



HISTORY OF 1ST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WAYNESVILLE 2020

Suffice it to say when the year 2020 began, few in the Waynesville Church had any idea of what lay in store for the Church, our nation or the world during the coming months. The word “pandemic” meant little to us except, perhaps, in reference to the influenza epidemic of 1918 which our parents or grandparents may have endured. But in the weeks to come, it would be deeply engraved on our minds, our tongues and our lives.

The year started calmly enough in our church. Rick Croskery reported to the Session that a new parking area behind the Church building had been made available with room for 12-15 more cars and that a new lighting system for the chancel area was being installed. Melonie Gross began serving as Assistant Treasurer and reported to the Session that the Church had a net income over expenses of \$50,000 through November 30th. The Session seemed to agree that the number of elders could remain at eight after the loss of one.

In February, the big news was that an anonymous donor had given \$1 million to build an elevator and a greatly expanded parking area in the rear of the Church. A building team consisting of Rick Croskery as Chair and Hughes Roberts, Linda Cox and Van Davis as members, was appointed. The firm of Clark and Lanning was selected to do the architectural and design work and the firm of Clark and Leatherwood to do the construction.

Also in February, Joan Barris and Charles Turner were approved as new members.



Former member Lalla Overby was welcomed back by letter of transfer.

In the same month, Riley Covin, representing the Hunger Committee of WNC Presbytery, presented a check for \$6,000 during Sunday worship to Brookley Nicholson, Director of Haywood Community Learning Center, to help provide meals for their students. The funds for this came from the Presbytery’s Nickel-a-Meal Offering provided by churches, including Waynesville.

In March, it became clear that the Covid 19 virus threat was real, and on March 19th the Session suspended communal worship services through April 1st. A week later this was changed to an indefinite suspension of all church gatherings until a virtual “all clear” was given by appropriate government agencies.

In April, arrangements were made to record and telecast Pastor Holly preaching and leading in worship from her home, often in front of her beautiful waterfall. Parishioners were encouraged to continue their donations by mail or online giving through the website. The payroll of church employees, with the exception of nursery attendants, was continued for the duration of the shutdown. This decision was helped by the offer from the Board of Pensions to waive the monthly retirement contributions from smaller churches for three months. Pastor Holly made lots of phone calls, in lieu of in-person visits, to those in need of support.

In May, Assistant Treasurer Melonie Gross reported that income during April had dropped, but year to date the church still had a positive balance. The Men of the Church donated their Breakfast Fund balance to two local charities, giving \$500 to Haywood Christian Ministry and \$500 to Pathways Center for family assistance with Covid-19 related needs. In considering “opening up” the Church, the elders approved letting church groups have access to the building starting June 1st, and beginning in-person worship again in early June, if Covid-19 tracking figures allowed it. A newly formed Task Force would develop a detailed policy for building use. Later in the month, the opening of the building was postponed, and on June 8 the Session targeted July 5th as a new opening date, with a final decision to be made later in the month. When that time came, opening was again postponed, because there had been no “leveling off” of new Covid cases

An average of 75 persons or families watched the worship service on the internet during June.

In August, the Session again voted not to begin in-person worship yet, but to re-evaluate in September, as to October. When that time came, a change regarding worship was postponed, but an okay was given for small group gatherings such as the Lunch and Bible Bunch and Bluegrass Jam Group to restart.

Also in August, Building Project Chair Rick Croskery reported a design change had been suggested in adding a multi-purpose room, costing \$150,000. This would bring to total cost to \$1,095,000. This was approved with the additional cost over the \$1 million gift being paid with church funds.

In September, Treasurer Nancy Thompson reported that year to date income exceeded expenses by \$41,155, a “heartwarming” figure! Hughes Roberts announced the award of five student scholarships to Gabriel Day (grandson of Jim and Joyce Day), Beau Hecimovich, (grandson of Janie and Larry Oakley), Will Hutchison (church member), and Sarah and Emma Clarke (granddaughters of Pat Parker).



At last, In October, approval was given by the Session to begin in-person worship in November. Communications Chair Drew Schrader reported that with the cooperation of church musicians Joel and Diane, Officer Manager Kristi, and Pastor Holly, the weekly worship service had been filmed and viewed an average of 80 times each week for the last six months. In June, a mid-week music program was begun that had over 1,000 views one week!

In November, using funds from a recent \$19,000 Covid relief donation, Blue Ridge Health was given \$5000 for Covid-related activities if the vetting Committee approved.

During November, an average of 30 persons attended worship in person, and an average of 112 watched the service on-line.

Sherry Ebner was approved for membership by the Session at their December meeting. She was drawn to First Presbyterian through the online worship services. She works for the NC Department of Public Instruction.

At the Annual Congregational Meeting on December 20, Janet Tingle was elected Deacon and Charlotte Casey, Lee Galloway, and Beth Johnson were elected as Elders.

The following Church members died during 2020: Jan Morgan, Jim Whitman, Bebe Abel, Margot Harpe, BJ Morrow, Hal Ward, Joan Schrenk, Howard Kline, and Jean Morrow.

All in all, it was a very challenging year, but with outstanding leadership from the Church staff, Session, and the congregation, much was accomplished. Thanks to all!