

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



First Presbyterian Church

131 Big Valley Street
Boone, North Carolina 28607

Our Mission Statement:

*“A family of faith Called to Grow in the love of Christ,
Share that Good News, and Serve the world.”*

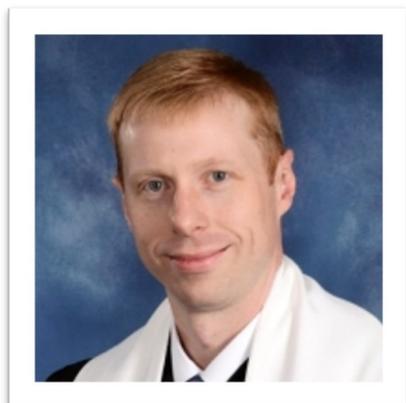
2020 Annual Report
First Presbyterian Church

131 Big Valley Street
Boone, North Carolina 28607
828-264-3906

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A Year in Review - from our pastor



The year 2020 has been one of the most challenging years for all of us at First Presbyterian. No one knew or anticipated that life, as we know it, would dramatically change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. No one knew that our last in-person worship service would be Sunday, March 8 for the duration of the year. We were not prepared to have worship services online, or to do Sunday school or small groups, and committee meetings through Zoom communication.

Despite the challenges of social distancing, of having to shut down in-person gatherings, and of even having to shut down our First Morning Out pre-school program for the year, we have continued to be the Body of Christ in different ways. Worship shifted from Facebook Live sermons to pre-recorded services that would air on YouTube. Zoom technology has allowed us to maintain visual and verbal communication with one another for continued Christian Education, and for the business of the church. We have celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion, Easter, Christmas Eve and even the Moravian Lovefeast in Spirit with one another online.

We've adapted to a new way in order to ensure the safety and protection of everyone. Despite all the challenges we have faced and continue to face, the church hasn't changed. We continue to live into our mission – to grow, to share, and to serve. Many of you have contributed to our Disaster Relief Fund to provide care to those suffering from economic hardship due to the pandemic. Thank you for your generosity! Together we raised over \$30,000 above and beyond our budget to provide care to our neighbors in need. These funds have helped support a weekly food ministry led by Tammi Zaidel and Erin Fowler to provide a box of food to sustain families each week, as well as providing additional funding to local organizations such as Hospitality House, Health and Hunger Coalition, and Casting Bread/Travis' Lunchbox. Many of our neighbors have seen the visible love of Christ through our combined efforts to share and serve.

In the midst of physical separation, we have broadened our outreach through online worship services. Our Moravian Lovefeast generated over 350 views, and our Christmas Eve service 441 views. We generally have a full sanctuary for both of these services, but if you stop and think about it, we have at the very least doubled the attendance of the Lovefeast online, and easily tripled the number of participants we usually have for Christmas Eve. God is at work bringing others from our community, state, nation, and even around the world to our worship services. That's really remarkable! And who would've thought that in a year where we've barely met in person that we would have nine new members join our church?

As you read through these pages, you may find that we've been unable to do certain things we typically do, such as mission trips or our usual vacation bible school, but we are still being creative in ways that have allowed us to continue the ministry God has entrusted to our care. As we look back on a challenging year, let us give thanks to the Lord who has been faithful and who continues to lead and stretch us to do ministry in different ways for his glory!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Jeff

Staff

Rev. Jeff Smith, Pastor
Jennifer Jones, Office Administrator
Erin Fowler, Director of Children's Ministry
Steve Marks, Pastoral Associate
Mary Beth Walker, Interim Director of Youth & College Ministry (Jan-April)
Will Sabillo, Interim Director of Youth & College Ministry (May-Dec)
Tammi Zaidel, Community Connections Coordinator
Lisa Combs, Chancel Choir & Handbell Director
Cindy Clawson, First Light Director
Brandon Winbush, Pianist
Rebecca Pitts, First Morning Out Director (Jan-Aug)

Elders

Jeff Brandon
Melissa Bryan
Becca Eggers-Gryder
Russell Headrick
Vicki Kruger
Todd Liljestrand
John Newell
Betsy Payne
Harris Prevost
Rob Robertson
Wayne Steeves
Cathy Ziegler

Deacons

Jane Butler
Susan Corey
Sarah Gordon
Margaret Headrick
Jennifer Hendrix
Kevin Hutelmyer
Julie LaGrone
Christine Leist
Craig McKinney
Marty Meredith
Ben Miller
Angela Smith

New Members

Lance Critcher
Sarah Critcher
Gideon Goff
Sarah Goff
Allison Harrison
Louie Harrison
Chuck Huntley
Shawn Huntley
Linda Phelan

Deaths

Barbara Browde
Tom Taylor
Jim Tinsley

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Moderator: *Becca Eggers-Gryder, Elder*

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

The children were active in person at the start of 2020 with Sunday school, Reach Wednesday mission study, and fellowship events like roller skating and creating soccer balls for Haiti. In March, the virus forced our ministry team to look for new ways to engage our children. Fourth and fifth grade Zoom Sunday school began. Later a younger kid Zoom Sunday school started meeting on Sunday mornings, too. Take home boxes were created and picked up with lessons, crafts, and candy. Children made cards that were sent to residents at Appalachian Brian Estates. Over 50 VBS Creation themed buckets were distributed in June. Fall bags with a memory verse challenge and Advent bags with a family Jesse Tree activity were dropped on porches in September and December. Cards and postcards were sent in bulk in an effort to stay in touch! The children met via Zoom in October to share Halloween costumes and met again in December to share favorite Christmas decorations. With virus numbers dropping in the fall, some of our younger members met in person outside with masks at our “Chalk the Lot Event” and our “Pumpkin Painting Event”. While 2020 was challenging for our Children’s Ministry, our families leaned in and our children grew in God through many new ways!



Erin Fowler, Children’s Director



YOUTH AND COLLEGE MINISTRY 2020

To say that youth ministry in 2020 was different would be an understatement. The pandemic fundamentally reshaped how our church did youth ministry. The needs for youth and college ministry did not necessarily change. Youth and college students needed the Word of God taught and discussed. They both needed spaces where prayer was a priority, and they both needed community. What changed was the means of providing all those things for these students and providing it in a way that was somehow distinct and life-giving in a time where persistent and ongoing ZOOM calls and meetings was leading to digital burnout. However, by the grace of God, ministry did go forward, and though there were times where it was a struggle, where mentalities had to change, and where consistent transition was the norm: God was faithful.

Mary Beth Walker, the previous Interim Youth and College Ministry Director, had stepped away since she was about to give birth, and Will Sabillo came into her place. She had built up a consistent youth following and desired more than anything that they would grow in their personal walks with Christ. Will Sabillo came in to do the same; however, even on the first day this became a challenge, since his first order of business was to cancel all youth and college events until alternatives could be planned. It was an odd way to start youth ministry at FPC.

Everything was moved to ZOOM or to Skype, from Sunday schools to Youth Groups, everything went into the digital realm, and student ministry began to explore this new territory along with families and students. Initially, we tried to keep things as essentially close to our former normal as we could, just digitally, while addressing the fear and anxiety that our students had. However, we progressively learned that this strategy had its drawbacks since it did not provide the necessary space for relational presence. Our students needed community and not just a digital continuation of programs.

Student Community Early in the Pandemic

To provide this relational space, our youth group had lunch “hangouts” via ZOOM three days each week, where youth could play games together (home scavenger hunts, online Jeopardy, partners in pen). This, along with youth group on Sundays, provided for both Christian education and for some semblance of community. Our college ministry also had a regular Sunday school to have community and to share in the Scriptures. This was incredibly helpful and provided for much of the student ministry needs at that time.

After several weeks of this, however, the amount of digital connection had begun to show its taxing effect upon our students. Going from one digital meet-up to the next, both school and youth or college groups, was beginning to wear students out. Not only were different options needed but also a different approach or mentality for how we could do youth ministry in a pandemic was paramount.

Student Community in the Summer

As our church leadership continued to diligently and prayerfully assess all the variables and unknowns of ministry in a pandemic, student ministry was met with its own challenges. Our usual FPC Youth summer calendar would not be the same as years before. Trips were canceled, whether it was for a missions trip, youth camp, or Carowinds; everything had closed down due to the pandemic, or was found to be incredibly unsafe due to the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 and broader community transmission.

Our youth group went through a latent phase as our Youth Ministry Planning Team (YMPT) in conjunction with our broader leadership continued to assess ministry at FPC. We maintained the youth groups, ZOOM hangouts, and Sunday schools; but we knew that things needed to change again to better serve our students amid ZOOM burnout.

Student Community in late Summer and Fall

As we learned more about this virus, it became clear that transmission of COVID was much less likely outdoors with proper social distancing and masking. This knowledge, considered and discussed among our leadership, opened the way for our students to be able to actually meet one another in outdoor activities. To maintain social distancing and to be discerning about group size, we kept our gathered activities to a maximum of 8 students with 2 leaders. This meant that middle schoolers and high schoolers would have their own respective events, which they---especially our high schoolers---were okay with.

Because of this new opportunity, we had several student activities including: a kayaking day at Price Lake, outdoor socially distant picnics, and a service project for our youth. Our college students had the opportunity to go kayaking at Price Lake, a hike at Boone Fork Trail, and lunch. This went along with our usual Sunday schools and youth groups.

Student Community Late Fall to the Present

As COVID numbers continue to fluctuate, it has been a balancing act for student ministry. We are continuing to do our Sunday schools and youth groups. When opportunities open up via a significant drop and stabilization in COVID numbers, we have tried to provide in-person youth groups and Bible studies. This has been met with a rather good turnout for any in-person event. We implemented our procedures for pre-, during, and post-cleaning; along with parameters for social-distancing and mask wearing. Furthermore, YMPT has met several times to assess and to reassess procedures.

Because of these measures and the leadership at FPC, we have been able to provide outdoor activities like our Youth Bonfire and indoor activities like youth group when COVID numbers are in the proper parameters, while also continuing to have an online presence for times when COVID numbers rise and for those who do not feel safe gathering together. Looking into the upcoming year, we are continuing to reassess how to best reach our students in our ever-changing world. What has become apparent amid all the challenges of 2020 is the faithfulness of God in providing for His people no matter what they face. It has been a struggle, but God has provided for our students as they have needed. Things will continue to change. God is with us to see us through whatever changes needed to be made as we serve our students.

Submitted by: *Will Sabillo*

ADULT EDUCATION

2020 Highlights in Adult Education:

In the first quarter of 2020, the Adult Ministry program was enjoying yet another busy and productive year. Our Sunday School classes were literally bursting at the seams as we explored creative ways to facilitate our increased attendance. Reach Wednesday was in full swing with a variety of classes, including our ever-popular Knarthex Knitters, Christian Discipleship, Women's Bible Study: Discerning the Voice of God, Bible Stories for Adults and Exploring Pastoral Care. We also launched our Small Group Ministry with five groups scheduled to begin meeting.

Then suddenly the doors to the church closed due to the coronavirus pandemic and we were challenged to find new opportunities to facilitate Christian education. These efforts have been facilitated by staff and several active planning teams comprised of our church members. Our programming is ultimately coordinated through the Christian Education Committee which provides guidance and support. We turned to the virtual classroom experience using Zoom. While there was a bit of a learning curve, we persevered!

Even in the midst of COVID-19, our Sunday School classes continued throughout the year. We were blessed to host seven different classes each week, offering content from traditional biblical studies, to current topics on various social concerns. Meeting by way of Zoom allowed folks to stay connected with each other and with our Sunday morning educational programming. Special thanks go to the dedicated class facilitators who stepped up to quickly learn the new technology and adapt their material to the virtual classroom.

Our Small Groups also elected to give Zoom a try. While there was some concern that the virtual experience would be too impersonal, everyone adapted well to the technology and found the connection with their respective groups to be remarkably meaningful, especially with the requirements for social distancing in place due to the pandemic. Our Small Groups adjourned for a few weeks over the summer and resumed for the fall, with plans to continue in a virtual environment until it is acceptable to meet in person.

Over the summer, another special program was offered. As our nation struggled with a number of incidents involving racial inequality, First Presbyterian Church partnered with other churches throughout Salem Presbytery to offer a three-week series entitled "Faithfully Uncomfortable: 21-Day Journey Towards Racial Equity." Using Zoom, participants sought to better understand systematic racism and injustice and how to bring equity and healing to our nation. A Task Force was developed from this program to explore further educational and missional opportunities.

In the fall, our Reach Wednesday programming continued in a virtual capacity. Once again, we relied on facilitators to lead and guide their classes using Zoom. Our Fall session included classes on Exploring Christians' Role In and Response To Racism, The Uniqueness of Christianity within world religions, Women's Bible Study: Keep It Shut: What to Say, How to Say It, and When to Say Nothing at All, and Church Officer Training. We also continued to explore new opportunities to nurture our Christian Education programs as we move into the new year.

Steve Marks, Adult Ministry Director

Respectfully Submitted by *Becca Eggers-Gryder*

Christian Education Moderator

CHURCH LIFE

Moderator: Vicki Krueger, Elder

Co Moderator: Cathy Ziegler, Elder

Mission: Involve members and friends of the congregation in the life of the church by creating opportunities, guided by the Holy Spirit, to grow and to share our faith, hope, and love in relationship with others.

Highlights from January through March 2020 before the pandemic:

1. Sunday Morning Coffee Ministry continued under supervision of Elaine Berry. If there were no volunteers, coffee was not made.
2. Reach Wednesday (formerly Wednesday Night Live) meal time planning.

Goals for 2020:

During the months of April through December 2020, Church Life members met via Zoom to check in as things shifted during the pandemic to see how to best meet the needs of members of the community with our budget being frozen.

Food for Families : 33 families were served.

Food Box Ministry : The ministry served community members and some families returned weekly for their box of food. Several families were also served school meals the first 9 weeks of school as members drove to their neighborhoods and delivered foods to their doorsteps.

Move Your Feet (MYF): The MYF program began as a way to help encourage members to get physical activity. Text messages were shared and members shared their activities. Madi Zaidel who got her Public Health degree and is a National Certification Health Educator Specialist was a great resource to the group and provided many learning opportunities for MYF members.

FPC Mask Makers: A group of members donated materials, time and talents to create and donate adult and child sized masks. Some masks were distributed on Fridays during the Good Box Ministry food distribution and were offered/given to community members who came to collect food without a mask.

Angel Tree Ministry: Members of the congregation were given the opportunity to select angels from the tree. 50 children were served.

2021 Goals:

Our Beyond 2020 plan states that Church Life is in charge of planning and implementing a picnic shelter in the future. The pandemic has changed the Beyond 2020 plan, but the shelter is needed in order to provide a meeting place where social distancing is possible. It was discussed to possibly have it built as a barn raiser in order to save funds and make it a community building event that our church family could participate in safely.

What can Church Life possibly do during this pandemic to continue supporting the life of our church?

How CAN we be the church while separated from church family?

~Respectfully Submitted by *Vicki Krueger*

COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator: *Todd Liljestrand*

The mission of the Communications Team is to share the Good News of what God is doing in and through First Presbyterian Church, both within our church family and to our wider community.

In this strange year, the www.firstpresboone.org website was more than ever a landing place and a launching pad for us as a church. Sue Newell deserves a million thanks and kudos for maintaining and developing that virtual Gathering Space for us to come to and spring from. From connecting to our YouTube services, to posting gathering guidelines amid the pandemic, to connecting online giving, to focusing on the 21-day challenge during our national racial reckoning, the strands of our life as a church "together, apart" connected on the web.

Hand in hand with the website is our Facebook page, which has kept a steady stream of likes coming to sermons, prayer points, the FPC Move Your Feet peeps, even the online Discovery class.

Email communication, too, took on a greater importance for us this year, and the church continued to use the MailChimp service for email communication to the congregation. Thanks be to Jennifer Jones for keeping us all in the loop, through weekly newsletters, "Fast Facts" announcements, and devotionals.

The committee only met a couple of times during 2020, and it is good to be able to turn the page and get a fresh start on 2021. Here's to a new year and a new start!

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Mission statement for Congregational Care Committee: *The entire congregation will be given loving and compassionate care when needed, according to the season of life or needs which arise from birth, illness, hospitalization, or death within a family.*

The following have been the main concerns of our committee this year:

Comfort Kitchen / Pandemic Meal Minisry - This ministry is dedicated to preparing homemade, individually packaged meals for our sick and homebound. To avoid multiple people congregating in the kitchen to cook, Arlene Steeves has been preparing meals at her home and delivering them to church members homes. We have five church families that are regular meal recipients every other week. This ministry has also reached out to others that have experienced illness during the pandemic.

Mask Ministry – As face masks became a requirement for 2020, this sweet sewing ministry stepped up. Arlene Steeves, Susan Corey, Anne Wright, and Joan Cone have been making masks for our congregants and anyone in need, free of charge. Since March of 2020, over 500 masks were made and distributed.

Birthday cards – Julia Pedigo has continued this ministry and it is such a blessing since we have been unable to meet in-person.

Care Receivers Ministry - Pat Weaver coordinates this ministry for the church's homebound and sick. Several members of our congregation participate in this ministry regularly sending cards, making phone calls, and visiting individuals in their homes or care facilities (when it is safe to do so). They provide a source of comfort and love while deepening relationships with care receivers and their families. Hundreds of cards have been sent in 2020.

Knarthex Knitters - 21 lapghans/shawls were made and prayed over for those in need during the 2020 year. Prayer shawls or lapghans were given to adults, youth, and babies. Each shawl/lapghan was prayed over (virtually) and was sent with a prayer and message signed by committee members. Julia Pedigo and many other knitters have been very busy this year sending love and warm fuzzies (literally) through this amazing ministry.

The Congregational Care Committee meets every other month and works directly with the First Presbyterian Church Diaconate to meet the care needs of our church family and community.

Respectfully submitted by *Tammi Zaidel*

DEACONS' FUND

Medical Expenses	\$8,564.30	Car Insurance	\$ 455.72
Rent Payments	\$2,050.00	Transportation Expenses	\$ 442.27
General Living Expenses	\$1,150.00	Expenses for New Baby	\$ 400.00
Car Payments	\$ 606.00	Electric Bill	\$ 200.26
Groceries	\$ 550.00	Telephone Bill	\$ 78.86
Total Distribution			\$14,496.91

Respectfully submitted: *Ben Miller*

2020 ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The 2019 committee membership at year end and term expiration was as follows:

- Frank Dooley: Chair 2021
- Wayne Steeves: Vice Chair 2020*
- Gary Moss: Secretary 2020*
- Bill Caroselli Jr.: Treasurer 2022
- Neville Chaney: 2021
- Harris Prevost: 2022

*Both Gary Moss and Wayne Steeves are eligible for, and have agreed to serve, new three year terms.

The committee managed two funds during 2020, their activity was as follows:

	Bal 12/31/19	Gain (Loss)	Expenditures	Bal 12/31/20
Unrestricted	\$661,092	\$ 48,882.	\$28,000	\$681,974
Weeks FMO	<u>40,927</u>	<u>3,523</u>	<u>2,229</u>	<u>42,221</u>
Total	\$702,019	\$ 52,405	\$ 30,229	\$724,195
	=====	=====	=====	=====

Unrestricted Fund reserves available per agreement with Mission Committee and Session:

	Mission Projects	Capital Needs	Total
Balance 12/31/19	\$11,526	\$ 16,439	\$ 27,965
2020 Accruals	24,400	12,200	36,600
2020 Expenditures	(28,000)	0	(28,000)
Available for 2021	\$ 7,926	\$ 28,639	\$36,565
	=====	=====	=====

Available funds become available at the rate of 1% per quarter for Mission Projects, and ½% per quarter for Capital Needs.

Submitted by *Wayne Steeves*, Vice Chair

FINANCE / STEWARDSHIP

Moderator: *Betsy Payne*

Year 2020 was another strong year fiscally for our congregation, despite a worldwide pandemic. Expected revenues less expenses ended the year with an \$88,451 surplus. By the commitment of our membership under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, many activities have been funded to continue God’s work. First Presbyterian also filed and received a Paycheck Protection Program Loan from the (federal) Small Business Administration Agency in the amount of \$79,600.

In addition to the aforementioned giving, the congregation contributed mightily to disaster relief efforts. Other gifts are referenced by the Deacons’ Fund and Missions sections of this report.

Income	Amount	Percent
Pledges	\$605,395	85.40%
Member Giving	46,559	6.57
Loose Offerings	22,667	3.20
Endowment	28,000	3.95
Interest Income	4,020	.57
Special Missions	<u>2,232</u>	<u>.31</u>
	\$708,873	100.00%

Actual Expenses		
Church Pastor & Staff	\$388,560	62.63%
Other Administration	24,127	3.89
Congregational Care	811	.13
Buildings & Grounds	75,386	12.15
Missions	101,432	16.35
Worship	22,636	3.65
Christian Education	4,459	.72
Church Life	2,031	.33
Youth	<u>980</u>	<u>.15</u>
	\$620,422	100.00%

Net Income **\$ 88,451**

Stewardship

The stewardship sermon series for the fall of 2020 focused on “Thankfulness.” The sermons were directed toward (1) thankful for one another; (2) thankful for God’s provision; and (3) thankful for God’s love.

Congregant couples giving stewardship testimonials for October were Pat & Wes Weaver and Gay Lynn & Jeff Williams.

The congregation responded joyfully to the call to pledge for the upcoming 2021 budget year. A total of 78 pledges were received in the amount of \$482,800.

MISSIONS

Moderator: *John Newell*

The Mission Committee has joyfully embraced the church's vision statement that we are called to Grow, Share and Serve. Members work in specific areas to help us know where the financial resources of this church will be most impactful for His Kingdom. A total of \$134,456 was used as noted below. The **Disaster Relief Fund** was created so we could respond to needs in a timely way and this year there were increased needs for assistance because of the pandemic. Because of the congregation's generosity we were able to increase our budgeted funding by \$28,401 to many of the organizations below. Together we have made a difference in a way that brings glory to God. My thanks go out to the members of the committee as well as many others who help throughout the year.

Organizations and individuals that we support include:

- \$20,832 - **Hebron USA** works hand in hand with the Presbyterian Church and the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, Mexico, supporting the **Las Manos de Cristo medical clinic** led by **Jan and Pablo Feliciano Cruz**. Members of this congregation have been working at the clinic and doing construction projects to support this ministry for more than 17 years.
- \$17,265 - **Hunger and Health Coalition** is a resource for individuals and families within our community that are struggling to provide themselves with basic needs such as food and prescribed medications.
- \$16,000 - **Hospitality House** is the only 24/7 homeless services agency in Northwestern NC.
- \$15,000 - **WeCan** (Watauga Crisis Assistance Network) responds to crisis situations when no other funding source is available and provides guidance, education, and advocates for those in crisis.
- \$10,000 - **Real Love Haiti's** vision is to invest in the lives of people with the love, mercy, and power of Jesus. The core ministries are: Orphanage, Widows Mite, Real Love Academy, Real Love Medical Clinic, water filters and a Church plant.
- \$8,633 - **Food 4 Families** provided necessary food deliveries to support 34 at risk families in Watauga County.
- \$7,500 - **High Country Prison Ministry** supports the chaplain at the Avery-Mitchell correction facility and works with **Forgiven Ministry/One Day With God** program to unite inmates with their children.
- \$7,000 - **Kari's Home** for women and **Freedom Farm Ministries** for men provide a way out of the bondage of alcohol and drug addiction through the Person and Power of Jesus Christ.
- \$6,000 - **Blowing Rock Cares** - Rumble Presbyterian Church's food ministry has been a very valuable partner by helping us provide boxes of food for pick up at our local schools and at our church during the pandemic.
- \$6,000 - **Foreign medical missionaries:** Dr. Gary and Marlene Van Brocklin in South East Asia and Dr. Amanda McCoy at Tenwek Hospital in Kenya.
- \$5,000 - **ASU Presbyterian/Episcopal Campus ministry** has been actively supported for 75 years.
- \$4,500 - **Travis' Lunch Box/Casting Bread Ministries** shows the love of Jesus Christ in a tangible way by providing food pick up at Faith Bridge Methodist Church in Blowing Rock.
- \$3,000 - **RAMS rack** (Resort Area Ministries) provides support/assistance/education locally.
- \$2,300 - **Water filter distribution** has continued for several years in Chiapas and Haiti using funds that were initially collected in 2018. We work in partnership with **Wine to Water** for help in sourcing filters, planing distribution and training.
- \$2,000 - **Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) ASU campus ministry** - Corey Keen
- \$1,200 - **Campus Ministry** - Will Barbour who grew up in this congregation serves as the campus ministry for Reformed University Fellowship at ETSU.
- \$1,000 - **Community Care Clinic** provides free medical care for many working poor with no access to health insurance.
- \$500 - **Wood Lot Ministry** is a partnership with Grace Lutheran Church that collects, cuts, and splits donated wood. The split wood is then given to people who can not otherwise afford firewood to heat their homes during the winter months.
- \$476 - **Two Cents a Meal** fights hunger locally and around the world.
- \$250 - **Back to School festival** was created to lift the heavy financial burden that back-to-school shopping creates for local families.



PROPERTY AND PERSONNEL

Moderator: *Russell Headrick*

As with almost everything else, the flu pandemic presented challenges on both the personnel and property sides of the committee's responsibilities during 2020.

PERSONNEL

Staff Changes: Just as the pandemic was gaining steam, Mary Beth Walker resigned as Interim Youth Director, and Will Sabillo was hired to fill that position.

FMO Initial Closure and Furlough of Employees: When the first North Carolina lockdowns, including the public schools, were announced, the session decided to close operations of First Morning Out ("FMO"), while retaining FMO staff members on the payroll, at least temporarily. When it became clear that the lockdowns would persist beyond the initial two-week period, session then decided that continuing to pay FMO staff was not feasible financially, and it decided to maintain closure of FMO operations and furlough FMO staff, both indefinitely. During that time, the committee gave aid and assistance to furloughed FMO staff in applying for, and ultimately receiving, unemployment benefits under newly enacted federal legislation.

FMO Closed for 2020-2021 Session: As the Watauga County school year approached, much uncertainty existed about whether, and to what extent, those schools would have in-person instruction. The session, following prayerful consideration of all factors bearing on the feasibility of operating FMO in such an unstable environment, decided to continue the closure of FMO operations during the 2020-2021 session, which resulted in no FMO staff being re-hired at that time.

FMO Personnel and Policy Handbook Approved. Following several years of work in attempting to reconcile drafts of this Handbook with the provisions of the FPC Personnel Manual, the FMO Advisory Board and this committee, following a joint meeting, agreed on a final draft of the FMO Handbook. The session subsequently adopted that FMO Handbook.

PROPERTY

Reduced-Level Building Operations; Co-extensive with the decision to cease FMO operations, session decided to terminate virtually all in-person use of the building. As a result, the committee reviewed building expenses and implemented a plan to reduce those expenses (e.g., reduced HVAC use, cleaning, grounds maintenance, etc.) during the period of limited building use.

Building Repair Issues: In late 2019, the committee reviewed various bids to perform repairs to the building exterior, but the committee wasn't satisfied that those bids embraced a design sufficient to rectify all aspects of the issues that had been identified. The committee commenced a search for a firm to perform a design adequate to the task and to oversee aspects of the construction. The committee identified and contacted a North Carolina engineering firm with experience in design of building exterior renovations. Following an on-site meeting of committee members and that firm's representative in October to survey the repair issues, the firm issued a design and construction administration proposal in late November. Several modifications to the proposal ensued in the following weeks, culminating in participation of the firm's representative in the committee's December meeting to discuss the latest proposal. Currently, the committee is considering that latest proposal, but is hopeful that this long overdue project will commence in the near future.

WORSHIP

Moderator: *Rob Robertson*, Elder

Mission: To enhance worship which involves all generations through drama, liturgical dance, singing, teaching, and preaching so the congregation of First Presbyterian Church experiences the joy and wonder of God and gives God praise and adoration.

Accomplishments for 2020

Worship during the Pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person services and all gatherings associated with First Presbyterian Church were indefinitely canceled in March. Worship was then conducted primarily via a Facebook video of Pastor Jeff delivering a sermon. Beginning with Easter a full-length worship service was premiered on You Tube every Sunday at 11 a.m. (eventually moved to 8:45 a.m.) It was originally produced via volunteer efforts with most segments recorded from home. In August a video production company began producing the services, which included weekly recording sessions with the sanctuary.

At home communion. After the Office of General Assembly gave permission for churches to conduct virtual communions, FPC communion beginning in May was conducted from home using elements available. Pastor Jeff led the ceremony via the recorded service available on You Tube. This method of observing communion was used every month for the duration of the year.

Online Moravian Lovefest/Christmas Eve services. The annual Moravian Lovefest was produced using new recorded segments and audio/video discovered from previous services. Candles were made available for pickup at the church to observe the candle lighting at home. The candles could also be used for Christmas Eve service, which was also online.

Music scholarships. Worship Committee funded all Spring scholarships through the end of that semester. Only the First Light Praise Team scholarships were continued through summer and fall. The band was an active participant in all online worship services.

Brainstorming Beyond 2020 goals. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the Worship Committee brainstormed three Beyond 2020 goals:

- More voices/demographic participation
- Alterations of service
- Children's choir (work building a sub-committee for this topic was discontinued in April)

With the onset of the pandemic and more pressing concerns further discussions were limited for the remainder of the year. In October a fourth Beyond 2020 goal with a later timeline – livestreaming of services – was added for immediate action. A subcommittee was formed to discuss the initiative, including funding and equipment needs.

Other activities:

- Actively sought feedback and recommendations to improve and broaden the online worship experience. This continued throughout the year.
- Organized an online document by which music and other service components could be scheduled.
- Started, then abandoned search for assistant in sound booth. With no in-person worship was no longer needed.
- Lenten Worship services included an in-person (pre-pandemic) Ash Wednesday. Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday were all conducted online.
- Charged a group to discuss the possibility of drive-in church. It was determined to not be feasible.
- A congregational-written daily Advent devotional was distributed.
- Worship Committee purchased a new ProPresenter license for the software used for services within the sanctuary. New handbell books were approved to be purchased.



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