



# First Presbyterian Church of Athens

2017 Annual Report

# 2017 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

Next Sunday is the Super Bowl, and whichever team wins, they will have had, by all measures, a successful season.

Companies have been making their annual earnings reports. The level of their profit is a way to measure success.

Report Cards are sent home from school. Grades indicate a student's level of success in classes.

But how do we measure success for a church? Maybe some of you keep score and the numbers are all important, or you look at the bottom line as if we were a for-profit business, or you give out grades to programs and people based on your personal preferences.

I believe the measure of success for a church is a matter of understanding just whose team we are on, whose business it is and what business we're in, and by what standards we grade our work for the kingdom.

So, I see the measure of success for a church as: Maturity in Faith, Strength of Community, and Service for Others.

1. Maturity in Faith: Are we taking advantage of learning more of the Bible, developing our spiritual lives, making a daily connection of faith to life? How do we help build up the community of faith through worship, stewardship, and prayer?
2. Strength of Community: How are we caring for each other, serving together, getting to know each other, building friendships, and welcoming everyone? What is the level of generosity and encouragement as we share life together?
3. Service for Others: How are the least of these among us being served? Who is not at the table as we serve and share the love of Jesus Christ and how are we making room for them? In what ways are we providing for others out of the abundance we enjoy?

By all measures, First Presbyterian Church had a successful 2017. Some of our success was visible, yet a good portion of it was beyond the human way of seeing things. God knows how lives have been changed for the better, how our church community has grown stronger in faith, hope, and love, and how we are prepared to take the next step into the future God has prepared for us.

We live in the confidence that God has hold of us and won't let go. Because of that faith, we can do great things for God and for good.

I look forward to serving with you in 2018.

Blessings and peace,  
Dr. Bruce Lancaster, *Interim Senior Pastor*

## Associate Pastor

The highlight of 2017 for me was beginning the Stephen Ministry program at FPC. This is the one-on-one caring ministry to persons going through crisis carried out by trained church members. After our three Stephen Leaders (Larry Gray, Dawn Frisch, and I) attended week-long training events, we publicized the program and recruited candidates to be our first Stephen Ministers. In the fall we began training a class of 18, far surpassing our goal! When these talented and dedicated Stephen Ministers finish their 50 hours of training in the spring of 2018, they will be assigned care receivers and thus launch a tremendous ministry for our church. I couldn't be more pleased with the quality of our Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers.

In other respects, 2017 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, funerals, home communion), pastoral care, teaching, and following up with guests to worship. Also, I did the following:

- Led the Lenten "Soup Group" on Friday evenings in exploring ancient spiritual practices
- Created, with others, a beautiful Easter egg mobile for Fellowship Hall
- Worked toward increasing awareness of suicide prevention and cultivating a supportive environment by attending a "Soul Shop" seminar, meeting with the FPC "Critical Conversations" committee, and preaching on the subject
- Helped coordinate the annual Women's Retreat
- Led the first Blessing of the Animals service in the Courtyard on October 7
- Helped plan and participate in the second Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship
- Invited Rabbi Eric Linder and Imam Adel Amer to lead Wed@First programs
- Served on the Holiday Benevolence Market Committee as the Market transitioned to a new time and venue in connection with the Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship, November 19 at the Tate Center
- Supervised the 2016-17 Waddel Fellow for Congregational Care (Peyton Lipecky) and the Waddel Fellow for Outreach (2016-17 Christina Cordon, 2017-18 Christian Cordon)
- Served on the Presbyterian Student Center board
- Participated actively in the work of Northeast Georgia Presbytery including serving in several ad hoc capacities

Our church has been guided this year by the theme "Fruit of the Spirit" as listed in Galatians 5:22-23. I feel grateful to be part of a congregation that is actively growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Gratefully submitted,  
Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*

## Director of Music and Organist

Looking back over the last four years, my annual reports all seem to begin by stating it's been another great year for music at First Presbyterian Church. This report won't be much different. While we have some wonderful annual traditions that continue to thrive, this year has also brought some new things for us. Our choirs continue to do well. The Chancel Choir has added a number of new members, joining soon after (or even before) joining our church. Along with that, our childcare needs on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings have grown which is sometimes challenging, but a good problem to have. The Handbell Choir has had some change in membership, but continues to do well. The St. Andrews Choir continues to rehearse and sing in worship regularly, and they continue to work with the Voice for Life chorister training program. Choristers are earning medals as they move up through the different levels.

Sadly, this year, due to health problems, Melanie Powers had to resign from her position as Children's Music Assistant/Director of the Cherub Choir, and we certainly miss her. We are now fortunate to have Charlotte Chromiak serving in that position, and she is doing a wonderful job. The Mellows continue their special ministry of music in our community by singing in independent and assisted living homes and nursing homes. They take a variety of music to people who can't get out to church or to concerts and it is very rewarding to see the impact their music has on those we sing for and with.

2017 also brought many special events. The Voices of Truth performed again in January, as part of our celebration of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. In February, we officially started The Wayne F. Middendorf Memorial Concert Series with The University of Georgia's University Chorus performing *Eternal Light: A Requiem* by Howard Goodall. The concert drew a large audience and was well received by our church and our community. Our Chancel Choir, Celebration Singers, St. Andrews and Cherub Choirs joined forces to celebrate Palm Sunday. Members of our Chancel Choir participated in the joint choir for the Good Friday service held at the Presbyterian Student Center. We celebrated another great Easter, joined by brass from UGA, organized by Jean Martin-Williams. We again hosted several piano recitals in our sanctuary. I played for the Weekday School graduation in May, and we also celebrated our annual Scottish Reformation Sunday in that month with Henry and Fran Frantz on bagpipe and drum. In June an intergenerational group of children, youth, and adults from our church attended the Montreat Worship and Music Conference.

Geneva Stonecipher completed her church music internship with us, and her experience here helped her get a church position of her own at Commerce Presbyterian Church. In August, Geneva and Chris Overbaugh were married in our church and our Chancel Choir was honored to sing in the ceremony. Chris and Geneva officially joined our church, and I am pleased that Geneva found her experience here to be more than just an internship; Geneva and Chris now feel that First Presbyterian is their church home. In August, also as part of the Middendorf Concert Series, I was joined by faculty and student brass ensembles from UGA in presenting a concert of music for organ and brass.

October brought one of the highlights of the year (and of my career) for me, hosting Dr. Marilyn Keiser for an organ recital, again as part of the Middendorf Concert Series. Dr. Keiser is a world-class performer and this was the first time I've felt I had a situation and an organ worthy of a recital by her. The audience included guests not only from across our state, but also Alabama, Indiana, North Carolina and South Carolina. It was truly a memorable event for me and for our church. In October, we also had Choir Dedication Sunday, I taught a Wednesday night class on music reading and hymn singing that was well received, and I played for the Ath-Half pre-race service.

In November we held an All Saints Evening Prayer Service, and members of the Chancel Choir participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. In December, I presented a program for the Weekday School Chapel, played for the Weekday School Christmas program, presented the Christmas Pageant (under the great leadership of Natalie Bishop) with music by our Cherub and St. Andrews Choirs, members of our Chancel Choir participated in a *Messiah* sing along at Oconee Presbyterian, I participated in the SAM Christmas Tea accompanying Kendall Kookogey's singing and leading the Mellows and all present in singing carols, we had our annual Festival of Lessons and Carols (at two services) with the Chancel Choir and Celebration Singers, and on Christmas Eve, played for five services. It has been a busy year.

In addition to work at the church, in 2017 I became part-time instructor of organ at the University of Georgia, where I am teaching three organ students each semester. I also began serving as artist-in-residence (organist) at Piedmont College in Demorest, playing for convocation, lessons and carols, a concert in April, and baccalaureate in May. They have been great experiences for me and I am proud to take the name of First Presbyterian Church into the community when I am asked to play and teach.

Our music ministry continues to thrive. We have a healthy church, a wonderful staff, and as we await the call of a new Senior Pastor, I am looking forward to the future with confidence. 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 and Organist*

## Director of Youth Ministries

When I first started doing youth work, I was only a few years out of college and felt more like a big sister. This year, I welcomed my own child into the youth program?! Much has changed in the field of youth ministry over the last twenty years – it has become more global, more digital, and much busier. Yet the core needs of adolescents remain – to feel welcomed, to be connected, to make a difference. Last year, we continued with our “must haves” while creating space for new opportunities to live out our youth ministry mission statement: *to draw youth into a journey of faith, prepare them for lifelong discipleship, and inspire them to carry the love of Christ to Athens and the world.*

The tried and tested, all-important, must-have, wouldn't-be-the-same-without parts of our ministry:

- **SKI TRIP:** A time for fellowship and fun, the ski trip is one of our most well attended activities of the year. In 2017, 21 youth and seven adults participated in Montreat Ski Weekend. In addition to a full day of skiing at Sugar Mountain, NC, there were worship and group activities at Assembly Inn with over 100 youth from across the Southeast. On Sunday morning, we even hiked up Lookout Mountain for a literal mountain top worship experience!
- **LENTEN PRAYER STATIONS:** For the last three years, we have set up prayer stations in The PIT during Holy Week. Last year the theme was “Love Your Neighbor.” Inspired by the Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship, we created a dozen prayer stations taking elements of the spiritual practices of our brothers and sisters from around the world.
- **YOUTH SUNDAY:** From writing prayers to performing skits and delivering eight mini-meditations, youth put together another meaningful all-youth led service. The theme was “God is my Rock.” After the benediction, river rocks painted with inspiring words were distributed and members were asked to hide them throughout Athens for others to find as a reminder that God is always there for us.
- **MISSION TRIPS:** Summer mission trips are where most youth really connect to their faith, as they see it lived out in action. In June we had 19 middle schoolers participate in a week of local mission focused on the call in Matthew 25. In the mornings they served as tour guides for VBS and in the afternoons, they served at various non-profits including the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank, Salvation Army, and Project Safe, as well as delivered flowers and cards to homebound members. The following week, we held an intergenerational mission trip with 14 youth and 12 adults serving with DOOR in Atlanta. We focused on issues surrounding homelessness, hoping to learn new ways we can better serve the homeless men and women in our own hometown. The highlight for many was certainly the time for community-building between the youth and adults over games and meals.
- **MONTREAT:** The summer would not be complete without a trip to Montreat, NC for the annual youth conference. This year we stayed at the Georgia Lodge and were joined by Cathi and Bruce Lancaster as chaperones. The theme was “A Missing Peace,” and from small groups to recreation and worship, our nine high school youth had a truly memorable week.
- **30 HOUR FAMINE:** Every other year, we participate in the 30 Hour Famine, using resources from World Vision. Through fasting, we learn first-hand about hunger while raising money and serving our community. Last year we packed 100 lunches for Our Daily Bread, loaded and unloaded over 300 Thanksgiving Food Bags and finally broke the fast with families and confirmation mentors in a shared meal in Fellowship Hall.

- COLLEGE INTERNS: I could not do this work without our college interns and Waddel Fellows. A big thank you to Alyssa Standard, Nettie Jester, and Jordan Osborne for being MY rock!

The new and exciting, responsive-to-changing-times and growing-group-size youth offerings this year:

- KICKOFF AT POOL: A big thank you to Lee Epting for offering us use of The Hill for our Fall Kickoff. While youth swam in the pool, parents were able to get to know each other and learn about the upcoming year. In addition to seven rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders, we have also welcomed six new families to our youth program in the last year.
- SUNDAY SCHOOL CHANGES: On Sunday mornings, we now offer three different Sunday School classes, starting together for donuts and highs/lows. The Middle School class, led by Erik Ness and Jordan Osborne, used *re:form* curriculum (creative, funny animated videos, and group activities) to engage in tough faith questions. The High School class, led by Meghan Bawcum, was a more informal time to reflect on the week, using the daily online devotional *d365.org*.
- CONFIRMATION CLASS: After taking a year to examine how our church does confirmation, we are back with a large class of thirteen 9<sup>th</sup> graders for this year-long journey. We held our Opening Retreat in August at Camp Fellowship, SC and meet each week during Sunday School, using a new curriculum called *Confirm Not Conform*. Additionally, each youth has been matched with a mentor to help guide them this year. Gratitude to Robbie Bryan who is our co-leader.
- SPLIT YOUTH GROUP: In response to growing numbers, we decided to split the Sunday night youth group into Middle School and High School, with each meeting at their own time, but sharing a meal together. We join together each month for a big event, including bowling, Elf movie night and service opportunities. Of all the changes, I am most excited about this one, as it has really helped strengthen relationships between youth while tailoring activities and discussion to each developmental level.

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV)* While the world is changing more quickly than I may like, our young people are both the hope for our future and the light in our present; I am incredibly grateful for the time I get to spend with them each week.

Kim Ness, *Director of Youth Ministries*

## Director of Children's Ministries

We have enjoyed another wonderful year in Children's Ministries! We've welcomed many new families and friends throughout the year in Sunday School and Children's Church, Godly Play has grown with six new, additional storytellers and two new Godly Play rooms, our children continue to serve as worship leaders in a variety of ways, and the overwhelming love and support from all our Children's Ministries volunteers and Nursery Staff remains constant and strong.

After a busy Advent Season, we enjoyed getting back into our regular Sunday School and Children's Church routine in January and February. We began the Lenten season on March 1 with a special Ash Wednesday experience. Together, children and parents built an interactive Lenten calendar as they journeyed to different stations throughout the sanctuary. During the six weeks of Lent, the children experienced many Godly Play stories including *The Mystery of Easter* and an interactive Godly Play story of Jesus' life and journey to the cross during Sunday School and Children's Church. On Palm Sunday, we were joined by another sweet donkey from the North Georgia Zoo named Tallulah. Tallulah led the children as they waved their palms and shouted "Hosanna" in the palm procession around the church. And we began a new Easter Egg Hunt tradition on Easter Eve at Lee Epting's beautiful homestead. After the "little, medium, and big bunnies" hunted for treasure-filled eggs, families picnicked and enjoyed a perfect spring afternoon together.

We finished up the 2016-2017 Sunday School year with another yummy Pancake Breakfast to thank all our wonderful Children's Ministry Volunteers and Nursery Staff. All volunteers and nursery staff members received baskets filled with Washington Farms strawberries and "Thank You Berry Much" notes from the children.

Vacation Bible School 2017 was moved up a few weeks to late May/early June in hopes to "catch" our sweet kiddos before they headed off for fun summer vacations. One hundred children from our church and the Athens community readied their passports as they boarded "First Pres Airlines" and traveled to Peru for, "Passport to Peru," Vacation Bible School 2017! The children were not only immersed in the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Peru, but were also reminded of God's eternal love for all his children all over the world. The children also took part in a very important mission project called Operation Kid to Kid, Clean Water for Peru. Close to \$250.00 was raised which meant that our children helped 50 Peruvian children have clean water for an entire year! On the last day of VBS the children celebrated a wonderful week together with a delicious Peruvian snack Helado Fruita (ICE CREAM with fruit) and proudly showed off their wonderful, Peruvian-inspired artwork to their parents in a special art show. VBS 2017 was definitely a big success and that is thanks to all our incredible volunteers and the support of our church staff.

The 2017-2018 Sunday School and Children's Church year began with Godly Play moving to Sunday School for all children, ages Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Thanks to the overwhelming support and strong commitment made by church members, we began the school year with six newly trained Godly Play storytellers and over \$3,000.00 in Godly Play funds to help fill two additional rooms with tangible Bible stories. And with Godly Play moved to Sunday School, we began a new "ready for worship" Children's Church curriculum based on the booklet called *A Children's Guide to Worship*. We continue to work on making Children's Church not just an alternative place for children to go during worship, but rather a special time created just for them so that they too may worship God in a meaningful way. Children in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades continue to enjoy serving as acolytes and liturgists during the 11:00 a.m. worship service and now our 2<sup>nd</sup> graders have also begun to serve as worship leaders as our new Communion Helpers. To help better support our children as they begin to remain in worship, our 2<sup>nd</sup> graders have been invited to stay with their families during worship and to take part in (or to observe) communion on Communion Sundays. To mark the beginning of this special year and to recognize this

important transition, these sweet children began a new tradition of walking in the Communion Elements and placing them on the Communion Table on World Communion Sunday.

Also during the fall another “Season of Giving” in Children’s Ministry began with the children dressing up in fun, friendly Halloween Costumes and Trick or Treating for UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) during Sunday School. Thanks to all our adult Sunday School classes and Chancel Choir, the children raised almost \$300.00 (\$100.00 more than last year!) for children in need all around the world. The children also “stuffed” many turkey offering envelopes with proceeds going to support Thornwell Homes for Children in Clinton, South Carolina. And during Children’s Church, the children learned about a new way they can help serve others around the world through Heifer International’s Fill the Ark program. I am excited to announce that after learning about all the animals that we can “fill the ark” with, the children voted to begin raising money to buy a trio of rabbits (\$60) in 2018 to send to a special family in need.

As 2017 came to an end, we enjoyed another wonderful Advent Season in Children’s Ministries! During each Sunday of Advent, pure joy filled the Children’s Ministry Suite as the children chose Christmas Pageant costumes, made ornaments, enjoyed goodies during our Christmas Feast and experienced the Godly Play *Advent* story all together. The children did a great job of reminding all of us of the true meaning of the season with yet another wonderful Christmas Pageant and very sweet Christmas Eve Family service. It’s been another great year, and I have no doubt that God will continue to bless our children and this important ministry in the New Year!

Natalie Bishop, *Director of Children’s Ministries*

## Director of Weekday School

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Weekday School provided preschool services for 105 children. The Weekday School enjoyed a wonderful teaching staff:

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Pre-K/Early Five's (4 or 5 Day) | Carol Norton, Suzanne Bowles, and Robin Nunan        |
| Three's (4 or 5 Day)            | Alex Lampp and Marcy Fabris                          |
| Three's (3 Day)                 | Susan Smith and Kate Beall                           |
| Two's (4 or 5 Day)              | Jennifer Cummings and Hannah Allen                   |
| Two's (2 or 3 Day)              | Tara Reid and Teresa Isbell                          |
| Early Two's (2- 5 Day)          | Megan Lewis and Jessica Story                        |
| MMO Toddler (2-5 Day)           | Mary Grant and Michelle Fletcher                     |
| MMO Baby (2-5 Day)              | Cheryl Fields, Melissa Nichols and Autumn Fullington |
| Spanish                         | Jody Pope  |
| Music                           | Susan Smith  |

The best in early childhood education was provided to each of our students by our devoted teachers.

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.

We were able to add a music teacher, which has long been a goal of the Weekday School. Although music is used in the classrooms daily by the lead and assistant teachers, having a certified music teacher, Mrs. Susan Smith, to share her talents each week with each class has been a blessing indeed. Not only does it enrich the children's time with us, it shows teachers who might not have had specific music education how to incorporate it into their classrooms, as teachers stay in the classroom while the music teacher is leading the class.

The Weekday School succeeded in retaining our accreditation, with our visit in the spring of 2017 by our evaluator, Dr. Dock Sisk. He was very complimentary of our school, and feels we are well above standards for accreditation.

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. We were able to add, with Weekday School funds, a sink to our indoor playroom. This helps children learn the habit of clean hands and allows for more art and art clean up in this area. We also were able to replace our outside sign, which was lost when the old playground fence was removed during construction eight years ago. The city was gracious in granting us the ability to add a new sign, provided with Weekday School funds, on our College Avenue playground fence.

The Weekday School had our fifth annual Live Nativity for the school and church families, as well as the community, in December of 2016. The church members and staff helped in many ways with this. We had over 700 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, and

Christmas art projects for children in the school classrooms as well as the Children's Ministry Suite. Cheese straws and hot apple cider were enjoyed in the courtyard. It was a well enjoyed event for all!

The Weekday School celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary during the last school year, having been founded in 1966. The congregation and Weekday School honored our school during Sunday services on May 7, 2017. Many current and former teachers, directors, and students came to celebrate, as several shared thoughts and remembrances from the Weekday School's past and present. All agreed that this special outreach of First Presbyterian Church has had a huge impact on our community through the decades. A reception was held in the Weekday School lobby and tours were given. A new section of murals called, "Peter's Garden" was completed during this time period, with many parents and congregation members sponsoring sections as a way to honor individuals or the school. Weekday School memorabilia was collected in the months beforehand and was enjoyed by many who remembered being part of the Weekday School long ago. Current students, parents, and teachers learned more about the rich history of this mission of the church we call "First Presbyterian Weekday School."

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 2017 budgeted amounts.

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 Wed@First programs, special dinners on Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, and our Annual Meeting/Dinner were hosted in Fellowship Hall. The annual weekend Session Retreat was held in the Moses Waddel Room. We continued to host events for community groups and weddings. Many community groups meet regularly on a weekly, monthly and/or annual basis at First Presbyterian, including Alcoholics Anonymous, AIDS Athens Board, Interfaith Hospitality Network Board, and Athens Youth Symphony. Additionally, we participated in Interfaith Hospitality Network of Athens 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.

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

Roger Burbage, *Church Administrator*

## Administration Commission

Commission Members: Mike Morris, Chair, Scott Collins, Treasurer, Jason Doornbos, Joe Hermanowicz, Joy Holloway, Richard Stone, Bruce Lancaster, Interim Senior Pastor, 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. Three Teams comprise the Administration Commission and each Team is charged with specific responsibilities in Property, Personnel, and Finance.*

The Administration Commission recognized 2017 as a pivotal year for our Church as we began our search for a new Senior Pastor in earnest. We viewed the successful administration of all church functions during this year as vital to the ongoing effort to continue our growth as a congregation, the maintenance of our facilities, and the faithful management of our financial resources. To that end, the Administration Commission is proud to report:

- We set a realistic operating budget for 2017 and for the first time in several years, we met our budget. This was a top priority for our Commission but could not have been accomplished without the extraordinary efforts of our church staff in holding down costs.
- We realized at the beginning of the year that we could not address our remaining capital debt until we call our new Senior Pastor and allow him/her to get their feet on the ground. We made sure we had adequate funds on hand to pay all debt service until the debt is addressed in a permanent fashion and relayed those thoughts to the congregation in a letter last spring.
- Recognizing cash flow to be an ongoing area of concern, we coordinated an effort to encourage our members to pay pledges to the operating budget earlier in the year rather than waiting until the end of the year.
- We reorganized our three standing committees naming active Ruling Elders as committee chairs while trying to get other church members involved in the committee activities. We believe this will give more members the opportunity to serve and present a format that will allow members to be involved in various committee activities as a precursor to possibly serving as Ruling Elders.
- The Property Committee was reorganized with Jason Doornbos as the Committee Chair, with Richard Stone, Ed Smith, Smith Wilson, Diane Adams, Carl Nichols, and Roger Burbage constituting the remaining committee members. During 2017, the Property Committee inventoried and catalogued all the systems in the church facilities so that we might do a better job of planning for required maintenance and/or replacement of systems. The Property Committee also completed several projects including repairing and repainting of exterior windows, putting UV film on sanctuary windows, repainting the doors to the sanctuary, new LED lighting at the main entrance of the Sanctuary, repair of shutters, regrouting the front steps and a new curtain in the balcony area.
- Keeping with our theme of having a Ruling Elder as the Chair of our various committees, we reorganized the Personnel Committee with Joe Hermanowicz as the Chair. Joy Holloway, Bill Bushnell, Rod Canfield, Mary Havick, and Jackie Macker rounded out the committee. The Personnel Committee spent a good part of the year looking at our Personnel Manual and our employee review process. The result is an updated, revised Personnel Manual and Employee Evaluation Form which should be adopted by the Session in early 2018.

- The Finance Committee has historically been composed of the various chairs of the Commissions of the Session. Realizing potential conflicts relative to the budgets and spending of the various Commissions, as well as the necessity of educating new Commission Chairs each year on the finances of the church, we recently finalized plans to reorganize the Finance Committee in 2018 to consist of two active Ruling Elders (one serving as the Chair) and not less than three nor more than five additional church members with business acumen to periodically review and assist in the ongoing finances and business of the church. We believe this new concept will assist in the efficient business operations of the church. In 2018, the Chairs of each Commission will constitute a newly formed Budget Committee to assist the Session in the formulation and passing of an annual budget. I want to thank our 2017 Finance Committee of Allen Crowell, Denise Horton, Mark Harrison, Harry Shuford, Ella Stewart, Scott Collins, Bruce and Roger for their insight and support in moving in this direction.

Overall, this has been a memorable year for our church. We accomplished some major goals in a year where we continued our search for our next Senior Pastor. I have to believe it is unusual for a church to actually grow while it is without a permanent Senior Pastor, but that is exactly what we did. We should all be proud of our accomplishments this year and grateful to Bruce for his remarkable leadership. As I step down from my role as Chair of the Administration Commission and the Finance Committee, I want to thank all who assisted in making 2017 a successful year in every aspect.

Mike Morris, *Administration Commission Chair*

# Congregational Care Commission Report

Commission Members: Harry Shuford, Chair, Sue Gray, Jane McGown, Judy Scanlon, Arlene Shirley, Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor, Madeline Van Dyck, Parish Nurse, and Lucy Bell, Church Staff Liaison

Commission Purpose: *To nurture, care, and respond to the needs of our congregation.*

Commission subcommittees:

Stephen Ministry:

- Stephen Ministry, a lay caregiving ministry, was launched in 2017 at First Presbyterian Church. Stephen Ministers provide one-to-one, Christ-centered care, to bring hope and healing to hurting people, “bearing one another’s burdens.”
- Dawn Frisch, Larry Gray and Carol Strickland completed Stephen Leader training this summer to establish and support Stephen Ministry in our congregation. They were commissioned as our first three Stephen Leaders on August 20.
- Our initial classes of eighteen individuals were recruited, selected, and began classes in October 2017. They will complete 50 hours of training to be equipped to be Stephen Ministers. The commissioning of our initial class of Stephen Ministers will be March 4, 2018.

SAM (Senior Adult Ministry):

- **Senior Adult Sunday** - Senior Adults were honored and celebrated on Sunday, August 27, with a lunch reception for 200 in the Fellowship Hall, with the theme of “Bearing Fruit” in ministry and mission.
- **Senior Christmas Tea** - With the theme of “Jesus Christ the Apple Tree”, on December 14 we hosted 65 senior adult members and friends in Fellowship Hall for our senior Christmas tea. Ten tables were festively decorated to honor and serve our guests. The Mellows Choir led the singing of Christmas hymns and songs. Members contributed sandwiches, cookies, and served as elves, greeters, kitchen helpers and musical entertainers.  
*Thanks to Sue Gray for her leadership in the overall planning and managing of Senior Adult Sunday and the Senior Christmas Tea, and thanks to Arlene Shirley and Greta Covington for the food preparation and presentation.*
- **Dot’sCloset@First** - In honor of Dot Handley’s spirit of generosity (she donated many deluxe walkers to the church) we started *Dot’sCloset@First* to arrange the loaning of useful medical assistance items between church members. Contact Madeline Van Dyck, FPC Parrish Nurse, at [madelinevandyck@gmail.com](mailto:madelinevandyck@gmail.com) if this project interests you. Please find a list of items currently available to borrow at <http://firstpresathens.org/dotsclosetfirst/>.
- **Rideshare@ First** - We are facilitating the development of a transportation team willing to drive members to church when needed, and when the driver is available. We especially need to build up our team of people who are willing to provide rides, and we also need your help identifying those who have transportation needs. Contact Judy Scanlon at [judy.s.scanlon@gmail.com](mailto:judy.s.scanlon@gmail.com) to participate.

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.

- For 2017 a class of 11 volunteers made a commitment to being part of the Lay Caller Team. They meet together with the Associate Pastor on a monthly basis for continuing education and support, and to schedule their upcoming visitations.

#### Prayer Ministry:

- **Prayers for Healing** - held weekly, Wednesdays, at 12:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary, with leadership by Jane McGown, is an informal half-hour service for members and friends wishing to pray for others or be prayed for themselves.
- **Prayer Chain** - this ministry has 170 members who receive emails and pray for people who have contacted the church requesting prayer. Requests for prayer may be submitted to the prayer chain by phone call to the church office, by email request, via the church's website, or through prayer request cards in the pews. There are four Prayer Chain volunteers who provide scripture to guide the prayers. *If you would like to be added to the church's Prayer Chain to receive these emails, please contact the church office.*

During 2017 the Prayer Chain was activated 28 times.

#### Flower Ministry:

- The Flower Ministry, under the leadership of Julie Sanks and Ella Stewart, consists of a group of 12 volunteers who use the flowers from our Sunday service to deliver a ministry of flower arrangements, cards, and visitation to over 24 homebound 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 2017 the Response Teams were activated on 3 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 2 times 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 not activated in 2017.

#### 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.

Harry Shuford, *Congregational Care Commission Chair*

## Fellowship & Evangelism Commission

Commission Members: Ella Stewart, Chair, Susan Ferguson, Lawton Stephens, Dan Trier, and 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, Primetime Presbyterians (PTP's), New Member engagement and Evangelism efforts.

Presbyterian Women – At the end of 2017, we had 4 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. Cheryl Gazlay serves as the Moderator of the Presbyterian Women. Leaders are: Cynthia McCullers, Diane Owen, Grace Lu, and Phyllis Crowell.

Wed@First Dinners – Set up went well this year. Volunteers assisted with sign-in and handling the money for dinner each week. John and Joan Duffett volunteered most weeks with others filling in as needed.

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, individuals/families have taken turns serving refreshments with Susan Ferguson coordinating 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 (200+) crowds filled fellowship Hall for the Easter Brunch and the Christmas dinner.

Church Picnic – Our church wide picnic at Sandy Creek Park was cancelled this year due to a low number of members making reservations. We hope to plan one for the spring of 2018.

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. They are always looking for additional players and players do not have to commit to the entire season.

Prime Time Presbyterians (PTP's) – Judy Howell does an amazing job scheduling interesting outings. 2017 outings were to Austell to tour Presbyterian Village, a tour of Whitehall mansion on Whitehall Road in Athens, Chateau Elan Winery and Resort in Braselton, George Bugg's collection of antique cars and trucks in Athens, David J. Spencer CDC Museum in Atlanta, and a tour of Oconee Hill Cemetery lead by Charlotte Thomas Marshall, a well-known Athens historian. They are very appreciative of the new church van. At Judy's request, we continue to search for someone to lead the PTPs in 2018.

First Friends – The First Friends group for women get together for dinner on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Nonie Hale are the coordinators of First Friends.

Presbyterian Men – The Presbyterian Men is an active group. Except for the summer, the group meets monthly for fellowship at different locations around the area. They had been well attended with 15-25 men at each gathering, but for the past 6 months, attendance has been less.

Evangelism – In an effort to familiarize UGA students with First Presbyterian, we participated in a UGA promoted “scavenger hunt”. Although we didn’t have a large number of students, it was well received by those who came and we had some meaningful conversations. We also reached out to members who have joined since 2015, but had not attended for several consecutive Sundays. We found them to have plausible reasons for their absences and no “drop-outs”. It is important to encourage new members and to get them involved in volunteer activities of their church.

Ella Stewart, *Fellowship & Evangelism Commission Chair*

## Mission & Outreach Commission

Commission Members: Denise Horton, Chair, Jayne Bailey, Robbie Bryan, Mary Burton, Kate Coble, Don DeMaria, Kitty Donnan, Bertis Downs, Ann Dunn, Brenda Glasscock, Sydney Jackson, Richard Lane, Joe Neighbors, Jerry Rogers, Rick Simpson, Sally Vandiver, Tom Wilfong, Christina and Christian Cordon, Waddel Fellows, Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor

Many lives were touched by First Presbyterian Church's generous congregation in 2017. 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 2017. This includes those who worked year-round in various endeavors. The **IHNA Team**, headed by Patty Whiten and Michelle Clendenen-Shaw, 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**. Robbie Bryan is leading the monthly effort to prepare 60 sack meals that are distributed by the **Athens Area Homeless Day Center** to individuals who frequently are unable to obtain food on the weekends. A number of our members also spent 2 days a week at **Jubilee Partners** from early summer through the fall, completely rebuilding the inside of a 30-year-old cottage that houses international refugees. The project, led by Jack Vandiver and Richard Lane, was a result of a decision by the Mission & Outreach Commission to combine an outreach grant with volunteer support.

We are grateful for the volunteer efforts that supported special events during the year. On the **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service** in January, many First Presbyterian volunteers spent time performing community service at Project Safe Thrift Store and Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery, as well as other sites. Nearly 30 units of blood were collected during what has now become our church's annual **Red Cross Blood Drive**, held in February and coordinated by Joe Neighbors. 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 2017, a total of \$1,292 went to the First Presbyterian Mission Fund (\$450 from our own crafts, \$400 from selling "share holder" certificates, and \$442 from Ten Thousand Villages). Also, Jubilee Partners received \$60 for their weaver, Casa de la Cultura received \$119 for their potters, and Bethlehem Ministries received \$153 for the embroidered items as well as \$1,415 in donations to support the Jatrofa Project—goats, beekeeping, trees, and apprenticeships. First Presbyterian continues to pay for and serve **Meals on Wheels at the holidays** (Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve) coordinated by Sally Vandiver. More than 100 FPC families provided Christmas for Athens area children with the **Salvation Army Christmas Angel project**. In 2017, approximately 125 children "angels" were provided for through this program, as coordinated by Sandy Boyles. In December, with financial gifts from congregation members and the help of at least 20 volunteers, we packaged 99 boxes of food valued at \$40 each that were shared with low-income Latino families through a partnership with **Casa de Amistad**. As part of an effort to extend the reach of **The Holiday Benevolence Market**, we teamed with organizers of the Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship and held the Market at the UGA Tate Center following the

service. While many of the more than 700 attendees of the service browsed through the 29 displays representing non-profit agencies in our area, giving was substantially lower than it has been in years past. Our hope is that in the coming year, additional publicity and education will result in a substantial increase in donations. First Presbyterian participants in this year's effort included Lisa Oelke, Dianne Penny Wilson, the Rev. Carol Strickland, and Denise Horton.

First Presbyterian Church **youth**, under the leadership of Kim Ness, participated in numerous outreach projects. Our **children**, under the leadership of Natalie Bishop, raised \$249 during VBS for Operation Kids to Kids: Clean Water for Peru and \$294 for UNICEF (Trick or Treating for UNICEF) in October. The children also "stuffed" many turkeys offering envelopes full of quarters for Thornwell Homes for Children in November.

The Mission and Outreach Commission received two **Waddell Fellows** through the Presbyterian Student Center. In the spring semester, Christina Cordon led an outreach emphasis during Lent (Lenten calendar with daily activities), and our interface with the Athens Twilight Criterion (staffing a water station for the 5K race). In the fall semester, Christian Cordon (Christina's husband) 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. This year, we opened our Children's Ministry Suite to our neighbors in Bethel Homes as the monthly meeting space for the **Bethel Homes Literary Project**. **Alcoholics Anonymous** and **NAMI** (National Alliance on Mental Illness) meet regularly at the church. **Recitals** are held at the church by community members and we provide rehearsal space for the **Athens Youth Orchestra**. From time to time, the **University of Georgia** and other organizations use the church space for classes. The church was again open for **Christmas Parade of Lights** to give parade participants an opportunity to use the restrooms and warm up with hot chocolate. We also coordinated with other congregations and the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Athens during last fall's hurricanes. Although our facility ultimately wasn't needed for **emergency housing**, we were available and did provide overnight support at First Baptist Church for several homeless individuals who otherwise would have had nowhere to be out of the torrential storms.

### **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 United States 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**, **Columbia Theological Seminary**, and **Montreat**.

We are also **ecumenical**. In 2016, we gave support to **Greek Intersarsity** and **Young Life**.

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.

As part of an ongoing effort to increase interactions between our youth and adults in mission outreach, Susan and Rob Haire worked with Youth Director Kim Ness on a trip to **DOOR Atlanta**, where they served the homeless community, exploring issues of social justice and how our church can respond to the same issues here in Athens. This trip also served as a first step in incorporating youth and adults in an **international**

**mission trip**, set for June 2018 to Honduras. Since our Honduras trips are every other year, money was set aside in 2017 to support the 2018 trip.

Under the rubric of Mission Support, funding for the above ministries totaled \$135,268.

### **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 can be filled out online at our website. In 2017 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 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
- **Extra Special People** – enhances the lives of children with developmental disabilities and their families by focusing on their abilities—not disabilities
- **Food Bank of Northeast Georgia** – A non-profit organization that recovers donated and salvaged surplus food and distributes it to agencies for redistribution to residents in need.
- **Jubilee Partners** – A Christian Service Community that focuses on hosting refugees who have newly arrived in the United States.
- **Interfaith Hospitality Network of Athens (IHNA)** – 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 2017 we bought supplies for our IHNA hospitality, paid for a meal for the Bethel Homes Literacy project participants, and transferred the balance to the 2018 Honduras mission trip fund.

Under the rubric of Outreach Grants, funding for the above ministries totaled \$72,326.

### **SPECIAL OFFERINGS**

Additional funds were raised by special offerings for:

- Souper Bowl of Caring – \$1,280

- One Great Hour of Sharing – \$2,547
- Mother’s Day Offering – to help support people who live in Presbyterian Homes and have run out of money or are on Medicare Coverage -- \$2,239
- Pentecost Offering – 40% of the offering is retained for support of young people local; in 2017 it went to scholarships for the Barrow After School Program to benefit students in need -- \$1,434
- Peace and Global Witness Offering – 25% of the offering goes to a local peacemaking effort; in 2017, it went to Athens Justice Coalition of Care – \$963
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for Hurricane Relief – \$3,482
- Thornwell Home – \$2,169
- Christmas Joy Offering – 1,712
- Christmas Eve Offering – 75% went to support Meals on Wheels and 25% was given to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance fund – \$4,498

These donations add up to \$20,324.

### **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN GIFTS**

From 2014 Capital Campaign monies, in 2017 we gave Bethlehem Ministries our third and final \$7,000 gift toward a full-time nurse at the Clinique Esperance et Vie in Haiti and our third and final \$26,333 gift to the clinic to use for the purposes of attaining financial self-sufficiency. Also, we gave our final grant payment of \$9,000 to **Nancy Travis Childcare Project**. The total dispersed from Capital Campaign funds was \$42,333.

### **TOTAL MISSION AND OUTREACH GIVING**

**The grand total of dollars from mission support, outreach grants, special offerings, and capital campaigns amounts to \$270,251.** 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, etc. Thank you for your wonderful generosity!!

Denise Horton, *Mission & Outreach Commission Chair*

## Worship & Music Commission

Commission Members: Allen Crowell, Chair, Joe Attaway, Dee Ann Cox, Mary Havick, Diane Hudgins, Margaret Johansen, Bruce Lancaster, Interim Senior Pastor, 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 2017, the Worship & Music Commission, along with the congregation and church staff, has pursued the goal of fulfilling this mission.

Dr. Lancaster led the congregation with extraordinary grace and good humor. His sermons were elucidating and to the point. Dr. Strickland, in her almost monthly leading of the services, was equally effective.

Geneva Stonecipher, our first music intern, continued to serve ably, assisting Dr. Coble in all aspects of the music ministry: rehearsing, conducting and singing in choirs, playing service music, accompanying, and ringing. In the fall semester she was a concerto soloist winner at UGA, and performed the Amy Beach piano concerto with The University of Georgia Symphony Orchestra. It was a bravura performance. Her last Sunday was June 11 at which time she spoke warmly from the pulpit, thanking Dr. Coble and everyone in the congregation. She was married in the church and has assumed the leadership of a congregation in Commerce, fulfilling the goal she set out on with Dr. Coble.

Melanie Powers retired as director of the Cherub Choir. Charlotte Chromiak, a gifted worker with young voices, became the new Children's Music Assistant.

Special worship services held throughout the year included Ash Wednesday (March 1), Maundy Thursday (April 13), Easter (April 16), and Scottish Reformation Sunday (May 21). A special worship service was held in Fellowship Hall on October 22 in connection with the AthHalf marathon. All of the choirs were recognized and rededicated on October 15. The Chancel Choir, members of Celebration Singers, lay readers and clergy presented a Festival of Lessons and Carols on December 17.

Voices of Truth performed on January 15, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day weekend. Dr. John Coble presented a recital of music for organ and brass on August 20. Featured were The Georgia Brass Quintet (with our own Jean Martin-Williams on horn) and the Bulldog Brass Society. Dr. Coble brought his major professor from Indiana University, Dr. Marilyn Kaiser, to perform a wonderfully varied recital on October 1 as part of the Wayne F. Middendorf Memorial Concert Series.

On the afternoon of November 19, the second annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship was held in the Grand Hall of UGA's Tate Student Center. Participating were clergy of many faiths including Rabbi Eric Linder (Congregation Children of Israel), Imam Dr. Adel Amer (Al-Huda Islamic Center) and ministers of many other denominations. 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 coordinated by Diane Hudgins, assisted by Joe Attaway and Mary Havick.

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 Annual Holiday Benevolence Market. All of the ensembles rehearsed regularly with Dr. Coble and Charlotte Chromiak.

All aspects of the Commission's tasks were effectively executed throughout the year. As I rotate off active duty as a Session member, I am encouraged that, with Dr. Lancaster leading us into the induction of a new Senior Pastor, we will continue to thrive.

Allen Crowell, *Worship & Music Commission Chair*

## 2018 Communion Schedule

|                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sunday, January 7       | January Communion                    |
| Sunday, February 4      | February Communion                   |
| Saturday, February 10   | Session Retreat                      |
| Wednesday, February 14  | Ash Wednesday Communion (2 services) |
| Sunday, March 4         | March Communion                      |
| Thursday, March 29      | Maundy Thursday Communion            |
| Sunday, April 1         | Easter                               |
| Saturday, April 21      | Women's Retreat                      |
| Sunday, May 6           | Scottish Reformation Sunday          |
| Sunday, June 3          | June Communion, Pentecost            |
| Sunday, August 5        | August Communion                     |
| Sunday, September 2     | September Communion                  |
| Sunday, October 7       | World Communion Sunday               |
| Sunday, November 4      | November Communion                   |
| Sunday, December 2      | December Communion, Advent           |
| Monday, December 24     | Christmas Eve (2 services)           |
| Sunday, January 6, 2019 | First Sunday of the New Year         |

## Nominations and Elections Committee

Committee Members: David Cole, Chair, Mary Burton, DeAnne Cox, Patti Reed, Carol Robinson, and Jim Scanlon

*“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)*

We started this journey of inspiration and connection in June of 2017. The team remained strong and steadfast in prayer with an intentional awareness of God’s presence and guidance throughout the entire nomination and selection process.

Nomination forms were made available to the congregation during the months of June and July with the option of completing and submitting nominations via the web if members so desired.

Committee members met on Monday, July 31, 2017, to review prospective candidates, and, after going through the process of contacting members, the following ten members emerged as the nominees for the Ruling Elder Class of 2020:

Jeff Bangle  
Megan Bawcum  
Bob Burton  
Julie Hayes  
Sydney Jackson  
Avery McLean  
Jeannie Nadenicek  
Carl Nichols  
Tom Reigle  
Judy Scanlon

The above-stated members were subsequently elected to the Elder Class of 2020, by acclamation, at a called congregational meeting on Sunday, October 8, 2017.

During the Stated Session Meeting on October 9, 2017, it was reported that Jody Corry had tendered her resignation from the Class of 2019. Committee members immediately resumed duties to work on Jody’s replacement.

On Sunday, December 3, 2017, during a Called Congregational meeting, Bob Glasscock was elected, by acclamation, to complete the Class of 2019.

All in all, it was a great experience working with an awesome team of witnesses for Christ!

David A. Cole, *Nominations & Elections Committee Chair*

Congratulations on the Births of:

Robert Hale Davis

Sawyer William Griffeth

Monica Leia Hromalik

Chatham Payne Johnson

Noah Alexander Knowles

Lowry Reagan Messich

Thatcher Ramsay Padgett

Julianne Grace Welch

In Memoriam:

Lora Antley

Judy Thomas Crawford

Ruby Couch McDonald Freeman

Mary Ackerly Koehler

Susan Sullivan Marion

George David Maxwell

Linda Burkett Smith

Elinor Tillman Terrell

William Marks Towles III

## Session

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

### Class of 2017

Allen Crowell  
Don DeMaria  
Susan Ferguson  
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

### Class of 2019

Robbie Bryan  
Greta Terrell Covington  
DeeAnn Cox  
Mary Havick  
Joe Hermanowicz  
Richard Lane  
Mary Peace  
Lawton Stephens  
Dan Trier

## 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 Johnson, *Administrative Assistant for Congregational Care & Membership*

Ms. Nan Powell, *Communications Specialist*

Mrs. Jennifer Sunderlin, *Receptionist/Administrative Assistant*

Mrs. Laura McHugh, *Accountant*

Mrs. Tiffany Greene, *Weekday School Administrative Assistant*

Ms. Jennifer Abbott, *Nursery Volunteer & Staff Coordinator*

Mrs. Charlotte Chromiak, *Children's Music Assistant*

Mr. Chuck Hunt, *Sunday Morning Manager*

Mr. Willie "Buc" Collins, *Sexton*

Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, *Parish Nurse*

### Student Interns

Ms. Jordan Osborne, *Youth Ministry Intern, 2017-18*

Ms. Yamini Pulusu, *Website Technician, 2017-18*

### Waddel Fellows

Mr. Wesley Bowden, *Congregational Care, 2017-18*

Ms. Stacey Bowden, *Children's Ministries, 2017-18*

Mr. Christian Cordon, *Mission & Outreach, 2017-18*

Ms. Nettie Jester, *Youth Ministry, 2017-18*

**REPORT TO CONGREGATION**  
**JANUARY 28, 2018**

| <b>Income</b>  | <b>2017 Budget</b>    | <b>2017 Actual</b>    | <b>2018 Budget</b>    |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Pledged Contributions                                | \$1,196,538.00        | \$1,206,917.80        | \$1,221,500.00        |
| Non-Pledged Contributions                            | 126,000.00            | 100,483.52            | 100,000.00            |
| Plate Offerings                                      | 12,000.00             | 10,925.27             | 11,000.00             |
| Church School Offerings                              | 1,000.00              | 771.87                | 800.00                |
| <b>Total Contributed Income</b>                      | <b>1,335,538.00</b>   | <b>1,319,098.46</b>   | <b>\$1,333,300.00</b> |
| Designated Music                                     | 4,000.00              |                       |                       |
| Interest Income                                      | 750.00                |                       |                       |
| Other Income   | 1,200.00              | 3,008.30              | 2,000.00              |
| <b>Total Other Income</b>                            | <b>5,950.00</b>       | <b>3,008.30</b>       | <b>2,000.00</b>       |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>                                | <b>\$1,341,488.00</b> | <b>\$1,322,106.76</b> | <b>\$1,335,300.00</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                      |                       |                       |                       |
| <b>Administration Commission</b>                     | <b>\$1,023,998.07</b> | <b>\$1,003,255.45</b> | <b>\$1,039,000.00</b> |
| <b>Congregational Care Commission</b>                | <b>7,200.00</b>       | <b>6,560.41</b>       | <b>7,000.00</b>       |
| <b>Mission &amp; Outreach Commission</b>             | <b>208,105.00</b>     | <b>207,594.21</b>     | <b>208,000.00</b>     |
| <b>Fellowship &amp; Evangelism Commission</b>        | <b>14,850.00</b>      | <b>13,622.02</b>      | <b>14,000.00</b>      |
| <b>Education &amp; Discipleship Commission</b>       | <b>42,750.00</b>      | <b>33,819.94</b>      | <b>36,500.00</b>      |
| <b>Worship &amp; Music Commission</b>                | <b>32,300.00</b>      | <b>21,094.13</b>      | <b>25,500.00</b>      |
| <b>Religious Development</b>                         | <b>5,500.00</b>       | <b>4,948.57</b>       | <b>5,000.00</b>       |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                                | <b>\$1,334,703.07</b> | <b>\$1,290,894.73</b> | <b>\$1,335,000.00</b> |
| <b>Revenue in Excess of (Less Than) Expenditures</b> | <b>\$6,784.93</b>     | <b>\$31,212.03</b>    | <b>\$300.00</b>       |