

The First Press

First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

January 2025 • Volume 30 • Issue 1



Remembering 2024

New Year, Same God

Written by Rev. Daniel J. Commerford

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!
- 2 Corinthians 2:17-21

Every January, many of us resolve to improve ourselves in some fashion. We make New Year's resolutions to lose weight, to take up a hobby, to spend more time with family, or some other commitment that would make this year better than the last. Statistically, very few of us actually follow through on these resolutions. A recent survey showed that as little as 9% of those who make a New Year's resolution fulfills that commitment. Some of the reasons that explain the low success rate can be found internally. If we do not pay attention to the underlying cause that drives the unhealthy habit we want to change, then we will be challenged when we find ourselves in a circumstance that has led us to that habit in the past. Other reasons are external, as unexpected events change the trajectory of our lives. How many of us experience some twist and turn throughout the year for which we did not prepare? Whether it's because of a challenge found within us or around us, the New Year is often a time when we make promises to ourselves that are hard to keep.

Thanks be to God that our faith in Christ does not depend on our ability to successfully improve ourselves year after year! As I read Paul's letters to the various churches that eventually became the majority of the New Testament, I have discovered a pattern of committing, renewing, failing, and relying on God to allow us to start the cycle over again. Churches like those in Corinth received the Good News of Jesus Christ, strived to apply it to the way they lived, failed along the way, and then relied on God's grace to be renewed again. Throughout their successes and failures, the earliest Christians learned to rely on God's continuing grace shown in Jesus Christ for renewal.

In the same way, every moment is an opportunity for us to be renewed through Christ, who meets us where we are and offers us a path to grow closer to God. My prayer for all of us is that this year provides us opportunities to grow closer to God, rely on Christ's grace, and embrace the Spirit's presence in us so that we can make Christ known around us. May all of us find renewal not in the success of our resolutions, but in the eternal and abundant love of God known to us in Jesus Christ.

Happy New Year!



Pastor Dan



Announcements and Events



FOUND ITEMS LEFT AT CHURCH

- +Woman's red "Relay for Life" jacket, size Large.
- +Yeti blue-green cup with lid.
- +Drinking glass: blue lid/clear plastic w/ "Strong like
- +AK" Gold plastic cufflink.

FOR THE LATEST UPCOMING EVENTS
VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.fpcgastonia.org



WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

Young Presbyterians

Sundays, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, Fellowship Hall.

Youth Group

Sundays, 5:00 to 7:00 pm, PAD.

Men's Fellowship, Breakfast, and Bible Study

Tuesdays, 7:30 to 8:30 am, PAD.

Women's Bible Study

Wednesday's, 10:30 to 11:30 am, Confirmation Room.

CRISIS ASSISTANCE MINISTRY

Contribute to our CAM Food Drive through January
to stock the Crisis Assistance Ministry's shelves. Drop
off donations at the Receptionist's desk.

NEW MISSIONS PARTNERSHIP WITH DREAM CENTER ACADEMY



Dream Center Academy provides an academic enrichment program for students in a high-need area of Gaston County. The program provides a safe space for students after school and during the summer. The curriculum empowers students to own their education by developing the academic and social skills necessary to succeed in school and beyond. The program is designed to support students from seventh grade through high school graduation so that the students become college-career-ready graduates and productive citizens of the community.

Planned Giving: Past, Present & Future

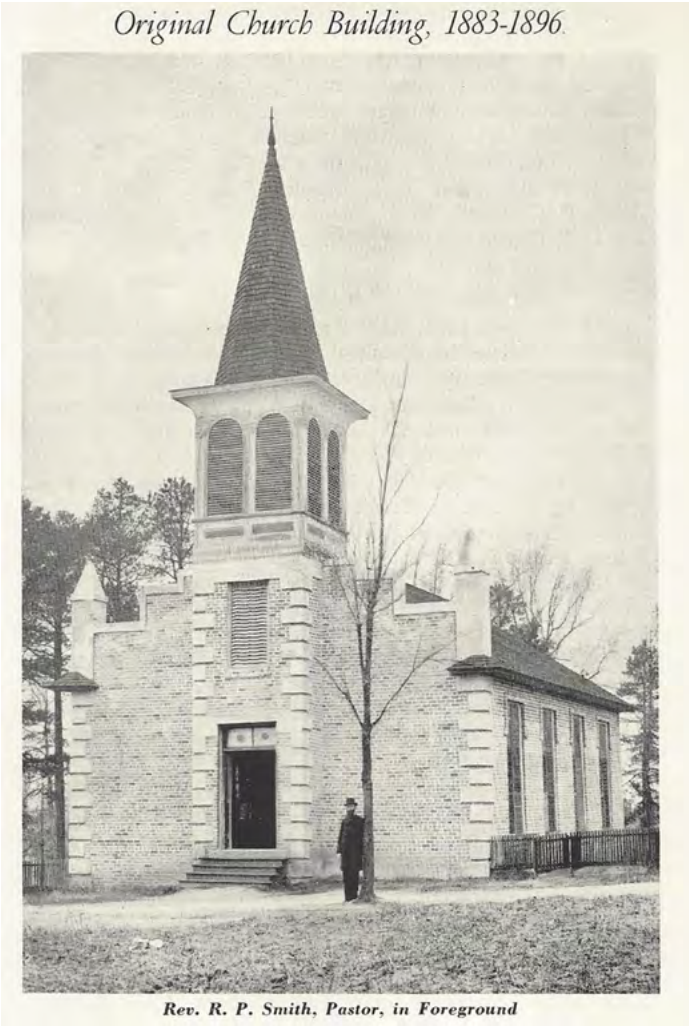
Written by Katherine M. Gallman

legacy (noun), legacies (plural noun): the long-lasting impact of particular events, actions, etc. that took place in the past.

In 1882, the First Presbyterian Church was organized in Gastonia by a group of twenty-two charter members and pastored by a supply preacher. It didn't have a building until 1883, when a little brick church building was constructed on a lot on Long Street donated by the heirs of Joseph Bradley.

Just over a decade later, a site was selected on what was then Marietta Street for the construction of a new church building. Funds were raised from contributions within the congregation, which they accomplished without sacrificing any of the benevolences supported by the church. That campus ultimately consisted of the sanctuary with a pipe organ gifted by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas L. Craig, an education building, an office building, and a Scout Hut located on a lot donated by Mrs. G.W. Ragan. In just over fifty years, some 3,200 members had been received by First Presbyterian Church, and just over fifty percent of its total contributions had been used for benevolent causes and mission work.

By the early 1950s the downtown church building was in need of renovation, and surrounding development threatened its ability to expand. In 1957, the congregation voted to relocate to the current Garrison Boulevard location. The groundbreaking in April 1960 was the culmination of four months of fundraising, over a year of architectural design, congregational approval and another year of plan development.



legacy (noun), legacies (plural noun): an amount of money or property left to someone in a will.

The **Presbyterian Endowment Trust known as PET** was first conceived in 1977 and was established by consolidating several existing funds to create an endowment. Its first gift came in 1980 after the church was named a beneficiary in the will of A. B. O'Neal. Mr. O'Neal was baptized in the church in 1916 and named the church one of the beneficiaries of his estate. Contributions to the Endowment continued through gifts and bequests. By 2003 over \$2.6 million had been distributed for missions, church projects, and special benevolences.

legacy (noun), legacies (plural noun): the long-lasting impact of a person's life.

Over the past several months I have reflected on what it means to leave a legacy. A legacy inspired by the intangible fingerprints that are left on us by those who have touched our lives – that parent, grandparent, teacher, coach, friend whose guidance and support have made a difference. A legacy driven by the tangible reminders of the people who have gone before us leaving behind physical mementos of their lives – artwork, writings, land, buildings, churches. Often, people do not know the legacy they will leave behind. Others, however, are intentional about defining their legacy, directing in some way how they can make an impact on the lives of those in the future. A simple step in this process, which is available to us all, is making a future gift through estate planning to support something that is meaningful to us.

If you are reading this, I am going to assume First Presbyterian Church is meaningful to you. Meaningful, just as it was to those twenty-two charter members in 1882, the 236 members who first sat in the new church building on Marietta Street, and the 525 members who voted to relocate to the current location on Garrison Boulevard.

Through thoughtful planning and generous giving in the past, First Presbyterian Church – Gastonia has become what it is today. The Planned Giving Committee at First Presbyterian Church serves as ambassadors to the congregation, promoting continued thoughtful planning and generous giving that will sustain it in the future.

For more information regarding making a gift, please contact the Church Business Administrator, a member of the Planned Giving Committee, or an 1882 Giving Circle Ambassador.

Sources:

A Christian Witness - A History of the Presbyterian Church Gastonia, NC 1882-2005 by Marion A. Ellis, 2005.
Gastonia and Gaston County North Carolina 1846-1949 by Joseph H. Separk, 1949.
Dictionary - Data from Oxford Languages.

College Scholarship Available

Written by Cindy Clark

The Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina (PWNC) offers an annual scholarship to a graduating high school senior (male or female) or a student already enrolled in a 4-year undergraduate degree program at a college or university. The scholarship, valued at \$3,000, is made for one year and renewable upon request for one additional year if the student maintains a satisfactory GPA. Applicants must be members of a Presbyterian church of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. The criteria for awarding scholarships are scholastic ability, need for financial assistance, and leadership in church, school, and community.

Applications must be postmarked by
February 15, 2025.

Contact:

Barbara Yarbrough

Scholarship Facilitator

byarbrough03@gmail.com

or **704-900-4510.**



High School Seniors and College Undergrads

APPLY NOW

for the Presbyterian Women of WNC Scholarship!

Valued at **\$3,000** for one year and may be renewed.

Deadline: February 15, 2025

Contact:
Barbara Yarbrough
byarbrough03@gmail.com
704-900-4510

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Snapshots of Faith



Moments that Inspire



USPS IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

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1621 E. GARRISON BLVD

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Service Views and Attendance

Date	TRADITIONAL SERVICE		THRIVE SERVICE	
	Service	Livestream	Service	Livestream
December 1	100	59	95	—
December 8	119	66	81	31
December 15	138	75	102	36
December 22	245	83	—	—
December 24	—	88	249	75

Please note service views do not include those watching via closed circuit stream at Covenant Village.