo families were residing in the village (Forrest 2016). By 2017-18, it is estimated that just over 5,000 people called Placitas their home, and 75% of them are considered white alone by Census data. Close to 25% of the population identify as Hispano/Hispanic, but only around 2% are considered American Indian or Alaskan Native/Indigenous populations. Other ethnic or national origin populations are even fewer in numbers.

According to the most recent 2018 Church Statistical Report, there are 164 active members, and the average weekly worship attendance is about 100¹. The trends in active membership and attendance have declined since 2013-14 when there were about 184 active members and an average membership attendance of about 117 per service. A great majority of LPPC members are older (65+ years). But the age gap between the oldest and youngest members is increasing dramatically. Among church

¹ Membership rolls were updated in 2019, resulting in 141 active members at present, and average weekly worship attendance has been recorded at around 80.

members today there are only 6 people who are 25 years of age or less, and 98 members who are 65 or more years old. This gap was the result of an abrupt drop in the total number of younger members from around 16 in 2014 to only 9 in 2015. At the same time there was an increase in the number of members over 65 years old from 76 in 2014 to 98 today. The ethnic make-up of the membership reflects the greater Placitas community. Over the last three years it has remained stable with a majority of 134 LPPC members identifying as Anglo/white, 25 as Hispano/Hispanic, 4 as Black/African American, 1 with Asian American heritage and no American Indian populations.

An increasing number of members are retirees from Albuquerque and other locations around the US who moved to Placitas. The majority of the household heads in LPPC are retired professional or white-collar workers. LPPC members are more likely to have bachelors or higher degrees with almost half having advanced degrees. Because the makeup of the LPPC membership includes many retirees and low-income families, the approximate average income of church members is lower than the Placitas community average. Residents of the Village of Placitas have greater concern about meeting basic needs than does the greater Placitas area. The primary interest of the Placitas community is toward fulfilling hopes and dreams and retirement activities while LPPC members are more concerned with spiritual and personal growth. LPPC and the community believe in the importance of preserving the family structure.

According to the *New Beginnings Assessment* (2014), LPPC is considered a Pastor-Centered congregation identified as having a range of between 51 to 150 people in weekly worship. This size congregation generally tends to hand over more responsibility for care of the congregation to the pastor. The pastor brings most proposals to the church board for decision, but she/he still plays an important role in decision-making, teaching and empowering lay leadership, and in general, being present at meetings and other activities.

Although no new congregational self-assessment survey results were available to include in this 2019 Mission Study, the previous 2009 Mission Study provides insights that may continue to hold true today. Of great concern in 2009 was a perceived lack of a commitment to Christian community in the greater Placitas area. A high percentage of the community believes in God, but a little less than half are not involved in their faith. LPPC members have much higher faith receptivity.

Church members in 2009 were happy with their personal relationships at LPPC. They had a strong commitment to God, and fifty percent believed their faith had grown stronger over the previous decade and want it to continue to grow. An overwhelming majority attended services weekly. LPPC members and friends were satisfied or very satisfied with their relationship with God, spiritual growth, health, career and family life. They are content with their marriages, relationships with their children and the church.

The congregation evokes the feeling of belonging to an extended family at LPPC. Nearly half of the membership indicated in 2009 that three or more of their five closest friends are members of the church. LPPC has an excellent support structure (pastoral care, Deacons, etc.) for its members and friends. The worship services (music, preaching and sanctuary) are noteworthy. The congregation also has high regard for the Sunday services, adult education, communications within the community, preschool, welcoming activities, fellowship and service.

LPPC IS A RESILIENT CHURCH FAMILY

When LPPC was founded in 1894, the new congregation of about 50 people met in the Mission Schoolhouse. The first mission schoolteacher was a woman, Lavinia Thompson. She taught elementary and Sunday school to all ages, and would conduct the Sunday services when the assigned minister was not able to make it. The early church members were almost all predominantly Spanish speakers and the families were closely interrelated. Because it was a close-knit community, everyone helped each other in time of need. As membership grew, a new building was constructed out of traditional handmade adobe bricks in 1930. Today, that building is within the current church structure called the Upper Room.

LPPC has never been a large church, and it has seen its share of ups and downs financially. In 1971 LPPC independently called its first half-time pastor, who moved to the village. In 1980 its first full-time pastor, Rev. James Anderson, arrived. Membership grew along with its financial stability. Recognizing the necessity of congregational growth for financial sustainability, Anderson led the church in its first major building expansion since the 1930s. The current sanctuary, a small kitchen and the Fellowship Hall were added in 1984, in large part by volunteer labor from the congregation and the wider community and financed in part by community enchilada dinners. The church was then able to host weekly playgroups for moms and their children, which they called the *Mother's Day Out* program. Today, LPPC provides meeting space for a variety of community groups such as homeowners' associations, the Jardineros de Placitas and Alcoholics Anonymous, as well as displaying works of local artists. Taking advantage of the ideal acoustics in the new sanctuary, the exciting classical music and arts program known as The Placitas Artists Series (PAS) was begun in 1986 and continues with packed audiences.

As church membership grew in the 1990's, the church restored the Presbytery of Santa Fe owned facilities at the Sandia Conference Grounds by adding a modern kitchen and updating camping facilities. In the late 1990's, a Memorial Garden and columbarium on our church property were dedicated. In 1996, Rev. Jane P. Harnes became the first female Presbyterian pastor at LPPC, contributing to an increase in church membership.

Even during financially insecure times, church building continued. In 2005, the Educational Wing was dedicated bringing the building's total size to 11,900 square feet. With that expansion, the LPPC *Mother's Day Out* program became both a nursery school and day care center serving families 5 days a week. New rooms for Christian education, office space and the choir were built; accessible restrooms and the kitchen were expanded with up-to-code, state-of-the-art facilities. The Fellowship Hall was also extended and now has more space for group meetings and visual art shows.

However, upon the retirement of Pastor Harmes in 2007, the church again hit troubled times. Worship attendance dropped and finances became tight. From 2008 to 2010, Rev. Elizabeth Lyman served as Transitional Presbyterian pastor at Placitas. The same year she arrived, the *Casa Rosa Food Pantry* was established when LPPC bought the house just north of the church. Although Casa Rosa is an independent entity it is still strongly supported by LPPC through individual involvement and donations, pastoral attendance at governing meetings, and monetary support from the Mission Committee.

The arrival of Pastor Drew Henry in 2011 marked a significant change for the church. Rather than seeking a part-time person, the congregation took a financial risk and called for a designated full-time pastor. The result was a financial turnaround for the congregation. Worship attendance grew to a weekly average of around 117 members and guests.

In 2013, a mortgage-burning ceremony for the educational wing was held on Pentecost Sunday to reflect that LPPC no longer had financial debt. Since the church was now able to afford paid professionals, there was less reliance on volunteer efforts for roles such as choir director, accompanist and office staff.

Over the past three years, LPPC has again been challenged by financial issues, as forecasted pledges and other income have been insufficient to cover requested church operating expenses. In 2017 and 2018, the shortfall was covered with funds from the church reserves with the expectation that expenses would be held in check and would not exceed projected revenue. However, this did not happen, and church reserves dropped to 5%, the threshold limit required for the operating budget.

When similar conditions arose in 2019, the Finance Committee worked with church leaders to propose cuts to reach a balanced budget. The impact of these cuts compelled the LPPC Stewardship Committee to launch a second pledge drive that was successful in obtaining the additional funds needed from the congregation to support the important work of the church and alleviated the pressure on those staff, programs, and services which otherwise would have been affected by these cuts. Furthermore, the church's permanent fund is now being replenished as a necessary part of the budgetary process.

In addition, the church officials adopted a new policy establishing an Unfunded Request, or UFR list, for the use of any funds in the operating budget left over at the end of the year. These funding requests would be reviewed, approved, and prioritized by Session, so that any remaining funds at the end of the year could be spent towards these projects.

LPPC IS DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

While the majority, roughly 71%, of the current LPPC membership is from the Boomer generation and predominantly of Anglo heritage, diversity and inclusion do not rely on numbers alone. The multicultural core of the State of New Mexico has been an attraction for many Placitans. Thus, many LPPC members seek to engage in the various cultural activities and languages within surrounding communities. The result gives the church body a unique insight and appreciation for the vital role of diversity in strengthening the church community and its greater mission. The arrival of pastor Jane Harmes followed by transitional pastor, Elizabeth Lyman, reflects how the church embraced and celebrates diversity in all its modern connotations of inclusiveness, openness toward cultural diversity, sexual orientation, marriage equality and political points of view, to mention a few.

LPPC members believe Christ calls us, as we are, to be His people. As the only protestant church in the Placitas area, LPPC draws people from a wide range of denominations and prior church affiliations. Joined together by faith in God as the center and unifying commonality, and recognizing the opportunity afforded by multiple and sometimes differing voices, LPPC welcomes members and friends from many different religious backgrounds, with a genuine respect for differences in attitudes, beliefs, and values. All are invited to communion and are welcomed as a part of this piece of the Body of Christ.

LPPC HOLDS WORSHIP AND MUSIC IN HIGH REGARD

The Worship Service

LPPC holds two Sunday worship services for most of the year—an early service at 8:30 a.m., followed by an adult forum at 9:15, and the later service at 10:30. In the past, the church had only one service at 9:30 during the summer months, but by a special vote of the congregation in 2019, the worship service schedule retained the year-round 8:30–10:30 times. The early service is held in the Upper Room (the original sanctuary of LPPC) and is shorter, with fewer in attendance, and of a more contemplative and informal nature.

In keeping with its rich history and traditions, LPPC continues its commitment to a bilingual service as a central piece of its identity, which is strongly supported by the congregation. At least one liturgy reading and one hymn are in Spanish each week. In addition, portions of the communion services are periodically done in Spanish. Lay readers are assigned each week to read the Spanish scriptures and assist with the Spanish communion, when needed.

The worship services can best be characterized as being God-centered, liturgically-based (in the reformed liturgical style), and participatory. Each Sunday, two lay liturgists lead pieces of the liturgy and read scripture passages; lay participation is also provided by two ushers/greeters, a visitor host, a sound technician, and a young acolyte to light the candles. LPPC has an entirely lay-led service once or twice a year, as well as a youth-led service once a year, usually at Christmas. LPPC also has an annual Worship in the Mountains service on a summer Sunday at the Presbytery owned Sandia Conference Grounds in the nearby Sandia Mountains.

Each year on the Sunday closest to Earth Day the *Earth Care Fellowship* (ECF) plans and directs an Earth Sabbath Sunday service. The ECF also directs an Earth Vesper service held on or near the winter solstice. Many of these services are held in outside locations. The winter solstice vesper, held in the darkened sanctuary by the light of a single candle, includes a juried poetry reading by local poets. Four times a year the ECF also organizes a highway cleaning crew to remove trash from a dedicated strip of Highway 165.

Music and Art

LPPC enthusiastically supports its choir and music program, employing both a professional pianist and choir director. Each Sunday, the choir performs an anthem as well as an introit and benediction response. The pianist also plays centering music at the beginning of the service. During the summer when the choir is on hiatus, individuals or small ensembles led by the choir director provide special music. A Sunday Jazz service, for example, has been held at least once a year over the past few years. The church is, indeed, blessed with a talented congregation including many gifted singers and instrumentalists.

While Sunday School for the children is in session, the children gather for 15 minutes in the Upper Room to sing the old favorites (and some new favorites) before they adjourn to their respective classrooms.

In 2017, LPPC was one of 146 churches throughout the United States to be blessed with a grant from the *Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program* to fund a summer sabbatical leave for Pastor Henry that also included funds for a series of 12 special musical services conducted during his leave (May 14 to September 17, 2017). Borrowing from the book, *A Song to Sing, A life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*, by Rev. Don and Emily Saliers, everyone involved in the

project was asked to consider the following: “Imagine that you were given a song when you were born. Suppose that as you grew into childhood, your grandparents taught you how to listen for music that connected you to your ancestors. Suppose as well that your future pathways in life were discovered over time as you traced that music and learned to improvise on your song. Human communities have, from the beginning of time, explored identity and destiny in music and song. Such ‘Songlines,’ as these may be called, link generation to generation.”

While Pastor Henry was pursuing his own Songline traveling both nationally and internationally, and learning how to play the fiddle he inherited from his family, “The Songlines of Our Lives” became the central theme of LPPC’s special services. The series included various musicians from within the congregation, well-known artists from our local communities, and celebrities from outside New Mexico with national renown. Each was invited to present their music and share their personal narrative as an important part of each worship service. In addition to the special music series, each Sunday service included church members who volunteered to give their ‘Songline’ or testimony about the importance of music in their lives. The Songlines Committee members served as Worship Leaders, which included an intern, Edward Lewis, who was assigned to the church during that summer.

The talented LPPC congregation also includes many visual artists who have helped the Placitas community emerge as a significant art colony. LPPC values its long association with the *Placitas Artist Series* (PAS) whereby once a month, from September through May, PAS displays visual art from community artists in the Fellowship Hall and provides musical performances in our sanctuary from Albuquerque’s philharmonic and other artists from around the world, in the sanctuary. Liturgical art such as banners and other seasonal décor are all part of the worship life of LPPC.

LPPC HAS A HEART FOR MISSION

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.....” Matthew 25:35

One of the strongest desires of LPPC is to serve the people of the community, the members and friends of the church, and the greater community of the world. As an outreach to the local community the church in 2008 conceived and initiated Casa Rosa, a food pantry for the hungry in Placitas. The congregation would like to expand the services to include some health care services. LPPC’s first concern is for our neighborhood.

The congregation also wants to stay involved with the greater community by continuing to work with “Building Together Sandoval County” and Habitat for Humanity. These programs work with those who need new homes and need help with

their current homes to make them safe, weatherproof, and warm. We also express our heart with the “Comfort and Joy” shawl ministry to provide comfort to members and friends in need. LPPC helped coffee farmers purchase the coffee roasting equipment and sells “Just Coffee,” produced by a Fair Trade Cooperative from Mexico, on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The committee promotes the coffee and is expanding into SERRV to help people all over the world who need ways to market their products. The church has partnerships with churches in Cuba, New Mexico, and in Sabanilla in the nation of Cuba. LPPC has many interests in the area of mission, locally and internationally. Las Placitas Church is committed to reaching out to the local community, identifying needs and providing solutions.

LPPC HAS A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In the last 50 years, Placitas has grown from a Spanish Village to an unincorporated collection of subdivisions. It is home to commuters who work in Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, and Santa Fe as well as retirees who have relocated far from family. Professional and community performing arts, collegiate and minor league sports, medical centers, Native American and colonial Spanish historic sites, major educational institutions, Los Alamos and Sandia National labs, skiing and other winter sports, hiking, hunting and fishing, off-road exploring, biking and nature and wild horse watching are all within a very short distance from centrally located Placitas.

While the elementary school and some volunteer organizations provide opportunities for getting to know other residents, Las Placitas Presbyterian Church provides the most important sense of community for many of its congregation. This important role is evident from the questionnaire responses received from friends and members of the congregation, almost ten years ago. This theme of the church providing a strong sense of community is characterized by the respondents who cited an atmosphere of genuine caring about others, appreciation for being part of a group that prays together and works together, and finding the church to be a source of fellowship, support, and acceptance.

Activities that contribute to this strong sense of community include fellowship dinners (large fund-raisers and small get-acquainted suppers), retreats, service on the fellowship committee, the many activities of the Deacons, the after-worship coffee time, working together on the gardens and the grounds, singing in the choir, sharing time and talents, participating in Christian adult education opportunities (Women’s Bible Study, Monday Night Discussion Group, and Sunday Adult Forum), Tuesday morning discussion breakfasts at the local Placitas Café, and getting involved in hands-on projects .

A loving atmosphere is cultivated during the life of a member’s or friend’s affiliation with this congregation, from the friendliness extended to first-time

visitors, to the emotional support given to those experiencing illness or loss of a loved one. Celebrations involve the entire congregation. Easter brunch and after worship pitch in dinners give those who are far from family a place to share the simple pleasure of a meal with others on these special occasions.

In summary, Las Placitas Presbyterian Church provides a sense of community to many who would not otherwise know one.

LPPC SUPPORTS ITS YOUTH & FAMILIES

Las Placitas Presbyterian Church has a deep appreciation for its children, youth, and young families (CY&YF). The church community recognizes the vital role that children, youth, and young families provide in our continued growth and development as a body of Christ.

LPPC is a diverse body of friends and members and it is understood that CY&YF are an important part of our diversity. LPPC has for many years supported the church body and surrounding community through children's Sunday School, youth groups and after church activities, outdoor activities including Ghost Ranch and hikes, lock-ins, sending a delegation to Triennium, hiring of a life long church member as Youth Ministry Coordinator, confirmation class, youth participation in Sunday morning worship, vacation Bible school, nursery care and Mother's Day Out programs.

LPPC SUPPORTS THE ENVIRONMENT

A major thrust of LPPC is concern for the earth and the environment. There is a very active Earth Care fellowship with special worship services that honor the earth with vespers, poetry readings, hikes, and other creative ways to show concern for the environment and the care of God's earth. The church has a wonderful memorial garden that is designed to conserve water and grow plants that thrive in the southwest. There is a keen interest in learning more about "green and creation theology." LPPC sets aside special times to study the earth and how to take care of it. Our desire is to continue to learn about the environment and how we can honor it, as God would have us do.

LPPC, an Earth Care congregation, installed a photovoltaic system as part of roof repairs through a mortgage (balance of \$81,304 as of October 2019) to reduce the monthly electric bill for the lighting and electrical appliance use within the church. The photovoltaic system has been online since mid-May 2017. For the 26 full months of record (June 2017–July 2019), the photovoltaic system has generated more electricity than the church used during six months or 23% of the time, and the church has paid

only the minimum monthly service charge (currently \$16.28) for nine of 26 months, or 35% of the time. While the monthly electric bill is reduced every month, the savings vary because the monthly photovoltaic generation has varied from 740 to 1,960 kWh per month. From May 2016 through April 2017, the monthly church electrical bill exceeded \$200.00 every month for 12 months. Since the installation of the photovoltaic system, only one monthly bill has exceeded \$200.00. The photovoltaic vendor's estimated payback period was 25 years. The system has just entered Year Three of the payback period.

LPPC FACES THESE CHALLENGES

Although LPPC is a strong and vital church it faces some challenges as it looks to the future. The following are the most important:

1. The Church's struggles to attract new members

Although Placitas as a whole has a population of just over 5,000, current membership between the two local churches in Placitas is 441 (141 for LPPC and approximately 300 for San Antonio Catholic Mission), or 9.4% of available population. Despite the fact that LPPC is the only Protestant church within the community, the center of most community activities, and the only source of pastoral care, membership growth has been difficult. A contributing factor may have been the 2008 real estate crash that brought a 2-decade building boom in Placitas to an end, and since then development has been at a more modest pace.

LPPC accepts the important challenge of reaching community members not currently active in a church through an active program of evangelism by both word and deed. Casa Rosa, through its activities along with an outreach program has brought some new members into the congregation.

2. Expansion and enrichment of LPPC's children and youth ministries

In 2018, 59% of our congregation was over the age of 65, and as such, consistency in youth attendance fluctuates. For the Christian growth of the children and youth, and for the continued long-term growth and life of LPPC, these challenges must be overcome. LPPC is seeking leadership and direction in supporting CY&YF. Pastoral guidance and continued congregational support will provide the means necessary to address concerns around providing programs to support youth and young families. Possible areas of renewed focus may include Christian education, youth ministry and outreach, children and youth music, vacation Bible school, nursery and childcare services, and young family outreach and involvement. Our goal is to provide a church home where children, youth, and young families want to be a part.

3. Integration of diverse perspectives of the congregation

The community is seeing a significant change as the area attracts retirees who come with differing perspectives on issues and often differing financial resources than those of the predominately Spanish local community. It is a challenge to integrate the ethnic, generational and philosophical diversity of the members so all can continue their life journey and be welcome and honored within LPPC. To promote harmony, it is important for the church to maintain balance in its activities, ministries, and messages.

4. Increase the financial stability of the church

In the future, we anticipate it becoming increasingly difficult to meet commitments that we have traditionally made to the congregation and the community. We must meet our mandatory financial obligations like the loan for the much needed roof repairs and the installation of photovoltaic panels. However, without additional giving, certain discretionary spending, such as the donations to the local Presbytery, may have to be curtailed or reduced.

Pledges and giving are distributed across the congregation with roughly 5% of pledges giving roughly 20% of the budget, but with all congregants giving as they are able.

There are many reasons pledge giving has been a struggle. A reduction in church membership, the loss of jobs, the devaluation of assets and investments, and perhaps a fear for the future, have all had an impact.

Going forward, we hope to reach a balanced budget without reductions. We want our fiscal profile to enable us to answer the question: "How can we deepen our commitment to taking care of our children, our community, and our mission to share the Good News of Christ here and throughout the world?"

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Las Placitas Presbyterian Church is an inclusive Christian community gathering for worship, prayer, learning, fellowship, and spiritual growth for people of all ages. As members of the body of Christ, we celebrate God's grace in our lives and seek to extend God's love and promise through service, outreach, education, music, arts, and witness. We are committed to peace and justice in the world, and to care for the earth as God's gift to humankind.

We cherish our origin as an early Spanish village mission church and honor this heritage in all of our activities.

We are Presbyterian in theology and governance, but welcome and support all people as they explore their personal life paths, emphasizing Christ's word, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

—Matthew 18:2

LPPC DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS - 2010 - 2018

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Active membership	151	166	172	181	184	167	161	164	164
Avg. Attendance	85	107	113	117	114	120	112	113	99
Member Gains	4	18	9	6	8	13	2	13	2
Member Losses									
Deaths	4	0	2	2	3	1	3	1	2
Other	10	3	1	5	2	29	5	9	0
Totals	14	3	3	7	5	30	8	10	2
Age Range									
<25 Years Old	16	18	16	16	16	9	7	6	6
>65 Years Old	65	71	76	75	76	89	99	98	98
Ethnicity									
White American	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	132	134	134
Black African American	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	4	4	4
Hispanic American	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	24	25	25
Asian American	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	1	1	1
Native American	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	0	0	0