

This is the text of the church bulletin rededicating the building, August, 1991, the church's centennial year.:

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Today's 10:30 morning worship service was conducted by visiting pastor Dr. Alfred L. Spotts, who contributed generously to the Centennial Celebration program. Special thanks to the 61 volunteers who gave their time and services to make this Centennial Celebration such a happy event. Thanks, also, to Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, who sent his congratulations to the Rico Community Church in a letter this week.

### THE CENTENNIAL CROSS

Our sanctuary cross, dedicated during the Centennial Celebration service by the Rev. Robert H. Kearns, measures 8 feet high and 6 feet across. Wood for the cross was fashioned from timbers brought to this area by the Rico-Argentine Mining Company. When artisan Gene Folsom completed crafting the Oregon fir into the cross, it was so perfectly created and balanced that nothing was needed to hold the cross piece in place. Further, the cross stood upright on its own even though the bottom was smaller than a typical adult's foot! Material for the mine cart railing cross superimposed over the wood cross was donated by Wayne and Maxine Webster. The railing was earlier used in a mine near Rico's Silver Creek, which flows by the church just to the north.

The Centennial Cross was designed and funded by Paul and Murlene Moore.

### THE PEOPLE'S CHURCH OF RICO

The Church of Rico has always been a true Community Church. Throughout these 100 years, through the ups and downs of the mining community, it has stood as a house of worship and a building of importance to the citizens of this area.

This church was first called the People's Church of Rico, Colorado. It was built in 1890 at a cost of \$4,000 through donations of money and work by the people of the town.

At this time, Rico was a boom town. It had over 500 operating mines of silver, gold and other ores. The town boasted of banks, newspaper, doctors, lawyers, various kinds of stores, a public school, dance hall, cemetery, hotels and many saloons. However, in this thriving, bustling community there was no organized church, although many people had expressed a need for one.

A Ladies' Church Building Association was formed. A group of teen-age girls went "from hut to hut and tent to tent" obtaining donations of money and promises of time and labor to help build. Land for the building was donated -- 3 lots on the corner of Mantz Avenue and Silver Street. Work went on through 1890 and the building was completed in January of 1891. The bell was purchased and installed later that same year. On Monday evening, Feb. 16, 1891, in the midst of a heavy snowstorm, a service was held for the ordination of a new young minister, Seldon C. Dickinson. He was a Congregational trainee from Oberlin, Ohio. He was also unmarried, which fact gave the newspaper opportunity for several humorous articles during his first weeks here. The Rico Democrat of Feb. 20, 1891, reported at length on the ordination service. "The heavy

snow that fell did not deter the people from attending the ordination ceremony...at the People's Church, and by 8 o'clock that beautiful structure was filled by the people of Rico, who take a just pride in the long looked-for consummation of their desire to see such a building erected."

On the following evening, the building was again filled to capacity for the dedication of the edifice, this ceremony again being reported in great detail. Almost every issue of the newspaper during the next few years contained items about the church, activities therein or the minister. There were Sunday school classes, Sunday services, weddings, funerals, concert, Bible schools, special meetings and activities. Since that time, this building has been in use for the same purposes.

In April, 1891, trustees of the People's Church deeded the "lands and premises" to a group acting as trustees for the People's Congregational Church of the Town of Rico. Throughout the next 40 or 50 years, the church had, at times, resident ministers. At other times, due to the economy and national situations, the congregation shared ministers with churches in other towns, or called in supply preachers.

During the summer of 1944, a Bible school was conducted by a S.S. missionary of Grand Junction and a pastor of the Glenwood Springs Presbyterian Church. That fall, a petition signed by 21 Rico people was presented to the Presbytery asking to organize a church body known as the Presbyterian Church of Rico. This was perfected in 1945 with 11 charter members. In 1958, a quit-claim deed for the church was conveyed by the Colorado Congregational Conference to the Presbytery of Pueblo. In 1986, the deed was transferred to the Presbytery of Western Colorado. Again the church was served by resident or supply ministers, until 1970. In that year, the Rev. Carl Dickson, pastor at Towaoc, began coming to Rico each Sunday afternoon at 3, For almost 12 years he served faithfully, winter and summer. Many times, only three remaining members of the church were present.

After Rev. Dickson moved to Idaho, a few interested people kept the church services going from June to October. Most of the congregation was made up of summer residents, tourists and campers. When visiting pastors were in the area, they would bring messages. At all times, the people arranged their own meetings, led devotions, had song services, scripture readings, discussion and prayer.

The local Presbyterian Church organization was dissolved in 1984. That same year, the building was advertised for sale. In Rico, a community meeting was held. Over 100 people showed interest. Letters were written. Telephone calls were made. Donations were accepted to aid in the attempt to keep the church for Rico. In 1989, the Western Colorado Presbytery Board decided not to sell the building. In October, they established a capital improvement fund and planned services for the summer through Labor Day. Christmas of 1990, a candlelight service was held: the temperature inside the church was 28 degrees! Again, on Easter, 1991, the church was open.

Throughout 1990, work was in progress and is continuing. The church has been cleaned, pews set, concrete porch and steps replaced, ramp added, all by local volunteers. Professional roofers put on a new blue roof. The exterior, including the bell tower, has been painted by Dan Crane, with the help of Ken Hazen. Plans are in progress for complete electrical rewiring and the

installation of a floor furnace. Everything is to be restored to the original appearance as far as possible.

The People's Church is still the people's church. The work is ongoing. We of Rico are thankful to the Lord for his providence, and to all the individuals and groups involved, too many to enumerate here. Whatever the church is called by name, we hope that it is really God's church, and that it will always be available for use to anyone and everyone who loves the Lord.

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