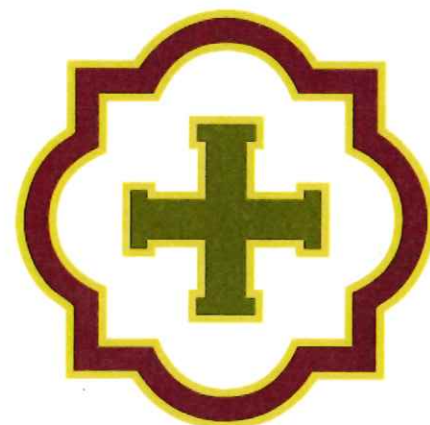
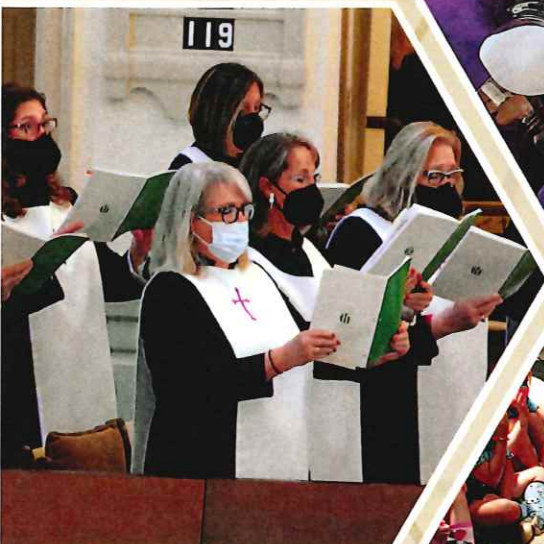


# 2021

## ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
CONCORD

*Celebrating the Joy of Giving*  
DURING YEAR TWO OF A PANDEMIC

MISSION & OUTREACH • CHRISTIAN EDUCATION • WORSHIP & MUSIC MINISTRY  
BUILDINGS & GROUNDS • FIRST KIDS • SCOUTS





# 2021 Annual Report

*Celebrating the Joy of Giving*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | CONCORD

## Why the Joy of Giving Annual Report?

The publication of the *Joy of Giving* Annual Report during the past five years has focused on describing the joy-filled life of our church family. Each sermon we hear, each song that fills the air, each child that learns one Bible verse, each member who is comforted by another, and each opportunity we have to learn, laugh, and pray together is an example of these joyous moments. Articles are written by dedicated Session program moderators, Diaconate mission liaisons and Presbyterian Women, all actively involved in the life of FPC. Photos were submitted by numerous members, but the majority were from René Prager.

## First Pres Thrives in 2021

Although the Covid pandemic continued to affect the life of our church in 2021, we had learned during 2020 how to creatively continue our programs and mission outreach. We successfully built on these experiences in 2021! Virtual worship continued until May 16 when, with great enthusiasm, our church family returned to the sanctuary for worship while continuing the virtual YouTube worship service for those unable to join us. Staff changes were a high point as our new Senior Pastor/Head of Staff Rev. Ellen Crawford True joined us and René Prager became Interim Youth Programs Coordinator.

Many meetings were virtual such as Presbyterian Women, Session and Diaconate meetings. Masks were worn on campus throughout the year. Gradually we returned to the campus with social distancing and masks required. During June, Vacation Bible School was held outdoors and the First Kids staff found a way to meet Covid requirements and bring the children back to campus. In the fall, the Market for Mission returned with great success and the Commons reopened!

## Our Gifts Made It Happen

The vibrant life of FPC in spite of the pandemic was made possible through our annual gifts and pledges for the budget and those by women for the Presbyterian Women's budget. In addition, benevolent gifts and grants were given to non-profits, schools, individuals and other worthy community groups. The significant impact of distributions from estate gifts continued to positively affect our annual budget. So many lives were touched in 2021 by God's grace working through gifts from our church family.

Indeed, this is the *Joy of Giving*!



## PRESERVING & MAINTAINING OUR CHURCH CAMPUS

Our church family is blessed with the dedication of church members who are monitoring the condition of our buildings and grounds on a weekly if not daily basis. The following information was submitted by Kathy Pilkington and Jim Holloway, Co-Moderators of the Buildings and Grounds Committee who noted, "We are so fortunate to have had these remarkable church members step up when needed by giving their time, expertise and personal gifts to maintain our church campus!"

### Buildings & Grounds: Boilers & Windows

The Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Maintenance Committee were very busy in 2021 maintaining our beautiful campus buildings and grounds to enhance our worship and fellowship. Challenges occurred when our 61-year-old heating boiler for the Sanctuary and Education Building sprung a leak that we were unable to repair. Of course, this occurred as cold weather began in early December! Fortunately, Jock Liles rescued us by loaning FPC temporary gas space heaters from Liles Construction so we could continue worship in our beautifully decorated Sanctuary during Christmas. Chip Moore also came to our aid with his expertise and knowledge of boilers by helping to choose the best contractor to reinstall the new boiler. Also, Chip personally contracted with a company to demolish and remove all debris from the old boiler and paid for the cost of this part of the boiler project.



After completing its due diligence, the Buildings and Grounds Committee decided to proceed with the restoration of the windows in the Fellowship House which was built around 1926. Many of them had wooden frames which had rotted, glass panes which were cracked or broken, and lead around the glass panes which had weakened. This was particularly true of the "diamond-glass" windows. A Greensboro company began the project in October for one of the "diamond-glass" bay windows and a second-floor window. Both windows were reinstalled in December. The John Morrison and Hugh Morrison families graciously paid for this initial phase of the project.



### Strategic Planning by Maintenance Committee

In 2015, the Session established a Maintenance Committee for the purpose of short and long-term maintenance planning and execution for our church buildings and grounds. In 2021, the Maintenance Committee was composed of Jim Holloway, Kevin Garrison, Buddy Delizza and Kathy Pilkington as members of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Ellen in her role as Senior Minister, Heath in his role as Maintenance Supervisor and Chip Clark, Susan Hannah, John Morrison, William Niblock and Kay Wall as standing members. The committee delivered a report to Session describing ongoing projects and planning for future maintenance needs.







## Reflections by Rev. Ellen Crawford True Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

What a difference a year makes! One year ago, I was counting down the days until our new chapter together would begin. The nine months I have spent serving as your Senior Pastor have been full and fast. During that time, we have gathered for confirmation and a pastor emeritus celebration, funerals and baptisms, pop

up socials and a Christmas pageant, weddings and Market for Mission. Perhaps the most poignant part of that statement is this: we have gathered. Two years ago, we grieved the loss of almost every chance to gather in person to laugh, cry, sing, study, and pray together. And now we are moving into a joyful new moment when we can gather. And it is so very good.

I am grateful for you, for your grace, your kindness, your faithfulness. Through you I witness God's mercies at work. Through you I am reminded of God's steadfast love, the love that never wavers, the love that will not end. I look forward with joy to the year ahead as we gather for worship, fellowship, education, and service. And I look forward to the ways we will be sent out to share Christ's steadfast love with the world.

Grace and peace,  
Ellen



## Worship & Music Ministry

### Virtual Worship Continues in Early 2021

Worship and music at FPC began in 2021 in much the same way as it ended in 2020. Virtual music, prerecorded and edited during the week before worship, continued to supplement the virtual worship supplied by Interim Senior Minister Rush Otey. Because of Covid, the music staff made use of smaller ensembles like trios and quartets, reducing potential harm of larger indoor groups. A very special thanks to Jennifer Newton, Joy Cook, Carrie Myers, Bob Prescott, and Scott Verner for several lengthy recording sessions where two months of special anthems were videoed!



Jacquie Yost, Director of Music Ministry & Organist, provides the following overview of how the Worship and Music Committee responded to Covid in 2021 and the creative ways our Worship & Music Ministry was able to continue throughout the many challenges.

congregants who were required to wear masks. Due to the most current social distancing and air-exchange recommendations at the time, the choir was placed down front in the chancel area. As Covid data improved, the Sanctuary Choir returned to the balcony and corporate prayer and congregational singing were permitted, although the mask requirement continued. This was perfect timing as we welcomed our new senior minister Ellen Crawford True June 15!

### Fall & Christmas Music Returns to Normalcy

The fall and Christmas season returned to 2019 pre-Covid normalcy with the reinstatement of Sunday School, Youth Fellowship, regular Sanctuary Choir rehearsals, and weekly live musical offerings in worship. On December 5, the Sanctuary Choir, conducted by Jeffrey Price, Choirmaster, performed John Rutter's larger work "O Holy Night" during the lessons and carols worship service. It included many beloved Christmas carols creatively arranged for choir with congregational singing and ended with the traditional singing of G.F. Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." The Sanctuary Choir's Christmas concert at Taylor Glen was warmly received

after an absence of two years.

In late March, our vaccinated Sanctuary choir was able to gather to make compelling recordings for Easter services. Youth Sunday, led by René Prager and the youth, was also virtual. Special thanks to Eli Farmer, Chloe Cline, Molly Morrison, and Dylan Batts for their musical contributions to this service and to the other youth who participated through scripture readings, self-composed prayers, and even poetry!

### Worship in the Sanctuary Returns

On May 16, live in-person/live-streamed worship returned to the sanctuary! The Music and Worship Committee continued to examine all aspects of safe indoor worship. Composed of Susan Otteni and Peter Chikes, Co-Moderators, and Susan Smith, Amy Woolwine, and Kara King, they met tirelessly throughout the year to monitor the effects of Covid on the life of our church. In May, worship services were limited to 12 choir members and 150

### The Future of Children/Youth Music Ministry

Covid has been exceptionally difficult for children and families with children. Since serving as music director at FPC for almost 20 years, I have delighted in creating, building, and maintaining the children and youth music program. Its focus is a graduated and age-appropriate sequence of music education centered on sacred vocal repertoire and other instruments. Sadly, these groups remained a casualty of 2021 except for a small group of



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# Christian Education



## Reflections by René Prager

Director of Christian Education



2021 was the year I answered God's call for me to serve in a new capacity at First Presbyterian Church. I started the year as the Interim Youth Projects Coordinator charged with leading a mission trip, Vacation Bible School, and summer trips for the Middle and High School Youth. After nearly a year of all virtual Youth activities, the challenge was to find safe ways to gather in person for fellowship, service, and spiritual growth.

Early 2021 was pre-vaccine eligibility for most of us and it did not feel to be the right time for a traditional traveling mission trip. Instead, we served God by serving our community in a two-day in-town Mission Weekend. It was exciting to work alongside more than twenty of our middle and high school youth on projects for our local healthcare workers, the Blessing Box, our VIP's, Opportunity House, and our FPC college students. It was evident our Youth were eager to connect and serve and that inspired the reintroduction of Youth Sunday on the 2021 church calendar. While the worship service itself was virtual, we met several times to write prayers and record portions of the service. I would later realize the gifts brought forth by the youth-on-Youth Sunday would reshape my understanding of God's call to me.

## Mission Accomplished!

Twenty-nine of our Youth assembled Saturday and Sunday February 27 and 28 for a Mission Weekend on the church campus. Although the protocols were different, it was wonderful to enjoy the great weather together and serve God through serving our community!

Several speakers were invited to speak to the youth. Jon Sauter of the Cabarrus Healthcare Foundation introduced the Foundation's Thank You project for our local healthcare workers. The Youth made 30 thank-you cards and recorded two video messages for our healthcare heroes.

Don Seitz shared his passion, the new Blessing Box. On Saturday afternoon, the youth hosted a drive-up collection to support the Blessing Box. More than 25 congregation members gave generously, filling five large tables with food and toiletry items. Sallie Dotger spoke about the importance of keeping in touch with



Drive-by food collection



Signing cards of encouragement



Making hoagies for Opportunity House

Vacation Bible School proved to be a wonderful way to both strengthen our partnership with First Kids and to engage a large number of congregation members with over 50 volunteers during the week and another dozen involved in the preparation work. Following the COVID guidance required by First Kids, we were able to design a fun outdoor-based curriculum and we found the "God Provides Everything We Need." Ellen's timely arrival at FPC for VBS week further amplified that theme as her energy brought a new glow to our programming.

I was asked to continue my work over the summer with the Youth. Managing our social media accounts became a more formal part of my responsibilities. This will give FPC the opportunity to connect with its congregants and the broader community as we discern God's calling for us. Highlights from the summer include the Middle School camping trip and a service workshop for High School. We continued to dream and plan our return to Sunday School classes and Youth group activities. Our amazing Christian Education Committee, Sunday School teaching teams, and Youth Group advisors crafted beautiful ways for us to return to weekly in-person programming.

2021 wrapped up with the Youth baking for Market for Mission, the Christmas parade, the tree lighting, and the Christmas Pageant. I am both humbled by and grateful for the opportunity to serve God, our children, youth, and families in this capacity.

our congregation members who are in assisted living or otherwise unable to be physically present at church. The youth wrote notes to be mailed for Easter in support of the existing outreach for our VIPs.

In record time, sixty ham and cheese hoagies were assembled and wrapped by our youth following a presentation by Kate Morrison about Opportunity House and its mission with our homeless population. We wrapped up our weekend with carefully packing items for our First Presbyterian college students. The care packages were shipped out in time for exams in the spring.

Rene Prager, Interim Youth Program Coordinator, said, "We give thanks to God for the amazing weather for our outdoor activities, the talented group of volunteers, and the thoughtful and energized Youth!"





## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2021

### S'more Adventures with God!

It was wonderful to see, hear, and feel the energy and joy of **almost 100 children and 50 volunteers on campus for our in-person Vacation Bible School program!**

In partnership with First Kids Preschool, we were able to offer the VBS program in compliance with the COVID guidelines governing the preschool programs. **By utilizing the wonderful outdoor spaces on campus, we created a fun camp atmosphere.** Both Youth and adults shared their creative talents in designing and implementing the backdrops for each space.

The children, age two through rising 5th grade, rotated through engaging activities in art, music, Bible stories, snacks, mission, and recreation learning about the ways God provides everything we need!



Our daily themes were:

**Shelter, Psalm 27:5:** He will keep me safe in his dwelling.

**Light, John 8:12:** I am the light of the world.

**Direction, Proverbs 3:5:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

**Water, Isaiah 49:10:** They will neither hunger nor thirst.

Our rising 5th graders experienced the return of our Five Alive! Program which added additional service and team building experiences to their days.

Jacquie Yost, Director of Music ministry, added, **"Children's laughter, playing, and singing could be heard all around our campus. Rev. True said she could hear children gleefully and boldly singing from inside her office!"**



## First Kids Preschool Program

**Maureen O'Bryan, Director**

First Kids continued to not only survive but to thrive as we entered 2021. **Our hardworking teachers, with wonderful church support, continued to create a joyful and safe environment where kids could be kids despite the ongoing pandemic. Our safety measures paid off. Individual classes closed for a few days at a time to quarantine, but we never had to close our entire school. As a result, our enrollment continued to grow to pre-pandemic numbers while staffing became our biggest hurdle. Thankfully, we rebuilt our teaching community as well, with 16 women who hold a total of 2 MA degrees, 14 BA degrees and 3AA degrees in education or related fields.** Wearing masks, taking temperatures and the extra cleaning measures became routine. These sacrifices were small in comparison to the great joy and benefit of experiencing children joyfully learning and playing together again.



Many First Kids' traditions continued with adaptations. Our May graduation ceremony, which usually takes place in the sanctuary, was transformed into a Graduation Car Parade down Union Street,

complete with fire trucks, police cars, banners, a string quartet and heart-warming cheers from our neighbors.

We happily welcomed "Pastor Ellen" who immediately jumped in to provide chapel time her very first week on the job which continued to be a highlight for three and four year-olds all year. **Our students participated in more quality time outside which included some daily lessons, the Week**



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### First Kids offers:



- Highly-trained staff with low student-teacher ratios
- Half-Day classes 2-5 days per week for children ages 6 months through Transitional Kindergarten
- Monthly Chapel for older classes
- Weekly Music and Movement Classes
- The Creative Curriculum approach with an emphasis on hands-on, developmentally appropriate learning and Letterland/PreK Literacy program
- Outdoor learning and gardening experiences
- Lifestyles Initiative



# Presbyterian Women in 2021



A Report by Kathryn Monroe  
Presbyterian Women Moderator 2021-2022

Presbyterian Women continued to find new ways to stay connected with each other during 2021. We began the year with the hope that life would soon be returning to normal; however, it was another year with Covid restrictions. **Some circles chose to meet outside with plenty of spacing, while others felt that Zoom meetings were more comfortable for their members. One thing is certain, though...the friendships among these women are unbreakable!**

Many of our 2021 events were virtual. We gathered through Zoom in March for our Spring Nurture Event that featured Elizabeth Richardson, who spoke about "Pilgrimages to Sacred Places". In May, we



invited women to drive through the church parking lot to pick up a cupcake to enjoy as part of our virtual Birthday Event. We



Speaker Elizabeth Richardson

honored the women whom we had lost during the past year and celebrated our accomplishments. In December we began the holiday season with a beautiful YouTube concert of Christmas music for our Joy Gift Event.

We were thrilled to be able to offer our Spiced Sunday event in person in November! We gathered in Davis Hall, ate delicious boxed lunches while spaced 6-feet apart, and listened to Colin Bramlett describe his inspirational journey that led him to open Second Course Culinary and Life Skills Center. This organization provides culinary training for formerly incarcerated people, allowing them the opportunity to lead a productive life with a successful career. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon of fellowship!

## Presbyterian Women of the Charlotte Presbytery



In February 2021, 2020-21 PW Moderator René Prager was contacted by the Presbyterian Women of the Charlotte Presbytery to inquire if any members from our Concord congregation would be interested in serving as the Assistant Treasurer within the PW of the Presbytery. Susan Brooks, who retired in 2014 from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance, expressed an interest in this opportunity.

Susan serves on the Coordinating Team for the Presbyterian Women as the Missions Coordinator. She recently completed her third year as a Deacon serving as the moderator 2020-2021. We are grateful for Susan's willingness to serve the PW of the Charlotte Presbytery and through her service provide us an additional connection with other congregations in our Presbytery.

# Presbyterian

## Honorary Life Membership Award



The Honorary Life Membership program was established in the Presbyterian Church to honor faithful service to Presbyterian Women and to the church. The 2021 award was presented to Carol Hovey, a lifelong member of FPC, who devoted her adult professional life to nursing while a single parent raising two children. Her daughter Holly traveled to Concord to surprise her and son Miles joined from out of state through FaceTime. Susan Hannah, her sister, was also present.

In addition to nursing, Carol discovered that education was her passion. In her 60's she earned her Master's in Community Health. She became Cabarrus County's first parish nurse and our area's first certified holistic nurse. She recently retired from teaching Advanced Care Planning within the Atrium Healthcare System.



Carol has been an active member of the church including Circle and Sunday School member, Circle leader, Sunday School teacher, PW Spiritual Nurture co-chair, Communion Committee, Pastor's Nominating Committee, Moderator of Presbyterian Women's Deacon, and Elder. She served in 2020-21 as Moderator for the Worship and Music Committee. Carol also participated in First Presbyterian Church's first medical mission to the Mexican border.

## Center of Hope/Night Shelter

One of the many missions of the Presbyterian Women is the Salvation Army's Center of Hope/Night Shelter. The center provides guests with a safe and comfortable place to spend the night in addition to meals and laundry service. Three times a year volunteers from FPC and PW provide meals for residents for a week. Betsy Morrison coordinates this effort.

Despite the pandemic in 2021, the Presbyterian Women continue this ministry by preparing 21 dinners and 21 breakfasts for 20-25 shelter guests during 2021. This year the Youth Fellowship, Girl Scouts, Circle 1, S&D Sunday School class, and individual members of the PW have worked together to provide nutritious and delicious meals. In addition, they provided disposable plates, utensils, and napkins to help the Night Shelter safely serve these meals during COVID.



# Women EVENTS



Spice Sunday attendees (left) and speaker Colin Bramlett with Alice Davis and Susan Hannah



## 2021 PW Dunford Fund Grants

In 1980, the Dunford Fund was created to honor Johnsie Sims Ridenhour, a faithful member of our church, by her daughter Nancy Ridenhour Dunford. The \$45,000 annual income from this fund is divided between the Presbyterian Women and the Diaconate Discretionary Fund.

In 2021, \$22,800 was distributed through a grant process where Presbyterian Women receive applications and distribute the income on a quarterly basis. Twelve grants were distributed to the following worthy applicants:

### Concord Bible Teaching Association

\$2,000 to help pay the salary of the teacher for the Bible class at Concord High School

### Concord Partnership for Children

\$1,500 to purchase board books in English and Spanish that will promote safe sleep and early literacy

### Ridenhour Scholarship

\$2,000 to assist with the seminary expenses of Mary Kate McAllister

### Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary

\$1,000 to provide Christmas stockings for Angel Tree children and seniors

### Ellis Sheridan

\$300 to assist with his Eagle Scout project of building bee houses at Memorial Garden

### Early Childhood Foundation of Cabarrus County

\$2,000 for Orff Schulwerk music program

### Brownie Troop 323

\$250 to purchase coloring books and Colors of the World crayons for their theme of international holidays and celebrations and to cover expenses for their Thinking Day program

### Opportunity House

\$5,000 to provide a security system for the Women's House and to purchase furniture and housewares in order to open three new houses

### Boys & Girls Club of Cabarrus County

\$2,500 for after school program for children in need

### Academic Learning Center

\$2,000 to assist with general operating expenses

### Friends Empowering Haiti

\$2,750 living expenses for Wisly Chery Spring, an engineering student in Haiti

### Second Course Culinary & Life Skills Center

\$1,500 to purchase a computer, computer software, and commercial printer. Their director Colin Bramlett spoke at the Spiced Sunday event.



## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN COLTRANE WEBB BACKPACK PROGRAM

Hello I just wanted to say thank you for all you guys do!! We greatly appreciate you and the church and whoever else is involved with helping the families. It has been such a blessing too mine

Comment from Backpack Program parent

COVID-19 protocols in 2021 continued to challenge the Presbyterian Women's Backpack Program and our ability to provide food assistance to students and their families. We maintained our reliance on the no alcohol/no tobacco gift cards from Food Lion to 15 families in the year that ended in June 2021 and to 11 families in the year that started in August 2021. Together with our partner in this program, Central United Methodist Church, our totals were 30 in the previous school year and 2 in the current school year. In addition to the \$25 weekly cards, we provided extra

gift cards for Thanksgiving (\$50), Christmas (\$100), and Easter (\$50).

In addition to the gift cards, in February we celebrated the Souper Bowl of Caring by providing bags that contained a variety of soups, crackers, cookies and fruit packs.

As always, our congregation's response to help provide these items was overwhelming, and the bags were well-received by the families.

During 2021, we also started sharing space in the Backpack Pantry with the Blessing Box. We weren't using it to store food, and

the Blessing Box team was purchasing and collecting items suitable for that program and needed a place to keep it, and we were happy to share.

Susan Brooks, who has coordinated this program for 16 years and was a shopper for two years prior, said, "No mission will be successful without the support of many people, including the Presbyterian Women's Coordinating Team, the Backpack committee, and the entire congregation. The gifts of time, money, and food are appreciated beyond measure."



# Dr. Rev. Todd Hobbie Named FPC Pastor Emeritus

Dr. Rev. Todd Hobbie who served FPC as Senior Pastor from 1992 until his retirement in 2012 was named Pastor Emeritus of First Presbyterian Church at the October 10, 2021 worship service, the first such honor in the history of our church.

## 1992 PNC Committee Gathers to Celebrate

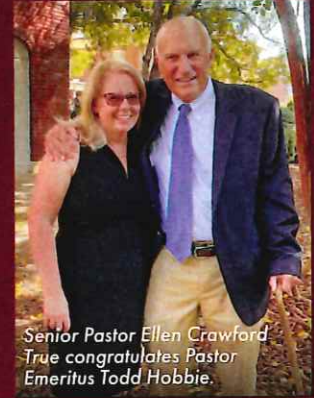


The original Pastor Nominating Committee that called Todd Hobbie in 1992 gathered to celebrate. From L to R, Paul Caldwell, Evelyn Barrier, Todd & Betsy, Susan Otteni, & Jim Monroe. Two other members, Dottie Flowe, who chaired the committee, and Cletus Bost are deceased.

Todd graduated from Davidson College, spent three years as an educational missionary with wife Betsy in Zaire, and then graduated from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, VA. He served at two other churches including the wonderful "little" church in Carolina Beach which became the backdrop for many of his sermons. He also served Lithonia Presbyterian Church near Atlanta, GA before being called to our church.

On behalf of the Personnel and Administration Committee and the Session, Jeff Monroe provided remarks about Todd's ministry. "He spent 20 wonderful years as our leader and is a true example of servant leadership. During that time, he was a not only a leader but a friend, confidant, support system and to many of us he became family."

Todd was presented a crystal award designed by Donna Knorr Moderator of the Personnel and Administration Committee. A placard indicating his Pastor Emeritus status was also placed under his photo on the FPC History Wall in the Will Young Building.



Senior Pastor Ellen Crawford True congratulates Pastor Emeritus Todd Hobbie.

## 2021 Staff Changes

### Rev. Dr. Rush Otey, Temporary Supply Minister, Departs

While the Pastor Nominating Committee sought a new Senior Pastor, Rev. Rush Otey served FPC as Temporary Supply Minister from November 2020 until June 2021 when Rev. Ellen Crawford True became our new Senior Pastor. Jeff Monroe, Moderator of the Personnel and Administration Committee, stated, "Rush brought a tremendous calm and consistency that we needed greatly and has been a true ROCK for our church—a true foundation. He improved the morale of the staff and the session members almost instantly. Although he was here a short time in our church history, his impact was significant." The Session made a donation in his honor to Union Presbyterian Seminary, Charlotte Campus to the Currie Chair for History.



### Associate Pastor Lynne Keel Resigns



In September 2021, Lynne Keel, Associate Pastor for Care and Mission, announced she had accepted a call to serve as Director of Programs at Montreat Conference Center in Montreat, NC.

She will serve as Director over the Youth conferences, the Women's Connection Conference, and the Institute for Church Leadership in service to the church at large. Her last day was October 31. Lynne served our church for six years developing a visitation ministry, an email prayer chain, opening The Commons, and establishing a partnership with OFCB ministries in Bayonnais, Haiti.

### René Prager Named Interim Youth Programs Coordinator

Upon the December 2020 resignation of Rev. Rachel Vagado, Pastor of Christian Formation, the Session approved the recommendation of the Personnel and Administration Committee to hire FPC church member René Prager as the Interim Youth Programs Coordinator beginning January 2021. René has had 33 years of experience in youth instruction and program coordination and has been very active at FPC serving as the Moderator for Presbyterian Women, VBS volunteer, Nursery & Junior Church Coordinator, 5-Alive Coordinator, organizer of the College Care Package ministry and FPC Girl Scout leader for 16 years. (See her Reflections on page 4.)



### Financial Staff Positions Change

Christy Canupp, Financial Secretary for the past 16 years, retired in February 2021. In a



letter to the congregation Christy said, "As my time working for your church comes to an end, I just want to let everyone know what a wonderful experience it has been for me. Thank you for all

the kindness, the fond memories, and the knowledge that has been bestowed upon me over the past sixteen years." Christy noted she was looking forward to spending time and helping care for her grandchild. She received a financial gift in honor of her service to the church.



The Personnel and Administration Committee restructured the financial secretarial position by hiring Kim Mazzola as a part-time Financial Administrative Assistant

to support the church treasurer and the accounting firm of Younce & Company which now manages the finances of the church. Prior to joining our staff, Kim worked as an Executive Assistant to an Executive Vice President at S&D Coffee from 2014 to 2020. Kim and her husband have lived in Concord for 20 years.



# Girl Scouts

The Brownie, Junior, and Cadette/Senior troops wrapped up their global and cultural focus in the first half of 2021. Highlights included a fun twist on their annual international Thinking Day celebration. Middle and High school scouts prepared ethnic food dishes and leaders delivered to each of the scouts. A rise in local COVID cases may have had the Girl Scouts meeting back on Zoom for two months, but the porch delivery kits enhanced the virtual presentations as they sampled food from across the globe together.

While the scouts returned to in-person meetings in March, worship remained virtual. The troops recorded a recitation of the Girl Scout Law and Promise appearing to pass the light of a candle between them with some creative video editing. This video was artfully incorporated into the recorded worship to include Girl Scout Sunday.



After a brief break over the summer, the girls kicked off a new year of scouting in September. An exciting number of interested families attended the kick-off event and, for the first time in four

years, First Presbyterian Church would launch into a new scout year with four active Girl Scout troops!

Daisy Troop 3631, Brownie Troop 323, Junior Troop 3142, and Girl Scout Troop 334 held a joint Investiture ceremony in the sanctuary in October with 27 girls in attendance. The troops meet twice a month and are open to both church members and the larger community.



In addition to earning badges, community service is an important part of Girl Scouts. The girls support many of the First Presbyterian Church's outreach programs including restocking the Blessing Box, providing dinner for the Salvation Army Night Shelter rotation three times a year, and supporting Operation Sandwich.



René Prager, [r.prager@firstpresconcord.org](mailto:r.prager@firstpresconcord.org) is the contact for all four Girl Scout troops. Daisy Troop 3631 is led by Pam Allen; Brownie Troop 323 is led by Cindy Wise; Junior Troop 3142 is led by René Prager, and Girl Scout Troop 334 is led by René Prager and Kirby Sheridan. Approximately 36 girls are registered across all troops for the 21/22 scout year.

# Boy Scouts



FPC Boy Scout Troop 3 met during 2021 and went on several exciting adventures including a ski trip to Beech Mountain, a hiking trip in the Uwharrie Mountains, a fishing trip at Badin Lake, a downhill mountain biking trip on Beech Mountain, a 15-mile hiking trip in South Mountain State Park, and summer camp at Camp Barnhart. Scoutmaster Harris Morrison said, "We have 15 active Boy Scouts who are advancing through the ranks and enjoying the lessons which scouting teaches."

For more information about Troop 3, please contact Scoutmaster Harris Morrison at [harris@harrismorrison.com](mailto:harris@harrismorrison.com).

# Cub Scouts

Cub Scout Pack 3 continues to grow and thrive at First Presbyterian Church. We currently have four active dens and over 20 boys involved in our program. We work with our scouts to develop their independence and an adventurous outdoor spirit. Highlights from 2021 have included multiple camping trips, an afternoon at a CannonBaller game, and a visit to the fire station. Plans are underway to hold our first Pinewood Derby in Davis Hall in 2022.



For more information about Pack 3, please contact Chip Clark at [chip60clark@gmail.com](mailto:chip60clark@gmail.com) or 704-791-2511.



# Racial Equality Statement

Scott Verner, Diaconate Mission Liaison of the Anti-Racism Committee, provided insight into the work of this committee.

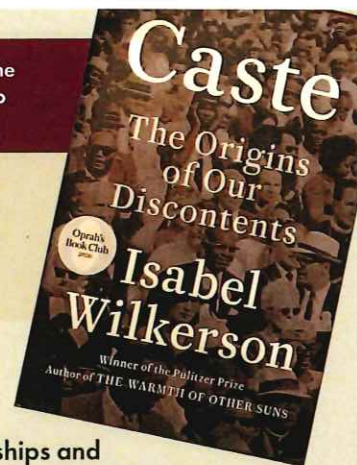
As a Matthew 25 congregation, First Presbyterian Church is called to actively engage in the world around us. Through this designation, approved by our Session, the General Assembly urges us to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are marginalized or in need – hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned, strangers, poor or oppressed in other ways and in need of welcoming and healing.

Systemic racism must be an area of deep concern to our congregation because it affects us as well as people in all those situations. It is not the open bigotry expressed in a racial slur. Instead, it is the assumptions behind racism that have been woven into American systems over the past 400 years – education, justice, economics, health care and more – and are so familiar that they are invisible to many, and their true depth and harm unknown to most of us.

Our congregation is one of six local churches that joined in 2017 to set up Racial Equity Cabarrus. The organization provides racial equity training through workshops and other activities that illuminate how our systems harm minorities.

In 2021 our congregation continued its support of REC. Grants from our budget totaled \$11,000 toward workshop scholarships and the cost of trainers. Church members and leaders in county and municipal governments, school districts, police forces and hospital systems here have participated in REC training.

We also continued inviting church members to read and discuss books and videos that describe systemic racism, how it originated, its effects on all of us, and how and why it persists nationwide today. Books we discussed included "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" by Isabel Wilkerson and "I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness" by Austin Channing Brown.



## Market for Mission



Bargains galore!

Working together with over 60 volunteers, First Presbyterian's Market for Mission was held October 2nd, 2021. It was so successful we sent a \$12,500 donation to Friends Empowering Haiti. Supporting the Haiti mission is the primary purpose of the Market but the effort does so much more. Our members are encouraged by working together and seeing the results of that effort. This was especially true after the confinement and distancing of the past two years. What a joy it was to gather together and welcome people into Davis Hall (masked) to shop the wonderful items donated by our members.

Folks were able to find bargains of so many household items, home décor, artwork, jewelry, children's toys, vintage and collectible items. Eager shoppers were lined up an hour before the doors opened at 8 a.m. One lady exclaimed as she checked out that "this is my favorite sale of the year!" Lots of happy shoppers, tired but grateful volunteers and supported the important work of Friends Empowering Haiti. The Habitat Restore truck arrived at the conclusion of the sale to pick up items that didn't sell. Other items were taken to CVAN and The Salvation Army. By 3 p.m. Davis Hall was returned to its pre-sale state!



Youth baked treats for sale

## Blessing Box

Because of the rise in homelessness and food insecurity during COVID, the Deacons saw an opportunity to create a Blessing Box on our campus—a pantry containing food, snacks, water, hygiene items, diapers, and even mittens and scarves.



Blessing Box stocked during Youth service project

Designed to provide direct support to the hungry, particularly in downtown Concord, the Blessing Box was constructed by Morrison Brothers Building Center and installed in late December 2020 near Davis Hall and the sidewalk on Church Street. This program was kicked off with enthusiastic church-wide support in January 2021.

The Deacons purchase food and supplies on a regular basis. In addition, each month a different group fills the pantry. We are grateful for the support of the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, First Kids Preschool, Presbyterian Women, youth groups, and Sunday School classes which sign-up to be a "Blessing Box Caretaker." Additionally, citizens throughout the community fill the box at various times adding to the impact we have in providing food and supplies to people in need. The sign on the side of the box reads, "Give what you can. Take what you need!" We have certainly seen this in action!

Kate Morrison and Dakeita Vanderburg, Deacon mission liaisons, said, "We thank our many volunteers, the financial support through fund-raising efforts, and gifts that enable us to stock the pantry. The Blessing Box is thriving and providing much-needed support of food and supplies to those who are hungry."



## Worship & Music Ministry (continued from page 3)

four elementary-aged children who met on Sunday afternoons. The possibility of performing in worship with this small number is minimal, yet the opportunity for spiritual and artistic growth through not only music but other creative additions became remarkably great.

Crafts, story-time, and movement have been added to our special time together, entwined with a portion of the weekly Sunday School curriculum, some focal points of Pew Prep, and the liturgical year. This slight deviation has become a hit among our small group! Their interests are now shaping the curriculum, too. It is my sincere hope more children will return next fall and once again we can hear children and youth music in worship. I seek your prayers and guidance about how we may unite to continue these vital programs and perhaps new ones that target the artistic enrichment of children and youth and their unique contribution to our spiritual community.

### Technology Enhances Worship

Technology continued to prove its importance in 2021 as live streaming of services continued. In an effort to enhance the audio output, new ambient microphones were installed and a second camera is on the horizon. Throughout the pandemic, Jacquie produced some



Youth share talents on Youth Sunday

amazing musical pieces that were electronically inserted weekly into the services. Youth Sunday, the last of our pre-recorded services, was a work of art created by approximately 15 youth. It contained reflective prayers, readings, a message for children, and thoughtfully composed prayers and sermons. Voices and instruments were lifted in song and coupled with images of nature made possible by virtual technology.

## First Kids (continued from page 5)



of the Young Child event, and holiday events such as visiting Santa and the Concord Parade Viewing Party.

Our outreach projects continued. In February we collected 800 food and toiletry items that were placed in the Blessing Box or donated to CCM. In the fall, our families donated over 150 pairs of shoes to the "Papa Joe" project to benefit children in El Salvador and over 100 Christmas gifts to distribute to families at CVAN.

We know that we are truly blessed to be an important mission of the First Presbyterian Church by growing minds and sharing God's love with the children of our community.

## FRIENDS EMPOWERING HAITI

A Mission of Love and Hope for Bayonnais



In 2017, FPC formed a relationship with Friends Empowering Haiti to support the Haitian non-profit ministry of Actionnel Fleurisma, the founder of Friends Empowering Haiti, and the school he founded in Bayonnais, Haiti in 1993. Education in Haiti is not free. Most schools are private, many families cannot afford tuition, and these private schools are often far away in larger cities.

Because children in the Bayonnais region had to leave their homes to complete their studies, in 1995 OFCB Ministries opened the Institute Classique de Bayonnais, a K-13 school. The school has a main campus and two satellite campuses serving over 2,300 students in 2021 with 51% of those students being female.

Despite unrest in Haiti and Covid, the school remained open throughout 2021 and the majority of students passed their National Exams. Due to fuel shortages and lack of supplies, there were times that some students could not get to school and times that students did not receive lunch. A school bus donated to Friends Empowering Haiti was delivered to Bayonnais in the fall. This is the second bus donated over the past five years.



A major event in 2021 was the opening of the Bethesda Health Center of Bayonnais by OFCB Ministries. The clinic includes an in-house pharmacy and laboratory run by local doctors, nurses, and dentists who did a great job during a very difficult year.

Members of FPC currently sponsor 42 students. Friends Empowering Haiti works alongside EWO to help secure sponsors for children to attend school. FPC held a child sponsorship event with EWO in October 2021. Brian Moore and Betsy Liles represent FPC by serving on the Friends Empowering Haiti board of directors.

If you are interested in donating or sponsoring a child, visit: <https://friendsempoweringhaiti.org> or <https://ewohaiti.org>.

## The Commons Reopens in 2021

In September of 2021, The Commons reopened to both the public and scheduled groups. Currently, the Deacons and several faithful volunteers open the space on Wednesdays and Saturdays (9 am to 5 pm) to the public. On other days, registered groups including Al Anon, a Bible study with Karen Clark, and occasionally, CCM use this space. The Commons is a non-ecumenical ministry of First Presbyterian Church and invites any and all to enjoy its unique, peaceful setting to experience the Holy Spirit.

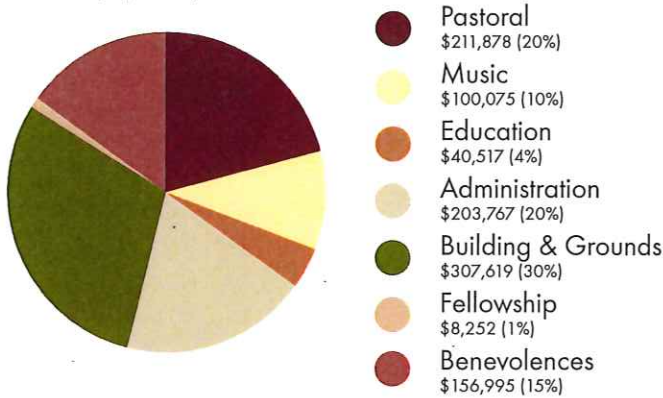




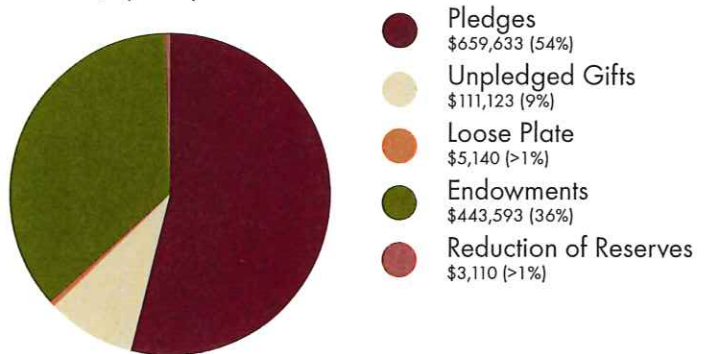
So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BUDGET EXPENDITURES AND RECEIPTS 2021

EXPENDITURES  
\$1,029,103



RECEIPTS  
\$1,222,599



## OUR FUTURE

### Gifts, Pledges, & Estate Gifts

The 2021 *Joy of Giving* Annual Report reveals a church family determined to meet the challenges resulting from the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though separated from one another during worship for many months, we continued to heed God's call to love and serve our neighbors through creative implementation of programs and our focus on mission outreach.

Our annual stewardship gifts and pledges were enhanced by distributions from investment funds held by the First Presbyterian Foundation, the Session, and external endowments. The graphs indicate, once again, the increasing importance of this additional annual support which was 36% of our operating budget. Those faithful followers who previously provided estate gifts to our church continue to provide ongoing annual contributions that allow us to minister to others. Their generous act of giving continues to be a gift from God!

And, because of this combined generosity from our church family and estate gifts, benevolences totaling \$156,995 or 15% of our budget were distributed in support of mission outreach projects serving those less fortunate, gifts much needed during this second year of crisis.

**Every generous act of giving  
is a gift from God!**



## OUR CHURCH NEEDS YOUR HELP!

We look forward to 2022. Through the leadership of Rev. Ellen Crawford True and staff plus the dedicated leaders from the Session, Diaconate, and church volunteers, FPC looks forward to emerging from the pandemic into a vibrant state of normalcy. The idea that tried-and-true programs will return and will be enhanced by imaginative and unique ways to worship and serve God is truly exciting!

It is obvious annual stewardship pledges and gifts become more important to assure we can maintain the financial health of First Presbyterian Church necessary to support programs and follow Christ's mandate to love and serve others. Where possible, increasing stewardship gifts and pledges, providing additional gifts during the year, and creating a gift for the church in our estate plans will ensure First Presbyterian Church of Concord continues to flourish in the future!

Please contact those listed below for more information about the many ways you might wish to financially support our church. We encourage you to go to the **GIVE** section of our website at [firstpresconcord.org/give](http://firstpresconcord.org/give) to learn more about resources which will assist you in planning your gifts.

### First Presbyterian Church Foundation

Britt Leatherman President	John Bishop
Susan Schneider Vice President	Francey Brown
William Niblock Treasurer	Jason Cagle
Betsy Liles Secretary	Tripp Carpenter
	Jim Monroe
	Holt Morrison
	Chrissy Rotan

### 2021-2022 Stewardship Committee

Dale Carpenter Co-Moderator
Harris Morrison Co-Moderator
Laura Martin
Jim Monroe
Valerie Thomas