

EPC Timeline (Corresponding pics can be found in the 50th anniversary book)

In the fall of 1961, George Hunter Hall, Synod Executive for Arizona of the United Presbyterian Church, recruited Rev. William Barrett, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Arcata, California, to organize a new Presbyterian church that the Synod hoped to establish in fast-growing North Phoenix. The Presbytery had purchased property at 39th Street and Shea Boulevard and posted a sign declaring that it was a "Future Home of United Presbyterian Church" site.

Rev. Barrett and his family arrived and he began "punching doorbells" on February 1, 1962. Worship began the first Sunday of March with 13 worshippers. On December 2, 1962, the church was officially organized as an ecclesiastical body with 46 charter members and nine more added in December. The name Emmanuel (God with us) was chosen and Rev. Barrett became Emmanuel's first minister.

Emmanuel held services throughout 1963 in a little house at 36 Street and Shea Boulevard, but members were anxious to be in their own church home and the Session agreed. A building committee was established and the sanctuary was dedicated in March of 1964. As attendance increased, the congregation voted to construct a children's building in 1965.

In May of 1968, Rev. Barrett accepted a call in Idaho and EPC merged with Paradise Valley Presbyterian Church. Their pastor, Rev. Melvin Nelson, was stated supply pastor at Emmanuel until the Rev. Richard M. Archibald was called in May of 1969 as Emmanuel's second permanent pastor.

During Rev. Archibald's 13 years at Emmanuel, the congregation grew and in 1975 a multipurpose building was completed and dedicated. In 1978, the congregation approved an extension of the sanctuary south wall, adding a narthex and rebuilding an expansion of the choir loft. Approval was also given for an outside covered walkway joining the sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall. Rev. Archibald retired in 1982 and over the next 11 months, Rev. Earl Christman and then Rev. Mark Russell served as interim pastors until Emmanuel's third permanent minister, Rev. David Fernandez, was called by the congregation and was installed September 1, 1983.

During the first three years of Rev. Fernandez's ministry, church attendance significantly increased and plans for a new sanctuary and additional educational space were explored. Before embarking on new building projects, a planning and building committee appointed by the Session made a recommendation that all existing debt from prior projects be paid off. After a very successful fundraising campaign, the final note was paid in 1998 and the church was and still is debt free. Unfortunately, the plan to build a new sanctuary never came to fruition.

In 1989, a few elders approached the Presbytery and asked for a review of Rev. Fernandez's performance. Although during a congregational meeting a vote to retain Pastor Fernandez was 73% in his favor, the outcome of the Presbytery's deliberations resulted in Rev. Fernandez's removal from the pulpit in 1990. Rev. Fernandez immediately appealed the Presbytery's action to the Synod and was exonerated and restored to the pulpit. However, the lengthy trial process resulted in Pastor Fernandez's absence from Emmanuel for 21 months during which time the Rev. Glenn Carlson served as stated supply pastor.

Emmanuel survived this painful period in its history and Rev. Fernandez continued as minister until his retirement in 1996. Rev. Stanley E. Jones became Emmanuel's interim pastor until the Rev. Mark Anderson was called in November of 1997 as Emmanuel's fourth permanent minister.

During Rev. Anderson's ministry, there was an increased focus on children's ministry which included children participating in the first 15 minutes of the service and then gathering for a children's sermon with the pastor before leaving for Sunday School. The youth group also blossomed and grew during this time meeting on Sunday evenings and formed a puppet ministry that performed for the younger children during some worship services. In addition to the wonderful choir that has always provided beautiful music for Emmanuel's services, the 39th Street Band was formed

as well as a Praise and Worship Team which introduced some contemporary features to worship while still maintaining our much loved hymns and many elements of the traditional Presbyterian service.

After Mark Anderson accepted a call to California in 2005, the Rev. Mary Saylor became EPC's interim pastor in May 2005 and became Emmanuel's stated supply pastor in 2007. Mary served in many roles in the Presbytery and as a chaplain at Montlure Presbyterian camp where many EPC youth have attended as campers and counselors. During Mary's tenure, the pastor's office, secretary's office, narthex and Fellowship Hall were refurbished and updated. There was an increased focus during this time on adult education which included small groups and various Bible studies as well as a marked increase in mission activities and ecumenical services with other local congregations. In 2009, the congregation celebrated the installation of a small pipe organ which greatly enhanced our worship services. Mary faithfully and joyfully served the congregation of Emmanuel until her retirement in August 2018.

Pulpit supply pastors filled EPC's pulpit until October 2018 when the Rev. Jennifer Fraser became Emmanuel's interim pastor. Pastor Jen led EPC during this time of transition by guiding the pastor nominating process and leading Emmanuel through all the changes brought about by the pandemic which included added virtual worship services. Pastor Jen accepted a call in California and left Emmanuel in October 2020. In November 2020, Pastor Jeff Baxter became EPC's gap interim pastor until the pastor nominating committee completed its task of calling a permanent pastor.

Pastor Jeff will complete his interim call at Emmanuel in April of 2021 at which time EPC is very excited to welcome Pastor Tom Voigt as Emmanuel's fifth permanent pastor.