

HISTORY OF 1ST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WAYNESVILLE,
2021

As 2021 began, Pastor Holly expressed the opinion that with the waning of COVID19, the Church was slowly beginning to be put back together again. Members were still vigilant about wearing masks, being social distanced, and beginning to be vaccinated, but still some activities were beginning back.

Crafters were starting up again, the Seekers Sunday School Class was meeting by zoom while studying faith and church and politics, led by Andrea Croskery. The Isaac Class planned to start in-person classes in March, studying Dietrich Bonhoeffer's teaching on prayer, led by Van Davis.

After a review by Gregg Miller showed that while the COVID-19 numbers had grown in Haywood County, practices that limited the spread of the virus in the congregation seemed to be working. It was agreed that at the first sign of transmission, in-person worship would again be halted.

Treasurer Nancy Thompson reported to the Session that the congregation's giving in 2020 had again exceeded the budgeted expenses. The Endowment Program had awarded \$3000 in scholarships and the overall fund balance exceeded \$88,027.

In the light of the choir's being unable to gather for practice, Music Director Joel Lillethun decided to take a six-month sabbatical. Organist Diane Combs filled the void.

The Session voted in January to continue the Elevator/Parking project, even though the expected cost exceeded the \$1 million gift from an anonymous donor. It was expected that an additional \$300,000 in additional funds would be needed. The result was that the Session decided to ask the membership for contributions to reduce or eliminate the need to borrow this extra amount.

In February, a Building Fundraising Team was approved by the Session. Appointed to this team were: Marti Peithman, Nancy Thompson, Mike McKinney, Larry Oakley, Holly Davis, with Hughes Roberts as the Chair.

At that time, work on the parking lot at the rear of the Church building got underway, and architectural plans for the elevator and covered drive were completed with work expected to be begun in April.

The Church's grief support group, "Healing Hearts," continued to meet each month in the Church's fellowship hall, watching a DVD series entitled "Beyond the Broken Heart." The group eats lunch together and occasionally plays a game. Its focus is to provide support for those who have lost loved ones, through discussion, insight, and prayer.

At the March Session meeting, Building Project manager Croskery, reported on the development of the new parking area. A retaining wall had been built with the old retaining pond removed as well as an old refuse dump that had been covered over.

In a new move, it was announced that the Church had reserved the picnic pavilion at the Allen's Creek Park for Sundays June 13th, July 11th, and August 8th, for Sunday School classes, and worship with a picnic to follow.

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In May, Building Chair Croskery, reported that, despite delays caused by COVID, DOT's proposed Walnut Street widening, and the discovery of non-functioning or improper drainage and utility lines, work had, at last, started on the actual building, the cost rising to \$1.5 million.

Ruth Circle Chair Laura Janson pointed out to the Session that though the circle is thought of as a monthly time of fellowship and study, it also engaged in mission activities, such as promoting the Thanksgiving and Birthday offerings as well as the donation of items needed at the Black Mountain Home for Children such as cleaning supplies, batteries, beach towels, backpacks and gardening supplies.

In May, also, Tony Caldwell was welcomed as the new church sexton replacing Scott Lawrence who had resigned because of family needs.

The summer monthly worship at Allen's Creek Park began in June with Steve Nowakowski talking about Haywood Christian Ministry and our Bluegrass Band providing music. This was to be followed in July, with Amy Murphy-Nugen talking about Waynesville's Homeless Task Force, and in August by hearing from law enforcement.

Foundation trenches for the elevator tower, multipurpose meeting room and handicapped restroom were dug in June. Also, in that month, bell tower music was begun, thanks to work by Rick Johnson. In addition, Tom and Sally Moore, and Rick and Sandy Elbracht, were welcomed as new Affiliate Members.

In August, COVID tracker Gregg Miller reported that the Health Department study showed things were less rosy and suggested the resumption of masking and social distancing.

Five college students, who were either Church members, or relatives of members, or affiliate members were awarded \$500 scholarships by the Endowment Team. They were: Sydney Weeks, granddaughter of Merry June Burwell, Sarah Clarke, granddaughter of Pat Parker, Beau Hecimovich, grandson of Larry and Janie Oakley, Emma Clarke, granddaughter of Pat Parker, and Jack Hecimovich, grandson of Larry and Janie Oakley.

In August, Hurricane Fred unleashed a microburst in the Cruso/Canton area of the county, that drowned six persons and destroyed or damaged countless homes. The Church's Mission team held a dinner where they fed 65 victims of the flood or flood relief workers.

Because of the threat of COVID infection, the October Craft Fairs were moved to the parking lot. Beth Johnson reported that \$4000 was raised for missions, despite gale force winds on the second Saturday.

By October, the elevator shaft had been built and the elevator installed. Rough in work for the elevator lobbies, restroom, and multipurpose room was proceeding. In November, it was decided that the quilters would be moved to a different space and their former room would become the choir room with the director's office adjacent.

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In December, the old roof tiles were cleaned as well as some of the brickwork. The old organ bellows were removed and space provided for storage for the music ministry, as well as a widened hallway to the choir loft.

In the annual elder elections, Stan Briggs and Pat Parker were elected to three year terms, Melonie Gross to a two year term and Lynn Heinrichs to a one year term. Carolyn Sawyer was elected as a deacon.

Four people (Tom & Sally Moore, and Rick & Sandy Elbracht), as has been noted, were received as affiliate members. Dean Inbody died on January 31st, Beason Campbell died on September 10th, and Clyde Reece on December 24th.

It was a challenging year, but with many accomplishments, a year not without grief, yet mixed with joy of many kinds, as God was with us! May He be with us and we with Him in the coming years!

SOURCES

2021 Session Minutes by Ron Tingle

2021 1st Presbyterian Church Newsletters by Kathi Armstrong & others

2021 Annual Report to the Congregation – Kristi Siplon & others