

CENTENARY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Brief History Prepared in Commemoration of Nisei Week
2007

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Centenary United Methodist Church was organized in June 1896, under the name **Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission of Los Angeles.**

A charter group of 15 first-generation immigrant *Issei* Christians held their first services in a small house at 252 Winston Street in downtown Los Angeles. The congregation moved to a larger building at the corner of Broadway & 9th Streets in 1902, and again to a third location at 1120 Georgia Street in 1906.

The year 1925 marked the centennial anniversary of the Methodist Church in America. That same year, the Centenary congregation purchased a lot on the corner of Normandie Avenue and 35th Street, and constructed a new church building on the site. The new church was named **Centenary Methodist Church** to commemorate these two historic milestones.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December, 1941 and the subsequent evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans from the west coast in the spring of 1942, the church closed its doors until 1945. Upon the return and resettlement of church members, Centenary served as a hostel for families who had no homes or neighborhoods to which to return.

The second generation *Nisei* undertook the reins of leadership and rebuilt the church's ministry and programs throughout the following four decades.

In 1988, the congregation made the decision to return to its historical home in the Little Tokyo area of downtown Los Angeles. A site was purchased on the corner of Central Avenue and 3rd Street, and construction of the first phase including administrative offices, classrooms and a social hall was begun. The entire facility was completed with the construction of the new sanctuary in 1995.

Today, Centenary retains its Japanese American heritage while welcoming and embracing people of all ethnicities and backgrounds. The third-generation *Sansei* and their contemporaries lead the congregation at a time when the downtown Los Angeles environment is undergoing exciting and rapid change.

Thanks be to God!