



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

2016 Annual Report

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In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church of Athens is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

Interim Senior Pastor

I would characterize my first four months in terms of “meetings.” I have met with the staff, in both informal and formal settings. I have met with 28 of the 29 active Ruling Elders, with one more scheduled in the early part of January, 2017. I have attended meetings of the Worship & Music Commission and the Finance Team. I also met with the newly elected Ruling Elders as I conducted the training sessions, as well as the New Member class this past October.

And, no, I will never forget the twenty-four Stewardship Home Gatherings that I attended in October! These were attended by nearly 325 members, both active and infrequent participants in the life of First Presbyterian Church. I used this time to speak about the importance of spiritual, physical, and financial support during the transition process.

In all of these meetings, I have also been listening: listening to concerns about finances and the debt; listening to worries about inactive members and what conflicts at Central Presbyterian Church will mean to FPC; listening to stories of Glenn Doak’s impact on the lives of members; listening to how difficult decisions were made concerning the staff and ministries of FPC; listening to the questions and hopes about the future of First Presbyterian Church of Athens.

But also in these past three months, I have been watching: watching how things are done; watching the worship attendance numbers and financial numbers; watching how people relate and respond to each other; watching myself as a newcomer to this church.

I have found the leaders of First Presbyterian Church of Athens to be dedicated and committed.

The staff is highly skilled and gifted, and I appreciate their enthusiasm and perseverance and how we have worked together in this transition. I sense an energy among the congregation, knowing that much is good with FPC and also seeing that some things need to be changed!

I will summarize what I’ve heard and seen under three categories: Connections, Communication, and Clarity. (Please note this is not a detailed nor inclusive description of First Presbyterian Church. These are general observations from four months serving as Interim Senior Pastor.)

Connections: One of the first things I noticed in the Stewardship Home Gatherings was how the groups wanted to and enjoyed connecting with one another. These were people who did not necessarily know each other, but they were having a good time visiting and getting to know each other. Along with this was the use of name-tags when I first arrived that helped me get to know the members; and as I was told, many members appreciated learning names of other members. This all points to the need to be intentional about how open the church is to “new” people as a matter of hospitality and inviting them into the ministry of the church, along with developing and supporting opportunities in a large church for members to get to know each other.

Communication: The ability to communicate clearly and in a timely manner is the “life-blood” of any group and is especially crucial in a large church. No longer is it simply a matter of a bulletin board and announcements in the Sunday Worship Service. First Presbyterian Church is making good use of the variety of communication systems of print, social media, and computer available to and used by the multiple generations among the church members. Questions continue to be raised, though, as to whether the intended audience is receiving the communication; that is, is the e-mail or letter opened...is the bulletin announcement read...is the poster noticed? Along with this is the ever-changing demand to keep up-to-date with the

hardware and software needed for communication in a technological universe – the computers, the phones, the monitors – and to provide the training necessary for the use of the new technology.

Clarity: It is a matter of communicating and connecting when people ask, “Why should I be involved as a member of First Presbyterian Church?” It means having a clear answer when someone asks, “How can I serve, where can I serve, what can I do that gives me the joy of serving Jesus Christ through this congregation?” The question is who this church is as we move into the year 2017. The answer must be clear as it connects this congregation to one another and its mission – spiritually, physically, financially, socially. From financial reports to regular commission updates; to mission needs and pastoral care; from staff responsibilities to members’ commitment - the answer must be clear as it communicates to our community, inside these doors and to the world outside.

Having said all that, let me conclude by saying I am glad to be here! In my sermon for the January 2017 Ordination and Installation Service which I am working on now, I refer to a cartoon in which a minister is standing in the pulpit asking for a sign from God. There is a big “Kaboom,” and the last panel shows the minister holding a sign – a “No Parking” sign!

Such is the sign for our journey over the next several months: it is the ongoing challenge of ministry, the daily decisions of discipleship, and the practical steps of service in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Bruce Lancaster, *Interim Senior Pastor*

Associate Pastor

When I accepted the call to be Associate Pastor in 2015 I knew it was coming—Glenn had confided as much; I just didn't know exactly when. The "it" was, of course, Glenn's retirement. After twenty wonderful years of ministry with this congregation, he hung up his stole, so to speak, on June 12, 2016. Thus began what I thought of as "the gap" until we secured an interim pastor. Thanks to Glenn's leaving the church in excellent shape and our committed Session and staff, the gap went very smoothly. Session members kept the congregation abreast of all the leadership transition matters in weekly "Rooted and Reaching Reflections" from the pulpit. I took up the preaching mantle with a summer sermon series on The Lord's Prayer. And congregational life carried on actively, not missing a beat. The Session's interim search committee did a fine job in bringing Dr. Bruce Lancaster to us. I have much to thank God for every day, but I was especially grateful on September 8 when Bruce arrived!

In other respects, 2016 was a very positive year as well. I continued to support three Session commissions in their faithful ministry: Congregational Care, Fellowship & Evangelism, and Mission & Outreach. Additionally, I carried out other areas of ministry such as worship leadership (including weddings and funerals), pastoral care, and teaching. Also, I did the following:

- Dedicated the Habitat House we built in 2015
- Mixed concrete, helped with VBS, and led devotions on the Honduras mission trip
- Suggested and co-led Maundy Thursday worship around tables in the Fellowship Hall
- Constructed, with help, the Maundy Thursday cup/bread mobile and Easter butterfly mobile for Fellowship Hall, plus blinds for the Palladian window
- Preached at the Pan-Presbyterian Good Friday service at Friendship Presbyterian Church
- Participated in the annual women's retreat
- Worked with the Stewardship Committee, capitalizing on the "Rooted & Reaching" theme and planning stewardship home gatherings
- Planned the first Interfaith Thanksgiving worship service with other religious leaders in town
- Supervised Waddel Fellows for Outreach & Mission and Congregational Care Commissions

I believe that together in the last year we have been faithful in following Paul's advice to the Colossians which we heard often: *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* (Col. 2:6-7).

Gratefully submitted,
Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*

Director of Music and Organist

This past year has been one of outstanding music and worship at First Presbyterian Church. Our choirs continued to learn about their ministry and grow musically and spiritually. Our Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, Celebration Singers, St. Andrews Choir, and Cherub Choir all maintained regular rehearsal schedules and sang or played in and led worship. St. Andrews Choir members continued working in their training program based on Voice for Life (the training scheme of the Royal School of Church Music). The Mellows continued to offer their special ministry to the greater Athens community by taking music, both sacred and secular, to people in independent and assisted living homes, nursing homes, etc. who are unable to attend church or concerts. It is very rewarding to see those in our audience come alive when we sing. One of our goals has been to continue and strengthen our relationship with the University of Georgia School of Music, as well as the general music community in Athens. We are doing that by offering our beautiful sanctuary and our fine musical instruments for recitals and concerts. We have hosted several piano and organ recitals as well as the Athens Youth Symphony concerto competition in November.

Some highlights of 2016 include The Athens Voices of Truth concert in January, combined choirs singing on Palm Sunday, an organ recital by Geneva Stonecipher in April, Youth Sunday with our Celebration Singers singing and youth instrumentalists leading worship, a program of music for organ and strings I performed with Athens area musicians in May, and Scottish Reformation Sunday with bagpipes and drums played by Henry and Fran Franz. June brought the retirement of Dr. Glenn Doak. To celebrate his many years of ministry with us, our own Daniel Elder was commissioned to write an anthem for the occasion. It was a pleasure to work with Daniel on this project, and his "Alleluia" was a wonderful contribution to that festive service. It's also an anthem we will treasure in our library and sing again in the years to come. Several youth and adults attended the Montreat Worship and Music conference in June, always a rewarding experience. Summer Choir met on Sunday mornings to rehearse music for worship, and we had several new voices join us. Combined choirs sang on Choir Dedication Sunday, I hosted a meeting of the Northeast Georgia chapter of the American Guild of Organists and presented a program in our sanctuary on organ improvisation. In November, members of our Chancel Choir sang in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship at First Baptist Church. December was very busy with the Handbell Choir playing at both the Holiday Benevolence Market and the Live Nativity. Bob Burton also played guitar for those events (and I got to play a little jazz piano at one). Our St. Andrews and Cherub Choirs participated and sang in the Christmas Pageant, I presented an organ demonstration and carol sing-a-long for the Weekday School children, our Chancel Choir participated in a *Messiah* sing-a-long at Oconee Presbyterian Church, some of which I conducted and played continuo. I accompanied the Weekday School Christmas program and led The Mellows in singing at the SAM Christmas Tea, at which I also had the honor of accompanying Dallas and Kendall Kookogey Bono as they sang. The Chancel Choir and Celebration Singers led our Festival of Lessons and Carols at both services on December 18, the Chancel Choir sang for two of our three Christmas Eve services, and last but not least, I played for the Christmas morning service.

One great new addition to our music ministry this year has been the creation of a Church Music Intern position. Geneva Stonecipher has served in this position and has been a wonderful addition to our music staff. She continues to "learn the ropes" of church music by participating in, accompanying, and directing our choirs and leading in worship with service playing. This has been a mutually beneficial situation and we look forward to Geneva continuing with us through the spring of 2017.

Music ministry at First Presbyterian Church continues to thrive. It was an honor to serve with Dr. Doak for my first three years, and it is an honor to serve now with Dr. Bruce Lancaster, our interim senior pastor. It has been wonderful working with Dr. Carol Strickland, Dr. John Kipp, Kim Ness, and Natalie Bishop, all great pastoral and program staff colleagues. Melanie Powers, our music assistant and Peggy Randolph, accompanist for the youth, children, and The Mellows have also been a pleasure to work with. Even though our future is somewhat unknown to us at this time, I am looking forward with confidence to many good years ahead. I consider it a privilege to serve as Director of Music at First Presbyterian Church of Athens.

Soli Deo Gloria (to God alone be the glory).
Dr. John T. Coble, *Director of Music*

Director of Youth Ministries

One of the best things about working with youth is the abounding energy and passion they bring to life. As such, nearly everything we do is meaningful and memorable. To capture a year in just a few pages for this report is a challenge. I have taken inspiration from an activity that we did to start this year – spread across the floor of The PIT were hundreds of images printed from *Time* and *National Geographic's* Photo of the Year contest. Each youth was asked to find an image that spoke to them and share why, then they were given a random image and had to see how God might be speaking to them. ***May these snapshots from 2016 give you a picture, as well, of how God is working with and through the youth of FPC to make this a more beautiful world.***

JANUARY: glistening white ski slopes and a stopwatch ticking down from 60

We had two very special events planned to kick off the year. The first should have been our ski trip to NC, but due to snow of all things, we had to cancel at the last minute for fear that the bus would not make it up the mountain. While incredibly disappointed, we rallied and hosted a lock-in here at church instead! At the end of the month, we held the 2nd Frozen Chosen Cup, a friendly competition between Madison, Oconee, Covenant and First Presbyterian Church youth groups. This year's theme was Minute To Win It...and I am pleased to announce that FPC took home the cup!!

FEBRUARY: a crayon drawn heart and the smiling face of a senior

On Valentine's Day, youth delivered handmade cards and flowers to our homebound members. We had four full vehicles spreading love across the area! "Thank all of you for taking a 'holiday' that you could have spent in so many different 'fun' ways to let those in the church who can no longer be as active as they once were know that they are remembered." – wife of a homebound member.

MARCH: neon strips of fabric tied to chicken wire and little hands drawing in sand

For Holy Week, we set up seven prayer stations in the PIT. Youth were the first to experience God through these different practices before it was opened to the congregation to spend time in prayer and reflection. Prayer stations included meditating using Taize, tying global prayer knots, seeking forgiveness through sand, naming 10,000 blessings on the chalkboard, walking the labyrinth, painting stones, and creating a stained glass cross using tissue paper.

APRIL: 30 navy startle us t-shirts and angels singing I believe

Above all highlights, Youth Sunday is always at the top. The theme chosen this year was God Sightings – seeking and finding God in the most common and unlikely places. Jordan Osborne and Sara Cotton delivered powerful, funny, heartfelt messages about the impact this church has had on their faith and challenged each of us to be startled by God. The Celebration Singers took us on a musical journey, with Ann Harper Covington bringing tears to all eyes as she sang Mark Miller's song, *I believe*, based on an anonymous poem found in a Nazi concentration camp.

MAY: a table of college pennants and smiling high school graduates

We wrapped up the school year with exams and end of year parties...and an emotional recognition of our high school graduates which also fell on Mother's Day. This year we celebrated seven of our youth, most of whom had been part of this church since they were young children!

JUNE: chaco-clad feet in a rocky creek and sunrise from the mountaintop

Montreat Youth Conference is a truly special place for Presbyterian youth. This year, we took a van full of girls only and rented a house within walking distance of campus. From morning energizers and keynote to small group discussions to group recreation and evening worship, we embraced all the opportunities to make "A World of Difference." I returned later in the summer to serve as a Small Group Leader during week 5, where my own high school youth director was serving as keynote leader!

JULY: hundreds of paper cranes hanging from the ceiling and Reading Terminal Market

Our mission trip this year was to Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia, PA. We took 13 youth and 4 adults for a week of immersion into the power of radical hospitality. To name just a few of their experiences: youth served meals to the

homeless, swam with children in summer camp, took a mural tour of the city, boxed goods at the food bank, played Bingo with seniors. We were changed by this week, in ways that we are still uncovering.

AUGUST: crackling campfire circle and rafts floating down the river

We had 18 youth and 8 adults join us for the Fall Kick-Off Retreat at Camp Ocoee in Copperhill, TN. All youth (and adults) stepped out of their comfort zones that weekend. From climbing the high ropes course to the giant swing to jumping onto the blob in the lake, we cheered each other on and laughed a lot! That evening, Robert Simmons helped to get a campfire lit for an under the stars worship service. And the following day our newest youth group members, the 6th graders, went horseback riding, while the rest of the group took on the rapids of the Ocoee River! Much gratitude to the Mosers, Magrinos and Osbornes who served as chaperones!

SEPTEMBER: teens lounging on bean bags and boxes of Dunkin Donuts

With the momentum of a great Fall Retreat, we have continued to see the number of youth attending Sunday night grow. Members are bringing their non-member friends. Cousins are coming when they are in town. And what has resulted is a vibrant, kind, accepting group of middle and high school students representing ten different schools. Sunday mornings have been more flexible, with fellowship over breakfast, service opportunities, small group Bible discussion and always donut holes!

OCTOBER: bowls of salsa and boxes of candy

Each year, we sign up to provide dinner for the Presbyterian Student Center. We load up the church van (side note: SO EXCITED that our church purchased a new church van the previous month!!), and take over the kitchen at PSC. While some are preparing taco salad, others are compiling Halloween care packages for our college freshmen, near and far.

NOVEMBER: U-Haul overflowing with bags and a pew overflowing with youth

This month we focused on service. Youth loaded and unloaded hundreds of Thanksgiving food bags in the rain. We attended the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service together, then had a mad dash through Walmart collecting supplies for two Casa de Amistad baskets. As we reflected on the night, youth asked that we do more activities like this, focusing on all that we have in common with others rather than what separates us.

DECEMBER: creamy tomato soup and a hot pink Christmas tree

What better way to wrap up a year than with food and fellowship?! Under the leadership of Chef Darryl Magrino, the youth again provided lunch for the Benevolence Market. Together, we raised over \$500 to be donated to refugee services. As always, we held our white elephant gift exchange and Christmas party following the Christmas pageant. Most popular this year was a literal glass elephant!

Behind the scenes of all these snapshots are the amazing **YOUTH INTERNS!** In May 2016, Greg Purser completed his second year as an intern with us. He is still active in our church, but is focusing on completing his PhD in Social Work. Alyssa Standard joined us in August 2015 as a Waddel Fellow and has continued on as a paid youth intern for Sunday morning and evening activities! In August 2016, Nettie Jester joined us through the Waddel Fellowship program and works with us on Sunday nights.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the congregation for their commitment to our ongoing **CONTINUING EDUCATION**. This year, I was able to attend the Blaze conference at Montreat, a Godly Play training in Atlanta, and the Forum on Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS). I also completed my Capstone Project and received a Certificate in Youth and Theology from PTS. My project was to redesign the confirmation curriculum for our church. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to participate in this 18-month long program as I now have a network of youth directors across the country and across denominations to support me in this awesome calling to youth ministry!

Kim Ness, *Director of Youth Ministries*

Director of Children's Ministries

This has been an exciting year for Children's Ministries! Sunday School and Children's Church attendance has increased, excitement continues to grow for our new curriculum, Godly Play, the children are engaged in worship in more meaningful ways, and the overwhelming love and support from all our Children's Ministries volunteers and nursery staff remains constant and strong.

2016 began with an early Lenten season in February. Children and parents gathered together for a special Ash Wednesday program in the Children's Ministry Suite. The children were challenged to Feast on Love (and to fast from hate) for as many days as possible during Lent. Palm Sunday was exciting with Easter Egg Hunts happening all over the church, a visit from "Star" the donkey, the waving palm procession around the church, and the glorious music that filled our sanctuary from our Children's and Chancel Choirs. The children enjoyed Easter morning with the Easter Brunch (this is becoming one of the children's favorite church traditions) and Lenten Prayer Stations down in The PIT. We finished up the school year with a yummy Pancake Breakfast to thank all our wonderful Children's Ministry volunteers and nursery staff as well as to celebrate the end of the 2015-2016 Sunday School year.

The Children's Ministry Suite was transformed into a Surf Shack for Vacation Bible School 2016! During VBS, our "little and big surfers" experienced God's amazing love, explored God's mission for their lives, encountered powerful water stories from the Bible, experienced Godly Play for the first time, and had lots and lots of FUN! Children in 3rd through 5th grade enjoyed many extra "Big Kid VBS adventures" including a walk on the Sandy Creek Greenway picking up trash along the path, helping to reduce pollution of the Oconee River. In addition to the fun games and team building activities, music and dancing, and creative beach themed snacks, all our children took part in many mission projects. Beautiful watercolor painting cards were created and sent to our older church members and the children collected over \$350.00 in their One Great Hour of Sharing Fish Coin Collection boxes. This money was sent to people in need all around the world. And to celebrate this wonderful week together, the Kona Ice Truck made a visit to First Pres. The children were thrilled! Thanks to all our incredible volunteers and church staff VBS 2016 was a BIG SUCCESS!

The 2016-2017 school year began with new opportunities for our children to serve as worship leaders. The children continued to enjoy serving as acolytes and now as liturgists leading the Call to Worship most Sundays during the 11:00 a.m. Worship Service. We also implemented our exciting new Sunday School and Children's church curriculum, Godly Play. Godly Play has begun to truly transform the Sunday School and Children's Church experience for our children. Godly Play, created by the Rev. Dr. Jerome Berryman, not only provides structure for spiritual practice, it also engages a child's innate spirituality and nourishes their use of religious language to help them make meaning from Biblical stories through the creative process (www.godlyplayfoundation.com). Every Sunday, our children gather together to build a circle as they ready to worship together, then they hear and see God's word (a story from the Bible). After the story they respond to the word by wondering confidently out loud with their peers and then are welcomed to play with the story pieces or through artwork or however they feel led by God, and lastly, we feast (one Sunday each month) and pray together.

As the holiday season approached, we began a "Season of Giving" in Children's Ministry. The children dressed up in fun, friendly Halloween Costumes and went Trick or Treating for UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) in October. Thanks to all our adult Sunday School classes and Choir, the children raised over \$200.00 for children in need all around the world. The children also collected money for Thornwell Homes and filled 15

shoeboxes with Christmas goodies for Operation Shoebox (Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child Project) in November.

The Advent Season was a very special time for all who were involved with Children's Ministries. During each Sunday of Advent, all the children (Pre-K – 5th Grade) and teachers together experienced the Godly Play *Advent* story helping us all stay focused on the true meaning of the season. The children did a wonderful job with the Christmas Pageant as always, and our Christmas dinner was the perfect ending to this very special evening.

On a personal note, I was very grateful to all our parents who arrived at the earlier start time so that they could experience with their child the Godly Play story, *The Holy Family* before the Christmas Pageant officially began. It was a great night for our Church family and what a great year this has been for our children! God is Good and is at work within this ministry! I cannot thank all of you enough for entrusting me with our children, their sweet hearts and clever brains every Sunday morning. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly and I am very grateful for this amazing opportunity. We have just begun this journey together, and I cannot wait to see what God has planned for our wonderful children in the new year.

Thanks again to all of our 2016-2017 Children's Ministries Volunteers and Nursery Staff!

Children's Ministry Team – Sarah Bryan, Melinda DeMaria, Matt and Lisa Jones, Kendall Kookogey, Shelly Parker, Karen Phillips, Jim Scanlon, Laura Toney

Sunday School and Children's Church Teachers – Jennifer Abbot, Sarah Bryan, Jennifer Castleman, Karen Cobb, Jody Corry, Greta Covington, Don DeMaria, Susan Ferguson, Madie Fischetti, Sara Johnson, Matt Jones, Denise LaBoon, Mia Nobbie, Christine Register, Church and Heather Roberts, Laura and Isabelle Seward, Mary Smith, Megan Sperr, Dan Trier

Nursery Staff – Wendi Finch, Rita Raines, Jessica Bond, Claire Hurley, Caylee Morrell, Robin Smith

Waddel Interns – Stacey Bowden and Jordan Osborne

Natalie Bishop, *Director of Children's Ministries*

Director of Weekday School

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Weekday School provided preschool services for 90 children. The Weekday School enjoyed a wonderful teaching staff:

Pre-K/Early Five's (4 or 5 Day)	Carol Norton and Lauren Thurston
Three's (4 or 5 Day)	Alex Lampp and Marcy Fabris
Three's (3 Day)	Susan Smith and Teresa Isbell
Two's (4 or 5 Day)	Carol Ashmore and Megan Lewis
Two's (2 or 3 Day)	Jennifer Cummings and Suzanne Bowles
Early Two's (2- 5 Day)	Tara Szotkiewitz and Kate Beall
MMO Toddler (2-5 Day)	Mary Grant and Michelle Fletcher
MMO Baby (2-5 Day)	Cheryl Fields and Melissa Nichols and Kelly Butler
Spanish	Jody Pope

We appreciate our teachers for their dedication and care for all the children in their classes.

Ballet classes continue to be offered from noon to one for three's and four's through Alice DePass Dance Studios. Kindermusik is also offered during this time, with Jennifer Cummings as teacher.

Lunch Bunch is offered Monday through Fridays to those at least two years old. Early Birds was offered again this year, allowing a few children to come as early as 8:00 a.m. to meet their parents' work schedule needs.

The Weekday School succeeded in retaining our accreditation, with our visit in the spring of 2016. We met or exceeded all expectations by our evaluator, Dr. Dock Sisk.

We are happy to have been able to offer partial scholarships for two Weekday School teacher's children, one church staff member's child, and eight children from the community. The school continues to be grateful for church funds covering our community and church staff scholarships. The Weekday School was able to provide scholarships for the teachers' children from its own funds.

Children, teachers and parents alike continue to enjoy our facility and Smart Boards. We feel that this technology allows our children to transition into any school system with ease. The resource of having a "visual encyclopedia" at the teachers' fingertips adds so much to our curricula, especially science. We are especially pleased to have these technologies for our children.

The Weekday School hosted the fifth annual Live Nativity for school and church families, as well as community members, in December of 2015. Church members and staff helped in many ways. We had over 600 people enjoy the story of the birth of Jesus in this unique, hands on way. Wildlife Wonders of Cleveland, Georgia brought the animals, we had live music in the courtyard and the Weekday School lobby, Christmas art projects for children in the school classrooms as well as the Children's Ministry Suite, and cheese straws and hot apple cider were served in the courtyard. It was a meaningful event enjoyed by all!

The Weekday School strives to be the best provider of preschool education in the Athens area.

Elaine Johnson, *Weekday School Director*

Church Administrator

While a more comprehensive discussion of the church's financial results is contained elsewhere in this report, I am pleased to note that, once again, the staff kept expenses well within 2016 budgeted amounts.

At the January 2016 Session Retreat, the Finance Committee established a goal of increasing transparency and awareness about the church's operating and capital debt position, and manifested this goal through multiple written correspondences to the congregation throughout the fiscal year.

One of our building goals was to increase the availability of our expanded and renovated facility to members and the community. In response to that goal, in addition to regular Sunday worship services, Sunday School and Wednesday@First programs, special dinners on Maundy Thursday, Easter, and Christmas, and our Annual Meeting/Dinner were hosted in Fellowship Hall, as well as Glenn Doak's retirement reception. The annual weekend Session Retreat was held in the Moses Waddel Room. We continued to host events for community groups and weddings. Community groups meet on a regular basis at First Presbyterian Church, including Alcoholics Anonymous, AIDS Athens Board, Interfaith Hospitality Network Board and Athens Youth Symphony. Additionally, we participated in Interfaith Hospitality Network by hosting homeless families for 4 weeks in the The PIT. In December, we had well over 500 people on our property for the Live Nativity.

At the direction of the Session, this fall we traded in our two very old vans for a new 2016 15-passenger Ford van.

After an approximately two year planning and implementation process, our new church website went live in early 2016. In addition to an all new look with more photos and information, the website also has the church calendar and offers the ability to create an account which allows members to update their records, track their contributions, and add the Church Life app to their smart phones.

It has been a pleasure working with the staff and congregation of First Presbyterian Church.

Roger Burbage, *Church Administrator*

Administration Commission

Commission Members: Matt Bishop, Chair, Diane Adams, Rod Canfield, David Cole, Scott Collins, Treasurer, Mike Morris, Ed Smith, Richard Stone, Glenn Doak, Senior Pastor (January – May), Bruce Lancaster, Interim Senior Pastor (September – December), Roger Burbage, Church Administrator

The purpose of the Administration Commission is to manage the resources God has entrusted us, maintain our assets with care, and love and nurture our personnel. Four Teams comprise the Administration Commission and each Team is charged with specific responsibilities in Property, Personnel, Nominations & Elections, and Finance.

During 2016, the Administration Commission launched and implemented several key initiatives to upgrade and enhance church operations and infrastructure:

- At the January 2016 Session Retreat, the Finance Committee established a goal of increasing transparency and awareness about the church's operating and capital debt position, and manifested this goal through multiple written correspondences to the congregation throughout the fiscal year.
- Another goal established by the Finance Committee was to ensure that operating funds and designated funds are not co-mingled with capital debt funds, preservation funds and endowment funds. This goal was accomplished working with our financial institution to open separate bank accounts for each of these funds.
- To further the goal of addressing the church's capital debt, the Finance Committee recommended and Session approved a line-item be established in the church's operating budget for interest expense.
- In addition to the line-item, a total of \$45,000.00 was approved by Session during 2016 to pay down the principal on the church's capital debt.
- The Property Team met several times and approved significant repairs to the sanctuary's ceiling and windows as well as the purchase of a new church van.
- The Nominations and Elections Committee identified and nominated ten new Elders for three-year terms beginning in 2017. The Congregation elected these Elders thereafter.
- Upon Glenn Doak's announcement to retire, the Personnel Team met several times and expeditiously conducted a search for our Interim Senior Pastor, Bruce Lancaster.

All of these initiatives reflect the Administration Commission's dedication to being a good steward of the resources God provides First Presbyterian Church of Athens.

Matt Bishop, *Administration Commission Chair*

Nominations and Elections Committee

“The function of the Nominations and Elections Committee is to nominate congregational members for the Session, the Church Nominating Committee, the Pastor/Associate Pastors Search Committees and any other committees requested by the Session.” (Session Handbook)

Committee Members: Mike Morris, Chair, Kathy Bangle, David Cole, Kitty Donnan, Lois Neighbors, and Paula-Frances Price

In May 2016, recommendation forms were supplied to the congregation requesting our members provide the names and other pertinent information of those individuals they wished to recommend as ruling elders for the Session Class of 2019. Congregation members were also urged to submit recommendations online if that was their preferred method of communication.

After meetings in May and June to review candidates, the Committee nominated the following members to the Elder Class of 2019: Robbie Bryan, Jody Corry, Greta Covington, DeeAnn Cox, Joe Hermanowicz, Richard Lane, Mary Peace, Lawton Stephens, Dan Trier and Jennie Welch. These 10 members were elected to the Class of 2019 by acclimation at a called congregational meeting in August 2016.

Following the election, Elder-Elect Jennie Welch withdrew from the Class as a result of a change in circumstance. The Committee reconvened in September 2016 and nominated Mary Havick to fill the vacated spot in the Class of 2019. Mary was elected by acclimation at a Called Congregational Meeting on November 6, 2016.

At the stated meeting of the Session of the Church on October 10, 2016, the Session approved the current Nominations and Elections Committee to continue to act in the nomination of congregational members to serve on the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Mike Morris, *Nominations & Elections Committee Chair*

Congregational Care Commission Report

To nurture, care, and respond to the needs of our congregation.

Commission Members: Harry Shuford, Chair, Sue Gray, Arlene Shirley, Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor, and Lucy Bell, Church Staff Liaison

Commission subcommittees:

SAM (Senior Adult Ministry):

- The Congregational Care Commission hosted an organ concert by our Director of Music Dr. John Coble for a gathering of over 200 senior adults and friends on May 1, followed by a reception in Fellowship Hall.
- We celebrated Senior Adult Sunday on August 28 with Dr. John Kipp preaching at both services, with a lunch reception for over 200 in Fellowship Hall, with “Rooted and Reaching” tree decorations for the tables, and with senior photographs to identify.
- On December 13 approximately 80 senior adult members and friends enjoyed “A Cup of Christmas Tea” in Fellowship Hall, and we were amazed and renewed by how meaningful this ministry is for all.

Thanks to Sue Gray for her leadership in the overall planning, and in all of the details of the invitations and publicity, volunteer recruitment, setup, decorations, and musical entertainment. Thanks to Arlene Shirley for leading the food presentation and tea preparation in the kitchen. And we appreciate our staff and the approximately 45 church members and The Mellows for serving as table hostesses, greeters, makers of sandwiches and cookies, kitchen helpers, servers, readers, musical entertainers, and elves.

Lay Caller Team:

- The Lay Caller Team helps to support the needs of the congregation and the ministry of the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Parrish Associates by providing a ministry of visitation to members hospitalized at Piedmont Athens Regional and St. Mary’s each week on Monday and Wednesday. Lay Callers also visit members at senior care facilities, visit homebound members, and follow up with phone calls to members after illness or loss.
- During 2016 the six members of the Lay Caller Team met with the Senior Pastor or the Associate Pastor every six weeks. For 2017 a new class of approximately 12 Lay Caller volunteers completed three training sessions held in the Fall of 2016 and made a commitment to being part of the 2017 Lay Caller Team. They have scheduled to meet together with the Associate Pastor on a monthly basis during 2017 for continuing education and support, and to schedule their upcoming visitations.
- Congregational Care Waddel Fellow Peyton Lipecky is exploring her call to ministry by participating in the Lay Caller Team during the 2016-2017 scholastic year.

Prayer Ministry:

- Prayers for Healing:
During 2016 Prayers for Healing was held weekly on Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary, led by Jane McGown. Beginning in January 2017 Prayers for Healing will be offered instead on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. This is an informal half-hour gathering for members and friends wishing to pray for others or be prayed for themselves.
- Prayer Chain:
This ministry has 173 members who receive emails and pray for people who have contacted the church requesting prayer. Prayer requests may be submitted by phone call to the church office,

by email, via the church's website, or through prayer request cards in the pews. There are six Prayer Chain volunteers who provide scripture to guide the prayers. During 2016 the Prayer Chain was activated 33 times.

Flower Ministry:

- The Flower Ministry, under the leadership of Julie Sanks and Ella Stewart, consists of a group of about 14 volunteers who use the flowers from our Sunday service to deliver a ministry of flower arrangements, cards, and visitation to 23 homebound members and members living in Senior Care Facilities not able to attend church.

Response Teams:

- Church members serve on 6 rotating Response Teams, made up of about 10 members each, whose ministry is to prepare and deliver food after a birth or death of a member, or to provide light refreshments and host funeral and memorial receptions. During 2016 the Response Teams were activated on 6 occasions to provide a meal to the family of a newborn child, were activated 8 times to assist with funeral and memorial receptions, and were activated once to provide a meal for a family with a special need.

First Responders:

- First Responders are available to deliver paper goods at the request of the family upon the death of a member. First Responders were activated once in 2016.

Correspondence Team:

- Congregational Care Commission elder Arlene Shirley sends cards to members of the church, including homebound members, members in need, new members, members with new babies, and thank you notes. More than two hundred cards and notes were sent last year.

Scribes:

- The Scribes are two faithful members who meet Wednesdays to write notes to church members.

Glenn Doak Retirement:

- The Congregational Care Commission hosted a farewell supper for Glenn and Ginny Doak, with Session members and their spouses, May 26 in the Fellowship Hall.
- We commissioned a local artist to paint a watercolor of the First Presbyterian Church façade with the Atrium to give as a gift to Glenn and Ginny Doak at the conclusion of his final worship service.
- Congregational Care Commission hosted a farewell reception honoring the Rev. Dr. W. Glenn Doak's twenty years of faithful, dedicated service to First Presbyterian Church and retirement as Senior Pastor on June 12.

"Startle us, O Lord, with the beauty of this place and what our being here represents."

Harry Shuford, *Congregational Care Commission Chair*

Education & Discipleship Commission

Commission members: Leslye Queen, Chair, Mark Harrison, Jerris Hayes, Christine Register, Glenn Doak, Senior Pastor (January – May), Natalie Bishop, Director of Children’s Ministries, Kim Ness, Director of Youth Ministries

Working to make disciples who rejoice in, seek, and share the love of Christ.

2016 was a strong year for the Education and Discipleship Commission.

Children’s Ministry

Natalie Bishop had a very successful first year as our Director of Children’s Ministries. 2016 was filled with many wonderful events for children and families including an Ash Wednesday children's service, an Easter egg hunt, ‘Surf Shack’ Vacation Bible School, an evening picnic at UGA band practice, and a delightful Christmas pageant with more than 50 children participating.

Attendance at Sunday School and Children's Church continued to increase as did excitement for Godly Play, the new curriculum which encourages children to explore their faith through Bible stories and grow their spiritual experience through wonder and play.

Members of the Children’s Ministry team are Sarah Bryan, Melinda DeMaria, Matthew and Lisa Jones, Kendall Kookogey, Shelly Parker, Karen Phillips, Jim Scanlon, and Laura Toney.

More details about the Children's Ministry are on page 8.

Youth Ministry

Kim Ness continues to be a superb Director of Youth Ministries. The number of young people attending Youth Group continues to grow, with many youth bringing their friends on Sunday evenings due not only to the programming, but also to the community of acceptance she has created.

When Kim wasn’t busy with Sunday school, Youth Group, the Frozen Chosen Cup, a summer mission trip to Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia, the Montreat Youth Conference, and Youth Sunday, she found time to complete her Certificate in Youth and Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary. For her Capstone Project, Kim focused on how faith develops and changes as young people mature. She revamped the confirmation process for our church and will be using the *Confirm, Not Conform* curriculum, as well as elements that are special to our experience including youth writing faith statements and service projects.

More information about the Youth Ministry is on page 6.

Adult Ministry

Elder Mark Harrison led the Adult Ministry team in 2016. Seven Sunday school classes offered adults the opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of scripture, look for answers to questions about God and life, learn how to transform their faith into action, and make new friends and strengthen existing friendships while becoming part of a supportive and loving community.

Wed@First continues to provide an opportunity for our members and guests to share a delicious meal, enjoy fellowship, and explore Christian growth in a relaxed atmosphere.

Members of the Adult Ministry team are Carla Buss, Mark Harrison, Lewis Hudgins, Robyn McDonald, Terry McRae, Alison Neufeld, Heather Roberts, and Carol Strickland.

Stewardship

We had a fantastic Stewardship team again this year. Led by Chuck Toney, they were Roger Burbage, Jim Dove, Carol McKay, Keith Oelke, Georgia Blue Simmons, Carol Strickland, and the incomparable Kitty Donnan, who organized 24 stewardship home gatherings that were attended by 319 members representing 212 households. A tremendous thank you to Bruce Lancaster for speaking so eloquently at all 24 gatherings!

Although not an official member of the Education & Discipleship Commission, Carol Strickland was a truly indispensable member of the Adult Ministry and Stewardship teams.

Leslye Queen, *Education & Discipleship Commission Chair*

Fellowship & Evangelism Commission

Commission Members: Chuck Roberts, Chair, Jason Doornbos, Madie Fischetti, Terry Nestor, Ella Stewart, Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor

Commission Mission Statement: *The Fellowship and Evangelism Commission provides growth opportunities for our members to connect and build relationships with one another outside of the regular Church and Sunday school time. The Commission also welcomes guests to our church, invites them to become a part of our family, encourages new members, and communicates about the life of the church with the larger community.*

Fellowship and Evangelism includes: Church wide dinners, Wed@First Dinner, Atrium Refreshments, Annual Picnic, Sports Teams, Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men, First Friends, PTP's, New Member engagement and Evangelism efforts.

Presbyterian Women – At the end of 2016 we had 7 active circles. As we have a wonderful influx of new members, efforts continue to be made to make the members aware of the circles and invite them to join. Carol Bachman serves as the Moderator of the Presbyterian Women. Leaders are: Maggie Davis, Carmen Meadows, Cynthia McCullers, Diane Owen, Susan Ferguson, Grace Lu, and Phyllis Crowell.

Wed@First Dinners – Set up went well this year under the leadership of Ella Stewart. She has a good group of volunteers each week to assist with sign-in and handling the money for dinner

Atrium Refreshments – The Atrium is a very popular place for members and guests to gather after the 11:00 a.m. worship service on Sunday mornings. This year many different individuals have taken turns serving refreshments. Madie Fischetti coordinated the weekly hosts.

Congregational Meals – The Congregational Care Commission and Fellowship & Evangelism Commission assisted the kitchen crew (headed by Daryl Magrino) with several large congregational meals: the Annual Meeting, Maundy Thursday, Easter, and Christmas. Each of the meals attracted record numbers and capacity (184+) crowds.

Church Picnic – Our church wide picnic at Sandy Creek Park was held Sunday, September 11, 2016. Approximately 180 people turned out to participate in games, outdoor activities, and enjoy a great meal. Highlights included the always-favorite bingo and a sand castle building contest. Daryl Magrino and his kitchen crew prepared another outstanding meal for this well-received event.

Sports Teams – FPC again fielded a softball team which played in the spring in the Church League of the Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services program at Bishop Park. First Presbyterian competed in basketball in a church league organized by Tuckston United Methodist. Thanks to Dan Trier for managing both teams. Both teams will again participate in 2017.

Prime Time Presbyterians – Judy Howell does an amazing job scheduling interesting outings. 2016 outings were to the ACC Recycling Center, TRR Cobb House, Steve and Carol Bachmann's house to see Steve's electric train collection, the Georgia Museum of Art, and the Complex Carbohydrates Research Center. They are very appreciative of the new church van.

First Friends – The First Friends group for women get together for dinner on the 4th Tuesday of each month at different restaurants in the Athens area. They meet at 6:00 p.m. for fellowship and fun. Nancy Bostrom and Betsy Canfield are the coordinators of First Friends.

Presbyterian Men – Chuck Roberts continues to lead the Presbyterian Men which is an active group. The group meets one evening a month for Men's Fellowship at different locations around the area. They have been well attended with 15-25 men at each gathering.

Chuck Roberts, *Fellowship & Evangelism Commission Chair*

Mission & Outreach Commission

Commission Members: Denise Horton, Co-Chair, Sally Vandiver, Co-Chair, Jayne Bailey, Mary Burton, Kate Coble, Don DeMaria, Kitty Donnan, The Rev. Margaret Davis, Bertis Downs, Ann Dunn, Brenda Glasscock, Lewis Hudgins, Sydney Jackson, Richard Lane, Joe Neighbors, Jerry Rogers, Rick Simpson, Megan Sperr, Jennie Welch, Tom Wilfong, Dianne Penny Wilson, Christina Cordon, Waddel Fellow, Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor, Elizabeth Wilkes, Waddel Fellow

Many lives were touched by First Presbyterian Church's generous congregation in 2016. Through gifts of money, time, leadership, and commitment we were faithful in our mission of "sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world."

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer commitment and time are critical to our ministry. First Presbyterian members donated thousands of hours in volunteer work in 2016. This includes those who worked year-round in various endeavors. The **IHN Team**, headed by Jayne Bailey and Terry Nestor, together with the dozens who volunteered to serve as overnight hosts, drivers, and meal providers, enabled our congregation to host homeless families at our church for four weeks. Monthly drives on "**Food Sundays**" for the Athens-Area Emergency Food Bank, coordinated by Kitty Donnan, as well the food drive during the Stewardship/ Thanksgiving campaign, tallied to roughly 8,077 cans/ items of non-perishable food that the First Presbyterian congregation donated during this year. Carol Robinson led a team (Fran Lane, Judy Howell and Ann Dunn) who bought, prepared, and served lunch to a crowd of about a hundred at **Our Daily Bread** once a month. Six times during the year members, under the direction of Sydney Jackson, provided meals to approximately 30 students at the **Presbyterian Student Center** at UGA. Volunteers from the church, coordinated by Kitty Donnan, continue to work quarterly at the **Project Safe Thrift Store**. We also provided several simple suppers for client meals at Project Safe. At the conclusion of the school year, after ten years of service under the leadership of Richard Lane and the retirement of our faithful volunteers, our church decided to no longer provide weekly volunteers and space for the **Athens Tutorial Program**, though our financial support continued.

We are grateful for the volunteer efforts which supported special events during the year. On the **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service** in January, many First Presbyterian volunteers, coordinated in 2016 by our Waddel Fellow Elizabeth Wilkes, dedicated a part or all of their day performing community service at Project Safe Thrift Shop and Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery, as well as other sites. In February, our volunteers attended the dedication of the **Habitat for Humanity** house our congregation built in 2015 with the aid of Ebenezer Baptist West Church members and students from the Presbyterian Student Center. A **Red Cross Blood Drive** was held in February with the collections exceeding the goal of 32 pints. Many people helped Mary Burton with the **International Craft Fair** held in November. This sale of fair-trade international crafts, along with hand-made items by talented church members, helps underwrite the cost of mission trips and other mission causes. In 2016, a total of \$1,098 went to the First Presbyterian Mission Fund (\$638 from our own crafts and \$459 from Ten Thousand Villages). Also, Jubilee Partners received \$65 for their weaver, Casa de Amistad received \$275 for their potters, and Bethlehem Ministries received \$625 for the embroidered items as well as \$1,375 in donations to support the Jatropa Project—goats, beekeeping, trees, and apprenticeships. This is a total of \$3,438 for missions. First Presbyterian continues to serve **Meals on Wheels at the holidays** (Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve) coordinated by Sally Vandiver. More than one hundred FPC families provided Christmas for Athens area children with the **Salvation Army Christmas Angel project**. In 2016, approximately 150 children "angels" were provided for through this program, as coordinated by Sandy Boyles. Also, Kitty rallied members to donate 109 laundry baskets full of traditional food items for a Christmas meal for a Hispanic family to be distributed by **Casa de Amistad**.

First Presbyterian Church Youth, under the leadership of Kim Ness, participated in numerous outreach projects. A report is in the Youth Ministry Section. Our **children**, under the leadership of Natalie Bishop, raised \$360 during VBS for the One Great Hour of Sharing (Fish collection boxes) and \$205 for UNICEF (Trick or Treating for UNICEF) in October. They also donated fifteen Shoeboxes for Operation (Shoebox) Christmas Child with Samaritan's Purse in November.

The Mission and Outreach Commission received two **Waddel Fellows** through the Presbyterian Student Center. In the spring semester Elizabeth Wilkes headed up our volunteer service in the MLK day of service, an outreach emphasis during Lent (hunger curriculum with small groups), and our interface with the Athens Twilight Criterion (staffing a water station for the 5K race). In the fall semester Christina Cordon coordinated our AthHalf race worship and water station and our hospitality with The Christmas Parade of Lights.

OUR BUILDING USE

The church building is available and used by the community often. **Alcoholics Anonymous** meets regularly at the church. **Recitals** are held at the church by community members, and we provide rehearsal space for the **Athens Youth Orchestra**. **Project Free** met weekly for 6 weeks. Project Free is a program for both parents who are co-parenting together, or single parents to learn how to parent effectively providing a happy, healthy life for their children. From time to time, the **University of Georgia** uses the church space for classes. The church was opened for **Christmas Parade of Lights** to give parade participants an opportunity to use the restrooms and warm up with coffee or hot chocolate. Refuge coffee company provided the refreshments in 2016 thanks to a donor from the church. The Bethel Homes community asked for assistance in helping with a meeting space for **Bethel Homes Book Club**. First Presbyterian will be providing space for them to meet beginning in 2017.

MISSION SUPPORT

As a PC(USA) congregation, we support our denomination's mission. We do this through our contribution to **general benevolences** in addition to our per capita assessment. This supports the ministry of Northeast Georgia Presbytery, the Synod of the Southeast, and the General Assembly Mission Agency. From underwriting mission personnel in more than fifty countries who are focusing on initiatives in reconciliation, evangelism, and global poverty to promoting causes in the US like child advocacy and education, we are spreading God's love in tangible ways. As a connectional church, we support **other Presbyterian ministries** such as the Presbyterian Student Center at UGA, two of our seminaries (Pittsburgh and Columbia), and Montreat.

We are also **ecumenical**. In 2016, we gave support to Greek Intersarsity and Young Life. Additionally, we provided \$3,500 in support of the mission work Grace Stephens is doing in Costa Rica through Young Life which completes our three-year pledge to Grace. **The Holiday Benevolence Market** was held at First Presbyterian in early December and coordinated by Dianne Penny Wilson and Rev. Margaret Davis together with Joan Duffett, Judy Scanlon, and Lisa Oelke. It is a joint venture between area congregations to benefit thirty local non-profit organizations. In 2016 the Benevolence Market raised \$21,000, a significant increase over the previous year.

Our church has had a commitment for the past fifty years to early childhood education through our **Weekday School**. In addition to housing and providing many support services to our Weekday School, the church awards some partial scholarships for families in need.

In accordance with the decision to sponsor an international mission trip every two years, Tommy Jackson planned a second **trip to Honduras** through Honduras Outreach International, which is based out of Atlanta. Our church sent fifteen people to a small village named La Paz in the Northeastern part of the country March 5-12, 2016. They worked alongside the villagers installing eight concrete floors over previously dirt floors, four latrines, and three water reservoirs, mixing multiple batches of concrete by hand and toting it by the bucketful. Our group also installed two eco-stoves, planted two dozen fruit trees, painted a mural in a school room, and led about 80 children in a community trash pick-up and three days of Vacation Bible School.

Under the rubric of Mission Support, funding for the above ministries totaled \$144, 431.

OUTREACH GRANTS

Through the generous support of our members, we are able to offer **grants to organizations** working to improve the lives of our fellow citizens. We especially focus on groups working in the areas of poverty, health, and education. Our grant application now is able to be filled out online at our website. In 2016 the following groups received a grant:

- **The Ark** -- responds to neighbors in need of material and personal support (rent, utilities, prescription medications, etc.)
- **Athens Community Council on Aging/Meals on Wheels** -- fosters independent living, good nutrition and support to home bound adults
- **Athens Emergency Food Bank** -- provides emergency food assistance to those in crisis.
- **Athens Neighborhood Health Center** -- offers primary health care for indigent, homeless, low-income and those without insurance

- **Athens Nurses Clinic** -- offers safety-net care for acute and chronic medical and dental conditions to uninsured low and no-income residents
- **Athens Tutorial Program** -- provides one-on-one tutoring at First Presbyterian Church for elementary, middle and high school students
- **Bethlehem Ministry** -- aids Terrier Rouge, Haiti's poor with health care, education, jobs and food
- **Casa de Amistad** -- identifies and addresses the needs of the under-served Hispanic community.
- **Clarke County Mentor Program** -- matches caring adults with children who would benefit from their interaction
- **Community Connections** -- strengthens individuals and organizations so all can receive support when they want to lend a hand or are in need
- **Extra Special People** -- enhances the lives of children with developmental disabilities and their families by focusing on their abilities—not disabilities
- **Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)** -- works with congregations to help families without homes, with children under 18, to achieve sustainable independence
- **Project Safe** -- works to end domestic violence through crisis intervention, supportive service, prevention and education
- **Samaritan Center for Counseling and Wellness** -- provides counseling and guidance regardless of income

We have a fund to be used for **unforeseen needs**. In 2016, \$2,876 was spent providing disaster relief for floods in Louisiana, holiday Meals on Wheels, a meal for Project Safe, and support for the Athens Nurses' Clinic.

Under the rubric of Outreach Grants, funding for the above ministries totaled \$66,673.

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

Additional funds were raised by special offerings for:

- Souper Bowl of Caring -- \$785
- One Great Hour of Sharing -- \$3,076
- Mother's Day Offering -- to help support people who live in Presbyterian Homes and have run out of money or are on Medicare Coverage -- \$1,188
- Pentecost Offering -- 40% of the offering is retained for support of young people local; in 2016 it went to scholarships for the Barrow After School Program to benefit students in need -- \$1,194
- Peace and Global Witness Offering -- 25% of the offering goes to a local peacemaking effort; in 2016, it went to Jubilee Partners -- \$1,421
- Thornwell Home -- \$1,695
- Christmas Joy Offering -- \$2,172
- Christmas Eve Offering -- \$4,067 for the Athens Nurses' Clinic

These donations add up to \$15,598.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS

From 2014 Capital Campaign monies, in 2016 we gave Bethlehem Ministries our second (of three) \$7,000 gift toward a full-time nurse at the Clinique Esperance et Vie in Haiti. Also, we gave our second (of three) \$26,333 gift to the clinic to use for the purposes of attaining financial self-sufficiency. The total dispersed from Capital Campaign funds was \$33,333.

TOTAL MISSION AND OUTREACH GIVING

The grand total of dollars from mission support, outreach grants, special offerings, and capital campaigns amounts to \$260,035. This is in addition to numerous in-kind gifts and donations for various causes raised by groups in the church such as Sunday school classes, Presbyterian Women, children (e.g. UNICEF), the Holiday Benevolence Market (\$21,000 for local agencies), etc. Thank you for your wonderful generosity!!

Sally Vandiver and Denise Horton, *Mission & Outreach Commission Co-Chairs*

Worship & Music Commission

Commission Members: Allen Crowell, Chair, Joe Attaway, Joy Holloway, Diane Hudgins, Margaret Johansen, Glenn Doak, Senior Pastor (January – May) Bruce Lancaster, Interim Senior Pastor (September – December), and John Coble, Director of Music and Organist

The mission statement of First Presbyterian Church of Athens includes seeking the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoicing in worship, and showing the love of Christ in the community of Athens and the world. Through its activities in 2016, the Worship & Music Commission, along with the congregation and church staff, has pursued the goal of fulfilling this mission.

The most dramatic event of the year was the retirement of Dr. W. Glenn Doak, senior pastor and leader of worship for twenty years. June 12 was his last Sunday in our pulpit. For the service, a special anthem titled “Alleluia” was commissioned from Daniel Elder, an up-and-coming choral composer, and graduate of the University of Georgia and Westminster Choir College who grew up in our church. Also sung in the service was the anthem commissioned for Dr. Doak’s installation, K. Lee Scott’s “You Will I Love.”

During the summer, Dr. Carol Strickland, in her role as Associate Pastor, served as the congregation’s leader. She presented an outstanding series of sermons illuminating the Lord’s Prayer. On September 11, Dr. Bruce Lancaster came to the church as the Interim Pastor. In no time at all, he established himself as an outstanding preacher with a warm, engaging personality.

Geneva Stonecipher became the first music intern in the fall. She is assisting Dr. Coble in all aspects of the music ministry: rehearsing, conducting and singing in choirs, playing service music, accompanying, and ringing.

Special worship services held throughout the year included Ash Wednesday (Feb. 10), Maundy Thursday (Mar.24), Easter (Mar. 27), and Scottish Reformation Sunday (May 22). A special worship service was held in Fellowship Hall on October 9 in connection with the Athens Half Marathon. All of the choirs were recognized and rededicated on September 23. The Chancel Choir, members of Celebration Singers, lay readers and clergy presented a Festival of Lessons and Carols on December 18. Dr. John Coble presented a recital of music for organ and strings on May 1.

On the afternoon of November 20, the first annual Interfaith Thanksgiving service was held at First Baptist Church. Participating were clergy of three faiths; Rabbi Eric Linder (Congregation Children of Israel), Imam Dr. Adel Amer (Al-Huda Islamic Center) and our own Dr. Bruce Lancaster. Readings were in Hebrew from the Tanakh, Arabic from the Quran, and the New Testament. Music was provided by a combined choir from many churches.

The church once again adopted the summer schedule of combining the 8:45 a.m. and the 11:00 a.m. services into a single 10:00 a.m. service.

The duties of greeting and ushering proceeded with efficiency. Flower arranging flourished under the leadership of Diane Adams, Sydney Jackson, Suzanne King and other talented volunteers.

Serving communion on a monthly basis as well as during other special worship services was carried out by Diane Hudgins, Joe Neighbors, and Joe Attaway.

The Chancel Choir rehearsed weekly and sang for every Sunday morning worship except Youth Sunday, and at many special services. Celebration Singers, St. Andrew's Choir, and the Cherub Choir rehearsed regularly and also participated in worship services throughout the year. The handbell choir played preludes to worship and for the Live Nativity and Benevolence Market. All of the ensembles rehearsed regularly with Dr. Coble and Melanie Powers.

Allen Crowell, *Worship & Music Commission Chair*

2017 Communion Schedule

Sunday, January 1	January Communion
Sunday, February 5	February Communion
Saturday, February 11	Session Retreat
Wednesday, March 1	Ash Wednesday Communion
Sunday, March 5	March Communion
Sunday, April 3	April Communion
Thursday, April 13	Maundy Thursday Communion
Sunday, April 23	Women's Retreat
Sunday, May 7	May Communion
Sunday, June 4	June Communion, Pentecost
Sunday, August 6	August Communion
Sunday, September 3	September Communion
Sunday, October 1	October Communion
Sunday, November 5	November Communion
Sunday, December 3	December Communion, Advent
Sunday, December 24	Christmas Eve
Sunday, January 7, 2018	First Sunday of the New Year

Congratulations on the Births of:

Greta Alice Chromiak

Graham Marie Epting

Marshall Evan Esary

Owen Laurence Guest

Robert Durand Heath III

Olivia Lynn Jordan

Massey Mae McConnell

Harper Elizabeth Price

In Memoriam:

Cyler Marshall "Buck" Adams

Edda R. Agee

Anna Belle Beusse

Robert Thomas Cobb

Robert Edward Colbert

Betty T. DeLorme

Margarett "Meg" Gunn Dure

Leona Scott Finch

Kevin Blair Garrison

Bessie Cabiness Hopkins

Frank Watson Lawson

Wayne Franklin Middendorf

Josephine Ruth Paine

Gerald Conaster Schab

Gerald Elliott Smith

James Quincy Wilfong

Session

Bruce Lancaster, Moderator, Jerris Hayes, Clerk of Session, Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor

Class of 2016

Diane Adams
Matt Bishop
Rod Canfield
Bertis Downs
Joe Neighbors
Terry Nestor
Leslye Queen
Chuck Roberts
Ed Smith
Sally Vandiver

Class of 2017

Allen Crowell
Don DeMaria
Madie Fischetti
Jerris Hayes
Joy Holloway
Diane Hudgins
Mike Morris
Jerry Rogers
Ella Stewart

Class of 2018

Joe Attaway
David Cole
Jason Doornbos
Sue Gray
Mark Harrison
Denise Horton
Christine Register
Arlene Shirley
Harry Shuford
Richard Stone

Staff

Dr. Bruce Lancaster, *Interim Senior Pastor*

Dr. Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*

Dr. John Kipp, *Parish Associate*

The Reverend Bob Googe, *Parish Associate*

Dr. John Coble, *Director of Music and Organist*

Mrs. Kim Ness, *Director of Youth Ministries*

Mrs. Natalie Bishop, *Director of Children's Ministries*

Mrs. Elaine Johnson, *Director of Weekday School*

Mr. Roger Burbage, *Church Administrator*

Ms. Melanie Powers, *Children and Youth Music Assistant*

Ms. Lucy Bell, *Administrative Assistant*

Ms. Nan Powell, *Communications Specialist*

Mrs. Jennifer Sunderlin, *Receptionist/Administrative Assistant*

Mrs. Laura McHugh, *Accountant*

Mrs. Tiffany Greene, *Weekday School Administrative Assistant*

Ms. Wendi Finch, *Nursery Coordinator*

Mr. Chuck Hunt, *Sunday Morning Manager*

Mr. Willie "Buc" Collins, *Sexton*

Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, *Parish Nurse*

Student Interns

Ms. Alyssa Standard, *Youth Ministry Intern*

Ms. Geneva Stonecipher, *Church Music Intern*

Ms. Angela Suh, *Website Intern*

Waddel Fellows

Ms. Stacey Bowden, *Children's Ministry*

Mrs. Christina Cotsakis Cordon, *Mission & Outreach*

Ms. Nettie Jester, *Youth Ministry*

Ms. Peyton Lipecky, *Congregational Care*

Ms. Jordan Osborne, *Children's Ministry*