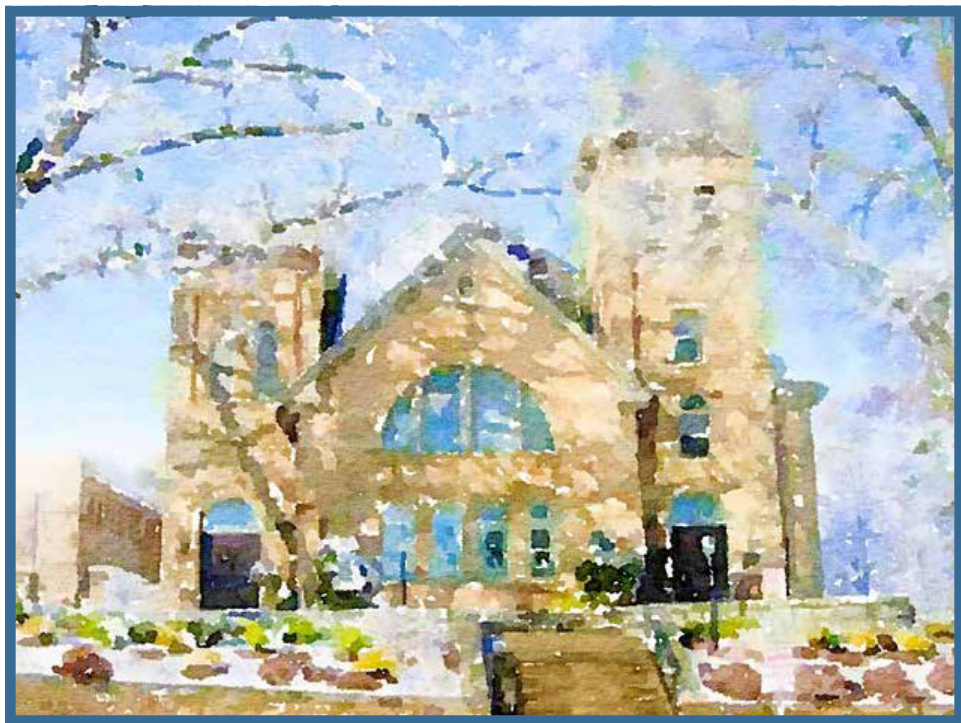


FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
HICKORY.NC



Growing Our Heritage

Church History

1973 – 2023

Growing our Heritage

First Presbyterian Church

Hickory, North Carolina

The Last 50 Years
1973 - 2023

Amelia McComb Stafford
2023

First Presbyterian Mission Statement

We, the First Presbyterian Church of Hickory, NC, affirm that we are disciples of Jesus Christ, sinners saved by the grace of God. We seek to glorify God and grow in faith through our worship, study, service, and witness. Led by the Spirit, we strive to be obedient to God's Word as we reach out to each other, community, and the world.

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Church History 1973 – 2023

Growing Our Heritage The Last 50 Years

Hickory's First Presbyterian Church is celebrating 150 years of service to God, its members, and this community. While doing God's work, the church and its members have also been able to reach out to those living in other countries. Although the church began in 1873 as a small mission church in the village of Hickory Station, it is now a church in the heart of the downtown city of Hickory, North Carolina. Through the years, much has changed at the church, in the community, and in our world.

The history of the church is documented in four historical sketches, starting with the publication, *History of First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, NC 1873 - 1923*, written by Dr. W. B. Ramsay, Clerk of the Session. It was followed by another history, *Historical Sketch of First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, NC*. This one was also written by a Clerk of the Session, Josiah J. Willard, and was published in 1949.

During First Presbyterian's Centennial year, Margaret Abernethy Smith (Mrs. Edmond Smith) and Gerald B. Hurst completed a book denoting our first 100 years (1873 – 1973). Finally, our latest history, which covered 140 years of our church history was written by Amelia McComb Stafford and Susie Gray Abercrombie.

It is now time to celebrate First Presbyterian's sesquicentennial anniversary. Without telling the story of the first 100 years, this historical sketch will begin in 1973 and focus on the last 50 years of our church's history.

We have been blessed with a rich heritage and many wonderful ministers, members, and strong leaders. This is our story.....



JOSEPH WHITNER KENNEDY
1964 - 1976

In 1973, the Rev. Dr. J. Whitner (Whit) Kennedy was our minister. The church's first associate minister, Rev. Day Carper (former missionary to the Congo), also served the church. At that time we had 867 members.

Our church's ministers and members were increasingly becoming concerned about the struggles occurring locally and throughout the world.

The nation had three Presidents during Whit Kennedy's service to FPC. Richard Nixon was President until August 9, 1974, when he resigned as a result of the Watergate Scandal. He was followed by Gerald Ford (1974 – 1977) and then Jimmy Carter (1977 – 1981). Our country's involvement in Vietnam ended in 1975. Women's rights came to the forefront with the passing of Roe v. Wade in 1973 and civil rights was an ongoing concern.

During these difficult times, First Presbyterian celebrated its Centennial Anniversary. In 1973, at this Centennial celebration, Margaret Smith, our church historian, presented an account of the church's 100 years of history. There was much to celebrate and the church looked to a future of change and challenges as we moved toward additional efforts to follow our Christian faith and service to others.

While our nation experienced a time of many controversies, our church chose to increase its involvement in service to others in the 70s and 80s. Of special note, the church helped organize and support the Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Ministry (GHCCM), which serves local people who are seeking financial and medical help. Rev. Kennedy became its first president and we continue to support this organization. Under the direction of Catawba County Family Mental Health, the church opened its doors to another helping agency by housing a day care center for adults in 1975.



Camp Grier retreat

Our church's first family retreat began in 1973 when members gathered for a weekend of spiritual growth and enjoyable activities at Camp Grier, in Old Fort, NC. We continued these family retreats for many years and, later, relocated them to Montreat as well as locally providing retreats at our church.

Rev. Kennedy taught a young adult Sunday school class called “The Swingers.” Of interest, while the group attended a dinner theater in Charlotte, they were introduced as the “Swingers” from First Presbyterian Church in Hickory, N.C. Concerned about the church’s “Swingers” group resulted in a local citizen calling our minister about our church having a group called the “Swingers.” Margaret Ann Campbell stated, “We were lucky that no one made us change our name.” Many of these in this group of Rev Kennedy’s class are and have been church leaders throughout the years.

In 1976, Rev. Kennedy accepted a call to a church in Waynesboro, Virginia and, in 1979, our associate pastor, Rev. Day Carper retired. In 1977, the Rev. Dr. David W. McKee accepted a call to our church and soon afterward, in 1979, the Rev. Dr. Robert (Bob) W. Ratchford joined him. Although Bob Ratchford began as an associate, soon both pastors were accepted as co-pastors.



Ronald Reagan was President for most of the 80s (1981 – 1989). The Space Shuttle Challenger disaster and the Chernobyl disaster occurred (1986). Tiananmen Square Massacre and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) made us aware of the gift of freedom in our own country. Sandra Day O’Connor became the first woman U.S. Supreme Court Justice (1981). The US attacked Iran in the largest naval combat operation since World War II (1988) in retaliation for the mining of the ship, USS Samuel B. Roberts in the Persian Gulf.

Continuing to open up our church to other helping agencies, in 1982 First Presbyterian helped establish a community hospice ministry by housing the group in our old education building. Hospice later moved to the Willard House, which was owned by the church.

This agency was one of the first hospices in the state and was one of three North Carolina hospices which was chartered in 1979. Now, Hospice of Catawba County has located to its own facility on Robinson Road. Also during this time, First Presbyterian initially provided a winter shelter for the homeless. Later, it financially supported the building of the Salvation Army Shelter for our homeless community neighbors.

Another agency began in our church kitchen in March of 1983 when lay leaders from six downtown churches, led by Mary Lou Dixon (FPC member), began serving a meal to hungry people from our city. This was the beginning of the Hickory Soup Kitchen. The six churches rotated on a monthly basis following our church’s initiation of the project.

Telling about this first day (1983) of the Soup Kitchen, Susie Abercrombie provided this story from our 140th year church history book: “Mary Lou Dixon, Susan Ratchford, wife of the Rev. Ratchford, and Susie Abercrombie were in the church kitchen as they prepared hot dogs and beans for the meal.”



Hickory Soup Kitchen

Continuing the story, Susie said, “About 12 noon, Ada Mae Belk came running in the door with a pot of white beans that absolutely refused to soften while cooking all morning. The beans had been donated and must have been ancient. Ada Mae was all aflutter saying she couldn’t stay and cook them any longer....I can hear her now: ‘Henry is home sick, and I got to go!’ And out she went as fast as she flew in.”

Susie Abercrombie added to the story, “Bob Ratchford went uptown to find some hungry people and brought back two men. One seemed happy with the meal, but the other one, who had no teeth, kept saying over and over, ‘Lady, these beans ain’t done!’ After a month, the soup kitchen rotated to other downtown churches until a permanent location was found.”

As our downtown church began to realize more and more the need to communicate with other churches and racial groups, we began the Downtown Pulpit Exchange in 1981. This exchange involved both predominately white and black churches.

An important historic event occurred in 1983 with the reunification of the Presbyterian Church US (Southern) and the United Presbyterian Church USA (often referred to as the Northern Presbyterian Church) into the Presbyterian Church USA. The two groups had been divided since the Civil War. As a result of this reunification, our church became incorporated in 1984. With the help of Charles Dixon, Attorney at Law and church elder, FPC incorporated as required by Book of Order – Section G-7.041. This was done to facilitate the transfer of property.

From the significant donations of the Josiah Willard estate and Dr. Cecilia Willard estate, the church established “The Willard Chair.” Since our church has greatly benefited from the contributions of the Willard family, it is important to know how the blessings of the Willard Funds came about.

This family had been an important part of our church since the early 1920s. Josiah J. Willard held many church offices, including Clerk of the Session. He wrote our second church history, published in 1949. In 1943, Josiah Willard

also wrote a hymn, “For Those Who Fly,” dedicated to our military fliers during World War II. In 1943, Mr. Willard moved to Maryland due to his wife’s ill health and to be closer to family members. However, he remained very attached to our church. He was so respected that members of the church refused to accept his resignation of his church office and a “temporary clerk” was appointed until 1947.

After his death in 1970, significant monetary funds were gifted to FPC through his will. His daughter, Dr. Cecilia Willard, who grew up in our church and who became a microbiologist and professor at the University of Texas Medical School in Galveston, also made FPC a beneficiary of a large financial gift in her will. After her death in 1987, her monetary gifts through “The Cecilia Willard Helping Fund” provided financial resources to a number of agencies and particularly to our church. Her contribution to FPC enabled the church to purchase the house, known as “The Willard House,” located on 3rd Ave. NW. (It was rented for a number of years but has since been torn down.)

With the Willards’ large financial contributions, the church purchased two vans and established “The Willard Chair” in their honor. In 1989, the Christian Education Committee requested \$25,000 of the Willard donation be set aside and the interest from this money be used to finance programs, designated as “The Willard Chair.” This special fund provides the means for our church to invite outstanding ministers, theologians or other inspirational individuals to present a weekend of faith-related messages.

Of significance, our church was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

*First Presbyterian Church -
National Register of Historic Places*



FPC supported the purchase by our presbytery of the formerly Gethsemane Baptist Church property on 3rd Avenue, NE for the Korean Fellowship (1986). The church was renamed “Immanuel.”

Sadly, Belk Memorial Presbyterian Church, which First Presbyterian helped organize in the 1940s, dissolved (1987). The remaining members were able to move their membership to our church.

A celebration of “100 Years of Women’s Work” (1887 – 1987) emphasized the immense contribution of women in our church. For this event, the women and Dr. McKee dressed in clothing depicting the various decades of the 100 years, while telling the story of women’s church work. Our women’s circle groups continue to meet monthly for Bible study and provide bereavement meals, items for Salvation Army Christmas stockings, food collections, toiletries for the Battered Women’s Shelter and Salvation Army as well as other services and needed donations.

Mary Ayers Campbell, a church elder, became the first female commissioned from our church to be chosen to represent Concord Presbytery at the General Assembly (1980). Nancy Thomason, another member from our organization of FPC’s Presbyterian Woman, was elected Clerk of Session in 1988. She was the first woman to serve in that position. Women had definitely entered leadership roles that had previously been held only by men church members.



Madeliene Bibee

Longtime employee at First Presbyterian, Madeliene Bibee retired in 1986 after 25 years at our church. She had initiated the church kindergarten program in the 60s and had been the church educator and administrative assistant.

In 1987, Bob Ratchford accepted a call to First Presbyterian Church in Kinston, NC. Soon afterwards, in 1988, David McKee dissolved his pastorate with our church. During this time, the **Rev. Dr. Maynard Fountain** became the interim pastor and was later joined by **Rev. Kirk Allen** as an interim pastor. After Rev. Fountain’s term of service, **Rev. Walter Styles** became an interim pastor to work with Rev. Allen.

In 1988, Concord Presbytery became **Presbytery of Western North Carolina**.



Freida Caldwell

Another longtime employee at First Presbyterian is Freida Caldwell. She began in 1989 as the Interim Church Educator.

Throughout the years, Freida Caldwell made significant contributions to the service of our church. She served as the Director of Christian Education until 2012.

She helped develop children's ministry by coordinating the church's preschool program as well as other children's programs such as the LOGOS and Wednesday Alive programs.

In 1989, Freida helped organize the first senior high mission trip to Mexico and continued to plan and go on many other mission trips. Our young people fondly remember these mission trips that Freida led and her involvement with our church youth groups. Freida worked as a volunteer and was on the staff for nearly 40 years. Our new playground is dedicated to her.



Freida Caldwell Playground



Computers were first provided in our church office in 1988. At that time, the church roll was updated and 227 people were put on the inactive roll. For that reason, the church membership number was reduced to 782 from the previous membership of 1005 at the end of 1987.

In late 1989, the Rev. Dr. G. Wallace Johnson was installed as our pastor. During this transition time, Rev. Walter Styles continued as an interim pastor for several months until, in early 1990, Rev. Fred Barnes became the church's interim associate minister. Children's church began for K-5 in 1990.



Our first Willard Chair speaker was Rev. Joan Salmon-Campbell, retiring Moderator of our General Assembly. As Wallace Johnson recalls, "Rev. Salmon-Campbell encouraged the worshipers to clap, sing, and sway, and lift their hands to the heavens" in the tradition of "her African-American style." This was a joyous, but different worship service for the "reserved" Presbyterians!

Another Willard Chair presenter was Dean K. Thompson, who was the retired President and Professor of Ministry Emeritus, at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. During his seminary years, one of his internships was at First Presbyterian in Hickory. He presented lectures and discussions related to his book, *Profiles in Prophetic Leadership*. Recently, the Willard Chair provided a concert of The Stephen Lynerd Group, with a faith message while blending sacred and classical music using the vibraphone, piano, bass, and drums.

As mentioned previously, in 1989, the church youth went on the first senior high mission trip to Mexico. Freida Caldwell was instrumental in organizing and leading many trips that were taken to Mexico in the following years. The youth groups have participated in mission trips both inside and outside the states.



2023 high school mission trip

As Melvin Meares stated, "Freida Caldwell (Christian Educator) and Lucy Turner (Associate Pastor) were the force behind building enthusiasm and the initial organization of trips. The Session, recognizing the importance of this type of opportunity to serve for youth and adults, committed substantial funding through the budget to support up to 50% of the cost for these trips with the balance provided by the participants. Over the course of time the mission trip opportunities have expanded to include opportunities for Adult, Medical, College, Sr. High, Jr. High, Weekend and Family." (See Melvin Meares' records and information concerning our church's various mission trips throughout the years.)



2023 middle school mission trip

Bill Clinton became our President (1993 – 2001). Advances in technology allowed the development of the World Wide Web and in 1993, it became available to the public. The fall of the Soviet Union occurred in 1991 as the USSR dissolved. The Gulf War erupted in 1990. Our country was in unrest. The Los Angeles riots, bombing in Oklahoma City, the school shooting at Columbine, and the truck bombing at the World Trade Center occurred.

As we entered a new decade in 1991, the office of deacon was eliminated when the church changed to a unicameral form of government. Also, in May of 1991,



Rev. Lucy Turner was called as the first woman associate pastor. She was particularly involved in organizing many mission trips and began the Women's Retreat.

Along with Freida Caldwell, Lucy Turner worked to begin our yearly Montreat and local congregational retreats. Our first Montreat Retreat was held on February 6 – 8, 1998. Since FPC was committed to local outreach, the pastors initially were seeing people who needed financial assistance. Lucy was able to put together the Good Samaritan Committee, whose volunteers meet with

people in need on a weekly basis. Still today, this Good Samaritan Fund is provided by the church with donations outside of the church budget. The volunteers do the interviews and determine amounts to help individuals who live in Catawba County with their rent, electrical, and water bills along with gas vouchers and bus tickets.



Montreat Retreats



Wallace Johnson recalls the church mission to help all people of our community. He pointed out, "One of the unique ministries to which the church contributed was ALFA (Aids Leadership Foothills Alliance). In 1991 this organization began its work. This congregation was the first in Hickory to provide support for this new and controversial ministry for people with AIDS. In the Session discussion about this new ministry, elders committed funds (which continued in the church budget for years) and helped renovate office space for ALFA."



Church membership was growing quickly, and by January 10, 1992, our church had 895 active members. Later, at the end of 1992, membership rose to 902. Membership continued to rise and, in 1999, there were 935 members.

Fifth Sunday Christian Fellowship began in 1993. This fellowship involved predominately black churches and predominately white churches. These churches included First Presbyterian, First United Methodist, Clinton Tabernacle AME Zion, and Hartzell Memorial United Methodist. Attendees were able to worship and have fellowship as they ate a covered dish supper.

After a number of years without a church weekday preschool program for our younger church children, Jennifer Nelson discussed the need for a preschool program with Freida Caldwell. Freida had been researching the possibilities of such a program and a committee was formed involving Sharon Meares, Diane Gammon, and Christy Taylor.

After obtaining information on other programs in our community, the committee decided a preschool program would fit the needs of the church. Beth Dilworth, who had been the preschool director at First Baptist Church, was eventually hired as FPC Preschool's Director. This program opened in the fall of 1995.

Babies six months through two years attended Monday – Friday, three year old preschoolers attended Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and four year old preschoolers came on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. The hours were 9am – 12am. An optional hour until 1 pm was also offered. This was the beginning of our current preschool program. Many young couples have been attracted to our church through this preschool program and our other children's programs. Now, Sarah White is our preschool director.



Sarah White & pre-schooler

As our church's membership significantly increased, we needed more space and improvements. To make room for a new fellowship hall, the Belk House (once the manse) was torn down. Located next to the former educational building/ parking lot, this Victorian home had not only been used as a home for pastors, but had later been used for numerous programs and organizations throughout



New Fellowship Hall Dining & Worship



the years. The new fellowship hall was completed in 1998 and along with renovations to the sanctuary and existing church buildings, our church facilities not only provided a center for church programs but also many community activities. The old fellowship hall was renovated as the Youth Center (now the Senior High Room).

We began a new century and many more changes occurred. After Lucy Turner accepted a call to another church in 2000, **Rev. Paul Kercher**, **Rev. Cecil Jivilen**, and **Rev. Mark Clark** served as interim pastors through 2002, until **Rev. Deborah McEachran** joined our staff as Associate Minister. During this time (2001), a columbarium and memorial garden were built adjacent to the sanctuary.

George W. Bush became President (2001 – 2009). The terrorist attack in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania killed 2,977 people. In 2003, America captured Iraq's deposed president Saddam Hussein. A devastating disaster of Hurricane Katrina in 2009 opened our eyes to our vulnerability to natural disasters. The war in Afghanistan began in 2001 and lasted twenty years. The nation's first African American President, President Barack Obama, became our nation's President in 2009 and won the next election for his second term.

The **Rev. Hayes Noble** (2002 – 2003) joined our church staff in 2002 as an associate pastor for youth. He was ordained while serving our church.



Rev. Deborah McEachran (2002 – 2011) joined our church as an associate minister. She was very involved with mission trips and outreach.

Since she was bi-lingual, she helped with the organization of Centro Latino which provided assistance to Spanish speaking citizens.

When asked about FPC's involvement with our Latino/Latina neighbors, Deborah stated ".... FPC was really a key player in Presbyterian outreach to the Latino neighbors in Hickory." She noted at the time she first came to our church, "Centro Latino was in its infancy." Looking back, she said, "One of my most profound memories was when FPC was able to host a large immigration clinic for Latinos on a Saturday." She continued, ".....we mobilized and were able to

host representatives from the Mexican consulate who were coming in to help process paperwork, provide the equivalent of social security cards, etc."

Deborah noted that various members of FPC were involved in numerous ways with our Latino neighbors by providing Bilingual Vacation Bible School, teaching English, serving as members of the Centro Latino Board (Jay Crane), and as volunteer drivers to pick up Latino students from Grandview to attend the after-school program at Centro Latino. And church members were supportive of the formation of the newly formed Latino congregation of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church located on 3rd Avenue, NE, formerly the Korean Presbyterian Church.

Deborah started a timeline denoting church history and events. Sally Robinson designed, added world history to it, and had this timeline professionally printed so that others could add information. The printed timeline was displayed at the 140th Celebration and Homecoming.

Deborah led Hunger Banquets served at several Wednesday Night Suppers at the church. Three different meals were served and were designed to represent examples of meals which were affordable for certain economic groups: "fine dining" meals for "wealthier" people, "middle class" meals, and lastly a "bag supper" for the "lower economic" group. The attendees, including some homeless people, were randomly divided by drawing a ticket indicating the meal they would eat. Discussions after the meal helped the groups better understand what others experience.

During these years, **Stephen Ministry**, providing supportive and confidential care, was formed with the leadership of Kelly Fulcher. As Sharon Turner stated, this organization "....offers a proven and effective way to organize, equip, and supervise a team of congregation members..." She added, "In January 2005, Rev. Wallace Johnson and Kelly Fulcher traveled to Orlando to participate in the Leaders' Training." After returning, our church began to train leaders and others to be Stephen Ministers to make available Christ-centered compassionate support to our members and others who are experiencing difficult times.

In October 2004, the church held inter-faith meetings with Muslims and Christians. This allowed both groups to interact and provided more understanding between faiths. Also, a day shelter for women was housed at our church for a while.

With the help of Deborah McEachran, an outreach ministry was begun with an evening service and meal on Sunday. It was called "**The Journey**". Quoting Deborah, "For those who attended, we were a bright spot in the week, a place to grow in faith and a community of trust and acceptance for people who did not always receive that in other parts of Hickory." Since those who attended were primarily people without a stable home or employment, a meal was included as part of the service.

When our stone sanctuary turned 100 years old, the church celebrated with a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall on January 8, 2006. Our church buildings continued to be remodeled. In 2007, the sanctuary was again renovated and the lower floor of the new Fellowship Hall was also remodeled. This lower floor of our Fellowship Hall allowed for a meeting room, called Kidz Space (now the junior high room) and a Boy Scout room.

In 2007, our new organ was installed. The process of purchasing a new organ for the sanctuary began in 2004 when a special “organ committee” spent six months of analysis to decide if the current organ could be repaired. The committee members were: Tod Caldwell, Don Coleman, Carole Cumming, Charles Dixon, Dr. Martha Hill, and Kim Salyards. It was determined that the old organ could not be fixed. As Don Coleman recalled, “The recommendation to replace the instrument was approved by the church session and congregation in 2006 as a principal portion of an upcoming capital campaign. Numerous organ manufacturers were considered. The committee visited churches in a ninety mile radius of Hickory.” This committee selected the Letourneau instrument, the cost being \$649,950.00. On June of 2008, our congregation blessed the first organ pipe and the organ was installed during the months from early June until September and dedicated in October 2008. This installation involved participation of around 20 members, who met to unload a truck full of pipes from the front of the church. As Shirley Thomason recalls, “There was someone from the organ company who told us which pipes to take and where to place them in the church on top of the pews. Some were very heavy and long. They were various sizes. It took several hours! The pipes were arranged in the order that they were to be placed. It was quite a beautiful experience. We all felt proud of our work!”

Wednesday Night Suppers continue as a time of fellowship and wonderful meals prepared by Matt Parker. The **Heritage programs** also continue and these monthly gatherings include a meal, a program, and fellowship with our older church members.



Wednesday Night Supper



Heritage program



Rev. Heather Wood Davis

In 2009, Rev. Johnson retired and **Rev. Heather Wood Davis** became our associate pastor. She had attended our church as a youth, had been ordained at FPC, and worked with our youth before becoming our associate pastor.

During this transition period after Rev. Johnson’s departure, **Rev. Carol Seaman**, **Rev. Dr. John Rogers**, **Rev. Dr. William Cockrill**, as well as **Rev. Mark Clark** served as interim pastors and Rev. Heather Davis remained as our associate minister. Later, in 2016, Dr. Wallace Johnson was bestowed the title of Pastor Emeritus of First Presbyterian Church – the first FPC pastor given this honorary title.

In 2010, the Church History Committee was formed, chaired by Amelia McComb Stafford. In 2011, Deborah McEachran accepted a call to another church and **Rev. Lynn Webber** became our Parish Associate.



Rev. Lynn Webber

Obama was President until Donald Trump began (2017) to serve for one term, ending in 2021. Black Lives Matter movement, dedicated to fighting racism and antiBlack violence, began as racial unrest increased. The Paris Agreement was adopted in an effort to address climate change (2015). Active shooter events occurred in schools, churches, movie theaters, and at the Boston Marathon. Al-Qaeda leader; Osama bin Laden, was killed (2011) by an American military operation in Pakistan



We were fortunate to have a new Senior Pastor, **Rev. Dr. J. Whittington (Whit) Malone**, who began his pastorate at our church in 2011.

After serving our church on staff or as a volunteer for almost 40 years, Freida Caldwell retired in 2012 as our Direction of Christian Education. Her work with youth and her service to our church made her a legend at First Presbyterian.

Rev. Dr. J. Whittington (Whit) Malone

On April 28, 2013, we gathered in the **Fellowship Hall for FPC Homecoming and Celebration of 140 Years**. The History Timeline was posted for members to add or correct historical information and events. The church members heard the story of our church when Amelia McComb Stafford, church historian, presented our church history through pictorial and "lecture." Our new minister, Rev Malone, former ministers, and former members attended along with our congregation. A wonderful covered dish luncheon followed.



Celebrating First Presbyterian Church's 140 Years Anniversary

Wallace & Sallie Johnson at 140 Year Celebration



Additionally in 2013, Hickory hosted both the Presbytery (January) and the Presbyterian Historical Society (October) at our church.

Our new contemporary church service began in 2013 and was named "Kairos", meaning "spiritual opportunity." Initially the Kairos and traditional services were held at the same time. By 2019, the same time of the services ceased and they began being held at different times on Sunday mornings. Of note, our 8:30 early service ended in November 2015.

In 2014, our membership was 874 and our budget was \$1,410, 974. In that same year, Melvin Meares, who began serving in 2012, resigned as Director of Missions and Lynn Webber also resigned as Parish Associate. In 2015, Mollie Lail resigned after being a preschool teacher and director for 10 years.

Interestingly, in 2015, our church mission group went to Hunting Ridge Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland and assisted the church and community. Deborah McEachran, our former associate minister, is the minister at that church. Katherine Mull, our Youth Director, led our group on this mission.

Carol Anne Hartmen became the Kairos Director of Music in 2015. And in 2016, Sarah McCall White became our Director of Preschool and Children's Ministry. During the Christmas season, the church had a live nativity which included animals as well as characters from the story of the first Christmas. With the generosity of our church members, our church budget continued to reach out to the community to assist agencies such as Salvation Army, GHCCM, Family Care Center, ALFA, the Soup Kitchen, Safe Harbor Rescue Mission, Habitat for Humanity, Exodus House, Hospice of Catawba County, Hebron USA, Family Guidance, Centro Latino, Guatemalan Partnership, Women's Resource Center, Pregnancy Care Center, etc.

Whit Malone and Pastor David Young from the Helensburgh Parish Church in Scotland exchanged pulpits for several months in 2017. In May of 2018, we had a groundbreaking ceremony to begin our new building project. On January 6, 2019, the project was completed and the Dedication occurred. The new additions included a Gathering Room, Porte Cochere, a new playground, and an outside covered walkway between the Education Building and the Sanctuary.

In 2019, our membership was 835 and the average weekly worship attendance was 234. This year marked FPC's 25th anniversary of our Guatemalan Partnership with Monte Hebron Church in Santo Domingo, Suchitepequez.

The church also began discussing church safety after a number of shootings in American churches had occurred. These discussions continued through the next year. However, the decision of the Session was that no person on the Safety Committee should be armed.

The year 2020 began a challenging time for our church as well as our community and nation. Covid 19 closed down schools and other institutions and our worship services were at first prerecorded and later live-streamed, using the church's website or Facebook page. These changes were made because this very contagious virus was spread airborne.

Wednesday Night Suppers continued but were picked up at the Porte Cochere each week as takeout meals. Even our Stewardship Dinners in 2020 and 2021 were served as a drive through pick-up meal.

In September 2021, we returned to church services with protective masks and limited numbers in attendance. The church preschool started back on September 27th of that year. By the later part of 2022, normal worship services began again as in-person activities and services resumed. Fortunately, in August 2022, FPC was able to serve our Wednesday Night Suppers inside the Fellowship Hall.

At the end of 2020, Mary Putman, our office manager and bookkeeper, retired after over 30 years of employment at our church.

Wallace Johnson noted, "Her skills, understanding, and love of the church were unequaled. By her unfailing presence, she steadily guided the congregation through several pastors, many staff members, and the transitions which come with such changes."



Mary Putman

Covid shutdown schools, businesses, and church services in 2020 and these closings lasted through part of 2022. Our President, Donald Trump, was impeached but acquitted by Senate in 2020 and 2021. The insurrection at the Capitol occurred on January 6, 2021. Following this, Joe Biden became President of the United States. After 20 years, the Afghanistan War ended in 2021. In 2022, Russia invaded the Ukraine and, in that same year, the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade after its 50 year previous court decision concerning abortion rights.

After removing some inactive members, at the end of 2021 our membership stood at 591. By the end of 2022, membership had risen to 625.

Whit Malone retired in 2022. **Dr. Richard Floyd** became our new minister. With new leadership, First Presbyterian continues to grow and expand our efforts to worship God through fellowship and service.



Rev. Dr. Richard Floyd



Our church celebrated its 150th anniversary on April 23rd, 2023.

We were blessed with the return of former ministers and former members along with our present congregation and ministers to celebrate this special event.



Together we worshiped and, after our service in the sanctuary, we enjoyed a wonderful meal and fellowship.



We continue to praise God for guiding us and blessing us throughout these years.

The history of First Presbyterian Church is a story of worship experiences, mission works, and service to others.

The church has made many changes and has experienced wartime, building expansions, varied types of Sunday services, Covid shutdowns, and struggles within our nation and community.

However, FPC stands strong and ready to follow God's message and to make necessary changes.

We are not so austere and conservative in our church policies and practices as was the early church when "sinners" were required to go before the Session for their misbehaviors. Our church leaders are not so worried about whether we play cards, or dance, or whether we enjoy a Sunday ride in a buggy or check our mail on the Sabbath (*See such stories in First Presbyterian Church, Hickory N.C., 1873 – 2013*).

Our focus is more on missions and good works as well as modifying our traditions to suit the present needs and culture. We glean from the blessings of the past and accommodate our ever changing society as we strive to be Christians and do God's work.

Church Staff in 2023

Rev. Dr. Richard Floyd, Senior Pastor
Rev. Heather Wood Davis, Associate Pastor
Beth Taylor, Director of Communications
Sarah White, Director of Preschool & Children's Ministries
Sue Shoffner, Financial Administrator
Kiki Neale, Director of Sanctuary Music
Martha Hill, Organist
Carol Anne Hartman, Director of Kairos Music Ministries
Kim Brookman, Receptionist/Office Assistant
Ashlee Barry, Family Ministry Assistant - WNS, Interim Youth Director - Jr. Highs
Lisa Webber, Interim Director of Youth for Sr. Highs
Jimmy Purgeson, Head of Maintenance
Matt Parker, Food Coordinator



Members of the Session in 2023

Clerk of the Session - John Bates
Class of 2022: Andi Banks, Jim Campbell, Jay Crane, Claude Davis, and Mandy Hildebrand
Class of 2023: Caroline Culpepper, Bob Smith, Knox Tate, Shirley Thomason, and Phil Trick
Class of 2024: Terry Appenzeller, Steve Harlan, Amanda Hilton, Stuart Mull, and Ellie Wilson
Class of 2025: Nat Auten, Don Coleman, Susan Guest, Sallie Huckabee, and Sarah Shumate

Music Ministry

Our church has a rich history of music provided in both of our church services.

Martha Hill has been our organist for over 30 years in the traditional services.

Our present music director for the traditional service is Kiki Neale.

The Kairos music program is directed by Carol Anne Hartman, with a choir and music supplied by a praise band of FPC members.



First Presbyterian Hickory's Mission Trip Focus

Melvin Meares

FPC has made a significant commitment to offering opportunities to serve through the gift of time and skills on mission trips. Freida Caldwell (Christian Educator) and Lucy Turner (Associate Pastor) were the force behind building enthusiasm and the initial organization of the trips. The Session recognizing the importance of this type of opportunity to serve for youth and adults committed substantial funding through the budget to support up to 50% of the cost for these trips, the balance provided by the participants. Over the course of time the mission trip opportunities have expanded to include seven different trip opportunities: Adult, Medical, College, Sr. High, Jr. High, Weekend and Family.

- 1970-2022: 166 trips; 2,858+ participants; 17,986+ days of service.
- Some participant numbers and days of service missing for several of the trips.

Adult Mission: 2023 marks 30 years of the adult mission program, beginning in March 1993, spearheaded by Associate Pastor Lucy Turner. There have been one or more trips every year since, with the exception of 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, 40 trips in all. Beginning in 2016 FPC teamed up with the Presbytery of Western NC to lead and help spearhead Presbytery wide mission trips.

- 1993-2022: 40 trips (8 international); 412 participants; 2,884 days of service.
- No 2020 trip due to Covid pandemic.

Medical Mission: Medical mission trips got their start in the 1970's and 1980's with three trips by several doctors and their families; Dr. Dan & Marty Espey (in the 1970's to Renosa, Mexico), Dr. Tom & Fran Fitz (1987 to the Congo, Africa), and Dr. Hamp & Katty Lefler & their daughters (1988 to Zaire, Africa). The next trip came in 1995 to San Felipe Primero, Qutanaroo, Mexico including 22 participants.

Beginning in 2003 and through 2009, six medical mission trips traveled to Mwandi a village on the Zambesi River in Zambia, Africa. The main purpose of the trips was medical, but included work with a local orphanage, teaching, Bible schools, construction and computer technical assistance. The medical focus was on nurse training and cataract surgeries.

In 2009 medical mission started supporting HebronUSA's medical mission clinic in Ocosingo, Chiapas, Mexico; making six trips through 2020 (completed the 2020 trip just before the Covid pandemic shutdown). The focus is on medical care to the indigenous Tzeltal people; a people that are considered second class citizens and denied quality medical care in the Mexican medical system.

- 1970-2020: 17 trips; 167 participants; 1,922 days of service.
- Completed the 2020 trip just before the Covid pandemic shutdown.

College Mission: FPC tries to offer college mission trips at least every other year. Due to summer jobs and varying schedules for college breaks it can be difficult to find a time that works well for our college students. However, FPC continues to strive to make this opportunity for service and fellowship for our college students.

- 1990-2019: 9 trips (7 international); 135 participants; 1,002 days of service.
- No 2020 trip due to Covid pandemic.

Senior High Mission: Freida Caldwell got the Sr. High mission trip program started in 1989. The plan is to offer an out of country experience every other year. Youth have traveled to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, Honduras and Puerto Rico. Other years they served in rural and inner city ministries, serving in 11 different US states.

- 1989-2022: 33 trips (16 international); 924+ participants; 7,191+ days of service.
- Some participant numbers and days of service missing for several of the trips.
- No 2020 trip due to Covid pandemic.

Junior High Mission: Freida Caldwell, after successfully getting the Sr. High trips going, started building enthusiasm for Jr. High mission trips. The Jr. High trips are within one day's drive of Hickory and are usually four or five days in duration. There has been a rotation of inner city ministries; such as food pantries, soup kitchen, clothes closets, shut in food delivery, and rural ministries trips; such as flood clean up, Christian camp renovations and painting. They've travel to eight US states surrounding and including NC.

- 1991-2022: 31 trips; 863+ participants, 4,221+ days of service.
- Some participant numbers and days of service missing for several of the trips.
- No 2020 trip due to Covid pandemic.

Family Mission: Family mission trips were introduced to enable the entire family to serve on a mission trip together. Participants included grandparents to infants. The trips focused on spending time at Black Mountain Home for Children, Grandfather Home for Children and Camp Grier.

- 2003-2014: 11 trips; 245+ participants; 619+ days of service.
- Some participant numbers and days of service missing for several of the trips.

Weekend Mission: Weekend mission trips were offered for those that couldn't take a week off of work to participate in the longer mission trips. These trips could be as short as a single day, but usually one night and one day, and occasionally two nights and two days. These trips are also usually within a few hours from Hickory.

- 2005-2015: 13 trips; 128 participants; 152 days of service.

Non-FPC Mission Trips: In addition to mission trips offered through FPC, we've had members participate in mission trips with other churches and the Presbytery of Western NC; traveling to Alaska, Guatemala, Cuba, and Mexico.

- 1963-2020: 12 trips; 27 participants; 238 days of service.
- Completed the 2020 trip just before the Covid pandemic shutdown.

Mission Trip Stories

Homeless: 2011 Nashville, TN; Two homeless Hickory men signed up to participate in our mission trip to Nashville. They each had previous work experience as roofers. As a result we were assigned roofing projects the entire week. God brought two homeless men, men that didn't have a roof over their own heads, to Nashville to put new roofs on the homes of flood victims, allowing them to move back into their homes.

Giving sight: As previously noted the primary focus on the medical mission trip to Mwandia was on nurse training and ophthalmology. The ophthalmologist; Hamp Lefler and his partner Tom Foster (First Baptist, Hickory), focused on performing cataract surgeries. They worked with people, many who had walked days to get to the clinic - people who had cataracts in both eyes, fixing one eye to help improve their lives. One woman had never seen her youngest daughter, who was about 10 years old, she saw her for the first time days after the surgery.

Cookies: Betty Bowman participated in eight adult mission trips from 1993 through 2001 traveling to Mexico, Jamaica, St Martin and 4 US states. One of Betty's many gifts was baking cookies. She made cookies for every adult mission trips for over 20 years. In one year she sent more than 24 dozen cookies on a single mission trip. Betty passed in 2019, and needless to say we miss Betty and her wonderful cookies.

Reading: An important part of the focus in the medical trips to Ocosingo is to provide reading glasses to those that can use them. The Tzeltal people have recently had the Bible translated into their language. It's a real joy for them when they get fitted with the proper strength reading glasses which enabled them to read and study the Bible in their language. Many of the women use their hands to do intricate work such as weaving and sewing. The glasses are also very helpful in enabling them to continue to perform their work.

Last minute change: The Jr. High trip was to be in Hatteras in June 2004. FPC received a call one week before they were to leave and was told there was no work available and they didn't need us! Krista Burns started looking at a map knowing we only went within a day's trip from home for the Jr. Highs. Her first call was to First Presbyterian of Jacksonville, FL to ask if they knew of anything or anyone we could work with in that area. They said "You know we have a program here at the church that puts youth into mission weeks--right?" "No we didn't." "You know we have the lodgings here at the church to house groups--right?" "No we didn't." "Son of a gun, we have a week available next week." "Get Out!" It was one of the best mission trips we had! God was in it from the very beginning and we had a great experience and served Him.

(Submitted by Lynn Smith)

Goat Lady: It was our first Katrina adult mission trip, February 2006. We asked the local coordinators to show us the jobs on the bottom of their clipboard that nobody wants. They told us of a lady that refused help for herself. She was very wary of men and didn't want anyone in her house. But she had lost her goat shed and was concerned for her goats. We took the job and built her a new goat shed. In the process the women on our team developed a relationship with her and we were eventually allowed into her home where we identified hurricane damage that we were able to address. The entire team ended the week being invited into her home to share lunch with her.

(Submitted by Dave Rowe)

You listen: On one of our medical mission trips to Chiapas, I was in the exam room translating for the doctors. An older man came in and was examined by the physician. She asked questions to assess the man's condition and listened attentively to his answers while checking his vital signs. She left us in the room together while she stepped out into the hall to consult with another doc. When I explained to the man that she was talking with another doctor to assess the best treatment for him, I noticed tears in his eyes. Then he said to me "This is why we come to you. When we come here, you look at us and you listen to us. When we go to the doctors here they don't see us. They don't hear us."

(Submitted by Dennis Stamper)

Prison time in Mexico: There was a missionary couple in Ocosingo, Mexico that we encountered while serving on multiple medical mission trips. The wife, Sharon, had a prison ministry and convinced us to take reading glasses to the local prison to help some of the prisoners be able to read and work on their crafts. It was an all-male population, a discouraging and oppressive environment, a place that was hard to imagine bringing any joy or security. However, it was amazing to witness the relationships that Sharon had developed. All the prisoners knew her; she was a mother to them all. She was able to scold them and bring love, compassion and Jesus to them. She was a bright light shining in their lives. *(Submitted by Bob Smith)*

18 Wheeler: Mission trips with FPC youth have always been one of my favorite things to do. I love going out and serving other communities with my church family. Without a doubt, after each trip, I can reflect back and think of numerous things that I learned, bonds that I made/strengthened, and how it impacted the community we were serving. My favorite memory is loading an 18 wheeler full of tires in Texas - I will never forget it!
(Submitted by Maggie Nichols; Jr. High, Sr. High & College Mission Trip Participant)

A hand up: One of the biggest things I learned from the 2022 Jr. High mission trip was the concept of giving people a hand up rather than a hand out. This means instead of giving the less fortunate money out your car window, it is better to go out and genuinely help them. Whether it's helping build homes or inviting them to a class to help them get back up on their feet.
(Submitted by Carsyn Barry; Jr. High Youth Mission Trip Participant)

Camaraderie: One of my favorite parts about FPC mission trips is the camaraderie within our group. You grow so much closer to those you travel with, and get to experience and do amazing things together. Mission trip are such a special way to grow closer to those around you as well as God.
(Submitted by Leah Brooks; Jr. High, Sr. High & College Mission Trip Participant 2018 & 2019)

Comfort zone: My favorite thing about youth mission trips is getting to step outside of your comfort zone to meet and serve people from all different backgrounds. For example, I will never forget worshipping with Gatlinburg's homeless community my sixth grade year. Going on these trips truly gives you a new perspective on life and allows you to grow so much closer with other youth and advisors.
(Submitted by Mebane White; Jr. High & Sr. High Youth Mission Trip Participant)

Relationships: I think mission trips are the perfect opportunity not only for us to help out those who need it most but also to grow as individuals and strengthen the relationships with those around us.
(Submitted by Wyatt Fisher; Jr. High, Sr. High & College Mission Trip 2023)

Hurricane Maria: Service and relationships, activities which can be overlooked in the hustle of college life, are foundational to college mission trips. Through my experiences in Puerto Rico and New Orleans, I was able to reconnect with High School classmates and friends through service. I especially enjoyed my time in Puerto Rico, where we had the pleasure to help a community in need following initial disaster relief efforts post Hurricane Maria. I'll never forget the rush of activity on the last work day to strip and rebuild an entire roof while attempting to not fall off (thanks to Cynthia Honeycutt for the makeshift harness). *(Submitted by Will Pitts; College Mission Trip Participant 2018 & 2019)*

Compassion: I saw God at work, when our Junior High School youth prepared and delivered meals to shut-ins in Atlanta, Georgia. A new compassion and spiritual maturity blossomed in these youth as they saw how some of the least of these live.

Blood needed: On the first Mwandi medical mission trip a woman needed a blood transfusion and there was no blood of that type at the hospital. It turned out that Katie Lefler had that same blood type and was able to contribute her blood to save that woman's life. *(Submitted by Ellie Wilson)*

Not just one focus: As part of a medical mission trip, FPC was the first group that had come to Mwandi that did things outside of the hospital setting. Sandra Foster (First Baptist, Hickory) organized the first Bible School with the local church. Ellie Wilson was the first to go into the local school and teach.
(Submitted by Ellie Wilson)

Educational support: Mwandi medical mission trip participants had the opportunity to provide financial educational support for orphans in the village. Conway and I provide educational support for a young girl, born with a deformed foot, at the Mwandi Basic School and continue to support her to go to a boarding school. She is now a vibrant sixteen year old doing very well in boarding school. *(Submitted by Ellie Wilson)*

Twins in the dark: The power grid is not that reliable in Mwandi. On a medical mission trip, as the power went out, a women went into labor and required a C-Section. The woman was taken into the operating room. Nancy Toy safely delivered the twins and as the mother was wheeled from the operating room the power came on. *(Submitted by Ellie Wilson)*

Prosthetics: On the 2007 and 2009 Medical mission trips to Mwandi, Jim & Kathy Rubel came to provide prosthetics limbs to people who had lost one or both legs. Disabilities often lead to exclusion in the culture. Moreover, their poor economic and social status can result in difficult living conditions. It was a true blessing to see the joy on the faces of the amputees when fitted with prosthetics that enabled them to have a fuller live and possibilities.

Going with the flow: On the 1993 adult mission trip to Agua Prieta, Mexico; we had two areas of focus: construction and medical. When we arrived at the border ministry we were informed that our doctors would not be permitted to see patients. As a result we were all doing construction. It was an unexpected event to see our doctors and nurses helping to dig a foundation for a new community center. However, it wasn't long before people in the community learned we had doctors with us. As a result Dr. Ken Bates did get to see some children while serving in Mexico.

Presbyterian Women

The Presbyterian women's organizations have provided many services to our church throughout its history. Beginning with the Earnest Workers in 1887 and continuing now with the name "Presbyterian Women," these women's groups have made a major contribution to FPC.



A number of our members are involved in our church circles which provide Bible Study and projects to help others at our church and community.

Preparing meals and giving support to women at the local Safe Harbor, as well as preparing and serving bereavement meals, making prayer shawls, and collecting items to go in children's Christmas stockings for the Salvation Army are a just a few of their service projects.



*Presbyterian Women
Honorary Life Recipients*

Listed are the women who have served as Presidents of the church's women's organizations throughout the last 50 years, 1983 – 2023:

1983 - 1985	Mrs. (George) Gloria Farr
1985 - 1987	Mrs. (Robert) Susie Abercrombie
1987 - 1988	Mrs. (H. T.) Nancy Gilbert
1988 - 1989	Mrs. (Robert) Margaret Ann Campbell, Jr.
1989 - 1990	Mrs. (John) Evelyn King
1990 - 1991	Mrs. (Joseph) Nancy Pollock
1991 - 1992	Mrs. (Bob) Della Marie McKinnon
1992 - 1994	Mrs. (Richard) Jane Jordan
1994 - 1995	Mrs. (John) Doris Robinson
1995 - 1996	Mrs. (Henry) Betty Fieselman
1996 - 1997	Mrs. (J. Victor) Betty Bowman
1997 - 1998	Mrs. (Richard) Adrienne Washer
1998 - 1999	Mrs. (Robert) Suzanne Hambrick
1999 - 2000	Mrs. (Sherrill) Lynn Young
2000 - 2001	Mrs. (Tim) Chris Gantt
2001 - 2002	Mrs. (Charles) Viola Mitchell
2002 - 2003	Mrs. (Paul) Culpepper
2003 - 2004	Mrs. (Don) Andi Morgan
2004 - 2005	Mrs. (John) Linda Ellis
2005 - 2006	Mrs. (Wilmer) Nancy Driver
2005 - 2006	Mrs. (Robert) Suzanne Hambrick
2006 - 2007	Mrs. (Tim) Chris Gantt
2006 - 2007	Mrs. Della Marie McKinnon
2007 - 2008	Ms. Josephine Hambrick
2007 - 2008	Mrs. (Bill) Sherry Pitts
2008 - 2009	Mrs. (Bill) Sherry Pitts
2009 - 2010	Mrs. (Charles) Willingham
2010 - 2011	Mrs. (Melvin) Sharon Meares
2011 - 2012	Mrs. (Dave) Sue Walker
2012 - 2013	Mrs. (Zack) Beth Taylor
2013 - 2014	Mrs. (Darrell) Amelia Stafford
2014 - 2015	Mrs. (Wilfred) Marje Wells
2015 - 2016	Mrs. (Mike) Becky Stevens
2016 - 2017	Mrs. (Melvin) Sharon Meares
2016 - 2017	Mrs. (Paul) Sylvia Kercher
2017 - 2018	Mrs. (Darrell) Amelia Stafford
2017 - 2018	Mrs. (Mike) Becky Stevens
2018 - 2019	Mrs. (Ray) Sharon Turner
2018 - 2019	Mrs. (Charles) Anne Beach
2019 - 2020	Mrs. (Bill) Christy Taylor
2020 - 2021	Mrs. (Bill) Christy Taylor
2021 - 2022	Mrs. (Jeff) Ellen Taylor
2021 - 2022	Mrs. (Melvin) Sharon Meares
2022 - 2023	Mrs. (Buddy) Judy Ray

Full-time Ministers: 1973 -2023

1964 – 1976	Rev. Dr. J. Whitner “Whit” Kennedy, Senior Pastor
1972 – 1977	Rev. Day Carper, Associate Pastor
1977 – 1988	Rev. Dr. David W. McKee, Co-Pastor
1979 – 1987	Rev. Dr. Robert W. Ratchford, Co-Pastor
1989 – 2009	Rev. Dr. G. Wallace Johnson, Senior Pastor
1991 – 2000	Rev. Lucy E. Turner, Associate Pastor
2002 – 2011	Rev. Deborah McEachran, Associate Pastor
2002 – 2003	Rev. Hayes Noble, Associate Pastor for Youth
2009 -	Rev. Heather Wood Davis, Associate Pastor
2011 – 2014	Rev. Lynn Webber, Parish Associate
2011 – 2022	Rev. Dr. J. Whittington “Whit” Malone, Senior Pastor
2022 -	Rev. Dr. Richard Floyd, Senior Pastor



Ministers at First Presbyterian Church's 150th Year Anniversary Celebration

Building Projects

1878	“Little White Church” at S. Center St. and Government Ave., Lot cost \$100. Bought from Henry W. Robinson. Church dedicated on 11/02/1878 (Lot and building cost \$1,769.23).
1906	Stone church dedicated on December 2, 1906. Church bell and pump organ moved to stone church. Cost \$14,600.
1928	Education Building, attached to sanctuary with matching stone. Cost \$28,000.
1949	Sanctuary completely remodeled to our present seating arrangement. Cost approx. \$85,000.
1957	Second Education Building. Fellowship Hall remodeled and kitchen added. Cost \$225,000.
1966-67	Sanctuary, new education building, and portions of first education building were air-conditioned. Replaced organ. Sanctuary improvements
1970	Fellowship hall remodeled.
1979	Remodeled 2nd floor of the older Ed. Building for staff offices. Improvements to 3rd floor. Cost \$140,000.
1998	New Fellowship Hall. Renovations of Sanctuary and existing buildings. Cost \$3,600,000.
2001	Columbarium built.
2007	Sanctuary remodeled. New organ installed. Kidz Space and Boy Scout room added.
2019	Gathering Room added and office area remodeled. Porte Cochere built along with new playground and covered walkway between sanctuary and educational building.

Members Who Have Gone into Church Vocations

Ordained

James W. Hassell, Japan
 Bonnar Knox
 Glenn Yount
 Sidney Crane
 William Henry Crane, Africa
 Connolly Gamble, Jr.
 Edward C. Hay
 William Bason
 Wm. W. Williamson, Jr.
 Charles Williamson
 Huw Christopher
 Mary McClintock Fulkerson
 R. Wayne Bernardo
 Heather Wood Davis
 Katheryn McGinnis

Not Ordained

Mattie Ingold Tate, Korea, Medical Doctor
 Louise Dixon Crane, Africa
 Ruby Satterfield, China
 Grace Henderson
 Mr. & Mrs. Hubert Ramseur
 Mary Ruth Marshall
 John Hay, Jr.
 Betty Burgess Frazer
 Ellen Bibee Kelly
 Jane Bibee Oseneek
 Ralph T. Parkinson
 Frances Hammersla
 Nancy Farmer

Those Who Have the Longest Membership at FPC

4/25/43	Josephine Hambrick
3/29/50	Bobby Campbell
4/6/58	Jerry Belk
6/22/58	Doris Newton
3/29/59	Kenneth Hill
3/29/59	Karl Thomason
4/1/60	John Clark
4/1/60	Amelia Stafford
9/24/61	Margaret Ann Campbell
4/7/63	Nancy Craft

Scouting Programs at First Presbyterian

Hickory's First Presbyterian Church has a long history of scouting. Our first Boy Scout scoutmaster was Brooks Todd. The troop began as Local Troop 2 and later became Troop 231. Brooks Todd's wife, Sally, completed a notebook which covers the dates 1930 - 1990 of the Boy Scout program at the church.

FPC has been blessed with many dedicated scout leaders throughout the years. Our church's Boy Scout troop continued until recently. Some of our Boy Scout leaders were Brooks Todd, Chic Robinson, Frank Deal, Karl Thomson, Doris Newton, Hank Engart, Dave Rowe, Gary Oakley, Michael Webber, John Fuller, Michael Montgomery, and others. After the difficulties of COVID, which limited meetings and activities, Troop 231 dropped its charter on December 31, 2022. This troop had continually been chartered and active for 92 years and approximately 40 scouts obtained their Eagle Scout Award through those years.

Although not active now, Girl Scouts have also been a part of the church's scouting programs. First Presbyterian's program was the first integrated Girl Scout troop in the city. Many leaders, including Sherry Pitts, Carol Robinson, Tammy Smith, Margaret Lavender, Lynn Young, Mary Ann Crane, Mary Ann Forehand, and Becky Burgess have contributed to the girl scouting program throughout the years.



*Carol Robinson with her daughter Sarah and son David.
 Carol and Chic Robinson were scout leaders at our church.*

First Presbyterian Members Who Have Served In Elective Office

Mayor

A.A. Whitener
R.H. McComb
Donald S. Menzies
Julian G. Whitener
Rudy Wright

NC Senator

J. Henry Hill
Andy Wells

NC House of Representatives

Andy Wells

City Managers

Raymond L. Hefner
General Richard Mayo
Wilfred Wells

Judges

E.B. Cline
D.M. McComb
Marvin Wooten
Mary Gaither Whitener

Aldermen/City Council Members

W.B. Menzies
Neil Clark
Julian Whitener
Sally Fox

Fielding Clark
Burford Cherry
Jay Gaither
David Aycock

First Presbyterian History Committee

Amelia McComb Stafford, Chair	Shirley Thomason	Don Coleman
Beth Taylor	David Persinger	Judy Ray
Margaret Ann Campbell	Becky Persinger	Sherry Pitts

Mission Statement of History Committee

It is the mission of the History Committee of First Presbyterian Church to gather, organize, preserve, safeguard and store materials pertaining to the history of the church. These materials include official church records, historical documents and correspondence, Holy Bibles, hymnal and other books, photographs, ephemera, artwork, artifacts and other historically significant materials which will be housed in a repository known as the Church History Room.

It is also a stated goal of the committee to interview long-standing and former members of the church to compile a digitally-recorded anecdotal oral history archive.

Ultimately, the committee will embark upon a project to research, collate and produce a manuscript history of First Presbyterian Church which can be published and distributed to church members and other interested parties.

Moreover, it will be in the purview of the committee to establish procedures to insure the future safeguard and preservation of all materials relating to the history of the church.

Timeline of the Last 50 Years at Hickory's First Presbyterian Church 1973 - 2023

1973 Centennial Celebration of FPC, **Rev. J. Whitner Kennedy** was the minister, **Rev. Day Carper** was associate minister.

Camp Grier Family Retreat

867 members

1975 Mental Health for the Elderly Adult Day Care met at the old manse. Camp Grier Family Retreat.

1976 **Rev. Whit Kennedy** accepts call to church in Waynesboro, Virginia.

1977 **Rev. David McKee (1977 – 88)** called.

Camp Grier Family Retreat (Sept. 23 – 24)

1978 844 members

1979 **Rev. Day Carper** (First Associate Pastor) retires.

“Building Our Future Together” Campaign - to have 2nd floor of the older Education Building remodeled for staff offices and to make improvements to 3rd floor. \$140,000.

Rev. Robert (Bob) Ratchford (1979 – 87) called as Associate Pastor. Revs. David McKee & Bob Ratchford serve as **Co-Pastors**

1980 Elder Mary Ayers Campbell, chosen first female Commissioner from FPC to General Assembly, represented Concord Presbytery at Myrtle Beach, SC. The Rev. Paul Kercher also 1980 Commissioner to General Assembly from Concord Presbytery.

Refugee family (the Tan family), seven members, from Vietnam sponsored by FPC. They had been living in a refugee camp in Hong Kong since 6/3/79.

1981 Downtown Pulpit Exchange began.

1982 Hospice begins at FPC. (Aug. 1982).

Early summer worship began.

Fall Retreat at Camp Grier (Oct. 1982)

1983 Houses winterized for needy.

Reunification of Presbyterian Church U.S. & United Presbyterian Church USA into Presbyterian Church USA. Plan sent to the Presbyteries for a vote.

Session authorizes major fund drive – “Reaching Out Together Campaign” led by Paul Kercher, professional fund raiser, and chaired by George Brown and John Crown.

March 1, 1983 – **Soup Kitchen** begins in FPC kitchen, moving monthly to the other downtown churches. April 1983 – 300 in March and on to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. June 6, 1983 – Session approved Soup Kitchen at FPC for June, July, Aug. 1983. Soup Kitchen approved again for FPC location through Oct. 1983.

(Oct. 3, 1983) Session approves sponsoring another refugee family (mother and young daughter).

Korean Fellowship (about 50 people) asked the Presbytery to organize them.

1984 Jan. 3, 1984 – Rev. Ratchford asked by Session to work with Soup Kitchen Board in finding permanent location.

Jan. 8, 1984 – Doris Coleman recognized at worship service for 40 plus years of service in kitchen and as part of custodial staff.

Jan. 22, 1984 – Incorporation – Congregational Meeting & March 5, 1984, Session Meeting – First Presbyterian Church incorporated as required by Book of Order – Section G – 7.041, providing control of church property to the local congregation, Charles Dixon, Attorney at Law & Elder, chair. Done to facilitate the transfer of property when the Presbyterian Church, which was divided by the Civil War (1861 – 1865), is reunited into Presbyterian Church USA.

Feb. 6, 1984 – Pastor Salary – FPC two Co-Pastors each paid \$16,900 & manse allowance \$4500.

(Oct. 1, 1984) **Handbells** obtained.

1985 Jan. 27, 1985 – Bernice Goins special day retiring from church nursery after more than 40 years.

“Reaching Out Together Campaign,” led by George Brown, John Crown & professional fund raiser, Paul Kercher, raised \$427,384 for debt retirement, facilities improvement, church development through presbytery, medical missions, etc. The campaign set aside 50% for benevolence and mission.

On March 15, 1985, First Presbyterian Church named to **National Register of Historic Places.**

(March 4, 1985) Session meeting plans for incorporation of church. Session called Cong. Meeting for 3-17-85 and put on this meeting’s agenda the following:

1. To resolve final matters pertaining to incorporation of church.

2. To resolve property issue to retain control of church property to local congregation as provided in Book of Order.

(March 17, 1985) Congregational Meeting to approve authorization of the title of the church property so that the local congregation will hold title to the property and exercise its privilege to incorporate under the provision of the Book of Church Order, Presbyterian Church U.S. 1982 – 83 edition. Approved by the Congregation.

The old Highland Fire Dept. building donated by the city to Soup Kitchen (4-1-85).

FPC missionary sponsorship given (9/1/85) to Frances Hammersla (member of FPC and commissioned 3/10/85) to go to Good Shepherd Medical Clinic in Zaire.

1986 FPC donated \$1000 to Soup Kitchen for year 1986.

David McKee & Bob Ratchford’s salary raised to \$23,000 for the two pastors.

\$2,000 given (7/7/86) to Hickory Homeless Shelter from 2 cents a meal offering to provide food.

Arthur Burgess reported on June 1986 Presbytery meeting that the Presbytery purchased the old Gethsemane Bapt. Church property in Hickory for use of the Korean Fellowship. It will be called “Immanuel”. The old FPC Chancel Cross given to Korean Fellowship.

Cornerstone donated by FPC to the Korean Fellowship for their new church location (Nov. 24).

Mary Putman hired as bookkeeper - secretary, beginning 12/1/86. She continued employment as Office Manager & Bookkeeper through the year 2020.

Madeliene Bibee retired after 25 years as devoted Kindergarten Leader, Church Educator, Administrative Aide. Event held in her honor.

1987 **Rev. Bob Ratchford** announces he will accept another call on 2/2/87. Bob left 4/27/87.

Plans & procedures for dissolving Belk Memorial Church. (2/2/87)

Cong. Meeting to dissolve pastoral relationship with Rev. Bob Ratchford who will accept call to First Pres., Kinston, NC 4/27/87. Salary at that time for both pastors was \$19,700 plus \$4,500 housing allowance/rent free of manse. Bob's wish granted with regret and good wishes.

Summer Early Worship Services to be held June 14 – Sept. 6.

Jim Thompson, Sexton, retires after 34 years (6/22/87). Monetary gift given.

June 1987, Belk Memorial Pres. Church dissolved by Presbytery. Congregation assigned to First Presbyterian Church, Hickory.

Cecelia Willard estate gives \$5,400 to add to the Willard Chair Enrichment Series fund of \$25,000 for Enrichment.

(9/28/87) Session discussed "Shelter for Homeless" during 1987-88 winter. Tabled for lack of consensus. Note: FPC provided a winter shelter at FPC for the homeless for several years in mid-1980s and was involved with the building and continues to provide funds & food for a shelter built at Salvation Army.

Brooks M. Todd Memorial Scholarship Fund established in memory of his more than 50 years of commitment to Boy Scouts at FPC. (9/28/87)

(9/29/87) Centennial Celebration of "100 Years of Women's Work 1887 – 1987" at FPC

Church Educator Search Committee calls A.B. "Mac" McCall, Jr. to begin Dec. 1987 (10/20/87).

1988 Renovated old manse ("Manster") & renamed it Belk House.

The Rev. Dr. Maynard Fountain begins as Interim Pastor.

Soup Kitchen in own location in old Highland Fire Dept. building donated by city.

(5/18/88) Called Session Meeting - The Rev. Dr. David McKee asks that his pastorate be dissolved effective 6/30/88.

Linda Blackwell employed as Music Director. Responsible for all choirs...chancel, two children's choirs, and handbell choir (5/16/88).

Session Meeting – The Rev. McKee thanked by Session for his eleven years of service as pastor of FPC, Hickory, NC (6/27/88).

Ralph Hungerpiller, Treas., reported a check for \$11,000 from the Estate of Cecilia Willard and stated this will continue in quarterly disbursements.

Nancy Thomason elected first woman Clerk of Session (6/27/88).

Property Com. suggests selling both manses and providing housing allowance for pastors instead.

Concord Presbytery to become Presbytery of Western North Carolina. (9/26/88)

Hospice still using FPC facilities as Hospice grows.

2 cents a meal collection in progress.

Communion Guild formed (9/26/88) by Worship Committee to assist Nancy Thomason who had set up communion since childhood while helping her mother, Doris Broome. In later years, Nancy's family members, husband, Gordon, son, Karl and his wife, Shirley and their sons, Will and Andy, and Nancy's daughter, Doris, helped her through the years.

(10/09/88) Rev. Kirk Allen, Interim Pastor to assist Pastor Rev. Maynard Fountain.

"Willard House" property bought, located on 263 3rd Ave. NW, adjacent to FPC. (11-16-88)

(11/21/88) Joint meeting of Session/Diaconate to deal with putting the 2nd St. Manse on the market for \$141,000. Any action on the 7th St. Manse delayed until spring 1989.

(12/18/88) Computers added to church offices – Word processing & bookkeeping computerized. Also, letter quality printer added and software updated. Later, computers updated 8/25/91.

(12/18/88) Two interim pastors: Maynard Fountain and Kirk Allen.

(12/18/88) Church roll updated. Letters sent to the inactive (who have not attended or contributed in 2 years) for whom have addresses. Result: 227 put on inactive roll. Membership reduced to 782 on Statistical Report for 1988 from 1005 end of 1987.

(12/31/88) Statistical Report – Sunday school average attendance in Dec. 1988 was 205 highest since 1984.

2 cents a meal fund collected \$3,410 in 1988.

1989 (1/15/89) Congregation approves budget of \$472,122.

(1/23/89) Session approves first Sr. High Mission trip (June 1989) to Merida, Mexico (Yucatan).

Memorial Ed. Fund begun in 1954 has awarded a total of \$90,000 over the years to both church members and non-members.

(Feb. 1989) – Rev. Maynard Fountain finishes term as Interim Pastor.

(March 1989) – Ralph Hungerpillar, Treas., reported the church is a beneficiary of an income trust established by the will of Dr. Cecilia Willard, former church member. A suggestion made to name the recently purchased property “The Willard House.” John Clark asked to chair a committee to recognize the Willard gift to the congregation.

(3/1/89) Rev. Walter Styles begins as Interim Pastor to assist Rev. Kirk Allen.

Average attendance at worship in Jan. 1989 was 303, in Feb. 345 and March 353. Easter Sunday was 525.

(4/24/89) Rev. Kirk Allen appointed committee: Don Fuller, Bob Szalanski and John Clark to report on Special Funds.

(June 1989) – First Sr. High Mission Trip to Merida, Yucatan, Mexico sponsored by Accion Presbyterian Ministries, a Christian Association for International Cooperation for the National Mexico Church.... Leader/Organizer: Freida Caldwell. Purpose of trip: Service to others, cross-cultural experience, and spiritual development. Cost \$750 per person including travel, materials and supplies for work in Mexico, and food and lodging. Three fund raisers approved and Session allocated \$1500 toward trip. Each person to pay 1/3 of cost. Church to pay 1/3 of cost. Fund Raisers to pay 1/3. Thirty people including youth and advisors on trip.

(7/12/89) Manse at 825 2nd St. NW sold for \$123,000 - the use for the funds for investments to provide a housing allowance for pastors of FPC.

(7/23/89) **Freida Caldwell** employed as Interim Church Educator, installed Aug. 15, 1989.

(7/23/89) Hickory Jewish Center Beth Shalom opened and invitation received for dedication.

(10/15/89) – Congregational Meeting to call the **Rev. Dr. G. Wallace Johnson**

Deacon Doug Taylor, Budget Committee Chairman, requested that a motion be approved that the Treasurer provide the officers of the church a report on each of the “Special Funds” administered by the church by the Feb. Session meeting. The moderator will contact Ralph Hungerpillar, Treas.

Rev. Water Styles continues as interim minister.

(11/26/89) Kirk Allen finishing up 14 mos. as Interim Pastor at FPC. Goal of an average attendance of 300 at worship is in sight.

(Nov. 1989) – Rev. Wallace Johnson begins ministry at First Presbyterian Church with 807 members.

(12/3/89) – Wallace Johnson preaches first sermon at First Presbyterian, Hickory, NC.

1990 (1/20/90) - Presbytery meeting – Rev. Wallace Johnson received by the Presbytery of Western NC.

(1/28/90) – Pulpit Exchange downtown churches.

(2/4/90) – **Rev. Wallace Johnson** installed as pastor FPC.

(2/25/90) – “Children at the Lord’s Table” Communion class to teach children/parents – Will begin again after a lapse of several years.

(2/24/90 report) – Average attendance for January is up to 362. Best Jan. attendance in years.

1990 Budget – \$507,763.

(3/25/90) Fred Barnes called as Interim Assoc. Pastor to begin April 23.

Children’s Church begins for K – 5 and First Grade children.

Ralph Hungerpiller, Treasurer, gives report on Special Funds.

Average attendance in worship in April was 392 almost reaching goal of 400 set as 5 yr. goal.

(3/5/90) Lease signed for space in Willard House by Hospice after outgrowing space in Old Education Building (upstairs) and then the old manse, the “Manster.”

(5/27/90) Freida Caldwell employed as Church Educator...Had already been Interim Educator.

Youth Mission trip to Merida, Mexico.

(8/19/90) Congregational meeting to sell 7th St. Manse. No early worship services in summer.

(9/21 – 23, 1990) First Willard Chair: The Rev. Joan Salmon-Campbell, Past Moderator General Assembly, speaker.

(10/28/90) \$3,000 to ALFA (Aids) for use for rent.

1991 1991 Budget \$572,826. Membership 841 end of 1990.

Church government goes Unicameral system, which eliminates office of Deacons.

LOGOS program begins (later Wed. Alive) for Grades 1 – 5.

(2/24/91) Columbarium, first introduced to Session by Margaret Ann Campbell in 1989, was formally proposed by Fran Fitz of Agnes Marshall Service Circle. Referred to long term planning committee (soon-to-be organized) for study and recommendation to Session.

(2/24/91) Extended Rev. Fred Barnes time as Interim Assoc. Pastor by 6 months beginning 5/1/91.

(3/2-3/91) Family Retreat at Camp Grier.

(3/24/91) Sr. High Youth Service – Freida Caldwell in charge.

(4/21/91) Attendance continues above totals for the last 10 years. Church Roll to be reviewed annually for active/inactive members. Inactive reinstated if show interest by attendance or financial support.

(5/3 - 5/91) Willard Chair Event – Dr. Charles Shedd.

(5/12/91) – The **Rev. Lucy Turner** called as first woman Associate Pastor to begin 6/24/91.

Mission in Motion Summer 1991:

Jr. Highs – July 5 - 9 to DC

Sr. Highs to Philadelphia – June 15 – 24

College Youth – May 10 – 18 to Yucatan Mexico

(7/1/91) Martha Hill began as FPC organist. She continued to serve until later part of 2023.

(8/25/91) New computers purchased.

(9/22/91) Hospice to rent all of Willard House for \$900 month.

(9/22/91) Communion to be served monthly instead of quarterly.

1992 (1/10/92) – 895 active members

(2/13/92) FPC encouraged to participate in interracial activities in the community which led to Fifth Sunday Fellowship (worship/supper).

(2/23/92) Habitat house to be built by FPC & Northminister Pres. Church.

(10/24 – 25/92) Family Retreat at Camp Grier.

End of 1992 – Members 902. Average attendance at worship 347.

1993 (5/30/93) Fifth Sunday Christian Fellowship begins – First Presbyterian, First United Methodist, Clinton Tabernacle AME Zion, and Hartzell United Meth. Churches hold first covered dish supper at First Presbyterian... *(See 2/13/92 above).*

Adult Medical Mission Trip Mexico – March

1994 (1/14/94) – End of 1993 report 927 members (up from 1992 report of 902). 1993 average attendance at worship 332. Church School enrollment 368.

1995 **FPC Preschool begins** to serve babies 6 mos. and older including 3 and 4 year olds. School Year (1995 – 1996)

1997 Partnership with Monte Hebron Church, Guatemala.
Old Fellowship Hall renovated as Youth Center.

1998 **New Fellowship Hall: Renovation of Sanctuary and existing church buildings.** “Claiming the Vision”: Campaign leaders were: Charles Dixon, George W. Brown, John D. Clark, Carol Robinson, Warren McAlpine, and staff member Dr. Wallace Johnson and Freida Caldwell. Paul Kercher was the Professional Fund-raiser for the campaign. \$3,600,000

(February 6 – 8, 1998) First Montreat Family Retreat.

1999 935 members

2000 Rev. Lucy Turner, Assoc. Pastor, accepts another call to become a Sr. Pastor.

Karen Emerick (2000 – 2002) served as Youth Director.

2001 **Columbarium Memorial Garden built.**

Earnest Workers quilt donated to FPC by Lib Williams, granddaughter of the Rev. Dr. Alston Ramsay, pastor of FPC 1891 – 1900, and wife Belle. The quilt was made as a gift for the Ramsays by the Earnest Workers.

2002 **Rev. Hayes Noble (2002 – 2003)** became our Associate Pastor for Youth.

2000 – 02 Rev. Paul Kercher, Rev. Cecil Jividen & Rev. Mark Clark, Interim Pastors.

2002 **Rev. Deborah A. McEachran** called as Associate Minister. She was bi-lingual and provided a focus on outreach and missions at home and abroad. Assisted Hispanic congregation.

Mission trips to Zambia, Mwandi, Guatemala.

Stephen Ministry formed.

Red Cross Blood Drives continue.

Day Shelter for women housed at FPC.

2004 **Inter-faith meetings held with Muslims and Christians at our church.**

Lindsay Ray (June 2004 – Sept. 2006) served as Youth Director.

2006 **Centennial Celebration of Stone Sanctuary** first used in 1906.

Bruce Graham hired as first full-time Director of Music.

Additional handbells acquired.

2007 **Sanctuary remodeled. New organ installed. Kidz Space & Boy Scout Room added.**

Denise Filip, hired (began 2/13/2008) as Full Time Director of Music Ministries to fill the position vacated by Bruce Graham; Martha Hill is long time organist, and Carol Cumming is long time church pianist with assistance as needed of Suzanne Deal Wells and Susan Albano.

2009 **Rev. Wallace Johnson** retires.

Rev. Heather Wood Davis becomes our associate minister.

The Rev. Carol Seaman, Interim Pastor. The Rev. Dr. John Rogers served as a Bridge Interim.

Art Group, led by Adelaide Silkworth, begins classes.

2010 848 members. The Rev. Dr. William Cockrill served as Interim Pastor.

History Committee formed with Amelia McComb Stafford, Chm. Arthur Burgess, Jr. donated his FPC history collection to the church.

2011 The Rev. Mark Clark served as Interim Pastor.

The **Rev. Deborah McEachran** accepts call as Sr. Minister in Baltimore, MD.

(June 2011) The **Rev. Lynn Webber** becomes Parish Associate.

The **Rev. Whit Malone** called as Senior Pastor to First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, NC.

829 Active members

2012 Freida Caldwell retires as DCE. She served as a volunteer and on staff for almost 40 years. Church staff reorganized to include Melvin Meares, Director of Mission; Meaghan Texer, Director of Family Ministries; and Janet Brooks, Director of Children's Ministries.

2013 (4/28/13) **FPC Homecoming & Celebration of 140 years – 1873 -2013.**

Membership 847, Budget \$1,253, 532

Contemporary Service began Sept. 2013. Becky Ford approved as Director of Contemporary Worship Ministries (May 19).

(1/26/2013) Hickory hosts Presbytery meeting. Met at our church on Jan. 30th.

(May 30 & Aug 25, 2013) Willard House demolition discussed.

(June 23, 2013) To name new worship service "**Kairos**"/mentioned Aug. and November too.

Presbyterian Historical Society met at our church in October.

2014 Steven Mowery is Choir Director (May)

Traditional service held at 10:00 and Kairos at 11:00.

Becky Ford resigns as Director of Contemporary Music Ministries.

Rev. Lynn Webber resigns as Parish Associate.

Total active members: 874

2015 (02/22/15) Katherine Mull approved as new Youth Director.

Carol Anne Hartman begins as Director of Kairos Music.

Traditional and Kairos at same time and later, Traditional at 10:30/ Kairos at 9:30. Zack Taylor designs made for Kairos.

(08/09/2015) Design for sanctuary

Mission to Hunting Ridge Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland (Rev. Deborah McEachran's church).

(October 25, 2015) Discontinuing 8:30 service voted on and the last service was on November 29

Membership: 796

2016 Live Nativity scene.

Sarah McCall White becomes Director of Preschool & Children's Ministry.

Budget: Salvation Army, Family Care, ALFA, Soup Kitchen, Safe Harbor Rescue Mission, Habitat for Humanity, Exodus House, Hospice of Catawba County, Hebron USA, Family Guidance Center, Centro-Latina, Guatemala Partnership, Women's Rescue Center, Pregnancy Care Center, etc. put in budget for 2017.

Rev. Wallace Johnson bestowed the title of Pastor Emeritus of FPC.

Membership: 783

2017 Whit Malone's pulpit exchange (Scotland) – late June to mid August.

Senior Highs to Mexico Mission (July 15 – 19)

New First Pres. app loaded to phone.

(Aug. 27) Capital Campaign starts with John Clark and Suzanne Wells, chairs. \$100,000 benevolence component designated of the \$1,700,000 million goal.

Membership: 781

2018 Active members 801

2019 Dedication Sunday (01/06/2019) Dedication of Building Project consisting of Porte Cochere, a new playground, a Gathering Room, and outside covered walkway between Ed. Building and Sanctuary.

25th Anniversary of our Guatemalan Partnership with Monte Hebron Church in Santo Domingo, Suchitepequez.

Safety Committee formed.

Active members 835

2020 Due to Covid 19, services were prerecorded and later were livestreamed.

Preschool closes on March 12 through the end of the school year due to Covid precaution. It reopened September 14, 2020.

Kathryn McGinnis (FPC member) ordained for ministry in Santa Cruz, California via zoom.

Wednesday Night Suppers & Stewardship Dinner served as take-out meals, picked up at Porte Cochere. "Virtual" Stewardship service.

Outdoor worship in August, 2020.

Safety Committee met (February 23). Decision that no one should be armed at services.

Limited number (50) of in-person worshipers (Sept. 27, 2020).

Mary Putman, Office Manager and Bookkeeper retires after over 30 years at FPC.

New positions: Sue Shoffner, Financial Administrator
Beth Taylor, Director of Communications & Heritage Group

Ashlee Barry, in charge of Wednesday Night Suppers

Jay Crane retires as church Treasurer

Membership 842

2021 Church services were again held as in-person services with protective mask requested. Other meetings to be held outside if possible.

Stewardship Dinner again served as a take-out meal picked up at the Porte Cochere. Wednesday Night Suppers still served as take-out meals.

Starting on September 12, the schedule of Kairos in the fellowship hall was held at 9:30 and the Sanctuary service held at 11:15. Sunday school and coffee attended between the services.

(Sept. 20) Ordination of Katheryn McGinnis, her home church, at traditional service.

Steven Mowery retires as Minister of Music.

Membership stood at 591 after some inactive members were removed.

Kiki Neale becomes our choir director.

2022 **Rev. Whit Malone** retires.

(February) Normal in-person activities at church begin again, mask still recommended.

Stewardship Dinner again in the fellowship hall.

Rev. Richard Floyd becomes our new minister.

Membership increases to 625.

Wednesday Night Suppers resume in fellowship hall in April.

On December 31, our Boy Scout Troop 231 dropped its charter after being continually active over 92 years.

2023 Celebration of 150 year anniversary service and gathering on April 23. Theme: **Growing our Heritage**. Former ministers, former members and congregation celebrated with a meal after the Sunday service.

Sources

Memories: Rev. G. Wallace Johnson, Rev. Deborah McEachran, Melvin Meares, Ellie Wilson, Jennifer Nelson, Kenneth Hill, Keith Nichols, Becky Stevens, Margaret Ann Campbeill, Adrienne Washer, Sharon Turner, Don Coleman

Mission Trip History - Melvin Meares

Session Minutes

Church Bulletins & Newsletters

Histories of First Presbyterian Church – Hickory, NC

- *History of the First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, N.C. 1873 – 1923*, Dr. W. B. Ramsay
- *Historical Sketch of First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, N. C.*, Josiah J. Willard
- *The Centennial History of First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, N. C.*, Mrs. Edmond Smith & Gerald B. Hurst
- *First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, N.C., 1873 – 2013*, Amelia McComb Stafford & Susie Gray Abercrombie

Presbyterian Women Circle Yearbook 2022 – 23

Newspaper articles – *Hickory Daily Record*

Josiah Willard album

Sally Todd's Boy Scout Scrapbook

Historical albums prepared by Amelia McComb Stafford

Times to Remember - Important Dates – First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, NC, 1873 -2013, Susie Abercrombie

Memories & Stories Of First Presbyterian Church Members





Memories & Stories

Margaret Ann Campbell

Back in about 1989, I was President of the Women of the church. I took seven women up to Montreat for the Women's Conference. We rented a nice, newly renovated home on Greybeard Road right across the road from the entrance to the campground and from Kirk and Dorothy Allen's home. The owner of our house called me the night before we left for Montreat. He'd been working on the house and it suddenly occurred to him that he'd inadvertently switched the hot and cold water pipes. It was too late to do anything about this. "Not to worry" I told him. "We'll remember."

The first morning dawned grey and foggy. We all got up, used the bathroom, and dressed for the day. I was the last one to use the renovated bathroom and completely forgot about the pipe switch. I forgot too that you have to run hot water a bit before it gets hot. Sooo....why was there steam in the toilet? I was the seventh person to use that toilet and I wondered why I felt steam! We had fun laughing over our mistake. The next morning everyone wanted to be last!

That same year was the year Hurricane Hugo roared right through little Hickory, N.C. It arrived very early on Friday morning, the day before the women of our church were hosting a Women's Conference for the Western North Carolina Presbytery. Phone lines and trees lay all over our yards and roads. This was before cell phones. Surely no one would even think of coming to our meeting. However I felt I needed to confer with our Vice President just in case.

I talked my husband into driving me to Evelyn King's house since it was way out Highway #127 and I couldn't walk out there. So after dodging trees, wires, and various other things in the road, we made it out to the Kings' house.

I remember even climbing over big trees! Evelyn and I must have found a working phone because we discovered women WANTED to come. Many towns were unscathed. They wanted to go to our grocery stores, and possibly they wanted to see our destruction since the actual eye had gone right through Hickory. Whatever!

We called our caterer whose company was out of town. "Yes," she said. She could come. I couldn't believe it. We were still on. The church still had power because it was on the power grid of the local hospital. Therefore, the next morning by early dawn, women were all fixing their faces, fixing their hair, and dressing in the church bathrooms. We were ready for the day! We parked the attendees' cars, greeted everyone warmly, and acted as if nothing out of the ordinary had even occurred! It HAD!!

When Gretchen Peed was President of the Women of the Church, she used to roar up on her big Harley and get off to attend the women's meeting. I think some women were amazed.

And of course, everyone remembers the "Swingers" Sunday school class and their adventures. We all remember going to a dinner theater in Charlotte and being introduced as the "Swingers" from the First Presbyterian Church in Hickory N.C. We were lucky no one made us change our name. Those members became leaders in our church!

A group of us went to the Women's Conference one year and Freida, who never met a stranger, started talking to Joan Salmon-Campbell, a big leader in women's work years ago. Before we knew it, Freida invited her to dinner and we had a wonderful time getting to know her. Then she actually came to Hickory and led a Willard Chair weekend - all because of Freida!

Bobby and I were taking a group of young people to Florida. The church van's air conditioner didn't seem to reach all the way to the back and those people were hot. Bobby stopped at a Wal-Mart and bought a hose for a clothes dryer. He attached it to the poor air conditioner and when some poor hot soul needed it, we just passed the "air" to him. It kept us cool and laughing. We had a flat tire on the way home. That darling boy, Joe Fox, jumped out of the van and fixed it! What a life saver he was!

There are two reasons we joined the Presbyterian Church when we were young. One was that Bobby's mother was very forceful. Another reason was what happened the night of our rehearsal at Corinth Church, where I grew up. Our wedding director was Mrs. Alhouse, the minister's wife. For some reason she kept calling Bobby, my future husband, Bobby Ann. I assumed she was nervous and maybe frustrated. She kept on...."Bobby Ann, you stand here, you go here, etc." Anyway, Bobby said that night, "I'm not going to any church where the minister's wife keeps calling me 'Bobby Ann'."

So, we came to the Presbyterian church, not Corinth!



Memories & Stories

Don Coleman

Memories of Purchasing the New Organ

The Worship Committee was apprised of continuing minor issues with the organ. The year was 2004.

A special “organ committee” was approved to assess the instrument. The committee members were:

Tod Caldwell	Charles Dixon
Don Coleman	Dr. Martha Hill
Carole Cumming	Kim Salyards

A consultant and two organists were chosen to assess and make recommendations regarding the adjustment and repairs as to a new instrument:

Vince Crist, consultant/organist (Church of Ascension)
Dr. Larry Lowder, organist (First Methodist Church, Hickory)
Robert Smith, organist (First Presbyterian Church, Morganton, NC)

After six months of analysis, it was determined that the current organ should be replaced.

The recommendation to replace the instrument was approved by the church session and congregation in 2006 as a principal portion of an upcoming capital campaign. Numerous organ manufacturers were considered.

The committee visited churches in a ninety mile radius of Hickory. With input from the consultants/organists, a decision was made to interview three companies:

Casavant Freres – Saint- Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada
Orgues Letourneau – Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada
Holtkamp Organ – Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Initial conversations and meetings were held with each company. Afterwards, visits again to churches with these instruments began. This entailed many factors: size of the organ for worship space as well as all aspects from a quality standpoint and working relationship with each company. This also entailed visiting churches in five locations in North Carolina and one in South Carolina. Some of the visits were over a full day.

Cost was discussed with each company. That was determined by the size of the instrument regarding “stops” and “ranks.” The committee unanimously selected the Letourneau instrument.

A period of three months of discussions with Letourneau ensued. The cost was \$649,950.00. The initial timeframe for installation was 2009. Due to a cancelation by one church, the date was updated to June 2008.

Fortunately, the existing organ chamber was adequate for the new instrument. Preparations were the responsibility of the Property Committee.

In early February of 2008, three committee member visited the Letourneau facility to view and assess the upcoming completion. Committee Members: Don Coleman, Martha Hill, and Denise Filip.

On June 8th, 2008, the congregation blessed the first pipe in preparation for its installation. The organ was installed from early June until September and dedicated in October of 2008. Three dedicatory organ recitals were presented by Dr. Martha Hill (2) and D. Dudley Oakes (1).



Memories & Stories

Kenneth Hill

I do not remember ever not going to First Presbyterian. I do not remember the first time I went, but it was over 70 years ago.

Kindergarten memories

We would surround our teacher in a semi-circle while she read Bible stories. We learned about a garden with a sneaky snake, Noah saving the animals with his boat and God's Rainbow Promise of no more floods. My favorite was the shepherd boy who saved his people from the mean giant. After Bible stories, we would go to what is now called the Bell/Choir room for juice and nap time with blankets on the floor.

An Easter egg hunt took place on the lawn where the porte-cochere is now located. The Go signal was given. Amelia (Stafford), even though she was among the youngest, was first off the line. She ran from spot-to-spot grabbing egg after egg while the rest of us were still looking. I personally do not recall finding any eggs.

Primary School memories

Our home was on what is now the Glenn R. Frye parking lot. Oakwood School and First Presbyterian were within easy walking distance. I thought proximity determined both our school and church. Mother explained the concept of school districts, but we were to choose our own church. My maternal and paternal grandparents were Presbyterian as were my aunts, uncles, and cousins. Skipping school, Sunday school or church never existed as an option for me or my brother.

During the week it was jeans and sneakers, but church attire was always "Sunday school clothes" consisting of a white shirt, neck tie, dress pants and black shoes. On Mother's Day, a red rosebud was worn on the lapel.

My friends and I would compete to find the largest acorns possible and stuff them in our pockets while waiting outside for church to start. I remember the shock to the entire congregation upon the announcement, from the pulpit, that the oak tree was diseased and there was no alternative but to cut it down.

I liked our Sunday church bulletin. (To see an exact replica of the cover page, look above the water fountain at the entrance to the Fellowship Hall). Contained inside the bulletin were two Bible verses: "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the House of the Lord" (like we had a choice, we were already there) and "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come unto me,'" which included a drawing of Jesus with children gathered around him. Both verses made me feel welcome.

Johnny Piatt, an elderly church member, stood inside the church front doors greeting everyone as they arrived, even us kids. He was gifted with a natural warmth and friendliness. I don't believe he was ever asked to volunteer; he just enjoyed talking to everybody.

During the church service I would gaze upon the beautiful chandelier lights hanging from the sanctuary ceiling, while thinking what to do in the event of an earthquake. The fox stoles in fashion at the time were even more engaging. If I was fortunate enough to sit behind a lady with a fox stole wrapped around her neck, the whole sermon could be spent staring into fox eyes while they stared back at me.

No air conditioning.... I would constantly complain to Mom about having to sit still for so long. She, a first grade teacher, was sympathetic for the most part until one time I guess she had enough, and told me I should just be quiet and listen to the sermon. Excellent advice which I still try to follow today.

The hymn numbers were listed on plaques hung on the wall beside each pulpit. There was no need to fumble through the bulletin trying to find the next song to sing. Sometimes, if church was running late, we were allowed to sing only the first and last verse.

Vacation Bible School was held in the old session room where we would memorize verses lovingly taught by Madeliene Bibee. Our class had individual desks. The room seemed so much larger then. The catechism was to be learned at home.

Cub Scout Pack 231 would meet in the aforementioned bell/choir room for uniform inspection: cap, bandanna, shirt with badges, belt, polished shoes and clean finger nails. We were graded by the Scout Masters. I do not remember our den ever winning. Once a month we had a Den Mother host our meeting at her home. Cookies were always provided.

Adolescent memories

Communion was four times a year: Christmas, Easter and two other times. Fred Stair was our long-term minister and taught our Confirmation class. One assignment was to memorize all the books of the Bible; that type of memorization was never my strong suit. Thankfully, he was kind enough to let me retake the test. A skill needed for communion was passing the stack of cups on the heavy brass trays without spilling them.

One of many Sunday school teachers I had was Locke Russel. He was a lawyer with an engaging speaking style that attracted our full attention. His sense of humor was no more evident than when he chuckled and reiterated the case when the witness was asked "Were you cut in the fracas?" The witness answered,

"No Sir, just behind it!" Occasionally our class was able to shift Mr. Russel off topic and onto an analysis of the previous Saturday night's TV episode of "Perry Mason."

Many memories are associated with the old parking lot. A narrow uphill driveway between the old fellowship hall (Sr. High room) on the left and the manse on the right led to the lot which is now occupied by the new fellowship hall. A low retaining wall running along the right side provided a sitting area; a basketball goal marked the end of the parking area. The lot portico was our gathering spot after Sunday school and before church. The lot retaining wall was our preferred place to sit and talk during Sunday evening youth fellowship. If someone had a guitar, Peter Paul and Mary songs were our favorite. Sometimes a "cool" adult would come join us. The parking lot itself was a great place for Boy Scout car washes held on Saturdays.

One Sunday afternoon our group started an impromptu football game on what is now the children's outdoor playground area. Three or four boys around our age from Ridgeview were walking down the sidewalk and asked if they could join us. "Sure" we said. They were more skilled than we, and I later wondered if they grew to be part of the undefeated Ridgeview football team of the mid-sixties.

I do not recollect much during the high school years other than our Sunday school teacher was Mr. Meachum. He would tell his story of the one and only football game he played for Duke University. During class we would ask and discuss the Difficult Questions. I believe his teachings were to strengthen our foundations of faith as we headed off to college.

Our recent Palm Sunday resurrected an old memory when Christy & Michael were in grammar school. They both had attended Sunday school and church, brought their palms home, and laid them on the kitchen counter. Shortly thereafter we heard unusual remarks from my wife, Eileen, who was preparing lunch. We ran to her aid where we found her battling dozens and dozens of little black bugs crawling all along the counters. That was the last time palm leaves were allowed indoors.



Memories & Stories

Martha Hill

Organ History

My organ career began when I was 14 years old - a freshmen in high school. I had been studying organ for a year or so, and substituted at St. John's Episcopal Church in my little hometown, Marion, North Carolina. St. John's hired me, and I played throughout high school. I continued to study through college and graduate school, and the organist jobs continued to provide financial support. After a break during the first few years of teaching and marriage, a friend called to tell me their church needed an organist. Guess what??? The late Samuel Duncan McMillan, pastor of that church, once preached a sermon about being called to serve when your preparation intersects with a need in the church.

My first Sunday at First Presbyterian was Easter, 1992, as I substituted for the substitute. The organist of 18 years, Brenda Smith Travis, was in declining health; her substitute was Dottie Triplett. The previous week on Palm Sunday, Dottie fell and broke her wrist, which created a dire emergency. The current choir director, Linda Blackwell, just happened to be the choral director at College Park Middle School, where I was the principal. I had been very careful not to reveal upon moving to the Hickory area that I was a church organist. But, as a fellow musician, Linda knew my little secret.

After that Sunday, Dr. Wallace Johnson, head pastor, asked if I would continue substituting until the situation was resolved. After much consideration, I agreed. The rest of the story is truly "history"!

I remember being told that Brenda Smith Travis had been the First Presbyterian organist for 18 years. I soon after exclaimed to my husband, "How does anyone stay in a church organist position that long?" Well, I have had to eat those words, as they say! My tenure ends on October 29, 2023 after exactly 31 and 1/2 years! Those years have been a continual blessing as I have accompanied Sunday services, weddings, funerals, Presbytery meetings, ordination services, hymn festivals, seasonal celebrations, and other special occasions.

A highlight of my organist career was being part of the process for the search, design, consultation, and installation of our wonderful Létourneau Pipe Organ, installed in 2008. I was most fortunate to travel with Don Coleman and music director, Denise Filip to Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada when the organ was complete to play it in the gallery of the factory. We were awed by the sound, and could hardly wait to have it "home".

When the organ arrived by truck to Hickory, the members of First Presbyterian gathered to carry the pipes into the sanctuary where they were carefully laid across the pews for installation.

The late Dr. Dudley Oakes, eventual owner of Létourneau, played the dedicatory recital, and I later performed an Advent/Christmas recital as well. I still love the organ's beautiful voices, and it is far and above all we dreamed it would be!

It has also been a great privilege to work with several really talented music directors over the years. All have brought their own unique style and gifts to First Presbyterian, and the choirs and I have grown musically as a result. As mentioned above, I began with Linda Larkin Blackwell in 1992. Others that followed were Bob Taylor, Bruce Graham, Denise Filip, Dr. Steven Mowery, and Christina (Kiki) Neale.

It goes without saying that when you work with people for long periods of time, you will have many stories to tell - and I do have many - enough to fill a book. Some are hilarious!

During Bruce Graham's tenure, the sanctuary was undergoing restoration of the roof, soffits, and facias. A squirrel managed to get into the sanctuary wing. The youth choir boys unsuccessfully tried to "catch" it at their Monday rehearsal. After Wednesday night supper, I went to the sanctuary to practice, stopping by the restroom. As I proceeded to sit on the toilet, one pretty dead squirrel was floating face down in the toilet bowl. More surprised than anything else, I let out a pretty loud holler. Choir member, Steve Finger, came running down the hall to see what was wrong. When I showed him the drowned squirrel he said, "That squirrel didn't drown. It died of a heart attack when it saw that big butt coming toward it!" The next Sunday about half way through the service, I happened to look at the wooden pediment right behind Wallace Johnson's head - only to see a squirrel perched there. Bruce had discovered a life-size stuffed squirrel in Blowing Rock, and put it there as a joke. Thereafter, I ended up with quite a collection of squirrels from the choir and church members. They were popular! Even Dudley Oakes asked if he could have one when he did the dedicatory organ recital!

Christmas Eve is always a beautiful, reverent, and very special service. The eleven o'clock service used to be the most attended. The only problem was that everyone had been celebrating with family and friends before they arrived at the service - including choir members! On one particular Christmas Eve, Wallace began his meditation. I looked across the chancel to see one of the basses - really big fellow - beginning to nod off. His head would roll backward, and then he would pop back up. Pretty soon other choir members began to notice his bobbing, and it was all we could do to NOT to laugh. Finally, he was

overcome, and his head went all the way back, his mouth fell open, and he let out the biggest, longest snore I have ever heard. It resonated around the chancel. Needless to say, the entire choir "fell out."

One Sunday during communion, the elder serving the choir passed the bread tray to the left side of the choir. In the Presbyterian manner, the tray passed from choir member to choir member down the front row. The last person turned to hand it to the second row, and the person receiving it lost control. We watched as the plate juggled for a moment, and then flew directly up in the air like a bottle rocket. It seemed as if we were watching in slow motion. Communion bread flew over the choir loft as if being blown in the wind. Any attempts to catch the silver tray were futile, and it hit the floor with a metallic gong, and began rotating loudly on the floor - slowing down as gravity did its work. I was playing music during all this. I am sure the elder served the juice, but only the Lord knows. I can't remember!

There have been "church" mice, who really loved the starlight mints left in the organ - leaving mouse droppings after their feast. A soprano even once lost her petticoat when the elastic broke during the anthem. It slithered down under her robe, and she just stepped out of it and kept singing - a real trooper! Cell phones have created a whole new dynamic. There was the Maundy Thursday service where my personal cell phone rang just as all of the lights were extinguished. I couldn't find it. A very unsavory word may have been uttered, heard by most of the choir!

Where you have people, you have humor! Since we are created in God's image, can you imagine His mighty fun and laughter?

The choir is family, and we have shared all of the circumstances and emotions that families experience. There have been situations of incredible sadness and situations so funny you couldn't catch your breath! Their hard work and dedication every week inspired me to a better musician and person.

As a church musician, worship is what we do! I love this quote by Paul Westermeyer, former music professor at Elmhurst College. He said, "The practical life of the church musician is the outcome of a vocation -- a calling -- that serves God and the people of God with God's unique gift of music."

Additionally, music unites all of God's people in praise and worship at the same place and station in time. One collective voice of praise raised to the Father. Who would not want to clear the cobwebs from the organ pipes and lead that?

I have been beyond blessed and privileged to have been called to serve at First Presbyterian Church!



Memories & Stories

Wallace Johnson

I have tried to write what I consider some highlights of the church's ministry while I was pastor. I'm putting them in loose chronological order, but I'm not certain of actual dates. Needless to say this is just my recollection and is certainly not inclusive. I began my ministry at First Presbyterian in December 1989, and the 20 years I served were the most fulfilling years of my life.

One challenge faced by the congregation in 1990 was creating a more effective ministry for church officers. After considerable conversations and a number of meetings, the church voted to change to a unicameral system of government - Session only - no Deacons. This was not without some disagreement and conflict while at an "unofficial" meeting of church officers over lunch at the Hickory Station Restaurant

In 1991, many opinions were expressed. One highly respected elder finally said something like, "I think this unicameral system has some merit, and I believe we should give it a try." Others began to fall in line, and within the year the congregation voted to go to this new form of government.

Also, in 1991 another opportunity for growth was the process for calling an Associate Pastor. After months of work by a duly elected Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), the Committee felt led to call Rev. Lucy Turner, the first female Associate Pastor in the history of the church. It proved to be a good match, and the congregation benefited from ministry from the female perspective. In 2000, Lucy resigned to accept a new call.

In 2002, the congregation called the Rev. Deborah McEachran to be the new Associate Pastor. While Deborah was active in many components of ministry in the church, her primary focus was on ministry beyond the congregation. She effectively led the church into new forms of service which continually challenged church members to engage in ministry beyond themselves. Since Deborah was bi-lingual, she was active in connecting our predominantly white church in Hickory with the Latino community.

It was a healthy stretch for everyone. Deborah served our church until she was called in 2011 to serve a multi-cultural congregation in Baltimore. One of the strengths of the congregation was ministry beyond our four walls.

One of my dreams was to commit fifty percent of the annual church income to benevolences. While the church did not reach that goal, it did at one point give over thirty percent of its annual resources to benevolent causes. The church continued to place mission as a top priority in the life of the congregation and in the annual budget.

One of the unique ministries to which the church contributed was ALFA (Aids Leadership Foothills Alliance). In 1991, this organization began its work. This congregation was the first in Hickory to provide support for this new and controversial ministry for people with AIDS. In the Session discussion about this new ministry, elders committed funds (which continued in the church budget for years) and helped renovate office space for ALFA.

Another form of outreach revolved around "The Fifth Sunday Supper" which included First Presbyterian, First United Methodist Church, Hartzel Memorial United Methodist Church and Clinton Tabernacle AME Zion Church. These inter-racial times for fellowship and worship challenged members of each congregation as people learned from one another and caught a glimpse of the unity God intends for faithful Christians.

In the past, the congregation had been blessed to be the recipient of a significant sum of money through a generous gift to the church by Dr. Cecelia Willard. The church had established the Willard Chair Endowment to bring speakers, programs, etc. who would benefit the community as well as the congregation. The renewal of the Willard Chair began in 1991 when the Willard Chair Committee invited Rev. Joan Salmon-Campbell, the retiring Moderator of our General Assembly, to lead worship and present lectures to the congregation. In one worship service, Rev. Salmon-Campbell began to lead the singing in her African-American style. As the beat to the music repeated itself, Rev. Salmon-Campbell encouraged worshipers to clap, sing and sway, and lift their hands to the heavens. It was a unique and rich experience for this reserved congregation. Members tried to participate as best they could. One of the older members, a reserved and committed elder, was seen tentatively lifting his hands as the music continued. His hands only got as high as his head, but his spirit was great! Willard Chair events became an annual highlight for the church and the community. This program enriched many people, and the church will be forever grateful to Dr. Willard for this contribution to the church.

KinderKids was a preschool program which evolved over those two decades into a much larger and more comprehensive week-day children's ministry. Under very capable directors, the church preschool served countless children in the community and their families five days a week. It was a vital part of the ministry of the church.

Acquisition of property contiguous to the church was a significant component of the church's long-range plan during this time. The church purchased a lot which faces 2nd Avenue NW to extend the existing parking lot from 2nd Avenue NW to 3rd Avenue NW. Then later the church purchased the lot behind the fellowship hall which faces 2nd Avenue NW for future use. The church was quite wise to buy these pieces of property. Who knows how this land might be used for ministry in the years to come?

During the 90s, when the economy was booming, church members faithfully gave to the congregation and adopted the largest budget in the history of the church! Combined with the funds committed to capital campaigns during this time, the congregation demonstrated a generosity which was unparalleled in the life of the church.

In 1994 the church committed to a major building program to renovate all the church facilities except the sanctuary and to expand the church facilities. Gifts and pledges to the capital campaign totaled \$3.5 million.

To make room for a new fellowship hall and classrooms, the church demolished the Belk House adjacent to the office wing of the church. The Belk House had been a church manse (minister's home) in the past and had been renovated to serve as a lovely ladies parlor on the ground floor and a youth center on the second floor. It was a sad day for many when the old building was torn down. But with a wise and a fruitful spirit, church members accepted the fact that a new fellowship hall was essential for the expanding ministry of the church, and that site was the logical place for this addition.

A few years later, the congregation voted to support another capital campaign, and members of the church faithfully gave to support this project. Capital improvements included completely renovating the sanctuary and the purchase of a new organ. When the renovation began, worship was held in the new fellowship hall for several months. A highlight was the Sunday the congregation began worship in the fellowship hall, and then processed to the newly renovated sanctuary with great joy and thanksgiving to conclude Sunday morning worship.

A year or two later after considerable conversation, which included some theological and practical reflection, the church constructed a columbarium and memorial garden adjacent to the sanctuary. This addition to our ministry was well received, and the remains of numerous church members found their permanent resting place in either a niche on the wall of the columbarium or in the ground of the garden.

Another transition in the use of the church's facilities was when Hospice of Catawba Valley began using a few classrooms in the Educational Building of the church and then moved to the Willard House as its work expanded. Eventually, as Hospice continued to grow, it built its own facility on Robinson Road.

As the 11:00 worship attendance increased and the sanctuary was almost full on Sunday mornings, the decision was made to begin a second worship service to relieve the crowding. This service was held at 8:30 a.m. in the new fellowship hall and became a favorite time of worship for many.

As part of the priority the congregation placed on missions, the church not only gave dollars but also gave an enormous amount of time and energy to church mission trips. In 1989, the church supported the first senior high mission trip to Mexico. That was just the beginning of dozens of mission trips which were significant experiences for all who participated.

Annual youth mission trips continued every year, usually alternating between a trip outside the states and one within the continental U.S. The mission trip ministry began to expand, and eventually involved trips by junior and senior youth, adults, medical professionals, and families. Such trips were possible only because of the commitment of countless adults who served as both advisors to the youth and participants in the other trips.

The key person who got this ministry off the ground was Freida Caldwell. She organized and led the first youth mission trip, and its success set the foundation for many trips to come. Freida was an indispensable member of the church staff. Not only was she a much beloved youth director, but she was also responsible for developing the children's ministry which included the expanded preschool program and the LOGOS program. Freida was a tireless recruiter of teachers for the Sunday school classes for children and youth and for the LOGOS program. In addition, she befriended countless youth and continued to be a wise guide for these kids even after they became adults.

Eventually Karen Emerick was called to serve as Director of Youth Ministry and Christian Education. She served well in both roles for two years then resigned to return to teaching. Lindsay Ray was then called to serve as Director of Youth Ministry. Lindsay was a conscientious member of the church staff and also served two years and then resigned to pursue other interests.

Then the church called Rev. Heather Wood who continued the congregation's strong focus on the youth of the church. Calling Rev. Wood was special because she joined our church as a youth and continued to be actively involved in the life of the congregation until she left for college. Then she attended seminary, and finally was called back to serve at First Pres.

About the same time as the installation of the new organ, the congregation expanded its music ministry by employing its first full-time Director of Music Ministries. For years the church's music ministry was led by dedicated professionals including organists Brenda Smith, Dottie Triplett, and Martha Hill (who was still the organist when I retired!) and Music Directors Linda Blackwell and then Bob Taylor. The first full-time music director was Bruce Graham followed by Denise Filip. The music of handbells and children's choirs, in addition to the chancel choir, enriched Sunday worship week in and week out.

A variety of new ministries began in the 90s and continued into the first decade of the twenty-first century. More young couples with children began to join

the church and become active in its ministry. The LOGOS mid-week program expanded to include first through fifth grades and came to be known as Wednesday Alive. This program included four components: worship and music, Bible study, recreation, and supper. Only with the weekly dedication of adults who planned the program, taught classes, led recreation, participated in the music portion of LOGOS, and served as “table parents” could this ministry have succeeded.

Eventually, a new and more contemporary worship service began on Sunday evenings. The worship services were led by dedicated musicians, a faithful coordinating team, and Rev. McEachran. This alternate form of worship came to be called “The Journey” and provided a different, more informal way for people to worship. It also attracted people who needed various kinds of help which expanded the ministry of this special service of worship into part of the outreach ministry of the church.

Another development in the church was the beginning of the Stephen Ministry for the congregation and community. Kelly Fulcher led the training of Stephen Ministers who provided effective, confidential care for people in crisis.

Family retreats in Montreat began and continued off and on for years. This annual Friday - Sunday experience was enriching in many ways, and hundreds of people grew closer to one another through these unique times together.

A new ministry for older church members, named The Heritage, was developed and provided a monthly time of fellowship, lunch, and learning for all. Wednesday Night Suppers were also revived and proved to be a weekly highlight for many as they filled the fellowship hall. Chef Matt Parker provided wonderful meals, and the fellowship of church members served to strengthen the congregation in many ways.

The congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary of the stone church in 2006. Many former pastors came back to greet old friends and to reminisce about people and ministry in times gone by.

This chapter in the life of the church would be quite incomplete without the recognition of Mary Putman. Mary has been the church receptionist, secretary, bookkeeper, and office manager for the church since 1990. Her skills, understanding, and love of the church were unequal. By her unfailing presence, she steadily guided the congregation through several pastors, many staff members, and the transitions which come with such changes. She was the glue which held things together at times. More than one person has said, “You can replace pastors, but you can’t replace Mary!”

Over these past twenty years many people joined the church. There were baptisms, marriages, and funerals. These marker events in the life of the

congregation served to symbolize the commitment of members to each other and to the ongoing desire to serve others. The faithfulness to Jesus Christ and to the church has continued. It is obvious that God’s spirit was certainly active in countless ways over these years, and the future is full of hope!



Memories & Stories

*Deborah McEachran
Huntington Presbyterian Church
Baltimore, MD*

Centro Latino was in its infancy when I came to First Presbyterian in 2002. I believe at that time their offices were in the St. John’s United Methodist Church. One of my most profound memories was when FPC was able to host a large immigration clinic for Latinos on a Saturday. It seems that the original location fell through for some reason, and we mobilized and were able to host representatives from the Mexican consulate who were coming in to help process paperwork, provide the equivalent of social security cards, etc. We had cables all over so that computers could be working at various spots in the fellowship hall. Several FPC members sprang into action, and it was a very successful day.

Multiple members of FPC were involved in various ways: Bilingual Vacation Bible School, teaching English and serving as members of the Centro Latino Board (Jay Crane was the treasurer for a long time).

I remember using the FPC bus (with various volunteer drivers including Blake Watts and Jay Crane) to pick up Latino/Latina students at Grandview Middle School and take them to Centro Latino for an afterschool program (maybe 1 or 2 times per week- not too sure on the frequency).

Church members were also very supportive of the planting of the Latino congregation that became Emmanuel Presbyterian Church. Some came and met with them to work out the kinks. Some came and worshipped with them on special occasions. We held at least one Posada event at Christmas time, and several church members on that street allowed their houses to be used for “knocking on the door of the inn” by Jesus and Maria.

We also held English classes for adults at one point at FPC, and matched English speakers with Spanish speakers so they could each teach each other. Alice Lentz’ bilingual children’s book, *I Teach You, You Teach Me* was printed and shared in many places, including through Centro Latino.

The Leflers took a special interest in Latino ministry and housed a young woman from Costa Rica for a time.

We used our church as a meeting place and a gathering place for special events.

That is what I can think of now. FPC was really a key player in Presbyterian outreach to the Latino/a neighbors in Hickory! I believe Rebeca Costa came to FPC through those connections somehow.

Reflections on the Journey

The Journey grew out of a desire to offer something other than our more traditional sanctuary worship on Sunday. I remember that Bruce Graham was our music director at the time, and he was very instrumental in getting this started. We had a group of church members (including a high school or college student) who brainstormed and prayed together. The church committed some funds for this effort which included new software for using a screen, promotional materials (banner out front, flyers to share in community) and food costs. We wanted a relaxed atmosphere, and I remember Bruce insisting that there be food afterward that was not a ready made meal, but something each person had to put together (like a peanut butter sandwich with bread, peanut butter, jam) so that we would spend more time together making and then eating our very simple meal around the tables.

We hoped to attract a younger crowd who might not be comfortable or interested in more formal worship. We quickly learned that we were not attracting the particular demographic we thought we would, but a group in our community who was very much left out of traditional worshipping congregations — persons without stable housing or employment. The meal part of the service continued and grew a little more substantial when we found that the food was really important. Worship was informal and conversational. Our music was led by several church members with guitar, sometimes drum.

The meals were planned and ingredients gathered by another team. Mostly Heather and I shared worship leadership. We had time for testimonies and I especially remember the time we were able to provide a funeral service for a member of the community who died with no one else to provide a time and place for corporate grieving.

We built strong relationships - several of which continue to this day. I stay in touch with folks I met there, particularly at holiday time. One man went with us on a mission trip to Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina. For those who attended, we were a bright spot in the week, a place to grow in faith and a community of trust and acceptance for people who did not always receive that in other parts of Hickory. It certainly was a “journey” for all who participated!



Memories & Stories

Jennifer Nelson

In 1994 while looking for a Mother’s Morning Out program, I had a discussion with Freida Caldwell, the Christian Education Director at the time, asking if FPC had ever considered a Mother’s Morning Out program. It so happened that researching a program was one of her goals.

She asked if I would be on a committee along with Sharon Meares, Diane Gammon, and Christy Taylor. We researched other church programs in the area such as The Episcopal Church of the Ascension and First Baptist Church, Hickory.

At the time, Beth Dilworth was the preschool director at FBC. She shared their guidelines and policies and valuable insight into various considerations. The committee decided a preschool program would fit the needs of the church and Beth Dilworth was eventually hired as FPC Preschool’s first director.

The program opened in the fall of 1995 with programs for babies 6 months through 2 years Monday-Friday, 3 year old preschool Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and 4 year old preschool Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. The hours were 9am – 12pm with an optional “lunch bunch” hour until 1pm.



Memories & Stories

Keith Nichols

It was a Saturday morning in 1999, when Rhonda and I had brunch in Freida Caldwell's back yard ---- and we drank her lemonade!!

Little did we know that saying "NO" to Freida was impossible, especially after drinking her lemonade.

Little did we know that becoming Sr. High youth advisors would grow into us becoming fully engaged in the lives of the youth and this church.

Little did we know that the years we spent with the Sr. Highs would give us lasting memories that are still very special to us today. Just last week we found "Betsy the Bear" – a stuffed animal named for Betsy Grant, who gave it to us when we had our son, Battle, 18 years ago. Tripp Davis will be forever called "More Tripp" because that's what Battle would say after he and Rhonda would meet Tripp for lunch at Bojangles.

Little did we know that three of those youth – Alex King, Melissa Meares, and Chris Mitchell – would come back as adults and serve as youth advisors to our children!

And, little do we know what seeds have been planted in our children – Battle, Maggie, and Henry – by all of their youth advisors and the many other adults that have made personal connections with each of them. Beth Taylor made it into Battle's college application essay. Bob Smith and Maggie have some secret "What happens in Texas stays in Texas" thing going on. Dale Menard is Henry's Quest Mentor and there is no telling what will come out of that relationship. – And there are many others.

The word that comes to mind when I think of 1st Pres is – UNEXPECTED.

We did not expect a lifetime of memories.

We did not expect to learn more from those kids than they did from us.

We did not expect intergenerational connections to be made with our children that will influence their faith journeys.

We certainly did not expect a lifetime of involvement with this incredible community of faith.

All we did was have brunch, drink lemonade, and say "yes".



Memories & Stories

Becky Stevens

Fond Memories of FPC

I'm so happy to report that Mike is continuing to recover from his battle with cancer to the point that we were finally able to start visiting churches in person last summer. We visited churches here in Cornelius, in Huntersville, and in Davidson. We are finally settling into what we believe will become our new church home. The only hold-up is that the church is between pastors and the new Senior Pastor will not be arriving for two more weeks.

Even though our new church family has given us a royal welcome, FPC will forever claim a big part of our hearts. You don't have a church home for over 40 years and it be any other way.

Our fondest memories of FPC always seem to center around the weekends in Montreat, and I suspect that we're not alone in that regard. Those weekends always seemed to be a little slice of heaven on earth. Even on the darkest days of Mike's illness, letting our minds wander back to Montreat never ceased to bring a smile to our faces.

Mike and I loved every minute of opening the Saturday Night Follies for several years in a row with our latest ballroom dance routine. We loved surprising everyone with our matching "costumes," which for Mike generally turned out to be a vest to match whatever dress I was wearing. But he actually got to claim the spotlight the year we performed a tango to "Phantom of the Opera." He fully embraced the role and wore a real Phantom mask and a cape. We'll never forget the "Whoa's!" when we took the stage that night!

Over the years we performed waltz, cha-cha, rhumba, shag, disco, and fox trot routines in addition to the tango. We unfortunately had to hang up our dancing shoes when Mike was diagnosed with cancer, but the memories of those special nights will last for a lifetime.

Thank you, FPC, for giving us these precious memories to hold in our hearts forever!



Memories & Stories

Sharon Turner

Stephen Ministry FPC

“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2, nrsv).

Stephen Ministries is headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri. It is an independent, not-for-profit Christian educational organization, founded in 1975.

Dr. Kenneth C. Haugk is the founder and Executive Director of Stephen Ministries. Stephen Ministry offers a proven and effective way to organize, equip, and supervise a team of congregation members called *Stephen Ministers* to provide high-quality, one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people in the congregation and the community who are experiencing life difficulties.

In January 2005, Rev. Dr. Wallace Johnson and Kelly Fulcher traveled to Orlando to participate in the Leaders’ Training. After a week of full training and returning to Hickory, our Stephen Ministry was organized.

Kelly Fulcher and Sue Walker were the first trained Stephen Minister Leaders. Subsequently, additional leaders trained included Pat Hines, Anne Evans, Sharon Turner, Teresa Oakley, and Sheila Chatto. More than ten Stephen Ministers at FPC continue to be dedicated in the desire to care for one another. It is the love of Christ that binds Stephen Ministry together. The Stephen Ministers strive to be a source of help, hope, and compassion to those hurting or just needing that extra touch.



Memories & Stories

Adrienne Washer

March 6, 2023

Today, March 6 is my 92nd birthday. Just “yesterday” in the spring of 1965, our family left our home near the Adirondack Mountains of New York state and relocated to Hickory, N.C.

We brought 3 young sons, the ages of 5, 3, and a newborn of 3 months. We came by car, except for the baby who traveled by air in the care of a nurse and was admitted to Holy Angels Nursery in Belmont. Baby Scott was born and baptized in St. Luke’s Hospital in Utica N.Y. and never came home due to unexpected serious complications related to spina bifida.

A few weeks after our arrival here, he died. Whit Kennedy was a Godsend. He was the highly respected and dearly loved pastor of the flock at First Presbyterian at this time and took care of the details and a private service at the cemetery.

Then, several Presbyterian women came to befriend me and assist in so many ways. They were Mary Lou Dixon, Marty Espey, Fran Fitz, Ann Meacham, Ann Mason and others. They became dear friends. I believe they were heaven sent. I truly was overcome with their kind help – having the settling of the family in new surroundings and recovering from the trauma of emergency C-section delivery so recently.

We relocated three years later to France and another move following that with the same international company and returned to Hickory and First Presbyterian in 1978.

My husband, Richard, and I were “Northerners” and hadn’t been acquainted with Southern ways. I was born and grew up in Toronto and Dick was from Boston and then Long Island, N.Y. He was Methodist and I, United Church of Canada. We each had a Canadian mother and British father.

Our thanks to First Presbyterian of Hickory!



Memories & Stories

Ellie Wilson

God Works in Mysterious Ways

I was fortunate enough to be a member of the first medical mission trip to Mwandi, Zambia in 2003. The main focus of this Medical Mission trip was cataract surgeries. The group was made up of eye doctors, Hamp Lefler and Tom Foster and their wives, Katty and Sandra. There were nurses including Brenda Steep; an OBGYN, Nancy Toy; a civil engineer, Conway Wilson; a contractor, Michael Sims; and a computer technology expert, Melvin Mears. I was a teacher and not a medical person but was assured that there would be plenty for me to do.

As it turned out this would be one of many trips that I made to Mwandi with our church, with Conway and friends or by myself. Although God is ever present everywhere, it is in Mwandi that I have really seen this manifested in so many ways.

On this first trip the doctors were performing cataract surgery in the only operating room and the power went out. They resorted to using a battery from a boat for the microscope. In between surgeries the battery died. At that moment a woman went into labor and required a C-Section. The woman was taken into the operating room and the battery taken to be recharged. Nancy safely delivered twins and as the mother was wheeled from the operating room, the power came on.

Another incident involved a woman who needed a blood transfusion and there was no blood of that type at the hospital. It turns out Katty had that same blood type and able to save that woman's life.

We were told that this was the first group that had come to Mwandi that did things outside of the hospital setting. Sandra Foster organized the first Bible School with the church. Melvin offered computer training. I was the first person that had gone to the school.

This first mission trip has led to many other trips to Mwandi by members of our church. There were more mission trips. Brenda took a group of nursing students; Wheat Williams and Terri Dettling took their family and some friends; and while in college, two of their children returned to help for a summer. I returned for four summers and taught school.

Today the Mwandi Mission includes: The United Church of Zambia; a union of Presbyterian Congregational, Methodist and French Protestant denominations; the hospital; mission supported primary and secondary schools; a preschool, a farm, a brickyard, and homeless shelter (Kandiana).

The most important gift that this church has given to Mwandi is the gift of prayer, friendship and compassion. The Mission Committee still sends financial support to Kandiana, and various church members send support to the OVC (Other Vulnerable Children) program, the brickyard (which employs several men with special needs), the hospital, the schools and other needs.

Now glory be to God who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream.

Ephesians 3:20

In the summer of 2006, I returned to Mwandi to teach. I took with me a small printer so that I could make pictures of the students. It turned out that this was another way that God was at work. Besides taking pictures of the students, I began making pictures of the mothers and their new babies at the hospital. Many had never seen a picture of themselves and were thrilled to have one of their new child.

One day, the missionary came to me and said that she was very concerned about a mother that had delivered a baby with several deformities including a constricted leg that would require amputation. In this culture, the mother would be shunned by society and often made the choice to let the baby die. The mother was refusing to eat or to feed the baby. I went to the hospital with my camera and took pictures of the mothers and their babies, but this mother refused to even look out from under the covers. I returned later to distribute the pictures and she could see the excitement of the other new mothers but refused a picture.

The next day she was the only one on the ward and I went in and started a conversation with her. I told her that I was teaching at the school, asked about her family, and found out her name was Maureen and that this was her 6th child. She lived in the bush, a day's walk from the hospital. I asked if she had eaten and she said no and I said neither had I. I told her I had been so busy at school I had not had time to eat my sandwich. She told me to eat it and I said that I would not eat it unless she shared it with me. She said I needed strength to teach and I told her, as a new mom, she needed the strength also. We shared the sandwich.

The next day I went back and there was another new mom and baby. So I took their picture. Maureen still refused to have her picture taken. I returned with the printed picture to give the new mother. I gave the new mother the picture and then sat by Maureen. I told her I had enjoyed talking to her yesterday and so I saved my lunch and brought a sandwich for her so we could share more time together. I returned later that afternoon as there had been two more babies born. This time Maureen's husband and her mother were there. They saw me give the new mothers the pictures. I then went over to speak to them

and asked if I could see the baby. The grandmother said, “Baby sick has bad foot.” I told her that it was something that the doctors could fix. She shook her head. Maureen uncovered the face of the baby and I told her she was beautiful. I asked if I could take a picture of the grandmother holding her. I was allowed and then got one of both Maureen and her husband holding her. I rushed to print the pictures and returned to give them to the family. They were thrilled with the pictures and I asked what the baby’s name was. The grandmother said, “No name. Baby is sick.” I asked them again to please let the doctors look at the baby because they could help fix the leg.

The next day I was told that the doctor had looked at the leg and that the mother gave consent for the surgery. I went to see Maureen and the grandmother was still there; she told me the doctor had come. I told her I was so pleased and then asked if I could hold the baby and let her take a picture of me with the baby. I returned with those pictures and gave them to the family. The grandmother handed me the baby and said, “You name the baby.” She was born on my daughter’s birthday, and I told them my daughter was a great runner and that this little girl was going to do great things. So I wanted to name her Eleanor after my daughter. The grandmother said, “Too hard. Name after you Ellie.”

The second medical mission trip that First Presbyterian sent to Mwandi occurred 18 months later. Included in the group were Kathy and Jim Rubel who owned Ability Orthopedics. They took supplies and orthotics with them. One of the patients that they saw was Ellie and they created a leg for her. Because of this, the missionary, Ida Waddell, was able to get the Zambian health system to begin working with Ellie. Ida and her husband, Keith, would take Ellie and her mother to the capital city of Lusaka to be seen.

Conway and I supported her education at the Mwandi Basic School and continue to support her to go to a boarding school. With the help of Keith and Ida, she is able to return to her village for the holidays. Ellie is now a vibrant sixteen year old who is doing very well in boarding school. She is very active in academics and sports. She just came in first in the Rockridge Challenge, an 18km road race that she chose to do by bicycle. At the end of this year’s school term, she was presented with the award for Outstanding Perseverance. She has also completed the school’s Bronze President’s Award.

Conway and I keep in touch with her and enjoy her emails, updates from the boarding school and from information from Keith and Ida. She is a beautiful and talented sixteen year old who has been able to make adjustments to both life at a boarding school and family life in the bush.

“For I know the plans I have for you” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Thankfulness

We are indeed thankful for all the blessings that First Presbyterian Church, its staff, its leaders and members have provided us.
From a bulletin printed decades ago, comes this reminder:

Thanksgiving is our hearts’ testimony to a deeply held conviction – the conviction that these things we call free and decent did not just happen to us. We have not inherited these things because we were wiser, more clever, or even luckier. We inherited them by blood, sweat and tears – mostly that of our founding parents – and by the grace of the Father of all nations of people. Whatever we enjoy today is not by accident. Someone before us dreamed the dream, laid the foundation and built the bridge. If we succeed without suffering it is because someone else has suffered without succeeding. And if we suffer without succeeding it is so someone else may succeed without suffering. Therefore, thanksgiving is justified and is our joyous praise to a great God.



Thank you to our church historians for recording our history.



Margaret Smith



Arthur Burgess



Amelia Stafford

