



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

2018 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 have a cartoon of a preacher heading into the pulpit. He's thinking, "I feel a spiritual crisis coming on...if I just had a sign to ease my doubts (and he looks up as if talking to God)...a sign to buoy my faith...if I just had a sign!"

In the next to last panel, there is a "zap" of lightning, and then, in the last panel, the preacher is holding a "No Parking" traffic sign.

He says, "I don't know what it means, but I think I feel better!"

One of the things this sign, "No Parking," means is change. As you read through this Annual Report, you will see evidence of changes in the life of First Presbyterian Church this past year.

Of course, the "big" change is the call to the Rev. Dr. Ryan Baer to serve with you.

But an even more important meaning of "No Parking" is that of the journey. As you read through this Annual Report, you will see that First Presbyterian Church has not been "parked" but has remained active in ministry and mission in this transition between ministers.

By all measures, First Presbyterian Church is a healthy congregation. I have appreciated the manner in which difficult issues have been discussed and faithful responses made.

This congregation is blessed with a gifted and dedicated staff. I have been impressed by their energy, creativity, commitment, and collegial spirit that serve this congregation in so many different ways. I hope you realize what a treasure you have in each of these Christian servants.

Yet, as you read this Annual Report of last year's mission and ministries, please remember the sign. Just as Jesus sent the disciples, so he sends you and me: No Parking! The journey is what matters. Your mission, your ministry, is to go where Jesus sends you, and the joy of it all is he says he will be with you every step of the way.

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

Associate Pastor

The highlight of 2018 for me was commissioning our first class of 18 Stephen Ministers in March. Stephen Ministers are church members who have been through 50 hours of training in order to minister one-on-one to persons going through difficult times such as divorce, chronic illness, grief, etc. All the Stephen ministers have taken assignments and greatly amplified the caring reach of our congregation.

In other respects, 2018 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. Each of these commissions did exceptional work on behalf of the church. Just read their reports! Additionally, I carried out other areas of ministry such as worship leadership (including weddings and funerals), pastoral care, teaching, and following up with guests to worship. Also, I did the following:

- Supervised Christian Cordon, the 2017-18 Waddel Fellow for Outreach
- Helped coordinate the annual FPC women's retreat in April and attended the annual Montreat women's conference in August in anticipation of bringing others next year
- Worked with Cheryl Gazlay to incorporate drama into the Maundy Thursday dinner and worship in Fellowship Hall
- Preached in March at Congregation Children Israel and at an ecumenical service on Good Friday at Greater Bethel A.M.E. Church; prayed at the annual AME Conference gathering at our neighbor church, First AME
- Participated in the Honduras Mission Trip in June, a week with fellow youth and adult FPC members building latrines and leading VBS in a remote village via HOI
- Worked with a committee of FPC and Milledge Avenue Baptist members to bring Soul Shop workshops for clergy and general public September 16-17 to Athens to increase awareness of suicide prevention
- Led the second Blessing of the Animals service October 13 held on the grounds of the Athens Community Council on Aging (since there was a wedding at FPC)
- Participated in the Interfaith Clergy Partnership of Greater Athens and in a women clergy support group
- Created, with others, a beautiful wreath mobile for Fellowship Hall for the Advent season
- Served as VP on the Presbyterian Student Center board which welcomed the Rev. Will Norman as our new campus minister this fall

It is a joy to be in ministry with this congregation. I wake up every morning excited to come to work. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your Associate Pastor.

Gratefully submitted,
Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*

Director of Music and Organist

My annual reports usually begin with “another great year for music at First Presbyterian Church.” Don’t expect this one to be any different. We continue to build on the foundation of our great music program going back almost 200 years now. All of our choirs have welcomed new members. Our Chancel Choir continues to work hard preparing for and singing on Sundays and for special services. We’ve gained new members and continue to have childcare needs which means we have young families in that choir. The Handbell Choir has gained new members and is at full capacity for a 3-octave bell choir. The Celebration Singers and St. Andrews Choir have seen change and growth as choristers graduate up to a new choir. With many new young singers, in the St. Andrews Choir, our RSCM chorister training program continues to be important. Charlotte Chromiak continues to do a wonderful job with our Cherub Choir and assisting with music for children’s ministry. The Mellows, a unique church choir if ever there was one, continues taking music outside of our doors to nursing homes, assisted living, etc. to people who can’t attend church or a concert. Their work is very rewarding.

While most of my work is done in and for our church, working with pastors and other staff planning music services, selecting, teaching, practicing music, and leading in services, I have continued to enjoy teaching and working with students in the School of Music at the University of Georgia and serving at an artist-in-residence (organist) at Piedmont College in Demorest. When I do outside things, I take the good name of First Presbyterian Church with me. I also see this work as part of our effort to continue to strengthen our relationship with UGA. Also, as part of that, we have offered internships to UGA organ students, when there are qualified candidates, to give them some experience working in a church music program. Yuxin Ni, a doctoral piano major and an organ student of mine, served as an intern in the spring semester of 2018.

Some highlights in 2018 include The Voices of Truth performing in January as part of our Wayne F. Middendorf Memorial Concert Series. In February, I gave a presentation to the Northeast Georgia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) on choir directing for organists. On Palm Sunday, our St. Andrews and Cherub Choirs joined forces in the service. On Good Friday, our church hosted a Tenebrae Service with Athens area Presbyterian churches. Our Chancel Choir was joined by members of Presbyterian choirs to lead the music for this service.

The month of April was particularly busy. Easter was great, as usual, with our Chancel Choir being joined by a brass ensemble of faculty and students from UGA, organized by Jean Martin- Williams. The second week of April, I accompanied UGA doctoral trumpet major Tyler Jones in a degree recital in our church. This was quite challenging musically, but I enjoyed the opportunity to offer our sanctuary and organ for such a recital, which was well attended by Tyler’s friends, family, fellow students, faculty, and members of our congregation. I hope to continue hosting similar events. The third week of April, I performed Joseph Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass* with the Piedmont Chorale with orchestra in the Piedmont College Chapel in Demorest. In the fourth week of April, we had a wonderful Youth Sunday, with music led by the Celebration Singers and many talented youth instrumentalists. On that same day in the afternoon, our former music intern, Geneva Stonecipher, and I presented a joint recital of solo organ works and some duets. This was a great send-off event before Geneva left to pursue a Master of Music degree at Indiana University. After completing her first semester, Geneva wrote to tell me how much her internship here helped prepare her for her graduate work, continued studies, and vocational plans.

In May, we held our annual Scottish Reformation Sunday. Sadly, we learned this year of the passing of Fran Frantz, our drummer and wife of our bagpiper Henry Frantz. Henry was here and plans to continue, but Fran was certainly missed. Also, in May, I attended UGA’s Hugh Hodgson School of Music convocation, played for

the Piedmont College baccalaureate ceremony, and also played for our own Weekday School graduation ceremony.

Over the summer we had a great group of many ages attend the Montreat Worship & Music Conference. We sang in choirs, played instruments and handbells, attended classes, and generally had a good time.

Fall activities included our annual Choir Dedication Sunday with combined choirs participating in September. I gave a presentation to the Augusta Chapter of the AGO on hymn playing, and I spoke to two classes at UGA called "Music in the Real World" about my work as a church musician. I also provided music for our annual AthHalf Pre-Race Service. In November, our Chancel Choir performed Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* accompanied by an orchestra, including organist Martha Braswell, as part of our Wayne F. Middendorf Concert Series. This concert was particularly meaningful after a year of some very difficult losses in our church community. Our Chancel Choir participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship. For our annual Live Nativity, the Handbell Choir performed, as did a fine brass ensemble organized by Wes Clarke, and Bob Burton performed on guitar. I also worked with a UGA music major on a composition project including performing his composition on our organ for recording.

December was busier than ever as I played organ for the Weekday School chapel, provided piano music at the Athens Country Club for the Presbyterian Homes Christmas party, The Mellows performed at the SAM Christmas Tea, at which (lacking another willing volunteer) I played the Grinch. That was a first for me, but the Mellows have a new song in their Christmas repertoire and I now own a Grinch costume. I played for two Lessons and Carols services for Piedmont College, provided music for our annual Christmas Pageant led by Natalie Bishop and our children and youth. We had our annual Festival of Lessons and Carols (at both morning services), I played and the Chancel Choir (with guests) sang for our Christmas Eve services. Though I have not included the many weddings, funerals, and memorial services we held over the year, December ended with a wedding which included a string ensemble that played a Handel organ concerto, among other things, with me. Also, I was particularly honored to play for the memorial service of Raymond Martin, a frequent visitor at our church, father of Jean Martin-Williams, and a dedicated church musician and teacher for many decades.

Our church has a fine staff, and it is an honor and pleasure to work with all of them. Though we will certainly miss our Interim Senior Pastor, Bruce Lancaster, we wish him well and look forward to the coming of our new Senior Pastor. I look forward to many more great years of serving First Presbyterian Church.

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

Director of Youth Ministries

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF YOUTH MINISTRY AT FPC ATHENS

JANUARY: Ski Trip, 80's Skate Night

We kicked off 2018 with our annual ski trip! This year, 19 youth and 5 adults loaded up a charter bus for West Virginia to participate in Winterblast, a weekend of worship and music held at Bluefield College and skiing at Winterplace Ski Resort. Later that month, over 40 youth from Covenant, Madison, and Oconee Presbyterian churches joined FPC youth for an 80's-themed roller skating night at Athens Skate Inn. Each month I meet with the youth directors from these four churches to not only support each other in our ministries, but also to plan special opportunities for us to bring our groups together.

FEBRUARY: Souper Bowl of Caring, APCE

On Super Bowl Sunday, the youth stand outside the Sanctuary doors with soup pots collecting money for the Souper Bowl of Caring. Our generous congregation donated over \$1,000 this year! The next day I left for the APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) Conference. This year it was held in Louisville, KY where the PC(USA) headquarters are located; the theme was "Deep & Wide, Boundless Hospitality." From inspiring plenary sessions to practical workshops to networking with other Presbyterians from across the country, this week was certainly a highlight of the year and I am incredibly grateful for a continuing education budget that allows me to attend.

MARCH: Lent

March is a funny month for youth as schools are on Spring Break and families travel, however, it is also the time when we want to prepare ourselves for Easter. This year, the youth burned palm fronds to prepare the ashes for Ash Wednesday. In Sunday School and youth group we reflected on the last week of Jesus' life using the PC(USA) curriculum "Seven Days to Glory." During Holy Week, we invited the congregation down to The PIT to walk through Lenten Prayer Stations that were based on Jesus' last week.

APRIL: (un)Frozen Chosen, Youth Sunday

The fourth annual Frozen Chosen Cup, a friendly competition between area Presbyterian churches, was water based this year. Despite the freezing temperatures, Covenant Pres took home the Cup. The joy continued with Youth Sunday! From colorful banners hanging from the balcony to leis presented by the children during the passing of the Peace to congregation-led reading of peaceful scripture passages, our youth did an amazing job planning and leading worship! The music was beautiful and our seniors who have been together at our church since pre-school, Hollins Cobb, Emily LaBoon and Erin Osborne, brought it full circle as they shared what it means to be a Peacemaker. May the peace of Christ be with you always.

MAY: Graduation Sunday, Confirmation, VBS/Lock-In

May is when the busy season begins for youth ministry. In worship, we celebrated our five graduating seniors and thirteen confirmands! Confirmands also wrote personal statements of faith to read to Session before they reaffirmed their baptisms on Pentecost Sunday. Copies are available in the office. The first youth activity in summer is to volunteer with Vacation Bible School, and we had 25 "tour-guides" this year! To thank them for their service, we hosted a 12-Hour Challenge on the last day with hourly activities from noon 'til midnight when parents picked up tired teens at Waffle House!

JUNE: Honduras Mission Trip, MS Massanetta

Meetings, paperwork, fundraisers, books, prayers...all year we prepared for our intergenerational, international mission trip to Honduras with HOI. We are so grateful to the shareholders who helped make this trip possible for 16 adults and 9 high school youth. It was a life-changing, spirit-filled week as we led VBS, mixed and poured concrete, and found God in all the beautiful faces of those we served alongside. Shortly after returning, I loaded up the church van for our church's first time to attend the Massanetta Springs (VA) Middle School Conference with 7 FPC and 4 Covenant youth. Led by high school students, 500 middle schoolers participated in energetic worship, encounter groups, and games from early morning to late night exploring the theme "Created. Claimed. Called - Y'all are mine."

JULY: Montreat

The summer would not be complete without a trip to Montreat, NC for the Montreat Youth Conference. I served as a Small Group Leader at MYC 3 then brought seven youth back for MYC 5. Again, we stayed at Georgia Lodge and were joined by youth from Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church in Augusta. The theme was “Lift Every Voice” based on the hymn frequently referred to as “the Black National Anthem.” It was a challenging and emotional week, filled with worship, music, small group discussion, games, and lots of laughter and tears.

AUGUST: Potluck Kick-off

The start of a new school year also begins a new year for youth – with eleven 6th graders finding their way to The PIT for the first time! At our potluck kick-off dinner, families completed paperwork while learning about a new plan for Sunday School where different church members will lead 3-4 week series and a modified schedule for Sunday night youth group. Middle School meets 4:30-5:30. Celebrations Singers rehearse 5:30-6:15. High School meets for dinner and program from 6:15-8:00 p.m.

SEPTEMBER: Confirmation

The much-anticipated new PC(USA) confirmation curriculum, “Big God Big Questions,” was released this year. Our class of nine 9th graders and one 8th grader meet twice a month during Sunday School to explore the four big questions they’ll be asked on Confirmation Sunday (3/24/19). Additionally, they connect weekly with their mentors and have a Parent Guide to help continue the conversations at home. The Opening Retreat at the UGA High Ropes Course was the perfect introduction to what we hope they will experience through confirmation – opportunities to ask questions, to step out of their comfort zones, and to trust each other and God.

OCTOBER: Fall Retreat, Picnic, Halloween Bowling (Bowling)

We returned to Whitewater Express in Copperhill, TN for our fall retreat. 18 youth and 6 brave adults spent the beautiful, yet cold, weekend rafting, high ropes coursing, marshmallow roasting, and praying together. Two weeks later, our interns organized the first Pumpkin Olympics at the church picnic. The following weekend, we gathered with over 60 area Presbyterian youth at Showtime Bowling in costume (!) for a night of fellowship.

NOVEMBER: 30 Hour Famine, Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship

With IHNA hosting families in The PIT, we moved our 30 Hour Famine activities out into the community. 12 youth participated this year in 10, 20, or 30 hours of fasting and learning about hunger and poverty here in Athens. Youth loaded and unloaded the Thanksgiving Food Bags, shopped on a budget for a family of five, filled Free Little Pantries, and finally broke the fast with family members over a potluck meal in Fellowship Hall. The next week, we joined with youth from Oconee and Covenant for an ice cream social following the Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship.

DECEMBER: Christmas Parties and intern gratitude

2018 ends with Christmas parties including the much-anticipated white elephant gift exchange – popular this year was the big bag of Sour Patch kids?! Lastly, I want to lift up my amazing college interns who bring such love and energy to our program. We could not do it without you. Nettie Jester graduated in December but will stay with us for one more semester before heading off to graduate school in speech pathology. She has been with us for three years. Jordan Osborne, a former youth in our church, joined our staff two years ago. She spent last semester studying abroad in Oxford but will be back in January! Lastly, we welcomed Kathryn Kent, a freshman from Atlanta, who came to us through the Waddel Fellow Program at the Presbyterian Student Center. They are such a gift to our church!

Kim Ness, *Director of Youth Ministries*

Director of Children's Ministries

We have enjoyed another wonderful year in Children's Ministries! Our children continue to enjoy Godly Play, serving as worship leaders in a variety of meaningful ways, as well as taking part in many church mission and outreach projects. We welcomed many new families and friends throughout 2018 and our Children's Ministry volunteer numbers continue to increase, which has kept this special ministry growing and moving in a positive direction. We also continue to be blessed with a strong Nursery/Childcare Staff who take wonderful care of our little ones every Sunday morning and many Wednesday evenings in the Nursery.

Winter/Spring 2018

After a busy Advent Season, we enjoyed getting back into our regular Sunday School and Children's Church routine in January and February. On Sunday, February 11, the children thanked all our Children's Ministry volunteers with a special "We LOVE our Volunteers" Breakfast. A yummy breakfast was enjoyed by all and our volunteers and nursery staff also received special Valentines made by the children. We began the Lenten season on Valentine's Day, February 14, with a special Ash Wednesday experience. Together, children and parents journeyed through different Lenten stations in the Sanctuary focused on fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. During the six weeks of Lent, the children experienced many Godly Play stories including *The Mystery of Easter and The Faces of Easter*. On Palm Sunday, we were joined by a sweet donkey from the North Georgia Zoo named, Star. Star led the children as they waved their palms and shouted, "Hosanna" in the palm procession around the church. We continued our Easter Egg Hunt tradition at Lee Epting's beautiful homestead on Easter Eve and 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 2017-2018 Sunday School year with the Blessing of the 5th Graders. Our 5th Graders received their very own miniature wooden Holy Family just like the Holy Family that is the focal point of our Godly Play circles. The children also successfully raised \$60 through our Heifer International's Fill the Ark Children's Offering. At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the children voted to use the money raised through the children's offering to purchase a "trio of rabbits" to be sent to a family in need. The children learned that the manure from rabbits helps grow healthy gardens and they also learned that rabbits multiply FAST! So, the baby rabbits would be shared with other families in need helping them, too, grow healthy gardens.

Summer 2018

We began the summer with "Maker Fun Factory" Vacation Bible School 2018 from Tuesday, May 29 - Friday, June 1. Over one hundred children from First Presbyterian Church and the Athens community enjoyed a fun week learning about how each of us are "Created by God and Built for a Purpose." We began each morning in a new way – Bible Buddy YOGA! The children absolutely loved beginning each day in this peaceful way, so much that I believe we will continue Bible Buddy Yoga during VBS 2019. The children also experienced the Godly Play stories *Creation; Mary, The Mother of Jesus; and The Parable of the Good Shepherd*. These stories reminded the children that God created each of us, God made each of us for a reason, and that God is always with us. In addition to Godly Play, the children enjoyed music, games, and delicious snacks. The children also completed many art projects including self-portraits, which were displayed in Fellowship Hall at our VBS celebration with parents. They also took part in a special, ongoing Children's Ministry Labyrinth project. Each child beautifully painted a "journey stone" that will be used to help build a labyrinth for all to enjoy at FPC. This special labyrinth will be the children's gift to our church for its 200th Birthday in 2020! And last but definitely not least, the children painted individual popsicle stick crosses that were joined together to build one large cross that hung in the sanctuary for two weeks after VBS and is now on display in the Children's Ministry Suite.

The children also worked on two outreach projects with the help of volunteers from Covenant Presbyterian and one of Barrow Elementary's outstanding teachers, Genise Vertise. Genise taught the children all about her native country, Haiti, and how she and students from Barrow Elementary are creating books that will help Haitian children learn how to read in their native language, Haitian Creole. The children worked together to make simple children's books that will be translated into Haitian Creole and eventually sent to Haitian children to enjoy. The books are still in the editing phase, but we look forward to sharing the books with our children soon. Our youngest age group at VBS took on their own outreach project as well, SAVE THE HONEYBEES! Our sweet little ones learned that just like each of us, God made each animal on Earth with a purpose. And WOW does the honeybee have an important pollination purpose when it comes to

our food! Thanks to the State of Georgia Botanical Gardens, each family was given a bag of seeds to take home and plant to help our “southern” honeybees. Thanks to all VBS volunteers and strong support from the church staff, VBS 2018 was a lot of fun and a big success!

During Summer worship, we tried out a new way to include our children in the 10:00 a.m. worship service. All children, Pre K – 2nd Grade (and older) were invited to remain in worship with their families to take part in *A Time for Children*. We used this special time to help our children better understand why and how we worship God in a variety of ways during the worship service. The little church mouse that is found in the children’s bulletin, *A Children’s Guide to Worship*, began to appear in the regular worship bulletin and continued to “move” to different parts of the worship service each Sunday during the summer, keeping the children (and maybe adults, too) wondering which part of the worship service they would learn about next. Beginning with the lighting of the candles to the *Prayer of Confession* to the *Benediction*, the children learned about many different parts of the worship service during *A Time for Children*.

Late Summer/Fall 2018

The 2018-2019 Sunday School and Children’s Church year began on Sunday, August 12, with the annual “Back to School Blessing.” The children were invited to bring their backpacks to church and to also fill them with extra school supplies to be donated to students in need in Athens and surrounding communities. The children thoroughly enjoyed unloading their backpacks with all the extra school supplies at the front of the sanctuary! What a wonderful sight! Each child also received a “God’s got your Back” backpack blessing tag to be connected to their own book bag.

Godly Play resumed at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. The children continue to enjoy experiencing and hearing the stories of the Bible in this unique and very meaningful way. In addition, Godly Play has enticed many of our adult church members to begin volunteering with Children’s Ministry. We already have six church members signed up to train as new Godly Play storytellers at the 2nd Core Godly Play Training to be held in February 2019 at our church! *Sunday Morning Music Time* with Mrs. Charlotte Chromiak was also introduced in Children’s Church at the beginning of the new school year. The children are really enjoying this special music time.

Our 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders continue to enjoy serving as Acolytes and Call to Worship Liturgists during the 11:00 a.m. worship service. Also new this year, Dr. Lancaster invited this sweet group of children to serve as a Child of the Church Representative during baptisms. Our 2nd graders also continue to do a wonderful job as Communion Helpers on the first Sunday of each month.

Our “Season of Giving” in Children’s Ministry began in September with the children voting on a new animal to “fill the Ark” with through our Heifer International Children’s Offering. Instead of just one type of animal, the children challenged themselves to double the money raised last year to \$140.00 and to “Fill the Ark” with two types of animals – CHICKENS and PIGS. I am proud to say that the children have already raised close to \$70.00. In October, the children dressed up in fun, friendly Halloween costumes and went Trick or Treating for UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund). Thanks to all our adult Sunday School classes, Chancel Choir, and congregation, the children raised almost \$400.00, \$100.00 more than last year! In November, the children “stuffed” many turkey offering envelopes with proceeds going to support Thornwell Homes for Children in Clinton, South Carolina.

As 2018 came to an end, we enjoyed an exciting Advent Season in Children’s Ministry! We began this special season with our Advent Workshop on the first Sunday in Advent. After worship, we joined together in Fellowship Hall for eggs, grits, and Mama’s Boy-style biscuits! Then families worked together to build their very own Advent Wreaths, readied Christmas cookie tins to be delivered to our homebound church members, and children chose their roles and costumes for the upcoming Christmas Pageant. On the second Sunday in Advent, 65 FPC children reminded all of us about the true reason for the season with another wonderful Christmas Pageant. During each Sunday in Advent the children experienced the Godly Play *Advent* story (4 parts) during Sunday School and then we journeyed with Benjamin Bear to Bethlehem in the *Advent Storybook* during Children’s Church. We finished up Advent with a “Very Merry Children’s Church” and then celebrated Christmas Eve all together, with our 4th Graders doing a super job of leading the 4:00 p.m. Child-Friendly Christmas Eve Service. It’s been another great year for this special ministry!

Natalie Bishop, *Director of Children’s Ministries*

Director of Weekday School

During the 2017-2018 school year (the last complete school year to date), the Weekday School provided preschool services for 127 children. The Weekday School enjoyed a wonderful teaching staff:

Pre-K/Early Five's (4 or 5 Day)	Carol Norton and Jessie Wilson
Three's (4 or 5 Day)	Cindy Boerma and Diana Maxwell
Three's (3 Day)	Tara Reid and Kellye Burks
Two's (4 or 5 Day)	Jennifer Cummings and Hannah Allen
Two's (2 or 3 Day)	Kate Beall, Melissa Miller and Lizzy Redwine
Early Two's (2- 5 Day)	Megan Lewis and Liz Clark
MMO Toddler (2-5 Day)	Mary Grant, Joanna Lawrence, Chandlar Ford, and Rebecca Carlton
MMO Baby (2-5 Day)	Cheryl Fields, Melissa Nichols Mia Lee, and Autumn Fullington
Spanish	Jody Pope
Music	Teresa Granger
Art	Robin Nunan

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, providing 14 hours of continuing education for our teachers during the year, most of which occurs at our annual early childhood conference in Atlanta.

We are happy to have been able to offer partial scholarships for six Weekday School teacher's children, one church staff member's child, and eleven 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 "visual encyclopedia" at the teacher's fingertips is worth so much to our science and other curricula. We are especially pleased to have this technology to offer to our children.

The Weekday School had a wonderful LIVE NATIVITY for the school and church families, as well as the community, in December of 2017. The church members and staff helped in many ways with this. We had over 800 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. This was our 6th annual Live Nativity!

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

May 2018 was the end of my tenth year as director. What a true joy it has been for me to see the children of this school thrive over the last decade. I look forward to the next decade and what it will bring for the Weekday School and the education and wonder for the children of our sweet school!

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 2018 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, seven special meals, including Easter and Christmas, 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 Church, including Alcoholics Anonymous, AIDS Athens Board, Interfaith Hospitality Network of Athens 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 800 people on our property for the Live Nativity. A detailed review of the church calendar revealed that over 75,000 were in the church facility during 2018.

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

Roger Burbage, *Church Administrator*

Administration Commission

Commission Members: Carl Nichols, *Chair*, Scott Collins, *Treasurer*, Jason Doornbos, Joe Hermanowicz, Sydney Jackson, 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 2018 as a pivotal year for our Church as we neared the end of our search for a new Senior Pastor. By the time this report is published, the new Senior Pastor/Head of Staff will have been announced. 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 2018 and we met our budget. We are grateful for the efforts of our Church Staff in holding down costs.
- We organized our four 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 the opportunity to serve to more members 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 organized with Jason Doornbos as the Committee Chair, with Richard Stone, Smith Wilson, Diane Adams, Carl Nichols, and Roger Burbage constituting the remaining committee members. The Property Committee completed several projects including repairing and repainting of exterior windows, repainting of the doors to the sanctuary, repainting the railings on the front porch and bell holder, new LED lighting at the main entrance of the Sanctuary, repair of shutters, and regrouting the front steps.
- The Personnel Committee was organized with Joe Hermanowicz as the Chair, Bill Bushnell, Jimbo LaBoon, Elizabeth Earl, Mary Havick, and Sydney Jackson rounding 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 was 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 organized 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 Chair of Finance was Carl Nichols and the other members were Jim Dove, Michael Earl, Lisa Oelke, Christopher Bruner, Scott Collins, Bruce Lancaster, and Roger Burbage.

Congregational Care Commission Report

Commission Members: Harry Shuford, *Chair*, Jeff Bangle, Greta Covington, Sue Gray, Jane McGown, Bill Patterson, Judy Scanlon, Arlene Shirley, Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*, Madeline Van Dyck, *Parish Nurse*, and Lucy Bell Johnson, *Church Staff Liaison*

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

Commission subcommittees:

- **Stephen Ministry**

Our initial class of 18 Stephen Ministers was commissioned March 4 to provide a Christ-centered, lay caregiving ministry to hurting people, to bring hope and healing, by “bearing one another’s burdens.” The class completed 50 hours of training to equip their ministry.

Most of our Stephen Ministers have been assigned and meet one-to-one with a Care Receiver, usually on a weekly basis. Stephen Ministers also meet as a group on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month for continuing education and peer supervision.

Contact our Stephen Leaders Dawn Frisch, Larry Gray, and Carol Strickland if you know someone who is going through a rough time and you think they could benefit from this ministry.

The Congregational Care Commission hosted receptions in the Atrium following both worship services on March 4 to celebrate and thank our new Stephen Ministers.

- **2018 Updating the Membership Roll**

In March 2018, the Congregational Care Commission, with guidance from the Interim Senior Pastor, began the task of updating the church membership roll, reaching out to members who had not participated in the mission and ministry of FPC in the last 24 months (not including those who are homebound or are otherwise physically unable to participate). In April, the church staff reviewed the membership roll, and in May, the Congregational Care Commission and Session reviewed the membership roll. In June, a pastoral letter with an enclosure card was mailed to inactive members, reaching out to them, inviting them to participate, seeking a response and any other information they wanted to provide, with a postage-paid envelope to be returned to the church. In August, the Congregational Care Commission reviewed the responses to the first letter. In August, a second pastoral letter was mailed to members who did not respond to the first letter. In November, the Congregational Care Commission reviewed the responses to the second letter, and recommended changes to active membership roll to the Session.

- **Visitation Subcommittee**

A subcommittee of the Congregational Care Commission began working in 2018 to strengthen our ministry and follow-up to members who need pastoral care. Our church cares for many members who are homebound, or living in senior care homes, are hospitalized, rehabilitating, or grieving from loss of family members. Many different people in our congregation help minister and care for others, including hospital visits, the Lay Caller Team, flower deliverers, visits by John Kipp, pastoral response teams, pastor visits, and card correspondence. In order to ensure that we are reaching all of our members who need pastoral care, Jennifer, our church receptionist, has begun keeping a centralized list of visits and calls, and the Congregational Care Commission has begun reviewing this monthly. If you need a pastoral visit, please let us know.

- **Soul Shop—Ministering to Suicidal Depression**

In September, a two-day suicide awareness training event, offering information about suicide prevention and ministering to those impacted by suicide, was co-sponsored by First Presbyterian Church and Milledge Avenue Baptist Church. A two-hour session, Soul Shop for the Public, was held Sunday, September 16, and an all-day session, Soul Shop for Faith Leaders, was held Monday, September 17.

- **Senior Adult Sunday**

Senior Adults were celebrated and honored at our worship service on August 5, with the theme “Stories of the Faithful.” Many thanks to John Simpson, Ray Schofield, and Diane Adams for sharing their stories of faith. Thank you to Sue Gray for her leadership in this ministry, and for the decoration of Fellowship Hall, and to Arlene Shirley for her leadership with the lunch reception for 200 following the worship service.

- **Senior Christmas Tea**

With the theme “Once Upon a Story,” we hosted 80 senior adult members and friends in Fellowship Hall for our senior Christmas Tea on December 5. Ten tables were festively decorated in “story” themes to honor and serve our

guests. We continued to be amazed and renewed by this ministry. Thank you to The Mellows choir for leading the singing of Christmas hymns and songs, to John Coble (playing the Grinch), and to the members who hosted and decorated tables, brought sandwiches and cookies, and served as greeters and kitchen helpers.

Thanks to Sue Gray for her leadership in the overall planning, and in all of the details of the invitations and publicity, setup, decorations, and musical entertainment. Thanks to Greta Covington and Arlene Shirley for leading the volunteer recruitment, food presentation, and tea preparation.

- **Dot's Closet@First**

Contact Madeline Van Dyck, FPC Parrish Nurse, at madelinevandyck@gmail.com, to arrange the loaning of useful medical assistance items between church members.

Find a list of items currently available to borrow at <http://firstpresathens.org/dotsclosetfirst/>

- **Rideshare@ First**

Contact Judy Scanlon at judy.s.scanlon@gmail.com if you have transportation needs, or if you are willing to drive members to church when needed, and when the driver is available.

- **Lay Caller Team**

For 2018 a class of 12 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.

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.

- **Prayers for Healing**

Prayers for Healing, held weekly on Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary, is an informal half-hour service for members and friends wishing to pray for others or be prayed for themselves, with leadership by Jane McGown and Bill Patterson.

- **Prayer Chain**

During 2018 the Prayer Chain was activated 54 times. This ministry has 169 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.*

- **Flower Ministry**

We are in need of a few more volunteers for our Flower Ministry for 2019.

The Flower Ministry, under the leadership of Julie Sanks and Ella Stewart, consists of a group of 10 volunteers who use the flowers from our Sunday service to deliver a ministry of flower arrangements, cards, and visitation to over 22 homebound and members living in Senior Care Facilities not able to attend church.

- **Response Teams**

During 2018 the Response Teams were activated 13 times to assist with funeral and memorial receptions, were activated on two occasions to provide a meal to the family of a newborn child, and was activated one time to provide a meal for a family with a special need.

Church members serve on six 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.

- **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 2018.

- **Correspondence "Team"**

For her third continuous year, Congregational Care Commission Elder Arlene Shirley wrote and mailed caring correspondence cards to members of the church, including homebound members, hospitalized members, members grieving family loss, new members, members with new babies, and thank you notes. More than two hundred cards and notes were sent this year.

Harry Shuford, *Congregational Care Commission Chair*

Education & Discipleship Commission

Commission Members: Mary Peace, *Chair*, Meghan Bawcum, David Cole, Christine Register, Kim Ness, *Director of Youth Ministries*, Natalie Bishop, *Director of Children's Ministries*

The Education and Discipleship Commission is charged with the following responsibilities: Church Nursery, Children's Church, Vacation Bible School, Sunday School (all ages), Middle School and High School Youth Group, Confirmation Class, Wednesday@First/Fellowship@First programming, Bible studies, small groups, and the Church Library.

Sunday School year 2018-2019: The Commission reviewed and voted unanimously to recommend the following curriculum items and list of teachers/coordinators:

Children's Sunday School (birth-5th Grade):

Director of Children's Ministries: Natalie Bishop

Nursery Volunteer & Staff Coordinator: Jennifer Abbott

- Infants • Nursery Baby Room – Room Lead: Rita Raines
- Toddlers – Preschoolers • Nursery Playroom – Room Lead: Mary Smith
 - Our toddler and preschooler curriculum is Group Publishing's Play-n-Worship. It is filled with music, activities, and storyboards that encourage little ones to interact with Bible stories.
- Pre-Kindergarten – 5th Grade • Children's Ministry Suite
 - Our elementary aged children experience Godly Play during Sunday School. Godly Play encourages children to explore their faith through story, helps them gain religious language, and helps them grow their spiritual experience through wonder and play.
 - Godly Play Guides/Volunteers, Pre-Kindergarten – 5th Grade: Natalie Bishop, Denise Horton, Madie Fischetti, Jennifer Abbott, Dan Trier, Carmen Meadows, Matt Jones, Jody Corry, Greta Covington, Susan Ferguson, Julie Hayes, Sydney Jackson, Gail Wilfong, Heather Roberts, and Carol Strickland

Children's Church (Pre-K-2nd Grade)

Bible Buddies and Ready for Worship: Natalie Bishop

Sunday Morning Music: Charlotte Chromiak

Youth Sunday School (6th-12th Grade)

Director of Youth Ministries: Kim Ness

College Interns: Nettie Jester and Jordan Osborne

This year, youth Sunday School is combined for all youth in grades 6-12. After fellowship and donuts, different members of the congregation will lead 3-4-week series:

- Community Building: Robbie Bryan
- Faith and Politics: Don DeMaria
- Inductive Bible Study: Paula-Frances Price
- Asking the Hard Questions: Chuck Toney
- Lenten Study: Youth Team (Kathy Bangle, Jean Martin-Williams, Don DeMaria, Andy and Julie Osborne)
- Finding God in "Moana": Meghan Bawcum

Confirmation Class is held during the Sunday School hour. We are using a new Presbyterian curriculum called "Big God Big Questions." Class is for 9th graders and is led by Kim Ness. Additionally, we have 10 adult mentors working alongside our confirmands.

Adult Sunday School

We currently offer seven adult member-led Sunday School classes. The 3rd annual Adult Sunday School Christmas party was held in conjunction with the Holiday Benevolence Market in the Fellowship Hall.

- Christian Issues - Room 308 - Study of the book, *Cover to Cover: Getting the Bible's Big Picture*, by Gerry Mathisen; Teacher/Coordinator - Sandy Boyles
- Inquirers - Moses Waddel Room - Thoughtful introspection and lively group discussion covering contemporary issues and daily Christian living with guest speakers and/or DVD studies; Teachers/Coordinators: Carla Buss, Carl Bergmann
- Living on a Prayer - Room 303 -Devotionals based on scripture, led by different class members. Sandwich project on first Sundays; Teachers/Coordinators: Karen Burg
- New Voices - Room 310 - Study of the book, *Radical Forgiveness: God's Call to Unconditional Love*, by Brian Zahnd; Teachers/Coordinators: Lewis Hudgins, Christine Register
- W.D. Hooper - Room 309 - Study of Romans with other books of the New Testament to follow; Teacher/Coordinator: Richard Stone
- Wayne F. Middendorf Men's Bible Class - Bride's Room, Tinsley Stern - Study of The Joseph Saga, Genesis 37-50; Teacher/Coordinator: John Kipp
- Women's Bible - Room 301 - Study of Hebrews; Teacher/Coordinator: Wanda Wilcox

Wed@First

Wed@First is a time of fellowship over dinner and a variety of programs. In the Spring of 2018, two four-week series were offered. Following the Session retreat in February, Education and Fellowship/Evangelism met to discuss the future of Wed@First. Due to attendance and finances, it was decided to take a break and re-imagine Wednesday night programming. In the Fall of 2018, we no longer offered dinner. Instead, Dr. Lancaster led a Brown Bag Bible Study Series. We also introduced Fellowship@First, intergenerational food/activity/ fellowship events offered at least once a month. These events are organized by both the Education & Discipleship Commission and the Fellowship & Evangelism Commission.

- January 17-February 7 - How the Bible Came to Be, led by Dr. Bruce Lancaster
- February 14-March 7 - Lenten Series
 - February 14 - Ash Wednesday Service
 - February 21 - Finding Sabbath at Montreat, Dr. Richard Dubose
 - February 28 - Lenten Service Project
 - March 7 - BINGO night fundraiser for Honduras Mission Trip
- September 19-November 14 - Brown Bag Series 'Bad Boys and Bad Girls of the Bible', led by Dr. Lancaster
- Fellowship@First
 - August - Kick off Brunch
 - September - Red Coat Band Picnic
 - October - Picnic and Pumpkins
 - November - *Requiem* Reception
 - December - Advent Workshop, Christmas Dinner

Church Library

Our church has a beautiful library in the Tinsley Stern Building, managed by two church member volunteers.

Staff Reports

Please see attached reports from Natalie Bishop and Kim Ness for more details on children and youth programming.

Mary Peace, *Education & Discipleship Commission Chair*

Fellowship & Evangelism Commission

Commission Members: Lawton Stephens, *Chair*, Dan Trier, DeeAnn Cox, Avery McLean, Jeanne Nadenicek, 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, Fellowship@First, Atrium Refreshments, Annual Picnic, Sports Teams, Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men, First Friends, Primetime Presbyterians (PTP's), New Member engagement, and Evangelism efforts.

Presbyterian Women (PW) – The mission of PW is to minister to the needs of the church, support and nurture in any way that is helpful. The Presbyterian Women at First Presbyterian Church of Athens currently consists of 61 active members from four group circles. This number has dropped in the last few years due to the age of most of the active leaders. After the ladies move into elder care they usually have an inactive status. (Note: First Presbyterian Church is the only Presbyterian church in Athens that has active PW.) Our chapter maintains a challenging Bible Study each year and follows the guidelines of the national organization. Monies are raised from donations each month for world, national, and local charities. At the end of the year, \$2,430 was distributed to Bethlehem Ministry and Project Safe in Athens, and to our new program “Godly Play” for our own Sunday School children. Cheryl Gazley is the moderator of PW.

Fellowship@First Dinners – Wednesday night dinners continue to be discussed to evaluate how best to proceed and what events to program.

In the fall, we experimented with a brown bag Bible study on Wednesday nights with Bruce teaching and participants bringing a sack supper.

The church picnic on October 21 at Sandy Creek Park was a great success with over 100 participants carving pumpkins and having fun playing games.

The picnic with the Red Coat Band, September 28 was also well attended.

Atrium Refreshments – We are grateful for the many volunteers who indicated a willingness to help on the Ways to Serve forms and came through with flying colors! Atrium refreshments after the 11:00 a.m. service provides a great way to meet new members and children love it.

Congregational Meals –

1/28/18 Lunch and Annual Congregational Meeting

3/29/18 Maundy Thursday dinner with drama and communion around the tables

4/1/18 Easter Brunch between services (Bruce Miller)

5/6/18 Scottish Reformation Sunday reception (Lee Epting)

8/12/18 Fall Kickoff Brunch between services (Bruce Miller)

12/2/18 Advent Workshop biscuit brunch following 11:00 a.m. service (Gabe Ave-Lallamont) – 90 attended

12/9/18 Christmas Dinner following Pageant (Gabe) – 268 attended

A big Thank You to all the volunteers who helped with the congregational meals. So many people gave of their time and talents with preparing food, serving, setting up, taking down, decorating, reservations, and much more.

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. The basketball team finished with a 5-5 record and lost in the first round of the playoffs. The softball team finished the regular season tied for first but lost in the first round of the playoffs.

Prime Time Presbyterians (PTPs) – First, we would like to acknowledge Judy Howell’s successful tenure as PTP coordinator. The group’s activities under Judy’s leadership were marked by creative trips, time investment, and hard work. Her efforts are greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed with her passing. Phyllis Crowell and Judy Burch served as “co-conspirators” for the second half of 2018. PTP’s adventures have included a colorful and interesting presentation on the history of Athens and the First Presbyterian Church by Ron Bogue, followed by lunch at South Kitchen+Bar; a guided tour of the Butts-Mehre Heritage Hall and indoor football practice facility on the UGA campus, followed by lunch at Olive Garden; and a tour of Happy Valley Pottery with demonstrations by resident artists, followed by lunch at Girasoles. There are plans for several more interesting adventures and PTPs invite anyone interested in participating to join in on the fun. Transportation needs are met by carpooling and use of the church van.

First Friends –First Friends is an informal group of 10-15 women that meet for dinner at different area restaurants on the fourth Tuesday of every month, except December. There is much sharing about families, happenings, and concerns of the church. A good time is had by all. Nancy Bostrom and Nonie Hale coordinate First Friends.

Presbyterian Men – The Men’s Fellowship has not met as much this year as in previous years. They are seeking a volunteer organizer for monthly events. Past events have included dinner at various restaurants around town, touring the classic car collection of George Bugg, the church picnic at the Red Coat Band practice, and Lawton organized a UGA baseball outing on April 27.

Evangelism –We continue to support New Member Classes, the New Member Tea with the session, and the New Member reception at church after new members are introduced to the congregation. We reached out to new members a short time after they became members to again welcome them and ask if they have questions or if there was anything we could do to support them. Members also contact guests who come to worship, when asked by the Associate Pastor.

Lawton Stephens, *Fellowship & Evangelism Commission Chair*
Jeanne Nadenicek, *Fellowship & Evangelism Commission*

Mission & Outreach Commission

Commission Members: Robbie Bryan, *Co-Chair*, Denise Horton, *Co-Chair*, Jayne Bailey, Mary Burton, Kitty Donnan, Bertis Downs, Ann Dunn, Julie Hayes, Brenda Glasscock, Sydney Jackson, Richard Lane, Joe Neighbors, Tom Reigle, Jerry Rogers, Frank Sherrill, Sally Vandiver, Tom Wilfong, Christian Cordon, *Outreach Waddel Fellow*, Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*

Many lives were touched by First Presbyterian Church's generous congregation in 2018. 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 Church members donated thousands of hours in volunteer work in 2018. 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 11 homeless families (38 guests) at our church for four weeks. For each of those host weeks we filled 94 volunteer tasks for a total of 376 volunteers throughout the year. In addition, FPC provided resources for IHNA's first annual Halloween party held at the Day Center. The party was a successful outreach serving approximately 50 current and former guest families.

Monthly drives on "**Food Sundays**" for the Athens-Area Emergency Food Bank, coordinated by Kitty Donnan, as well as the food drive during the Stewardship/Thanksgiving campaign, tallied to 7,645 cans/items of non-perishable food that the First Presbyterian Church congregation donated during this year (3,251 during Thanksgiving). Ann Dunn, Fran Lane, and Judy Howell, until her death, led a team 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. Mary Elizabeth McConnell helped organize the purchase of **birthday cakes** for children in foster care.

We are grateful for the volunteer efforts that supported special events during the year. 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. FPC continues to pay for and serve **Meals on Wheels at the holidays** (Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day) coordinated by Sally Vandiver. More than 100 FPC families provided Christmas for Athens area children with the **Salvation Army Angel Tree project**. In 2018, approximately 125 children "angels" were provided for through this program, coordinated by Sandy Boyles. In December, with financial gifts from congregation members and the help of several volunteers, we packaged 106 boxes of food valued at \$40 each that were shared with low-income Latino families through a partnership with **Casa de Amistad**. A check for \$1,226 was also sent to Casa de Amistad. First Presbyterian Church **youth**, under the leadership of Kim Ness, participated in numerous outreach projects. As part of an ongoing effort to increase interactions between our youth and adults in mission outreach, 25 people (youth and adults) participated in the **Honduras mission trip** in June, under the auspices of HOI, to install latrines, concrete floors, and mud walls, as well as lead VBS, in a remote village. This trip cost \$38,131. Our **children**, under the leadership of Natalie Bishop, raised \$377 for **UNICEF** (\$100 more than last year) and then raised \$60 to purchase a trio of rabbits with **Heifer International's Fill the Ark** program. The children also "stuffed" many turkey offering envelopes full of quarters for Thornwell Homes for Children in November.

OUR BUILDING USE

The church building is available and used by the community often. Again this year, we opened our doors to our neighbors in Bethel Homes as the monthly meeting space for the **Bethel Homes Reading for Success** program. **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 Symphony**. From time to time, the **University of Georgia** and other organizations use the church space for classes. The church was again open for the **Downtown Parade of Lights** to give parade participants an opportunity to use the restrooms and warm up with hot chocolate. The Mission and Outreach Commission also coordinated our **AthHalf Pre-Race worship and water station**.

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 50 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 2018, we gave support to **Greek Intervarsity** and **Young Life**.

Our church has had a commitment for the past 50 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.

We also set aside \$4,000 from the 2018 budget for **future mission trips**.

Under the rubric of Mission Support, funding for the above ministries totaled \$132,740.

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 2018, 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-Area 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
- **Bethlehem Ministry** – aids Terrier Rouge, Haiti's poor with health care, education, jobs, and food
- **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
- **YMCA** – promotes youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility

Additionally, we purchased food for Our Daily Bread monthly lunches, Homeless Day Center sack meals, and holiday Meals on Wheels, as well as paid for miscellaneous expenses for hosting families through IHNA. From the contingency fund we paid for a meal for the Bethel Homes Reading for Success participants and funded hurricane recovery and repair efforts in Flint River presbytery and in Mexico Beach, FL.

Under the rubric of Outreach Grants, funding for the above ministries totaled \$71,915.

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

Additional funds were raised by special offerings for:

- Souper Bowl of Caring – \$1,224
- One Great Hour of Sharing – \$2,013
- Mother’s Day Offering – to help support people who live in Presbyterian Homes and have run out of money or are on Medicare Coverage – \$787
- Pentecost Offering – \$1,470 (40% to Barrow Elementary after school program)
- Peace and Global Witness Offering – \$1,152 (25% to Homeless Day Center)
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for Hurricane Relief – \$910
- Thornwell Home – \$3,014
- Christmas Joy Offering – \$2,461
- Christmas Eve Offering – \$3,973 (50% to Casa de Amistad and 50% to Athens Nurses Clinic)

THE HOLIDAY BENEVOLENCE MARKET was held at our church this year. Donations to the approximately 30 local agencies for 2018 totaled \$11,500.

TOTAL MISSION AND OUTREACH GIVING

The grand total of dollars from mission support, outreach grants, special offerings, Honduras Mission Trip, Holiday Benevolence Market, and other fundraising **amounts to \$277,193**. 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, knitting group, etc. Thank you for your wonderful generosity!!

Robbie Bryan, *Mission & Outreach Commission Co-Chair*

Worship & Music Commission

Commission Members: Bob Burton, *Chair*, Joe Attaway, Bob Glasscock, Mary Havick, 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 2018, the Worship & Music Commission, along with the congregation and church staff, has sought to fulfill this mission.

Dr. Lancaster led the congregation in worship with sermons that were concise and provocative. His effective use of humor was memorable. Dr. Strickland led worship nearly every month and was equally effective. She was creative and gave especially thoughtful prayers.

Charlotte Chromiak did splendid work as director of the Cherub Choir, leading them in a number of worship services.

Special worship services held throughout the year included Ash Wednesday (February 14), Maundy Thursday (March 29), Good Friday Tenebrae Service (March 30), Easter (April 1), and Scottish Reformation Sunday (May 6). A special worship service was held in Fellowship Hall on October 21 in connection with the AthHalf marathon. All six of the choirs (Cherub, St. Andrews, Celebration Singers, Chancel, Mellows, and Handbell) were recognized and dedicated on September 23. The Chancel Choir, members of the Celebration Singers, lay readers, and clergy presented a Festival of Lessons and Carols on December 16.

Dr. John Coble and Geneva Stonecipher, our first music intern, presented a memorable recital of music for organ and piano on April 29.

Dr. Coble led the Chancel Choir and a small group of instrumentalists in a performance of Fauré's *Requiem* on November 4 as part of the Wayne F. Middendorf Memorial Concert series.

On the afternoon of November 18, the third annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship service was held at Piedmont College on Prince Avenue. The service was led by clergy of many faiths and 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.

Allen Crowell coordinated the ushers and greeters, in the short term, until our new coordinator, Kathy Bangle, began. Kathy has continued the tradition of excellent leadership in seeing that the duties of greeting and ushering proceeded with efficiency.

Diane Adams, Sydney Jackson, and Suzanne King coordinated approximately 75 talented volunteers in providing and arranging flowers for our worship services. We should not take the important work of the flower committee for granted.

Joe Attaway and Mary Havick coordinated the task of serving communion on a monthly basis as well as during other special worship services.

The Chancel Choir rehearsed weekly and sang for every Sunday morning worship service (except Youth Sunday), and at many special services. The Cherub Choir, the St. Andrew's Choir, the Celebration Singers, and the Handbell Choir rehearsed regularly and also participated in worship services throughout the year. The Mellows sang for the annual Senior Christmas Tea and at senior care facilities.

The Worship and Music Commission is updating our manual to facilitate planning Funeral/Memorial Services.

An exciting new ministry has just begun, the live streaming of our 11:00 a.m. worship services on Facebook. The Commission wishes to thank all of the volunteers who have joined our professional staff this past year in the effective fulfillment of our mission. We owe special thanks to Dr. Bruce Lancaster for his splendid leadership to this exciting point as we welcome our new Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, Dr. Ryan Baer.

Bob Burton, *Worship & Music Commission Chair*

2019 Communion Schedule

Sunday, January 6	January Communion
Sunday, February 3	February Communion
Sunday, March 3	March Communion
Wednesday, March 6	Ash Wednesday Communion (2 services)
Saturday, March 23	Session Retreat Communion
Sunday, April 7	April Communion
Saturday, April 13	Women's All-Day Retreat
Thursday, April 18	Maundy Thursday Communion
Sunday, May 5	Scottish Reformation Sunday
Sunday, June 2	June Communion, Pentecost
JULY	NO COMMUNION
Sunday, August 4	August Communion
Sunday, September 1	September Communion
Sunday, October 6	World Communion Sunday
Sunday, November 3	November Communion
Sunday, December 1	December Communion, Advent
Tuesday, December 24	Christmas Eve (2 services)
Sunday, January 5, 2020	First Sunday of the New Year

Nominations and Elections Committee

Committee Members: DeeAnn Cox, *Chair*, Phyllis Crowell, Richard Lane, Andy Osborne, and Leslie Trier

“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)

In 2018 the Nomination and Elections Committee was tasked with the job of nominating congregational members for the Session. Committee members met to review prospective candidates nominated by the congregation.

Contact was initiated, prayers were offered, and the following ten First Presbyterian Church members emerged as the nominees of the Ruling Elder Class of 2021:

Jennifer Abbott
Sandy Boyles
Michelle Clendenen-Shaw
Elizabeth Earl
Ed Ferguson
Rob Haire
Grace Lu
Chris Pope
Mixon Robinson
Rosemary Stancil

Elected by acclamation at the September 9, 2018 Called Congregational Meeting, the ten elders-elect were then examined by the Session on December 8 during the Stated Session Meeting. Along with the entire congregation, the members of the 2018 Nominations and Elections Committee celebrate the confirmation of the Ruling Elder Class of 2021.

On several occasions, Dr. Bruce Lancaster has remarked on the speed with which this new class of Ruling Elders was formed. I would like for it to be remembered that Judy Howell had been elected to serve on this Nominations and Election Committee but was unable to do so due to her untimely death.

Those of us who knew Judy know how much she loved this church and how seriously she took her service to First Presbyterian Church. Maybe we had help.

DeeAnn Cox, *Nominations & Elections Committee Chair*

Congratulations on the Births of:

Nora Kate Bawcum
Isabelle Anne Buss
Sebastian Wayne Frias
Mac Delano Friesen
Hamilton Weeks Grenley
Lawrence Floyd Jones
Allie Katherine Meijerink
Thaddeus Landan Respress
Harvey Ruth Ryder
Hollis Brooke Venables

In Memoriam:

Stacey Carol Bowden
Ethel Tison Chaffin
Verner Franklin Chaffin
Charles Dwight Clement
William Victor Crosby
David Hibbett Donnan
John Robert Duffett
Mary Gannon Gunn
Mary Alice Hannon
Lucy Talmadge Hardell
Allison Bishop Hays
Royle James Heyl
Margaret Elizabeth "Betty" Martin Horne
Judith Elkins Howell
Joyce Domke Johnston
Catherine Taylor "Kate" Jones
Raymond Jones Martin
Jesse Carl "J. C." Mullis
Amy Hargrove Nicholson
Robert "Bob" William Oertel
Jack Edwin Razor
Carolyn Brandenburg Reynolds
George Marshall Scott, Sr.
Mary Louise Cofer Stark
Amanda Hulsey Thompson
Warren Larry Thornton
Henry Grady Wilson, Jr.

Session

Bruce Lancaster, *Moderator*, Richard Lane, *Clerk of Session*, Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*

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
Bob Glasscock
Mary Havick
Joe Hermanowicz
Richard Lane
Mary Peace
Lawton Stephens
Dan Trier

Class of 2020

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

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*

Mrs. Lucy Bell Johnson, *Administrative Assistant for Congregational Care & Membership*

Mrs. Nan Thomas, *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. Paulo Santos, *Sunday Morning Manager*

Mr. Willie "Buc" Collins, *Sexton*

Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, *Parish Nurse*

College Interns

Ms. Nettie Jester, *Youth Ministry, 2018-19*

Ms. Yuxin Ni, *Music Ministry, 2018*

Ms. Jordan Osborne, *Youth Ministry, 2018-19*

Ms. Yamini Pulusu, *Website Technician, 2018*

Waddel Fellows

Mr. Christian Cordon, *Congregational Care, 2018*

Ms. Kathryn Kent, *Youth Ministry, 2018-19*

Ms. Annabel McSpadden, *Congregational Care, 2018-19*