THE CLOSING OF LA IGLESIA METODISTA, FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

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The oldest surviving religious structure in Flagstaff, Arizona, constructed in 1891-1892, is the old Presbyterian Church. It was the third church building—and denomination—in Flagstaff. It was preceded by the Methodist Episcopal Church (1887), and the Brannan Street Catholic Church (1888), both of which have been dismantled. This has left the Presbyterian sanctuary as the oldest surviving church structure in Flagstaff. It was originally located across the street from the new courthouse (1892). When the Presbyterians united with the Methodists to form the Federated Community Church in late 1915, the First Presbyterian Church was absorbed into the Federation until it was sold to C. B. Wilson, a lawyer. He in turn sold or donated the church structure to the Mexican Methodist Church which was moved south of the railroad tracks where it is located today. Saul Moreno, who was long active in the Mexican Methodist congregation, told the author that the building was moved as far south as the Rio de Flag, a frequently dry wash. Since no bridge crossed the ditch in 1927, the structure rested at this temporary site until a way was devised to cross the banks.

In the process of relocating the structure, the back room, behind the sanctuary where the fourth set of windows (at the rear of the structure) was located, was removed, and only a wall barrier was left on the south or street side for many years. Thus, the church building (slightly modified) passed out of the Presbyterian system into the Methodist system. In 2003, after decades of struggle, the Methodist bishop closed La Iglesia Metodista (or El Divino Redentor).

As is often the case with newly formed congregations on the frontier in the 19th century, itinerant ministers held early preaching exercises in Flagstaff before traveling on down the railroad to the next stop. This was true of the Methodists in the 1880s as well as the Presbyterians. In fact, the Presbyterians formed a Ladies Aid Society in 1890, and with the help of

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1See Garland Downum, A Flagstaff Heritage: The Federated Community Church (Flagstaff: Federated Community Church, 1983): 7-11, 25-34; First Presbyterian Church to C. B. Wilson, January 12, 1925, in Coconino County Courthouse; J. L. Daugherty and Wife to Mexican Methodist Episcopal Church, February 12, 1925, Coconino County Courthouse. I have benefited much from an interview with Romie and Lloyd Sedillo, the last surviving members of El Divino Redentor (July 3, 2003).
John Menaul, a preacher from Albuquerque, raised money with a Thursday evening supper for 25 cents at the home of Mrs. John Vories. In 1891 Mrs. Vories gave a “Quotation Party,” consisting of violin, piano, and vocal solos, at her home on Railroad Avenue (later Santa Fe Avenue, now Highway 66). Mrs. Vories hosted a large number of community citizens, not necessarily Presbyterians, but including the first permanent Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Robert Coltman. Coltman had been appointed to a newly formed congregation in March, 1891, under the guidance of Menaul, and the Presbytery recognized the church in April, 1891. Flagstaff Presbyterians were partially motivated by the abrupt transfer of the popular Nathan Gutherie from his pastorate at the Methodist church in 1889. The Presbyterians could at least keep a preacher as long as they liked.2

The newly formed Presbyterian congregation needed a sanctuary. Four lots were purchased, and the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad donated two more lots. Construction began. The first service was held in an uncompleted structure in January, 1892. Until that time the congregation had organized in the GAR Hall and met for Sunday worship in the Masonic Hall. The Presbyterian denomination donated or “loaned” some of the money for construction, and even for Coltman’s salary, with the stipulation that if the property were ever alienated, i.e., ceased to be a church, it must be paid back. So far as we know, it never was.3

The Presbyterians, perhaps with limited resources, struggled to survive in a frontier community. Before 1900 they held a Children’s Day. In 1891, a lad played a school boy in a skit at an ice cream social, whose ears got boxed by a school marm. In 1895 he spoke on “Climbing the Ladder of Good Citizenship” at Sunday school. The church barely escaped disaster when a fire broke out in town in 1893. Flagstaff had already suffered two devastating fires in 1886 and 1888. When the young Merrell Vories returned to Flagstaff in late 1904, fresh out of Colorado College, he spoke at a Union Service of Methodists and Presbyterians on “Missions,” as he was on his way to Omihachiman, Japan. A year and a half later, he delivered a stereopticon illustrated speech at the Presbyterian Church on “Japan from Within,” and his work with the YMCA in Omihachiman.4

Although the church enrolled 54 members soon after Coltman arrived, financial stringency was apparent. However, the Presbyterian Church made accomplishments. With Home Missions support, three Presbyterian pastors, Thomas Moffett (1893-1896), George Logie (1898-1905) and Frank Reid (1905-1907) toured the Navajo Reservation in 1900 to select a site for a

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2Arizona Champion, Flagstaff, April 3, 21, May 3, August 10, 1890, Coconina Sun, Flagstaff, August 1, 29, October 22, 1891; Downum, 25, 28-29.
3Downum, 27-31.
Presbyterian Mission. At Lorenzo Hubbell's urging, they chose Ganado for a school and church where Sage Memorial Hospital still exists in 2003. Mrs. Gertrude Gates financed a large manse, north of the sanctuary, which replaced the pastor's smaller residence, and which could also be used as an Indian dormitory for Native Americans visiting Flagstaff. Today it is called the Professional Building. Under Logie the Presbyterian establishment went off mission status. A clue to the financial stringency is that pastors received rent payments from the manse directly, after Mrs. Gates transferred title to the church. Some benevolences were not paid in later years. As Frank Reid remembered some fifty years later, he was an elder, a trustee, a treasurer, a Sunday school superintendent, choir leader, and sometimes in a pinch, janitor.5

The Mexican Methodist congregation was a long time aborning, but began in 1902 when Dona Blaza Rodriguez, a mid-wife and saloon keeper of the Chin Chan Chun Hall, began theological conversations with a second-hand furniture dealer named Charles Harper, el Viejito Harper as he was affectionately called. By 1919, el Viejito needed assistance in explaining his brand of Protestant Christianity to nominal Catholics. Julian McClure, a local seller of biblical literature was enlisted in the cause. These two in turn brought in Miss Anna Gertrude Linny, a Methodist Bible study teacher, and the congregation was soon formed.6 Linny later married one of Harper's employees.

To complete the formation, a church building was needed. The new Federated Church decided that it no longer needed the second structure, or the Presbyterian Church. Therefore, in 1925 the Board of Trustees of the nominal Presbyterian Church, consisting of William Beeson, president, and Tom C. Bellwood, Charlotte Acker, M. G. Fronske, and Walter Runke, sold five lots (and the church?) to C. B. Wilson. He used the lots for his own business purposes and either sold or donated the church to the Mexican Methodists. According to one early member, the Spanish-speaking congregation paid $50 down and $650 for the structure, and voted 17 for the purchase and 2 against. The trustees of the Mexican Methodist Church, consisting of Austin Brown, Tom Rees (both members of the Federated Church), Jesse L. Rodriguez, Arturo Valdivia, Martin Macias, and Francisco

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5 Downum, 30, 32-47; Frank C. Reid (Los Angeles) to Rev. Leonard L. Patterson (Flagstaff), July 19, 1951, Series 1, Box 6, Folder 25, in Federated Community Church Archives (hereafter FFCCA), Special Collections Northern Arizona University, (hereafter SCNAU).
Gurule, bought three lots on South San Francisco. The next project was to move the church to its new site.\(^7\)

Shorn of its steeple, its bell placed on the vestibule floor, a slice off the peak of its roof so it could pass under the telephone and telegraph wires, it was moved in 1927. Many remembered with nostalgia the bell calling worshippers to service and the fine pine lumber used for its inside finish. Former lumbermen recalled the care they took in selecting the finest lumber, and a former preacher remembered returning to the sanctuary to view once again the refined interior. C. B. Wilson removed the structure from his newly acquired lots, perhaps to build more apartments or office buildings. The Mexican Methodist Mission, led by Rev. John Burman, received the building from the Federated Church, which the Mission actually owned for three years before the removal in 1927.\(^8\)

Sunday school attendance records of 1940, the first extant records of the MMC were found in the sanctuary in the flue.\(^9\) Apparently, the records of La Iglesia Metodista for the long period 1927 to 1963 have been lost, or are located somewhere in the old Pacific and Southwest Conference in Los Angeles, or in a defunct Hispanic Methodist Conference. A brief minute existed of a quarterly conference (a local church meeting), recorded in October, 1962. Its pastor (and presiding officer and secretary), Mardoqueo B. Garcia, recorded that the benevolence assigned to it by the Methodist Church (probably at the annual conference) of $183 was accepted.\(^10\) That seems to be a tradition of El Divino Redentor, a name which became popular, over the remaining years, to pay its benevolences and apportionments in

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\(^7\)Anonymous, “El Divino Redentor,” in Historical Statements Folder, MMC, CUMC; First Presbyterian Church of Flagstaff to C. B. Wilson, January 12, 1925; Coconino County Courthouse, Flagstaff; J. L. Daugherty and Wife to Austin W. Brown, et al, February 24, 1925, Coconino County Courthouse, Flagstaff, in MMC Folder, CUMC. Testimony differs whether the church structure was donated by the Federated Church or by Wilson, or was sold; Interview with Travis Kendall, July 1, 2003.

\(^8\)Coconino Sun, July 8, 1927.


\(^10\)Minutes of the First Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Church of Flagstaff, in Lopez Folder, MMC Folder, CUMC. Until about 1969, the MMC was a member of the Latin American Provisional Conference of the Methodist Church; Interview with Travis Kendall, July 1, 2003.
full, even as its membership and attendance at Sunday services declined.

It was under the pastorate of Eugene Lopez (1963-1985) that a large number of documents survived. This author found them in the old, unused flue of the sanctuary! Lopez was actually a Baptist, and a part-time pastor. In his other job, he assisted the graduate dean, Richard Beal, at Northern Arizona University. Normally, Lopez transmitted $200 or more in apportionments and benevolences for a congregation of 22 to 27 members. The pastor's salary ranged from $900 to $2688. In early 1976, Lopez arranged for a major refurbishment of the exterior of the church which included the installation of amber colored glass in the windows, repair and replacement of existing siding, removal of the cover over the bell tower, and replacement of the louvers in the bell tower, all to be paid in installments. A crisis in El Divino Redentor affairs led Lopez to hold a "Consultation," in July, 1982, with the Phoenix Metropolitan Commission (MEPCO) and the Latin American Methodist Action Group (LAMAG) to examine the feasibility of a Latin American ministry in Flagstaff and the disposal of Hispanic Special Project Funds granted by the Pacific and Southwest Annual Conference in August 1979 to the Flagstaff church. After meeting with Saul and Lisirio Moreno, and Rev. Travis Kendall of the Federated Community Church (the parent of the old Presbyterian church), a congregational meeting evaluated the situation. Lopez participated in all these meetings and consultations. He recorded ten to twelve members (not quite as many members as Lopez reported in his annual reports to the Methodist hierarchy).

Hispanics in Flagstaff totaled 5,469, enough to justify a Hispanic ministry. El Divino Redentor had accumulated $10,000 in its savings account, and MEPCO had $4,000 which could be used for expansion of its mission. Though Lopez had faithfully served these Methodists for many years, he was a Baptist, and alternatives for a Methodist pastor were considered: a seminarian to serve part time; an NAU student pastor seeking ordination; attachment of El Divino to a sister church, say in Phoenix; appointment of a retired Spanish-speaking Methodist minister, or the utilization of grant funding for equitable salaries. LAMAG had already visited the Flagstaff church in 1978 and recommended the appointment of an NAU seminarian. After the July 1982 visitation and meeting, District Superintendent Thomas K. Farley convened a charge conference (an MMC local meeting) to plot the future of the Mexican Methodist congregation. At Lopez' urging, eight congregants attended a meeting in December, 1982, to review the consultation report. Farley conducted the meeting adopting the general theme, "Let us go forward to a new day." Saul Moreno and Romie Sedillo favored the development of a congregational minister and an outreach minister to bring back into the congregation former members with the use of conference funds. Farley thought these funds might be found. Attention was also paid to renovating the structure, especially the installation of toilets and a new central
heating system. The bell tower needed a new foundation and the rear “addition” and “lean-to” must be torn down because of its dangerous condition.\(^{11}\)

In 1985, apparently, Lopez resigned and returned to Tucson (later Patagonia). For three years El Divino Redentor had no pastor, until mid-1988, when George Lockwood assumed the pastorate. Lockwood was Anglo, but he wrote and spoke Spanish, and he made a valiant effort to expand the congregation. Lockwood was also the minister of the Williams United Methodist Church and encouraged his Spanish-speaking congregants there to travel the thirty miles to Flagstaff to attend Hispanic services. Some of his members returned to Mexico at times. He established a Sunday afternoon service at El Divino Redentor, and a Friday (or Thursday) evening Bible study at Saul Moreno’s home, and a Bible study in Spanish in Williams. As in the past, all apportionments and benevolences were paid in full. He recruited five new members in 1989 and hoped to receive even more in 1990. He added a Sunday school for the youth, and with the aid of a summer intern, established a summer Bible school. With the financial help of the Commission on Religion and Race and from the Federated and Trinity Heights churches in Flagstaff, he conducted field trips and created a puppet show for his youngsters to perform. He planned to refurbish the interior of the sanctuary. In 1990 Lockwood transferred from Williams to the Campus Christian Center at Northern Arizona University, and no longer needed to travel from one town to another. In fact, the Thanksgiving meal for the congregation was held at the Campus Christian Center. 1990 was also a year of expansion, although he regretted losing the potential confirmands in his class in Williams when he left that community. He owed much to dedicated members such as Saul and Lisiria Moreno (Saul was the general handyman), Romie Sedillo (treasurer and Sunday School teacher), and many others, all of whom gave him assistance on all matters. He was especially appreciative of Daniel Lopez of Camp Verde, who often came to Flagstaff for services (when he was not in Mexico), who was ninety years old in 1990, a man of the century.\(^ {12}\)

Lockwood faced a daunting challenge to revive the church, the smallest church in the North District of the Desert Southwest Conference, which had succeeded the Pacific and Southwest Conference. It had lost membership from 1960 through the 1980s. Whereas Lopez reported a membership of about 20, Lockwood at first could only report 11 or more. To enhance the activities of the Hispanic neighborhoods, or barrio, in south Flagstaff, Lockwood instituted a summer program for youth (a Vacation Bible

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\(^{11}\)Flagstaff Hispanic Ministries Consultation and other relevant documents in Lopez Folder, MMC, CUMC; Ben Corbett Construction Company of Phoenix to El Divino Redentor (Lopez) February 9, 1976 also in Lopez Folder.

\(^{12}\)Pastor’s Reports for 1989, 1990, and 1991 to Charge Conferences; Questionnaire and Answers, MMC, CUMC; Mel Muchinsky to Rev. George Lockwood, April 1, 1991, and February 12, 1992, all in Lockwood Folder, MMC, CUMC
School), employed an intern for the summer programs, paid up benevolences assigned by the church officials (99% by August 31, 1991), took out insurance on the one-hundred-year-old building and new social hall, repaired the roof, painted the interior, sought assistance from sister churches (Flagstaff Federated and Trinity Heights), replaced the windows, and began to raise money from the local congregation, especially for a new social hall, to match other contributions for capital construction.

That is where Lockwood placed the emphasis and also met many frustrations. He needed bathrooms and kitchenettes for Bible study and membership classes, Sunday school, potlucks, coffee hours, and he needed a central heating system. Currently, he had only the sanctuary for meetings which sometimes interfered with worship services. Earlier, to discourage vandalism, the city had condemned the remnants of the old backroom, which had consisted of a wall on the street side, rotting floorboards, and an inadequate storage room. The idea of reinvigorating the congregation by building a social hall was decided in 1988 when Lockwood first arrived at El Divino, but he left for the Pacific Northwest Conference in 1992 before it was finished.13

In 1989, plans were made, assisted by Bob Philpott of Trinity Heights UMC of Flagstaff, Dick Thorson of Flagstaff Federated Community Church (the old parent of El Divino), other Flagstaff residents, and a $5,000 grant from Federated. Lockwood, and others, worried from the beginning whether $30,000 or so could be raised for a new social hall and resolved not to go into debt. He immediately set about soliciting volunteer labor and discounted construction materials. Some of his parishioners in Williams assisted and in the summer of 1990 a group of volunteers from University Church in Las Vegas, Nevada (later “nomads” came from Ohio and Iowa), spent time donating labor. Lockwood did not anticipate the city’s delay in issuing a permit. The Las Vegas contingent could yet not work on the social hall so Lockwood assigned them busy projects, such as refurbishing the Williams parsonage. Lockwood termed the city’s tactics a “royal headache.” The city worried about parking (he reduced the city’s demand for 40 spaces to 10), about paving the parking lot and the alley which accessed the lot, about hooking up to the proper water line (on San Francisco Street or on Dupont—the church was on a corner lot), about half the proposed building lying on a floodplain, about low flush toilets, and before Lockwood had moved one rock on the back lot, he had spent about half his current funds paying for engineering projections and city permits. He needed to raise more and sent out the call to church institutions in the Desert and Southwest District, and set up a building fund within El Divino. He and a few others largely contributed to the fund—Saul Moreno and his wife Lisirio or Lily; Romie-

13Project Proposal for Construction of a Classroom/Fellowship Hall; Pastor’s Reports for 1990 and 1991 (apparently there was more than one pastoral report for each year); Desert Southwest Annual Conference, 1991; 1992 Adjusted Apportionment Assignments; Two certificates from the Conference to Lockwood, 1989 and 1990; Romie Sedillo to Roger Stressman, January 7, 1989, all in Lockwood Folder, MMC, CUMC.
Rumalda and Lloyd Sedillo; Carolyn Bame, a successor to Lockwood; Claude and Sarah Clifton; Jim and Redonda Rominger; Trinity Heights UMC; and Nathan Holt, pastor at THUMC and later District Superintendent who personally pledged some of his income. The Methodist Men’s Club and Women’s Club at THUMC adopted the social hall as a project and Ray Newton finally laid the last bumper in the parking lot. Lockwood expected Elias Luevano and his wife Josie (Elias' father had built the pulpit in the church), who was a cabinet maker and a successor to Lockwood, to volunteer labor on the social hall.14

When Lockwood arrived there were six members on the books, two of whom lived sixty miles away in Camp Verde. In the enthusiasm of the moment, he had received thirteen members (twenty-one attended church), but two young men were deported, and extreme poverty restrained the maintenance of the building fund. Outside help was necessary. Bob and Steve Philpott prepared the plot site of its volcanic rock, an expensive proposition, and in August, 1991 the foundation was laid.15 Construction and paving went on until 1996, long after Bishop Elias Galvan had re-assigned Lockwood to the Pacific northwest.16 Ray Newton and Nathan Holt had taken charge of the enterprise.

As time went on, Trinity Heights UMC took a larger interest in the construction of the social hall. The preacher at THUMC, Nathan Holt, later became the District Superintendent in Las Vegas from whence he had resources and command for the completion of the project. Holt pledged his own money to the project and guided his church to make monthly contributions and the Methodist Men’s Club to adopt the social hall as its project. Newton kept Holt informed, and good-naturedly accused Holt of eating gourmet food in Las Vegas, but when he saw things going awry, he asked for Holt’s disciplinary assistance in setting things right. Together they raised money through Holt’s personal and District contributions, and Newton’s organization of a rummage sale with the help of Romie and Tim James. They

14[Lockwood], Report to the North District Building and Location Committee...; Minutes, Church Location & Building; Philpott, Lockwood, and Thorson to [form letter], June, 1989; [Lockwood], Listing Application for Local Churches and Projects to Request Volunteers in Mission Work Teams, March 28, 1990; Development Review Board, September 20, 1990, May 10, 1990; Planning and Zoning Commission (Flagstaff), June 16, 1990; WFM (Werhan, Folkers & Monihan, Inc.), June 14, October 3, November 2, 1990; Review Comment Response, October 3, 1990; Check for $2,314 to City of Flagstaff, signed by Remalda B. Sedillo [treasurer], November 6, 1990; Payment, City of Flagstaff, No. 11222, November 6, 1990; Building Permit Application No. 6993, November 6, 1990; United Methodist Review, February 12, 1993; Ray Newton to Romie [Sedillo], September 25, 1994, December 12, 1995, February 18, 1996; Ray Newton to [Nomads], February 16, 1996, all above in Lockwood Folder, MMC, CUMC.
15[Lockwood], Report to the North District & Location Committee..., August 8, 1991 in Lockwood Folder, MMC, CUMC.
16Lockwood is last listed in Romie Sedillo’s Ledger in June, 1992, in MMA, CUMC. See also Pastoral Appointments 1993 in MMC, CUMC.
coordinated the working visits of the “Nomads,” who plumbed and got at least one of the bathrooms working. They reprimanded the wayward: Tim James, a young fervent missionary, who led the rummage sale, or who got the carpet laid with free labor, but who arbitrarily spent Romie’s money, or played inappropriate music (“Music for Sick Bastards”) at religious services, or Chuck DiBella, who assumed he controlled the hall, as the church incorporated the Neighborhood Shoppe into its organization. Finally, Newton got the parking lot paved and bumpers laid.17

Lockwood, when full time funding for the Campus Christian Center ended, transferred out of the Desert Southwest Conference in June 1992, and his place was taken by Carolyn Bame. Other substitutes preached from time to time, Rev. John Espin and Rev. Francisco Castillo, who wanted the appointment, but the Methodists would not appoint him. Bame spoke from the pulpit in Spanish and at other times with a translator. She attended a course for unordained pastors at Claremont College in June, 1993, and while she was away, Rev. Benjamin Vicuna from Central America, preached until September, 1993, when Bame returned to El Divino’s pulpit. Vicuna and his family had been members of Bame’s congregation. Bame supported the improvement of the facilities with her donations, the construction of more dependable restroom facilities in the new social hall (the previous facilities had been located in an addition to the side of the manse, which was itself in a bad state of repair and a matter of very great concern to Newton), the replacement of the old windows which could not be opened for ventilation, and the addition of a new electric organ in the sanctuary. She found that her relationships with the Hispanics and their appreciation of her services very inspiring.18

Bame filled a slot while the District Superintendent, Nathan Holt, looked for a Hispanic preacher. Finally, by March 1994, he appointed Elias Luevano, a cabinet maker and instructor in carpentry at California State University at Hayward. His father had been a member of El Divino Redentor, and Luevano seemed a natural to supervise the completion of the social hall. Indeed he advised and complimented Newton on the donation of

17 Newton to Nate Holt, et al, February 19, March 8, 20, 25, November 21, December 17, 1995, February 14,18, 1996; Newton to Rev. Reford Nash and Mr. Shirley, [no date]; Newton to Mark Snyder, December 17, 1995; Newton to [all; letter of thanks], December 12, 1995; Proposal and Contract, Northland Paving Co. No. 0745; John Mechem to Ray, November 16, 1995; Newton to Mechem, November 21, 1995; Nathan Holt to Bob France, June 20, 1995; Newton to Joe Donaldson, April 11, 1995; Two Notices of Rummage Sale; Charlie DiBella to All Involved in the building project at El Divino, March 28, 1995; Tim [James] and Belle to Romie and Loyd, May 30, 1996; Nathan Holt to Tim James, November 28, 1995; Agreement between El Divino, and DiBella of the Coffeeshoppe International, March, 1995; Nathan Holt to Romy Sedillo, September 22, 1993; all in EDR Building Project Folder, MMC, CUMC.

18 Interview with Carolyn Bame, June 18, 2003; Carolyn to Romie and Lloyd [no date]; El Noticio, 27 De Junio De 1993; Bame is mentioned frequently in Romie’s Ledger from July, 1992 to August, 1995, all in the Bame Folder, MMC, CUMC.
bathroom fixtures and counseled with Alfredo Salazar on completion of construction. Luevano determined to complete the project by soliciting donations. But tragedy struck. While working around the building site, he stepped on a nail, and because of his diabetic condition, he did not realize that the nail had penetrated his foot. Only later did he attempt to extract the nail. Attempts to combat the infection and restore circulation failed. He and his wife, Josie, returned to their home in Fremont, California, where he attempted to carry on his pastoral duties, admonishing his flock to support the financing of the social hall and to be steadfast in the faith. He was in the hospital numerous times and finally a leg was amputated below the knee. He had to learn to walk with a prosthesis. By January or February 1995, he knew he could not return, but in 1996, he still exhorted his congregation. He died in 1999.19

The task of finding a permanent preacher met many a setback. Undoubtedly, Saul Moreno preserved the life of the church while it searched for an ordained pastor. In the interim between Lopez and Lockwood, Moreno became lay leader and performed many other duties keeping the church running through all its vicissitude. He substituted for a pastor in submitting apportionment and benevolence reports. His unexpected death in July 1992, and of his wife Lisirio (Lilly) in April 1993, was a blow from which the church could not recover. Romie, in her ledger, knew something significant had happened and after recording income and expenses, noted simply, “Saul died, July 6, 1992,” or “Lilly died, April 17, 1993.” In fact, Lilly had been cast adrift by Saul’s death and expressed some surprise that the anglos in the retirement home treated her with respect. She was a lost soul, forced to associate with people not of her own kind.20

Why did the bishop close this church? After all of the special efforts of the Sedillos, the Morenos, Lockwood, Luevano, Lopez, Newton, Holt, Philpott, and many others did the light that shined fail? Did the tragic deaths of Luevano and the Morenos create a vacuum? Did the young people of the Mexican Methodist Church intermarry and find surcease elsewhere? Was the Mexican population assimilating or acculturating and no longer desired a bilingual service? Did the alliance with the International Coffee Shoppe or Neighborhood Church prove impolitic? Had the Mexican Methodist Church served its purpose and no longer needed to exist?


20 Jorge Lockwood to Lisirio, October 5, 1992; Lisirio Moreno to Romie, October 10, October 25, 1992; Monthly Schedule, [n. d.]; [various worksheets and reports], 1984 to 1988: [Moreno?], List of Officeholders, 1985, all in Moreno Folder, MMC, CUMC; [Romie Sedillo], Ledger, Julio, 1992, April, 1993 in MMC, CUMC
As the 21st century dawned, El Divino Redentor ceased to be a Hispanic church. It assumed a different profile, became Anglo, and Neighborhood Church, as it came to be called, never quite flourished. The Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church subsidized La Iglesia Metodista as a temporary measure. Throughout the Southwest, Spanish-speaking pastors ministered to their congregations, but unfortunately, Flagstaff lost its Hispanic ministry.  

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