

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
312 South Oleander Avenue ✕ Compton, California
Centennial Celebration, 1925-2025

LIFT EVERY VOICE and SING – 1925

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, in Compton California, enjoys a rich history of community service that began in 1925. As we celebrate the centennial (1925-2025) of this small spiritual community, what remains consistent, and at the center of this journey, is a legacy of love. This legacy began simply with eight individuals. These eight souls, with modest resources, gathered to make a positive difference in a small farming community on the outskirts of Los Angeles, California.

In 1925, the Diocese of Los Angeles, founded 1895, was only 30 years old. The City of Compton, established 1888, was only 37 years old. This is the environment in which eight souls gathered, for Worship, Prayer, and Christian Education and Formation in Christ, in a small store at the corner of Compton Boulevard and Willow Street.

The Rev. Canon R. Renison, General Missionary of the Diocese of Los Angeles, led the first service of Holy Communion on Wednesday, 25 March 1925. This was followed by weekly services, offered primarily by lay readers. The focus of this early community was threefold; **CHRISTIAN FORMATION, COMMUNAL PRAYER, and COMMUNITY SERVICE**. This three-fold work of ministering is how St. Timothy's began. Honoring this legacy of love and service has continued throughout the various iterations of this spiritual community. The beauty of this legacy and mission is captured in the hymn that invites all to *Lift Every Voice and Sing*.

***GOD OF OUR WEARY YEARS,
GOD OF OUR SILENT TEARS***

THE GREAT DEPRESSION and an EARTHQUAKE – 1929 and Beyond

St. Timothy's forged ahead in the later part of the 1920's. On Sunday, 28 January 1928, The Right Reverend William Betrand Stevens, Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles, held the first service of Confirmation for this young community. As St. Timothy's solidified its presence in Compton, it also became a symbol of hope and compassionate service in the midst of the stock market crash of October 1929.

The 1929 stock market crash began the period known as The Great Depression. During this period, St. Timothy's provided a space for members of this farming community to gather, organize, and support one another with available resources.

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
I Corinthians 13:4-5*

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The Great Depression period was still underway when in 1933 the Long Beach Earthquake claimed the lives of 17 citizens of Compton. This earthquake also caused the destruction of homes, school buildings, and some of Compton's earliest structures. St. Timothy's continued to serve in the midst of these challenges as the City of Compton rebuilt and recovered from this earthquake. St. Timothy's commitment to the community of Compton was further documented when its new church building was dedicated on Easter Sunday, 28 March 1937.

EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

The years immediately following World War II (1945) were a prosperous time for middle-class Americans who benefited from a robust post-war economy. Various programs, including the G.I. Bill, improved the life of many citizens. Also, during this period, the Great Migration of African Americans from the South into Northern Urban Cities was felt by St. Timothy's. In the early 1950's, St. Timothy's was a predominantly White community. At the close of the 1960's St. Timothy's was an almost entirely African American congregation. In 1962, St. Timothy's Episcopal Day School was birthed and reenvisioned from the initial parish day school that began in 1956. This school began modestly with classes for pre-school through the sixth grade. Instruction eventually expanded for students from pre-school to the eighth grade.

In a Los Angeles Times article entitled, ***Spirited School in a Troubled Town Clings to Life*** (Martha Groves, 24 November 2000), St. Timothy's Episcopal Day School was honored for its fortitude in the midst of local challenges,

Carol Hall said St. Timothy's (Episcopal Day School) has helped correct behavioral problems that the girls exhibited after years in foster care.

The combined work of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church and St. Timothy's Episcopal Day School launched individuals who've gone on to earn degrees in higher education from celebrated institutions. These institutions include, the University of Southern California, Princeton University, Harvard University, and a host of other notable sites of higher learning. Most importantly, St. Timothy's, church and school, sent their students forward formed by the ideals of following the example of compassionate and loving service exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ. St. Timothy's is honored by former students who return to witness to how their Christian education and formation at St. Timothy's Day School grounded their character in a positive manner.

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The St. Timothy's Episcopal Day School became inactive with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (March 2020 – May 2023). St. Timothy's Episcopal Day School currently remains inactive, as of 2025. St. Timothy's Episcopal Church presently provides space for a thriving Head Start Program, known as Crystal Stairs, Inc, that began in 2016 < <https://www.crystalstairs.org/about-us/> >.

RIOT. REBELLION. UPRISING.

St. Timothy's Church, and its Episcopal Day School, survived and served during times of peace as well as challenging moments in its history. During the Watts Riots of 1965, and the South-Central Uprising of 1992, St. Timothy's provided tangible support to the community. For example, during the 1992 Uprising,

*We had a short service, and we started cooking, says Germaine Love, describing her Compton parish Sunday morning, May 3 [1992]. Love is altar guild director at St. Timothy's Church and office manager for the adjoining St. Timothy's School. St. Timothy's Tower and Manor, a parish-sponsored senior housing facility across the street [from St. Timothy's Church], had lost food during a two-and-a-half-day power outage suffered by the neighborhood. Following the service, the women and men of the primarily Black parish brought the Tower and Manor's 132 residents a hot dinner. Later, a parishioner on the faculty of Compton College arranged for a college van to help the residents of the Tower and Manor shop and bank, since nearby stores were closed (see *Parishes Lived Through Violence, Now Cope With Aftermath*, by Lucy V. Parker | 15 May 1992 | The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, News).*

Alongside dramatic moments in its history – known as riots, rebellions, and uprisings – St. Timothy's maintains a powerful, positive, and supportive presence in the mundane lives of those seeking a better life. The power of this ministry of presence is often nothing fancy and hard to document. Nevertheless, the greatest moments are often found in the basic work of ministering through a compassionate presence.

The compassionate presence of St. Timothy's is exemplified through its offering of food to families in need, providing resources to connect people with jobs, and offering a pastoral presence in the lives of those we serve. The media will readily document bad choices. What often goes undocumented is the daily work of supporting the lives of others. St. Timothy's is honored to witness the return of those who've shared how the presence of this small community has aided their journey in making better choices.

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LET US MARCH ON, TILL VICTORY IS WON

IN SPIRIT and TRUTH – Beyond demographics, riots, rebellions, and uprisings, St. Timothy's remains an enduring and positive presence in Compton, California. Honoring the lives of young and old alike remains at the center of its mission.

In 2025, St. Timothy's continues to offer loving service by supporting early childhood development through the **Crystal Stairs Head Start program** that daily breathes new life into its church property. It honors the physical hunger of the surrounding community through its monthly **Free Food Distribution** program. It honors the elderly through 135 apartment units at **St. Timothy's Tower and Manor**. It honors those suffering from addiction through its partnership with **Cocaine Anonymous**. It addresses the specific joys and challenges of the lives of individuals and families through **Pastoral Care, Biblical Studies, Contemplative Prayer, and ongoing Worship**.

St. Timothy's can document tangible works of love that feed bodies and offers physical space for rest and renewal. The more subtle forms of positive transformation in the lives of others is not as easy to document as food distribution. Both the visible and more subtle forms of affirming the lives of others remains at the heart of its mission. The work of ministering to others is what motivated the eight souls that began St. Timothy's. Formation in Christ honors their seminal efforts as this work of ministry continues.

New ventures in **Contemplative Prayer and Centering Meditation**, at St. Timothy's Church and St. Timothy's Tower and Manor, stand as a testament to the power of positive spiritual formation. Positive spiritual formation promotes the importance of our shared humanity. A sense of shared humanity is particularly important as artificial intelligence emerges to define this age.

In the midst of the perils and promise of artificial intelligence, St. Timothy's honors **Perennial Wisdom and Divine Love**. This congregation continues to worship and offer spiritual formation online and in person in the Post Covid-19 world. As a result, St. Timothy's has grown – numerically and spiritually – and now includes individuals and families from Northern California, Southern States, as well as Homebound Locals who've found new life in an ongoing connection with others through digital technology. After one hundred years of ministering in the City of Compton, California, it's into this brave new world that we ***March on Till Victory is Won***.

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A FEW SIGNIFICANT DATES

- 1925 INITIAL ORGANIZATION** of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church took place in a small store at Compton Boulevard and Willow Street and later in the local Masonic Hall. The Rev. Canon Renison, General Missionary, Diocese of Los Angeles, held the first service of Holy Communion on 25 March 1925. On 12 September 1925, A.J. Mockford was licensed as the first Lay Reader-In-Charge. He traveled from Long Beach each Sunday, rain or shine, in his old Model T Ford, to facilitate the gathering for worship, instruction, and spiritual formation of the initial eight souls that comprised this community.
- 1926 CHURCH PROPERTY ACQUIRED** – In 1926, the current site of the church property was acquired at the corner of Oleander and Laurel in Compton, California. In March 1926, The Rev. F.E. Anthony celebrated the first liturgy of Holy Communion in the new building. Twenty-Four received the Blessed Sacrament.
- Virginia Pearl White was the first baptism on Easter Sunday, 4 April 1926. This Easter Sunday, in 1926, also saw the dedication of the new church community, of the people of St. Timothy's, by the Right Reverend W.B. Stereus, Bishop-Coadjutor of the Diocese of Los Angeles, California. Sixty-Five persons attended. During these early years, Lay Ministers conducted Morning Prayer, and local clergy offered a monthly liturgy of Holy Communion.
- 1928 FIRST CONFIRMATION** – The first Sacrament of Confirmation was offered through St. Timothy's Episcopal Church on Sunday, 29 January 1928. The Right Reverend William Bertrand Stevens, Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles, presided at this liturgy.
- 1937 NEW CHURCH BUILDING DEDICATED** – On Easter Sunday, 28 March 1937, the new church building was dedicated by The Right Reverend William Stevens. In 1938, The Right Reverend Robert Burton Gooden dedicated the completed building and the new stained-glass windows, depicting Saint Paul and Saint Timothy.
- 1953 PARISH HALL** – The Bishop's Committee authorized the building of a Sunday School Room. This room later expanded into a Perez Parish Hall, dedicated on Thursday, 21 May 1953. The current parish hall, expanded and improved, is dedicated to the Right Reverend Chester Talton, Suffragan Bishop of Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles (1991-2010).
- 1954 PARISH STATUS GRANTED – ST. TIMOTHY'S MISSION** was admitted to parish status on Wednesday, 27 January 1954. This recognition took place at the Annual Diocesan Convention held at St. Paul's Cathedral in Echo Park, California.
- 1956 ST. TIMOTHY'S PARISH SCHOOL** opens its doors to sixteen students in September 1956. This small student body preceded St. Timothy's Episcopal Day School.

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- 1962 ST. TIMOTHY'S EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL** remains the only African American Episcopal Day School west of the Mississippi. The school grew to serve pre-school through eighth grade. As the demand dwindled, it offered pre-school education only. This school became inactive with the 2020 arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020 – May 2023).
- 1965 ST TIMOTHY'S MANOR** opened its doors to a 21-unit senior housing facility. The United States Department of Urban Development (HUD) funded this facility. This facility was later expanded to include a 114-unit Tower Apartment facility, for a combined total of 135 units.
- 1971 ST. TIMOTHY'S TOWER and MANOR** was dedicated in 1971. This was the tallest structure in Compton until the building of the 13-story Compton Courthouse, in 1977.
- 1998 FREE FOOD DISTRIBUTION MINISTRY** – Our monthly free food distribution offers groceries, to individuals and families, to alleviate food insecurity and raise awareness of hunger, both locally and globally. The importance of this ministry cannot be captured in words.
- 2009 TALTON PARISH HALL DEDICATED** in honor of the 18-year tenure of the first African American Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles, **The Right Reverend Chester Lovelle Talton** (Suffragan Bishop, Diocese of Los Angeles, 1991-2010).
- 2009 LIBERIAN PRESIDENT VISITATION** – Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, visits St. Timothy's Episcopal Church and encouraged students to pursue their dreams.
- 2016 CRYSTAL STAIRS HEAD START PROGRAM** – St. Timothy's is honored to host this national program that provides grade school readiness. Crystal Stairs reflects the mission of St. Timothy's < <https://www.crystalstairs.org/parents-families/crystal-stairs-head-start-program/> >.
- 2022 COCAINE ANONYMOUS** meetings, known as *Beyond the Courthouse*, begins in St. Timothy's Talton Parish Hall < <https://ca4la.org/meetings/?meeting=beyond-the-courthouse> >.
- 2024 COMPTON LEGACY ACADEMY** begins operation in St. Timothy's Old School House. It supports low-income families with early childhood education < <https://www.legacykids.org> >.
- 2025 ONLINE and IN-PERSON SPIRITUAL FORMATION and WORSHIP**
The COVID-19 Pandemic (March 2020 – May 2023) introduced online ministry. In the post-pandemic era, services continue online and in-person. St. Timothy's grew in numbers during the COVID-19 Pandemic as it expanded its outreach locally and out-of-state. Sunday and weekday offerings for Worship and Christian Formation take place both online and in-person.

Lift Every Voice and Sing. Lyrics: James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938). Music: J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954). Excerpts from this hymn are used to frame the segments of this brief history of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Compton, California. This hymn honors eternal vigilance in the movement from slavery – in all forms – to freedom. Like the biblical journey, from the Exodus to the Promised Land, this hymn honors the challenges and resilience of persons in their individual and collective journey to true liberation.

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Lift Every Voice and Sing

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

Lift every voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might, Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

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