



Faithfulness Sustains the Generations

Ocala, Florida's
First Presbyterian Church

Celebrating 150 Years of Service
to God and Community
1857 - 2007

Compiled and Researched by

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Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*

With 11 charter members, Ocala's First Presbyterian Church was organized as a Home Mission church in the summer of 1857 by the Presbytery of Florida, then a part of the Synod of Georgia. For 27 years, Stated Supply ministers served the church occasionally until we received our first regularly-installed pastor in 1884.

Women in the congregation always have played important roles in FPC's history. *The Ladies Aid Society* was instrumental in purchasing land for our first manse and, through their historic efforts, saved the manse from defaulting on its debt obligation when disastrous freezes in 1894-85 caused a serious business depression. As *Women of the Church* and now as *Presbyterian Women*, they have continued to serve the church and enhance its programs.

Our 40 member church erected and dedicated our first church building in 1887 at a cost of \$2,500 plus \$800 for the lot. It sat 300 people.

On June 10, 1928 we celebrated the formal opening of our present church building. A "sacred recital" was given, utilizing the Three-Manual Pilcher organ the *Women of the Church* donated. The Wicks Organ was installed in 1971. The church bell, donated in 1891, still rings from our present church building.

The Christian Education Building was completed in 1958. We dedicated our Fellowship Hall in June, 1970 and held worship services there until dedicating the newly-renovated sanctuary in January, 1972. The church's basement was converted to offices during the renovation. After the installation of the stained glass windows, we formally dedicated them in January, 1972. Following the fire that destroyed our neighbor, First Baptist Church, we purchased the Baptists' three city blocks located east of our property.

For many years FPC has recognized the continuing growth in Ocala and Marion County and the need to initiate new church development rather than expand First Church. Consequently, we were instrumental in establishing the following Presbyterian Churches: Fort King (1965), Silver Springs Shores (1974), Marion Oaks (1981) and Countryside (1987).

The *real* history of First Presbyterian, however, is that of people called of God, not buildings and organs. Throughout its 150 years, FPC has become a great community church striving to fulfill its mission: **"to worship God and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called to serve and demonstrate God's message of love to all."** Thus, we challenge people to identify with Jesus Christ and to actively seek to serve Him. Through our many programs, community involvement and support of world missions both physically and monetarily, we endeavor to fulfill our stated mission.

* Title of 19th century hymn by John S. B. Monsell and William F. Sherman, used by Mrs. Rex Greene Todd as the preface to her "Epoch I" in her 1932 *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida 1857-1932*.

Forward

Each month since becoming Business and Finance Administrator in 2005, Mary Kash paid FPC's fees for the rental of a commercial storage space. Mary often wondered what church property was located within those walls. Early in 2006 she decided to investigate. When she and Church Sexton Ralph Adkins visited the facility, they discovered many boxes of church records, history and pictures which they returned to the church.

Sorting through the newly-discovered treasures, we became intrigued by a marvelous 75-year history of the church written in 1932 by Mrs. Rex Greene Todd.

Prodded by Administrative Assistant Toni Joseph, we agreed to develop a series of articles for *The Spire* and subsequently formed a committee to plan a year's celebration of First Presbyterian Church's Sesquicentennial. Over the next year-and-a-half we spent many fascinating hours reading not only Mrs. Todd's history but also hundreds of pages of Session minutes--- and we enjoyed interviewing our members-of-longest-standing and hearing tales from their long associations with our church.

We are pleased to provide each church family a copy of this book as we culminate our sesquicentennial's year.

~ TW
October 28, 2007

Through all the Years

And the master sent his disciples out
To spread God's word of love.
And men of faith obeyed their Christ
With blessings from God above.

They covered the Old World with Good News
Through the Crusades and Temples and such,
They sailed the oceans to the new world
And loved it very much.

Men and women like you and I
Placed our flag in the American land,
And shared the teachings of our Lord,
We spread the Good News, it was grand.

At last we settled on Ocala soil
With perseverance through the years.
We built two churches and nursed four,
Through hard work, laughter and tears.

Through weddings, baptisms and love,
Through Presbyterians' long meeting ways,
We passed along the Lord's teaching
Through sad and happy days.

Through everlasting memories
For so many friendships found
For sharing the Good News with others
We give thanks for this sacred ground.

Today is the day we celebrate
With prayers, songs and cheers.
The birthday of our Ocala church
A glorious one hundred fifty years.

~ Alfred Gilkes
2007



13 Pioneer Presbyterians organize FPC as a Home Mission Church in 1857

Ocala's First Presbyterian Church was organized in the summer of 1857, when the entire state of Florida was known denominationally as the Presbytery of Florida. The Presbytery had been organized in 1840 by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, and was governed by it until 1845 when Florida came under the Synod of Georgia. The Synod of Florida began in 1891.

Two pastors and 11 charter members begin FPC

Mrs. Rex Greene Todd's *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida: 1857-1932* tells us that in 1857 the Presbytery of Florida appointed a committee consisting of the **Rev. W. J. McCormick**, pastor of the church at Gainesville; and the



Rev. Joseph Brown, Home



Missionary, to organize the First Presbyterian Church in what was then the little village of Ocala, Florida.

She noted, "The charter members of this church numbering eleven, were **Edward M. Beckett and wife, William Beckett and wife, John M. McIntosh, James H. Johnson, D. P. Cappleman and wife, James W. S. Crowson, Duncan M. Allred and his sister, Elizabeth Allred.**"

Ocala's Methodists and Baptists help FPC and its Supply Pastors in its infancy

FPC was organized in the summer of 1857 as a Home Mission Church served by Stated Supply ministers furnished by the Home

Mission Committee of the Presbytery of Florida.

In her 1932 history, Mrs. Todd wrote that these Stated Supply ministers "visited from time to time and preached, administered the sacraments of The Lord's Supper and baptism and received into membership those making application...."

We have no pictures of Stated Supply Pastors **Rev. Roderick Henderson** (1877), **Rev. G.A.S. Hough** (1887-89), **Dr. W. H. Gotwald** (1889) or **Rev. J.P. Anderson** (1890-1891), who served during this early period in our history.

No Stated Supply pastors were noted for 1870-1875 and 1878-1884. Records show a Stated Supply Pastor served in 1876 but no name was listed.

Mrs. Todd tells us, "The Methodist and Baptist congregations (already formed) kindly allowed the Presbyterians to use one of their houses of worship upon the occasions of these visits. Later," she continues, "when the denomination was stronger, different public halls were used, notably the one over T.W. Troxler's Store." We had no regularly-installed pastor until 1884 when **Rev. B. Helm** was installed. He served until 1886. There is no picture available of Rev. Helm.

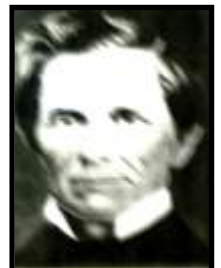
After the Civil War

There is no record of services during the Civil War after June 1864. Records resumed on February 26, 1865, when **Rev. E. P. Crane** conducted services. Mr. Crane was followed by visiting ministers, **Rev. Donald Frazer**



and **Rev. Archibald**

Baker in the mid-1860s. Both are pictured here, but there is no picture



available of Rev. Crane.

"Tradition has it," states Mrs. Todd, "that the church was reorganized at the close of the War Between the States, the meeting taking place at the home of **Mr. and Mrs. Ulric Reddick...**"

In March, 1867, the session extended an invitation to **Rev. J. W. Montgomery** to supply the church twice a month for a year; but in January 1868, he was invited to serve as a supply minister for a year on a salary of \$400. He continued to serve the church until the fall of 1870. Unfortunately, Mrs. Todd's research found no church records from 1870-1876, and stated that the records "if ever made, are lost."



The **Rev. John Daniels** served as supply from 1876-1878. "A period of vacancy intervened, lasting to 1884," she reported. There is no photo of Rev. Daniels.

Current FPC Elder's great-grandfather played important role in our early history

After being established in the summer of 1857, our 11 charter members were assisted by two of its founding pastors, one of whom was the **Rev. W. J. McCormick, Sr.** Rev. McCormick, founding pastor of the Kanapaha Church in the Gainesville area, was one of the supply ministers who visited Ocala from time to time to preach, administer the sacraments and receive new members.



In his book *Planters, Plantations & Presbyterians*, Rev. McCormick's great-grandson, current **Elder Dr. Don McCormick**, included much Central Florida history and many of Rev. McCormick's personal recollections.

Being a Supply Pastor to Ocala's newly-formed Church was not easy

An Irish immigrant born May 6, 1821, **Rev. McCormick** recounted day-to-day experiences in his *Day Book* which Don included in his book. Some references to one of his trips to Ocala's church when he was 39 years old are cited below.

Sat., Sept. 8, 1860: *Was disappointed this morning in not getting down to Micanopy in day time. Mr. Scott's horse is sick, and I will be compelled to take the stage tonight....I penned two letters today, both touching ministerial duties....(one to) Judge McIntosh of Ocala sending on a Presbyterial appointment to preach there to the little Presbyterian Church on the 4th Sabbath of this month.*

Wed., Sept. 19, 1860: *Was in my study most of the day. It is the night of our weekly lecture and prayer meeting; hence, I am called upon to make some additional preparations besides preparing for services at Ocala---Deo Volente (God being willing)---on next Sabbath by order of Presbytery...*

Fri., Sept. 21, 1860: *Started for Ocala on the pony this morning, went as far as Mr. Merry's for dinner and in the evening rode some eight miles farther to Dr. John Payne's where I spent the night.*

Sat., Sept. 22, 1860: *Left early and wended my way to Ocala. Called to see Mr. Worten Young...did not find him at home so I continued on and after a long, hot and weary ride, I reached Ocala, found Judge McIntosh's and met with a hearty reception. Preached in the Methodist church at night.*

Sabbath, Sept. 23, 1860: *Preached in the forenoon to an attentive congregation. Took dinner at a Mr. Crowson's, merchant and member of our church. Held a meeting of session (in) the afternoon at Judge McIntosh's, the other Elder, Mr. Beckett being present and preached again at night. Thus ended my Ministrations there.*

Mon., Sept. 24, 1860: Called to see some persons this morning and about ten o'clock went out five miles into the country to spend the day. Night at Capt. Taylor's, Mrs. Dawkins' father. Had a pleasant visit; a pleasant family.

Tues., Sept. 25, 1860: Willie Taylor and myself started early for home and after a long ride of forty miles, reached Gainesville about dark....Was very tired tonight and hence, retired early.

The **Rev. Dr. W. J. McCormick**, age 62, passed away at 4:35 p.m. on June 29, 1883. *The Weekly Bee*, a local Gainesville newspaper stated, "There was no man in Gainesville more universally beloved than he. No one ever doubted his sincerity of purpose or his purity of heart, and his exemplary Christian life has made him an object of profound respect. An able minister, a faithful pastor, and an upright citizen, his place in his church and in society will not be easily filled." (As quoted in *Planters, Plantations & Presbyterians* by F.D. McCormick.)

Building the first church building

"And Solomon determined to build a house for the name of the Lord" With this biblical quote, Mrs. Rex Greene Todd began the second section of her 1932 *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida: 1857-1932*, in which she describes the development of our first church building.

FPC originally called **Rev. Ben Helm** in December, 1884, but records do not indicate that he was installed. Mrs. Todd states, "On December 27, 1885, a second call was extended to Rev. Helm for three-fourths of his time, and he became the first regularly installed pastor....(Rev. Helm) was formerly a missionary to China, but was compelled to give up his work there on account of his wife's health." Including his earlier time at FPC, he served from 1884-1886.



Small FPC congregation buys a lot and builds a church in short time span

Mrs. Todd mentions that In August 1885, the church lot was bought on the corner of Fort King Avenue and Watula Street.

The Ocala Banner said the following about our church on September 17, 1886: **The members of this religious denomination have organized. They own a beautiful lot in Gary Park paid for; have \$650 in the treasury and \$1000 pledged toward the building fund. They expect to erect a Church edifice to cost \$2,500.**

Mrs. Todd commented, "It was largely through the untiring efforts of **Rev. Helm**, our first regularly-installed pastor, that the church was built." He returned to dedicate the church building on May 10, 1887.

"Imagine," Mrs. Todd writes, "eighteen or twenty families so filled with zeal and the love of God that they bought a lot and built and dedicated a church in two years." The 40-member church sat 300. It cost \$2,500, exclusive of the \$800 cost of the lot. James W. Harris was the architect and builder. The pulpit was formed in a recess built to the north end of the building. To the west was the pastor's study.

Additions complement Church building

A two-room addition at the rear for Sunday School classes was donated by **Sunday School Superintendent C. W. Brown**, who soon realized the necessity of providing room for the infant class. The rooms were called the "Infant Class Room" and the "Session Room", though both were used as classrooms.

Mr. and Mrs. John Dunn---for whom the City of Dunnellon was named--- presented the bell in the tower as a gift on December 24, 1891. The bell was cast in 1891 by the McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore, Maryland. In their 1966 book *Ocala Country*, Eloise Robinson Ott and Louis Hickman Chazal state that the bell was "the

largest bell in Ocala...often mistaken for the deep sound of the fire bell." In 1928 the bell was moved to the new church building on Third Street, where it remains and is fully functional. The bell first tolled at the funeral of **Mrs. Ulric Reddick**, who, at her death was the congregation's oldest member. (It was at Mr. and Mrs. Reddick's home that the church was reorganized at the end of the Civil War.)

The first organ was a gift of **A. E. Waterman** and **R. L. Anderson**. **Miss Jessie Woods** was the first organist, playing on a small reed organ. **Mrs. J. D. Bucklew** gave the Bible used in the first church.

Membership increases under Stated Supply Rev. Hough are helped by FPC's highly successful revival meetings

During the stated supply ministry of **Rev. G.A.S. Hough** (1887-1888) 53 members were received into the church, largely, according to Mrs. Todd, the result of an extremely successful revival led by Mr. Culpepper of Macon, Georgia, a nationally-reputed revivalist. Mr. Curry was the revival's singer. The revival opened in the Methodist Church but soon the crowds were so great that the meetings were held in the local Opera House which was filled every night. "Ocala," Mrs. Todd wrote, "experienced a great spiritual awakening---perhaps the greatest in its history. A committee of women visited the merchants and prevailed upon them to close their stores during the morning service in order that merchants and employees could attend the meetings." Three long-time members--- **J.J. Gerig, Mrs. W. V. Newsome** and **Mrs. R. L. Anderson** were among those who joined FPC during this revival period.

Statistics for year ending May 1, 1888

Mrs. Todd cited the following statistics for the year ending May 1, 1888: 12 infants and 8 adults baptized; 13 new members received by letter; 39 received on examination for a total membership of 94. The pastor's salary was \$760; the Sexton's wages were \$24; and the organist's salary was \$30. Four teachers taught a total of 60 Sunday School scholars.

After being served by Stated Supply pastors since its founding in 1857, Ocala's First Presbyterian Church has had "regular pastors" since 1890.

Dr. John Gordon Law served as pastor from



1894-1901. Dr. Law's family included his wife, daughter, Mary, and son, John Gordon Law, Jr. Having a regular pastor who had a family, the necessity for their housing became important. A congregational meeting was

called on December 9, 1894 "to consider ways and plans of raising money to build a manse."

Ladies Aid Society is instrumental in building the manse and in saving it from being lost in a business depression

Mrs. Todd notes that "Largely through the initiative of **Mrs. A. E. Waterman**, the manse lot was bought in 1895 from Mrs. Fannie R. Gary, widow of Colonel Gary." The lot was on the northeast corner of Ft. King and Watula Streets, next to the site of the FPC's first church building that is now a Grace Episcopal Church parking lot. FPC's first manse still stands and is owned by Grace Episcopal. Mrs. Todd writes, "The **Ladies Aid Society** gave an Ice Cream Festival that was largely attended. The proceeds from this enjoyable affair formed the nucleus of the price of the lot."

She continues, stating that although Session minutes contained nothing about the actual building of the manse, the annals of the Ladies Aid Society recorded that it was built during Dr. Law's pastorate. She mentions that "Dr. Law furnished all or most of the money [for building the manse] and accepted a mortgage on the manse and lot as security." Mrs. Law, an invalid, died shortly after the family moved into the manse.

The Ladies come to our aid...again!

Mrs. Todd mentions that "The disastrous 'freeze' of 1894 and 1895 caused such a business depression that the church not only failed to meet its obligation, but even failed to

pay interest on the mortgage. When the manse was about to be sold to cancel the debt, the **Ladies Aid Society** assumed the debt and discharged it in full, and so retained the manse as church property." **Mrs. William Sinclair**, president of the **Ladies Aid Society**, along with **Mrs. Waterman**, originated the plan to save the manse. Mrs. Todd notes that "Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the **Ladies Aid Society** for their wonderful work in saving this property for the Church. The Ladies Aid Society had the sincerest regard for Dr. Law, both as a pastor and as a business man. They appreciated his hearty cooperation with them in their effort to cancel the mortgage on the manse, which was not entirely cancelled until after Dr. Law returned to his home in Darlington, S. C....Before he met with financial reverses, he frequently returned the interest to the Ladies Aid Society."

Financial report considerably different from today's

According to Mrs. Todd, 1895's financial report was lean, "both in amount of contributions and objects to which contributed" and included the following: *Sustentation for Home Missions* (\$9.81), *Evangelistic* (0), *Invalid Fund* (0), *Foreign Missions* (\$16.29), *Education* (\$11.86), *Publication* (\$9.57), *Tuscaloosa Institute* (indicated in the minutes as "colored") (\$9.92), *Presbyterial* (\$15.00), *Pastor's Salary actually paid* (\$600) and *Congregational* (\$214.00).

Men at work!

Session minutes stated that when the Synod met in Ocala in 1895, "the elders and deacons ...constituted a committee to represent the church and to effect all necessary arrangements." Seven men made up the committee of arrangements. Mrs. Todd delighted in saying, "You will please note that men worked in the church in 1895. Not a woman on the committee!"

FPC's extremely reluctant to release Pastor Law

Our fourth regularly-installed pastor, the **Rev. Dr. J. G. Law** (1894-1901) followed **Pastor B. Helm** (1884-86), Stated Supply

Pastors **G.A.S. Hough** (1887-88) and **Dr. W.H. Gotwald** (1889) and Pastors **J. P. Anderson** (1890-91) and **S. V. McCorcle** (I) (1891-93). Except for Dr. Law and Rev. McCorcle, no pictures are available for these men.



As mentioned, Dr. Law was extremely helpful to FPC's Ladies Aid Society in building our first manse and in keeping it from foreclosure.

Let there be (electric) light....

In her history of our church, Mrs. Todd noted "An interesting item...in the Minutes of December 12, 1899" stating that "the deacons were to make a contract with the City for lighting the Church by electricity....How well I remember the oil lamps in brackets at stated intervals on the walls!" she exclaimed.

Permission not granted...again...and...again

Because of continued ill health, **Dr. Law** tendered his resignation as pastor on April 10, 1900. Declining his resignation on April 22, 1900, the Session gave Dr. Law unlimited leave of absence, hoping he'd regain his health. Dr. Law again resigned on January 4, 1901 and, at a January 27 Congregational Meeting, his resignation again was rejected. In May, 1901, Dr. Law's third resignation was accepted.

Among many other considerations during Dr. Law's pastorate, a committee was appointed to consider the advisability of opening a Sunday School in North Ocala. (Nothing further on this topic appears in Session minutes.)

Mrs. Todd reflected that "Dr. Law was a conscientious, God-fearing minister, who unfalteringly did his duty at all times. Broken in health and enduring financial and domestic troubles, he uncomplainingly carried his burdens with Christian fortitude."

FPC Calls 3 Pastors between 1902 and 1907

After reluctantly accepting the resignation of its fourth regularly-installed pastor, the Rev.

Dr. J.G. Law who served from 1894-1901, FPC was served for a short time by **Rev. R. Morris** (1901-02). Pastor Morris was described as "a young man of great eloquence." A congregational meeting was called on October 10, 1902 "to concur with the Pastor in asking Presbytery to dissolve the relationship of Pastor and Church." (No picture of Rev. Morris is available.)

FPC is without a Pastor for 6 months during Dr. William C. Lindsay's Term

At a congregational meeting on November 16, 1902, the church called **Dr. William C. Lindsay** as pastor. Mrs. Todd noted, "Dr.



Lindsay was among the most scholarly ministers that this church has possessed. He was also a pleasing speaker." He served from 1903-06.

In April 1903 the Session

determined that hereafter the church would use the individual communion service.

With two Elders unable to remain on Session, only **Amos Y. Strunk** and **E. W. Kraybill** were the Session and Elder Strunk was elected its Clerk.

Mrs. Todd reported that "From July 1906-January 1907, the church had no regular pastor as **Dr. Lindsay** was absent on his vacation until October 6. Returning at that time, he resigned and the pulpit was empty until January 6, 1907."

Trying to keep up with the Baptists?

According to Mrs. Todd, "During this time, the Baptists had a young man, Mr. Warren, as their pastor. He had united the factions in the church, bought a new pipe organ and built an addition to the church. There was a great increase in the membership and the Baptist Church was enjoying an era of prosperity and spiritual growth, so a great many of the Presbyterians thought it advisable to call a young preacher to fill

their pulpit." (and) "...it is known through the annals of the Ladies Aid Society that the [Presbyterian] church purchased a second-hand pipe organ at the suggestion of Dr. Lindsay. The Ladies Aid Society assisted very materially in paying for this organ. On April 3, 1903, Mrs. D. E. McIver was elected organist...This organ was used until the new church was built" [in the 1920s].

As mentioned above, Dr. Lindsay was away from July 1906 until January 1907. On October 28, 1906, a congregational meeting was called to consider calling a pastor. Forty-one percent of the members were present. As their names were called they were asked if they wanted a young minister or an old one. (Remember! The Baptists had a successful *young* pastor at this time!) Twenty-three FPC members replied that they wished a *young* minister. Three asked for a *middle-aged* minister. The others indicated they had no choice. **Mr. R. L. Anderson**, who had been chosen as the meeting's moderator, read letters and recommendations from eight applicant ministers, but no action was taken.

We welcome Dr. Dodge in 1907

Nearly three months later, on January 6, 1907, **Dr. W. H. Dodge** was asked to act as Supply Pastor for FPC. On March 31, 1907, a congregational meeting unanimously chose Dr. Dodge as FPC's minister with a salary of \$1,000.



All promised "proper support and encouragement during the time he was the regular pastor of the church." The congregation increased his salary to \$1200 in June 1911.

At this time FPC had three Ruling Elders (**E. W. Kraybill, A. Y. Strunk** and **Peter Ingram**) and five Deacons (**D. E. McIver, T. W. Troxler, George MacKay, H. A. Waterman** and **J. C. Smith**).

Installed on April 28, 1907, Dr. Dodge served until 1915. Mrs. Todd noted, "Although Dr. Dodge was not a young man as many had voted for, there has never been a pastor who

was more dearly beloved by this congregation. His family called him 'Happy' and that named suited exactly. Genial, cordial, friendly, sympathetic, tactful, he showed by his daily walk and conversation that he was Christ's disciple....The year 1907 was before the advent of automobiles, and yet no sick person lived too far away for Dr. Dodge to visit and cheer and comfort. The writer [Mrs. Todd] recalls a long illness of her son and there were very few days during that illness that Dr. Dodge failed to call. Often she did not know he was there until she entered the living room to find him quietly sitting there, praying for the recovery of her son."

1907's report to Presbytery

In 1907 FPC reported 110 communicants, three Elders, six Deacons, and an average Sunday School attendance of 50. Expenditures in 1907 included: Foreign Missions, \$34; Home Missions, \$32; Local Home Missions, \$51; Colored Evangelization, \$10; Ministerial Relief, \$13; Education, \$18; Publication, \$24; Bible Cause, 0; Presbyterian, \$15; Pastor's Salary, \$750; Congregational, \$495; and Miscellaneous, \$40 for a total of \$1482.

Dr. and Mrs. Dodge make tremendous impact at FPC

Mrs. Dodge, who became a member in January, 1907, transferred her membership from First Presbyterian Church, Bainbridge, Georgia. As we'll note later, she played an important role at the church.

In her FPC history, Mrs. Todd reported that in June, 1907, two months after Dr. Dodge's arrival, "a special meeting of Session was called to give information of the called meeting of Presbytery to be held at Lake City on June 18th to consider the advisability and feasibility of taking steps to establish and maintain a Presbyterian College at Lake City." Pastor Dodge and Elder Kraybill attended the meeting. (There's no further mention of this proposal.)

Mrs. Todd noted that FPC hosted Presbytery on October 14, 1913, and once again remarked, "The committees appointed to make all arrangements for entertaining this body were composed entirely of men."

Session establishes a regular order of worship services in 1914

In February, 1914, the following regular order of service was adopted:

1. Organ Prelude
2. Doxology
3. Invocation and Doxology (Invocation to be omitted at evening service)
4. Hymn
5. Scripture Reading
6. Prayer
7. Hymn
8. Offering followed by prayer with organ playing
9. Solo or Anthem
10. Announcements
11. Sermon
12. Prayer
13. Hymn (Congregation standing)
14. Benediction
15. Organ Postlude

FPC supports candidates for Presbyterian ministry

Also in 1914, the church recommended **W. H. McIntosh** as being worthy of the care of Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry. Mrs. Todd commented, "**William McIntosh** came here with his parents from Scotland. He and the **two Dodge boys, Richard and Witherspoon**, are the only ministers sent out by this church [as of 1932]".

Dr. Dodge leaves to serve East Jacksonville Church

On December 9, 1914, Dr. Dodge notified Session that he had received a call to the East Jacksonville Church and wished to accept it. At the December 20, 1914 congregational meeting **G. S. Scott** moved, "While we deeply regret the necessity of parting with Dr. Dodge as our Pastor, we join with him in asking Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relations now existing." Mrs. Todd's history tells us, "When Dr. Dodge resigned his pastorate, the majority of his congregation loved him and parted from him very reluctantly. Christian Endeavor Society, Sunday School, Missionary Society and the Auxiliaries were in prosperous and flourishing condition and the church made a net gain of 25 percent in membership during Dr. Dodge's pastorate."

Members still want the departed Dr. Dodge to pastor them; he eventually rebukes them

After Dr. Dodge severed his connection with this Church, wrote Mrs. Todd, "...the members were continually sending for him to baptize their children, marry their young people and bury their dead. Finally Dr. Dodge told us that it was discourteous and disloyal to the resident minister to ask him to discharge these duties, and, besides, it placed him (Dr. Dodge) in an embarrassing position, so gradually the congregation was weaned away from their beloved Pastor."

Mrs. Dodge was a missionary at heart; an 'Angel' to her family...and to FPC

Mrs. Todd commented that during Dr. Dodge's ministry, **Mrs. Dodge** "was as dearly loved as Dr. Dodge. The family called her 'Angel' and she was the presiding angel of the Dodge household. They were a remarkably happy family and all of them possessed the faculty of laughing. It would have been a matter for comment if any member of the Dodge family seemed downcast or had a frown."



Mrs. Dodge sparks enthusiasm for mission work

But Mrs. Dodge's influence was felt beyond the Dodge home! According to Mrs. Todd, "Mrs. Dodge cooperated most heartily in all the activities of the church." In *The Christian Endeavor Society of the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida 1887-1932*, Mrs. Todd wrote, "It was the earnest desire of Mrs. Dodge to become a foreign missionary and so she was always intensely interested in the cause of missions." She was, according to Mrs. Todd, "president of the Missionary Society all the time she lived here and always held the meetings at the Manse, prepared programs and served refreshments. It seems that her enthusiasm

for Foreign Missions should have aroused a missionary spirit among the members of the church."

Mrs. Dodge "conducted both a Junior and Senior Christian Endeavor Society and interested them in missionary work." In the *Narrative Report* for 1908, it's noted, "There has been some religious growth and activity among the younger element of the church, especially in the work of foreign missions. A study class of eighteen or twenty has been formed."

Through Mrs. Dodge's efforts (third from left in top row shown with members of FPC's Junior Missionary Society), the **Junior Missionary**



Society assumed the maintenance of a cot in our hospital in Korea as late as 1928. Mrs. Todd wrote, "This Junior Society was still sending annually \$50.00 to Korea for this cause. This deserves special mention and consideration, as the maintenance of this cot...appears to be the only concrete work done by any department of our church for the cause of Foreign Missions."

Mrs. Dodge establishes our tradition of sanctuary flowers in 1907

Mrs. Dodge began the church's custom of putting flowers in the church each Sunday. She supplied the flowers herself. She was elected president of the Missionary Union of Suwannee Presbytery when it was organized in 1907 and served seven years in that capacity. She then was elected the first president of the Florida Synodical.

Boys will be boys!

Mrs. Dodge taught a class of boys in Sunday School. "There was no room available," noted Mrs. Todd, "and she took them in a tiny space behind the organ and taught them regularly. How those boys loved her and many have grown into fine Christian men...I feel sure that they will give Mrs. Dodge credit for part of their Christian training. When Mrs. Dodge left, no other teacher could manage that class of boys as she did. [The boys] lost interest and attended spasmodically and some dropped out of Sunday School entirely."

Witherspoon Dodge, in describing his mother, said, "Mentally she was keen and alert, possessed of good judgment and common sense, though not profound. Spiritually, she was much of a mystic, believed in and practiced the prayer life unceasingly and lived in very real communion with her God." Her daughter, Mrs. J. H. Workman, wrote that in looking over her mother's papers, she was "struck with the volume of notes and clippings that she had on prayer and the building up of the spiritual life."

Isn't it a shame that church records show this fantastic woman, mother and spiritual leader only as "Mrs. W. H. Dodge" or "Mrs. Dodge"?

A 2007 information update!

After reading *The Spire* article that lamented the lack of a first name for Mrs. Dodge in church records, long-time member **Mrs. Roberta Collar**, who believed Mrs. Dodge's name was Sally, referred us to the Dodges' grandson, **Richard Dodge, Jr.**, who confirmed that his grandmother was **Sally Witherspoon Dodge!** He informed us that Sally was a direct descendant of Presbyterian minister **John Witherspoon**, the only ordained minister who signed the Declaration of Independence. John Witherspoon also was one of the founders of Princeton University. Both of the Dodges' sons, Witherspoon and Richard, eventually became Presbyterian ministers.

What things were like for FPC's members in the mid-1900s

In 1906 the average life expectancy was 47 years...Only 14 percent of U.S. homes had a bathtub...8 percent of the homes had a telephone...

There were only 8,000 cars in the U.S. and only 144 miles of paved roads...The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph...With a mere 1.4 million people, California was the 21st most populous state...

The average U.S. wage was 22 cents per hour...The average U.S. worker made between \$200 and

\$400 per year...A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2500, a veterinarian between \$1500 and \$4000 and a mechanical engineer about \$5000...

Over 95 percent of all births in the U.S. took place at home...A pound of sugar cost four cents...eggs were 14¢ a dozen...coffee was 15¢ a pound...Women washed their hair only once a month and used borax or egg yolks as shampoo...

The five leading causes of death in the U.S. were (1) Pneumonia and influenza, (2) Tuberculosis, (3) Diarrhea, (4) Heart Disease and (5) Stroke ...Las Vegas, Nevada's population was 30...

Two out of every 10 U. S. adults couldn't read or write...Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school...18% of U.S. households had at least one full-time servant or domestic help...

Rev. Herndon serves during World War I years



A former Associate Editor of *The Christian Observer*, **Rev. John R. Herndon** was installed as pastor on October 24, 1915. The paper often had sent Rev. Herndon to report the proceedings of General Assembly which he did "in an exceptionally able manner." Mrs. Todd noted that Mr. Herndon was shy and often appeared unfriendly "when in reality he was suffering from timidity." He was recognized as a profound student of the Bible, conscientious and "a better pastor than preacher." The 1916-1917 budget adopted in March included \$750 for benevolences and \$1650 for local expenses, totaling \$2400.

27 Members served in World War I

World War I began in 1914. The United States declared war on April 6, 1917. In June 1918 Session granted FPC's **Clerk of Session S. P. Hollinrake** an indefinite leave of absence to engage in YMCA work in France.

The war ended on November 11, 1918. Besides Mr. Hollinrake, the following 26 names appeared on the Presbyterian Roster of the World War: **Robert Anderson, Leslie Anderson, Edward Anderson, Abram Arabian, Raymond Bullock, Walter Bullock, H. Curry Campbell, Charles Cleveland, Travis Collier, George W. Davis, Norton P. Davis, William Henry Fuller, J. Duncan MacKay, Hugo McIntosh, Pete McIntosh, George Newsome, John Thompson, Dr. Ben B. Todd, Heron Hall Todd, J. G. Parrish, Dr. E. Lawrence Scott and William Eagleton Hammock.**

All of these young men except **George MacKay** returned safely at the close of the war.

FPC's April 7, 1919 statistical report to Presbytery showed 6 Ruling Elders, 8 Deacons, 166 members, 114 enrolled in Sunday School, \$1300 Total Benevolences, \$1879 Current Expenses for a Total of \$3179.

Pastor Herndon leaves

At a congregational meeting on July 18, 1919, **Rev. Herndon** tendered his resignation in order to accept a call to Winston-Salem, after which the congregation adopted these resolutions: "Resolved that the departure of Rev. John Herndon is a distinct loss to this church and that we are deprived of the services of a man who has labored for his God and the members of this congregation, who has been unsparing in his work, both in the Church and all of its branches of usefulness. He has been our Pastor, Sunday School leader and teacher...He has been loyal to his country and freely gave of his services to everything that was for the good of our nation and its soldiers...

"Resolved that the congregation wishes to go on record that in the departure of Mrs. John R. Herndon that they have parted with one who has been wholly in the service of Christ our Redeemer and has been a sharer in all our joys and sorrows...whose heart was open to everything good and who detested all things bad...one whose place it will be well high impossible to fill."

Mrs. Todd added, "Mrs. Herndon was a very capable minister's wife, interested in all of her husband's activities. Free from all affectation, friendly and cordial in her relations, she was popular with the congregation. Like Mrs. Dodge she was interested in young people and during her residence here she maintained the interest of the Junior Missionary Society and continued sending \$50 a year to maintain a cot in our Korean Mission."

A tragic note

Mrs. Todd later recorded that one year later, "Three days before Christmas [1920] the congregation was shocked at the news of the tragic death of Rev. John R. Herndon at Winston-Salem. He was hit and instantly killed by an auto driven by a drunken driver. Letters of sympathy and condolence were sent by Session to the widow and children."

Rev. W.F. Creson serves from 1920-1925; active in FPC and community projects, aiding undertakers and charitable organizations

After Pastor John R. Herndon's departure in 1919, various ministers served the church until the congregation unanimously extended a call to **Rev. W. F. Creson** on March 28, 1920. Accepting the call, Rev. Creson served until 1925. At the same meeting, the congregation decided to hold an every member canvass the last Sunday in April since they had pledged Rev. Creson an \$1800 salary!



A 'first' for an Ocala Presbyterian minister

In her FPC history, Mrs. Todd recorded that "Mr. Creson was a pleasant, affable man and thoroughly consecrated." She further noted, "Some member of the congregation who preferred remaining incognito presented Mr. Creson with a car. So...he enjoyed the distinction of being the first Presbyterian minister of Ocala to own an automobile."

1920 a busy year for FPC and its Pastor

The April 1920 Presbytery meeting was held in Ocala. FPC elders and deacons were appointed as the committee to provide entertainment. After an Elder urged a church get-together meeting, a motion was approved that a committee composed of the chairs of the Circles of the Women's Auxiliary be asked to arrange this get-together meeting.

The 1920 statistical report showed 132 Resident Communicants; 135 enrolled in Sunday School, \$1290 in Benevolences, \$1710 Current, and a Total of \$3000.

In October, 1920, Rev. Creson held a series of meetings at Moss Bluff, where he conducted services once a month. He also conducted a successful revival there. According to Mrs. Todd, "The undertakers and heads of charitable organizations called on him in preference to any other minister in town to visit their sick, cheer their needy and bury their dead. It is doubtful if his work among this class was appreciated."

On March 6, 1921, a year after Rev. Creson's arrival, the congregation adopted the following resolution: "We, the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church, believing that in our pastor, Rev. W. F. Creson, we have a very efficient and earnest worker for the pure religion of Christ...and desiring to share with him more of the abundance with which the Lord has blessed us, we therefore move to amend our call that it may read \$2400 instead of \$1800."

Mrs. Creson's a strong complement to the Pastor's ministry

Both Rev. and Mrs. Creson were active in the church and community. Mrs. Todd commented that "Mrs. Creson was a woman of attractive personality and an unusual

amount of executive ability. Though hampered by ill health and much sickness in her family, she managed to do a great deal of church work." Assisted by **Mr. and Mrs. Russell**, Mrs. Creson organized a *Christian Endeavor Society*. Mrs. Todd reported that "She was one of the best presidents the Woman's Auxiliary ever elected and made a good record for that department of the church while president."

Together the Cresons organized the *Young People's Triangle* composed of the Young People's organizations in the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.

Miss Ray transfers to Kentucky church and begins Home Mission work

Mrs. Todd noted that "On November 21, 1920, a letter of dismissal to the church at Levi, Kentucky was granted to **Miss Ruby Ray**. Miss Ray served several years in the home mission field in the mountains of Kentucky and did wonderful work."

Congregation struggles with Sunday School facilities; postpones replacing Rev. Creson

As in previous years, during Rev. Herndon's pastorate (1915-19), there was an increasing demand for more room and equipment for Sunday School activities. A committee was appointed to decide whether to build a new church or to add a Sunday School wing. Apparently no subsequent action was taken. Early in Rev. Creson's ministry, at a congregational meeting on December 1920, it is recorded, "Discussion of the enlargement of equipment for Sunday School and Church followed. On motion, the congregation unanimously voted for the providing of adequate equipment for church and Sunday School at the earliest possible moment."

FPC's 1921 statistical report showed 152 officers and teachers in Sunday School; a total contribution to all causes from Sunday School: \$474.20; six ruling Elders; nine Deacons; a total church membership of 195; Benevolences totaling \$1,809.61; and Local totaling \$3,530.

Continuing to search for a Sunday School solution

On January 29, 1922, the congregation authorized the Deacons to secure funds and to appoint the necessary committees related to the church's plan to build a Sunday School wing and to purchase Sunday School equipment.

Sunday School Superintendent L. M. Murray, an Elder, was instrumental in bringing this topic about. Sadly, Mrs. Todd noted that on "August 22, 1922, Elder L. M. Murray was called to his heavenly home." The Session adopted a resolution declaring "*That we put on record our appreciation of him as a man of unusual parts; as a deacon conscientious in the discharge of every duty; as a Sabbath School Superintendent faithful in every detail of the work; as a Clerk of Session, true and accurate records were always kept; as Ruling Elder, he served the Church faithfully.*"

No further mention of the results of the January 1922 plans for Sunday School appear in the records. But on March 25, 1925, a resolution from the Board of Deacons urged the Session to call a congregational meeting "for the purpose of going thoroughly into the present status of the church, financially and otherwise..." Mrs. Todd reported, "After due consideration, it was deemed wise to postpone action for the present. In order to cooperate with the Board of Deacons, Elder **George MacKay** was authorized to call a joint meeting of the officers immediately and to decide upon the best method of procedure."

The congregation postpones replacing Rev. Creson; names Dr. McConnell as supply pastor

Rev. Creson resigned on October 18, 1925. On December 5, 1925, a congregational meeting was held to consider the church's condition and "to call a pastor if the way be clear." At the meeting, the Treasurer reported notes at the bank of \$500 and \$700 due on benevolences. The congregation, in a vote of 52 to 7, voted that FPC get a supply pastor and to not call a pastor at that time. Subsequently, **Dr. William McConnell** was chosen to fill the pulpit until a pastor was elected. Mrs. Todd's history tells us, "Dr. McConnell was a great organizer and appointed many committees with the object of getting the machinery of the church

running smoothly. He was a very good preacher also."

We call Dr. McMurray but FPC must meet his two challenges before he will accept

On January 10, 1926, the congregation elected a pastor selection committee that included **Dr. E. G. Peak**, Chairman, **Sydney Haile**, **J. K. Dickson**, **J. J. Gerig**, **W. C. Ray**, **Mrs. J. H. Taylor**, **Miss Mary McDowell** and **Mrs. L. M. Murray**, the widow of **Elder L. M. Murray**.

On February 7, 1926, the Pulpit Committee recommended **The Rev. Dr. John A. McMurray** as pastor. He was unanimously approved by the congregation.



A month later, at a congregational meeting on March 16, 1926, **Dr. McConnell** read a letter from **Dr. McMurray** in which he made two propositions

before he would give his final answer to the church's call to become its pastor. First: As a people, would we give him our whole-hearted support? Second: Were we willing to build an adequate church? The congregation voted "yes" to both propositions and the following were named to the Building Committee: Elder **George MacKay** and Deacons **Dr. Henry**, **Dr. Peek**, **J. J. Gerig**, **W. C. Ray** and **H. P. McCurdy**.

The 1926 statistical report recorded five Elders, eight Deacons, 210 communicants, 156 enrolled in Sunday School, Benevolences of \$1,395, Current Expenses of \$1,906 and a Pastor's Salary of \$2,940.

FPC proceeds toward building new church

The recurring question of enlarging and improving FPC's Sunday School facilities continued in the early years of the 20th century. Early in 1922 the congregation authorized the Deacons to secure funding and designate committees to plan for erecting a Sunday School "edifice." However, by March, 1922, after a review of the church's finances, the congregation had postponed action.

***Pastor McMurray quickly gets
"rave reviews" at FPC and
in Ocala***

Mrs. Todd wrote, "The church is to be congratulated upon possessing such a talented minister as Mr. McMurray. Pleasing in address and manner, tactful, friendly, thoroughly consecrated, he has won the regard of the citizens of Ocala as well as of his congregation."

She continued, stating, "He is an orator of marked ability...Possessing an unusually large and choice vocabulary, he is able to clothe his thoughts in fittingly beautiful words.

"[He] is interested in everything that means advancement in the cause of Christ. But perhaps his special hobby is young people and their work, so the Sunday School and *Christian Endeavor* [program] receive a large part of his attention.

"The men of the church...gave Mr. McMurray a car on October 31, 1926. In thanking the congregation, he assured the members of more efficient pastoral work, for a car multiplies pastoral efficiency."

***With direction from its Pastor,
FPC moves toward building its
new church...were we wise to
purchase the 3^d Street lot?***

One of the conditions upon which Dr. McMurray accepted the pastorate was that adequate equipment be provided for conducting the affairs of the church and Sunday School. So a congregational meeting, May 12, 1926, was called to receive the report of the committee that had been appointed to determine the advisability of buying the Ray lot on East Third Street for a church.

"The lot in question," said Mrs. Todd, "was known as the 'Deck Davis lot' and occupies a whole block fronting on East Third Street. The lot was purchased from Walter Ray for \$40,000 and of this sum Mr. Ray 'gave' \$15,000." "This," she continued, "was a fictitious price engendered by 'boom' conditions then existing in Florida." She added, "Everyone realizes now [1932] that it would have been wiser to have used the church lot on Fort King Avenue rather than assume such an enormous debt."

***FPC breaks ground for new
church; lays cornerstone with
time capsule***

Ground was broken for the new church building on December 21, 1926, with **Miss Frances McIver** spading the first shovel of earth on the new church site. Her father, **D. E. McIver**, had been a member of the church since 1887 and a Deacon since 1890. Her mother served as organist for many years. Frances herself was very active in young people's work.





Accompanied by this picture of our new church being constructed, the following article appeared in ***The Ocala Evening Star***:

Ocala's new Presbyterian Church...will be constructed in the colonial style so popular in England. The church is approached by a broad and generous flight of steps, opening into a vestibule, tiled the entire length. From the vestibule the auditorium opens. It is 40 feet wide by 52 feet long with a gallery over the vestibule. The seating capacity is 400.

Opening off the main auditorium is the Sunday School which can be utilized with the auditorium. The Sunday School is surrounded by enclosed class rooms, in two tiers. The upper class rooms and gallery are reached by stairways in tower and rear of gallery.

A large full lighted basement is under the entire building, giving ample room for all church activities. The church will be lighted by beautiful circle beaded windows glazed with amber tinted glass. Other rooms adding to the efficiency of the building are the kitchen in basement and pastor's study on ground floor.

The choir is well provided for with a large and roomy chancel space flanked by the organ space. The church will be heated by a direct hot

air furnace. The complete cost of the building will probably run, with seating and heating plant, around \$70,000. Specifications and drawings were prepared by George MacKay, architect...

Cornerstone's contents included...

The cornerstone was laid on July 10, 1927. During the ceremony a metal box was placed in the cornerstone that included the following:

The Minutes of the Suwannee Presbytery was the first article placed in the box, along with a copy of the Scriptures; a copy of the February 8, 1927 *Ocala Evening Star* that featured a history of the church and a description of the new building along with a photograph; a copy of the church bulletin containing the organization and directory of the church, officers of the church and its organizations; church members' names; names of contributors to the new church; a copy of the by-laws of the church corporation; a photo of the old church; names of the building committee and sub-committees on location, plans, finance, construction; names of architects, contractors; and a copy of the church bulletin containing the order of service at the cornerstone laying.

First services held at new church



When the new church's basement was completed, the first services on the new property were conducted there on April 15, 1928.

Pastor McMurray said, "***Our dreams have come to pass, our hopes have reached fruition, our aims have succeeded, in the completion of our***

new church. In humility, love and gratitude, we praise the Lord and we pray that he will accept this church as His Home of worship. 'Not unto us, O

Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake."

On June 10, 1928, the first services were held in the main auditorium. The three-manual **Pilcher Pipe Organ** donated by the **Women's Auxiliary** was heard for the first time. That evening Professor Kennedy of Jacksonville gave a full organ recital. The new church cost approximately \$68,000.

The MacKay-Drake wedding is first in 3rd Street sanctuary

The Third Street church building was dedicated on June 10, 1928.

Miss Annie MacKay was the first bride married in its Third Street sanctuary. She and **Trusten Polk Drake, Jr.** became husband and wife on October 27, 1928. Their sons, **Trusten** and **George ("K")**, were long-time FPC members and Elders until moving from the area. **Bob Drake**, a grandson of Annie and Trusten, is an ordained FPC Elder as is his wife **Lee Anne Drake**, who currently serves.



In her history, Mrs. Rex Greene Todd offers poignant commentary on FPC's years leading up to the new church building

On June 10, 1928 the congregation worshiped for the first time in the main sanctuary of the Third Street church. In her history of our church, **Mrs. Rex Greene Todd** wrote the following touching remarks related to the early years of the church and its first house of worship.

Resume

Three score years and ten have passed since a homeless, pastorless congregation of thirteen members organized the First Presbyterian Church in 1857. All honor to that sturdy band of Presbyterian pioneers who had the courage and faith to organize a

church under such conditions! "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

These thirteen members have grown to a congregation of 210 owning their own church and manse property.

Three candidates for the ministry were sent out from this church; Richard Dodge, Witherspoon Dodge and William McIntosh; and one home missionary, Ruby Ray, to the mountains of Kentucky.

No great revivals are chronicled; no outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Like the Laodiceans, this church could be described as "neither cold nor hot". While the church never ascended to great spiritual heights, neither did it descend to quarreling and bickering. There were no factions or schisms; but the whole congregation lived and worked in harmony.

The old church was deserted for the new and more pretentious one on East Third Street, and to the passer-by looked desolate and neglected.

Could the old church have talked, it would have told of children baptized in their infancy and now grown into fine Christian men and women, of Sabbath School teachers and lessons learned and songs sung; of the happy, busy meetings of the Ladies Aid and Missionary Societies; of the birth of the Women's Auxiliary; of youth and maiden who took their marriage vows beneath its roof; of the dead over whom "dust to dust and ashes to ashes" had been pronounced; of eloquent sermons preached there by dearly loved ministers.

Finally, in 1929 the old church was sold for old lumber for \$325.00 to Mr. Sam Christian and it was torn down and carted away. Only the cement walks leading to the doors remain to tell that once a building stood there.

The pews and cushions are still used in the new Sunday School auditorium. The pulpit, chairs and Bible are in the basement. The same bell hangs in the tower of the new church and its ringing calls the Presbyterians to worship.

It almost seems that a requiem should have been sung and a prayer offered for the passing of the old church.

And so, for the church associated with many pleasant memories, we write

FINIS

Dr. McMurray continues community activity in the early to mid-1930s

Through the early to mid-1930s, FPC maintained a membership of approximately 300. Session minutes record that the Rev. Dr. John A. McMurray, was not only *our* leader, but also provided leadership in the community and promoted interaction with other churches. On April 16, 1933, Rev. McMurray officiated at Reddick School's baccalaureate services. He addressed the Assembly of World War I veterans at the Memorial Building on June 2, 1935.

On October 8, 1933 our congregation worshiped with the Baptists in a welcoming service for that church's incoming pastor. We held no evening worship service on September 29, 1935 since "the congregation was invited and urged to attend [the] special service for Boy Scouts at the Baptist Church."

The Albright family has long history with First Presbyterian

The Albright family figures prominently in the



leadership of our church. Session minutes of July 23, 1933 note that Pastor McMurray received a leave of absence during the month of August 1933 and that Weirsdale's **Rev. George E. Albright** was authorized to fill the pulpit. Rev. Albright was the father of **Edwin W. Albright, Sr.**, who would serve as FPC's pastor from 1966-1982. George Albright's grandson, **Edwin Albright, Jr.**,

also a Presbyterian minister, served as Executive Presbyter of Suwannee Presbytery and currently serves as Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. FPC's Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries **Dale Cook** is a step-grandson of Rev. Edwin W. Albright, Sr.

On March 15, 1936, the Clerk of Session was instructed "to write the family of the late **Rev. George E. Albright**, Weirsdale, Florida, and extend to them the sympathy of

the session in the death of Mr. Albright who had supplied the pulpit of our church several times in the absence of our pastor."

According to **Mrs. Ruth Albright**, widow of Rev. Edwin W. Albright, Sr., George Albright was in his early 50s at the time of his death.

The mid-1920s bring changes to FPC

In May 1926 the congregation voted to incorporate the church and that it was to be known as the *First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida*. Mrs. Todd stated, "[Member] **Fred Hocker**, attorney, very kindly attended to all legal proceedings attendant upon the incorporation of the Church, and without any cost to the congregation." She added, "This courtesy was much appreciated...but was no surprise to those who remembered the faithful work of **Mr. Hocker's mother** in the old church. There she was president of the Missionary and Ladies Aid Societies and for years was a dearly beloved and efficient teacher of the Women's Bible Class."

The church becomes incorporated

The Church was legally incorporated May 11, 1927, with **D. E. McIver** elected president; **Dr. E. G. Peek**, vice-president; **H. A. Waterman**, secretary and **Dr. H. W. Henry**, treasurer. The Church Board of Deacons constituted the corporation's Board of Directors, who were empowered to handle the legal business of the church.

Mrs. Todd felt it important to note that when the manse lot of Ft. King Avenue was purchased in 1895, "the deed was made to **D. E. McIver** and **U. R. Waterman** and their successors in office as deacons...and that "now in 1927 D. E. McIver and Ardis Waterman [were] instrumental in purchasing the lot for the new church."

Many things were 'relative'

Mrs. Todd pointed out that **U.R. and Ardis Waterman** were brothers, the grandsons of **Mrs. Ulric Reddick** in whose home the church was reorganized after the war in 1867. The Waterman brothers' mother, **Mrs. R. E. Waterman**, noted Mrs. Todd "was instrumental in purchasing the manse lot and in saving it in a time of financial stress for the church."

There were other family connections during this period. **Miss Frances McIver**, who

spaded the first shovel of earth on the new church site, was the daughter of **D. E. McIver**, a member of the church since 1887, a deacon since 1890 and first president of the newly-incorporated church. In her history, Mrs. Todd wrote, "On March 28, 1928, this church gave up one of its leading citizens...when **Donald Evander McIver** passed on to his reward....He was ordained and installed a deacon in this church in 1890 remaining in office until his death. He was Chairman of the Board of Deacons until two months before his death, when he resigned because of ill health...He was the first President of the Church Corporation...among the last things he said to his pastor was...the wish that he would live to get in the new church." (The first service in the new church---held in the basement---was on April 15, 1928, 18 days after Mr. McIver's death; the first service in the main auditorium was on June 10, 1928, 74 days after his death.)

The Men of the Church organization has rich history

We've celebrated many of the women's accomplishments in the development of the church. Men also were organized to serve God, the church and the community. From the organization's annual reports, we learn that the programs were four-fold: **devotional, educational, Bible study and service.** Their historian **Mr. Rex G. Todd** noted, "The programs are varied...outside speakers address the men.... [and] The men conduct roundtable discussions....One is impressed with the good fellowship that prevails... the friendly cooperation...the hearty good times...the aliveness of the organization... [and] the power for good that exists in this group of men."

Men of the Church work to bring Boy Scout Troop 72 to First Presbyterian

Mr. Todd reported that sponsoring a Boy Scout troop was a major objective of the men's group in 1935-36. To that end, they heard District Boy Scout Executive G. B. Anchors of Gainesville, who told of organizing and managing a troop. FPC's **Dr. Richard C. Cumming** appealed to the men to sponsor the troop. Scout Committee Chairman



Colin Lindsay reported that Troop 72 had been organized in 1933 with 18 boys. **Newton (Newt) Perry** was Scout Master.

In the 1935-36 annual report, Mr. Todd wrote, "The **Men-of-the-Church** had a rousing time at their monthly supper meeting in the Social Hall, when they had as their guests...Boy Scouts from Troops 72 and 100 who put on a strong and appealing program. The following Scouts were guests: **Wynn Whidden, Charles Shyrock** [who in 1939 became the troop's first Eagle Scout], **Glenn Purdom, Robert McLeod, Buck Hansard, Gregory Smith, Gid Parrish, Bill Stroud, Vane Baldwin, Johnny Walker and Harry Drake.**"

Troop 72 Scouts impress everyone when they present their first ceremony at FPC

Troop 72's chartering and investiture services were held at the church on a Sunday night in lieu of the regular service. Mr. Todd stated, "A large crowd attended and witnessed an impressive ceremony." According to the annual report, the Scouts, led by **Wynn Whidden**, "put on one of the best programs of the year." Wynn told the men what Scouting means to boys, emphasizing character building. He led the Scouts in repeating the Scout oath and law. Scout **Harry Drake** explained the meaning of the Scout Badge. Scout **Bill Stroud** told of what kind of Boy Scouts are needed for leaders. Mr. Todd concluded, "The regular program closed fittingly with singing of the Boy Scout Tap Song and the Scout benediction."

Our Scout troop has impressive history

In its 73+ years, Boy Scout Troop 72 has served many boys in our community. It has produced **52 Eagle Scouts**, including **Charles Shyrock** and **Eric Birch** (1939), **C. T. Enzian** (1943), **Tommy Dearmin, Lee Smith** and **David Cumming** (1957), **Manuel Cepeda** and **Mark Waldon** (1959), **Bob Rile** (1962), **John S. Tomy and J. W. Howell** (1963), **Bill Briggs** (1964), **Craig Henderson** (1966), **Walter Toole** and **David Henderson** (1968), **Jeff Moses** and **Rich Turner** (1969), **James C. Cunningham, Jr.** (1972), **Henry S. Powers** and **Howell L. Winfree III** (1973), **Douglas Haigh** and **David M. Brooks**

(1974), **Ross S. Winfree** and **James T. Webb** (1976), **Alan M. Parra**, **A. Michael Parra** and **Juan C. Cunningham** (1978), **James A. Clark** (1980), **Robert A. LeClair** and **J. Travis Moger** (1981), **Vladimir Urbancek** (1983), **Kevin Fouche** (1990), **Brian Freeman** (1993), **James G. Clardy**, **James Wray** and **Richard A. Long, Jr.** (1994), **D. James Rodgers III** (1995), **Thomas D. Pauley** (1997), **Kenneth H. Swanger** (1998), **Adam R. Black** and **Jonathan D. Connor** (2000), **Gene D. Sakowicz** (2002), **Roderic C. Tatom**, **Jonathan E. Lewerenz** and **Alan Drake** (2003), **Brian W. Akin**, **Michael J. Manastenski** and **M. Kyle McElhaney** (2004), **Jonathan Bryant** and **Salvatore R. Dhorio** (2005), **Robert D. Nottingham** and **Brandon M. Czarzasty** (2006).

(A plaque in the sanctuary's vestibule honors these 52 Scouts.)

Men of the Church's activities were varied in 1935-36

Other activities and projects recorded in the **MOC** annual report that year included the men's custom of presenting Bibles to the girls of the Florida Industrial School who "unite with the Presbyterian Church." During the year 18 girls received these Bibles. MOC members' group assignments included (1) Visitation of the sick and new members, (2) the Maricamp service on the third Sunday each month, (3) Meeting programs, and (4) Transportation of church members and bringing Florida Industrial School girls to church on the first Sunday of each month. 1935-36 MOC officers were **Alfred MacKay**, **J. A. Winfield**, **Bradford White** and **G. A. Purdom**.

With gratitude to Mrs. Todd!

In developing this history we have incorporated much of our past as recorded and remembered by Mrs. Rex Greene Todd in her 1932 history of First Presbyterian. We've enjoyed her writing because so much of it came from personal recollections and experiences rather than being culled from far less descriptive accounts in session minutes. The church is fortunate that her history remains intact and preserved. Mrs. Todd's husband served as historian for the Men of the Church.

(A copy of Mrs. Todd's history has been placed with the Session minute books in the conference room.)

Other things happening at FPC in 1935-36

The June 23, 1935 Session minutes stated that all loose collections on the fifth Sunday of any month would be set aside for local charity. At its September 21 meeting, Session endorsed the September 29, 1935 *Dollar Gift* for relief of Home Mission Pastors and workers.

Though in the midst of the country's Great Depression, **Church Treasurer Deacon J. A. Winfield** reported in November 1935 that church finances were in good shape. "Best since I've been on the Board." However, eight months later, on July 27, 1936, Treasurer Winfield met with the Session and said, "Inasmuch as next Sunday is *Loyalty Sunday* and the church is in need of funds to take care of bonds and interest dues" he would mail a letter to members that week urging them to make an extra donation on *Loyalty Sunday*. During the early to mid-1930s, records showed that FPC paid Rev. McMurray \$2800-\$3300 annually.

The church's 1935 statistical report showed a net membership of 309 at the end of the year. The net membership at the end of 1936 was 319. The 1937-38 budget showed the Pastor's salary as \$3000, a \$300 reduction from the previous budget.

The May 3, 1936 Session minutes recorded that "Members of the church be requested to remain at home for study of the Bible in the afternoon of May 17, 1936 and to attend the Vesper service at the church at 5:30 p.m., which...will take the place of the regular evening service."

FPC alters 1936 program due to Pastor McMurray's out-of-state illness

On July 12, 1936, the Clerk of Session was instructed to write **Pastor McMurray** who was ill in Maryland, granting him a leave of absence for the balance of July and the month of August. In August Session agreed to continue having Sunday evening services, but to dispense with midweek prayer meetings while the pastor was away.

Men's 1936-37 annual report reviewed their activities

In 1936-37, the **Men of the Church** met monthly in the church's Social Hall, where the Circles of the **Women's Auxiliary** served them supper. Guest speakers often spoke to the group, with a favorite being Gainesville's **Dr. U.S. "Preacher" Gordon**. In November Dr. Gordon brought his "Junior Officers" who presented the program that included an investiture service that was "inspiring as well as interesting." In March the congregation was treated to a Fellowship Supper provided and served by the men. Once again, Gainesville's Dr. Gordon was the guest speaker "at this friendly, informal, pleasant affair." During the year, the MOC assisted the Pastor in his visits to the Prison Camp and in transporting girls from the Florida Industrial School just outside Ocala. MOC officers in 1936-37 included **Dr. Eugene Peek, Don S. Wallace, W. E. Ellis, Grover Poole** and **Dr. R. C. Cumming**.

FPC's women's organizations boast proud histories

In a history of FPC's Women's Organization, Elder **Mary Carolyn McCullough** reported, "The earliest records of a Women's Organization date from 1888. However, there is a tradition that following the Civil War, a meeting to reorganize the church took place at the home of **Mr. and Mrs. Ulric Reddick**.

This same tradition credits Mrs. Reddick with organizing and serving as first president of the Ladies Aid Society (1867)."

A returned missionary, Rev. Ben Helms, served as our pastor from 1884-1886. "It seems likely," wrote Mrs. McCullough, "that he encouraged the women...to form the Home and Foreign Missionary Society....During the pastorate of Dr. Gordon Law, 1894-1901, **Mrs. William A. Hocker**, as president of the Ladies' Missionary



Society, formed the women into groups to call on patients in the hospital."

Mrs. McCullough continues, "In 1902, the Ladies' Home and Foreign Missionary Society met on the second Thursday of the month. The members answered roll call with either a Bible verse or the name of a missionary." **Mrs. G. M. Hubbard** and **Mrs. W. H. Dodge** succeeded Mrs. Hocker as president (1907-1915). Mrs. Dodge, wife of Pastor W. H. Dodge, entertained each meeting at the manse, where she served refreshments. **Mrs. G. Scott** served from 1915-1919.

The Ladies' Aid 1889 pledge card read:

"I promise to pay the treasurer of the Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida, Two Dollars and Sixty Cents in weekly installments of five cents each. The money is to be applied on the purchase of a lot on which to build a manse for the use of the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida."

Earlier we are told of the Ladies Aid Society's energetic role in FPC's purchasing a lot for a manse and in saving the manse when disastrous freezes in 1894 and 1895 nearly caused it to be sold.

Mrs. McCullough wrote, "Toothsome suppers, bazaars, silver teas and other money-raising socials, self-denial offerings and generous gifts from individual women raised the money to save the manse. Receipts from [former pastor and the manse's financial backer] Dr. Law, who had moved from Ocala...indicated that the final payment of this debt had been made by 1904." During the pastorate of Dr. Lindsay (1903-1906), **Mrs. Reddick's** daughter, **Mrs. A. E. Waterman** and **Mrs. R. L. Anderson** gave a joint note to purchase the first FPC organ.

Ladies' Missionary Society + Ladies' Aid Society = Women's Auxiliary in 1919

Mrs. McCullough's history noted that in 1919, the Ladies' Missionary Society and Ladies' Aid Society merged and became the Women's Auxiliary. In 1928, they purchased a Pilcher organ for the new church for \$9350. They also equipped the kitchen and dining room.

To finance these purchases and to contribute to their support of Foreign Missions, Assemblies, Home Missions, Christian Education, Bible Course and Thornwell Orphanage, the women made pledges, hosted an annual silver tea, served weekly Rotary luncheons and engaged in other money-raising projects. In 1948, the Women's Auxiliary became Women of the Church and, with Union in 1985, the Women of the Church became **Presbyterian Women**.

FPC women serve beyond Ocala; become 'the first' in many areas of service

All women in our women's organizations contributed greatly to our history, with many working at the Presbytery level. **Mrs. W. H. Dodge** was the first Presbyterian President and served from 1907 until 1914. Other FPC women who served as Presbyterian Presidents included **Mrs. W. W. Condon** (1922), **Mrs. J. J. Gerig** (1953 and 1954) and **Elizabeth Donnelly** (from 1978 through 1980). **Cora Smith** became the first woman elected as Moderator of the Suwannee Presbytery. In 1964, the following women became the first women elected as FPC officers: **Margaret Camp, Bernice Gerig** and **Mary Steddom** (Elders) and **Cora Smith** and **Eloise MacKay** (Deacons). The FPC women hosted the Presbyterian meeting in 1908, 1924, 1930, 1938, 1947, 1957, 1968, 1975, 1986 and 1998.

FPC women continue to work in Presbyterian leadership positions

In recent years the following FPC women have served in Presbyterian positions: **Gera Fleming** (District VII Enabler, 2003 through 2006); **Sheryl Goedert** (Secretary, 2004 and 2005); **Evelyn Weaver** (Treasurer, 2004 and 2005 and Treasurer-elect, 2007); and **Jacqueline Baldwin** (District VII Enabler, 2007).

FPC in the late 1930s and early '40s recorded growth and faced challenges as the U.S. grew closer to war

The Great Depression continued through the 1930s, as did the FPC pastorate of the Rev.

Dr. John A. McMurray, whose salary continued at \$3000 annually in the 1937, '38, '39 and '40 church budgets. The 1936 and 1937 annual reports showed net memberships of 319 and 304, respectively.

At its March 26, 1939 meeting, the Session granted Pastor McMurray \$50 a month for expenses on his automobile in 1939-40. The 1938 annual report showed a net membership of 330 and in 1939 a net of 333. Dr. McMurray continued to be paid \$3000.

The world's war situation intensifies; President Roosevelt calls for prayers

The war situation in Europe grew worse in 1940, including---but not limited to---the Germans' bombardment of Scapa Flow Naval Base near Scotland; the Nazis' invasions of Denmark, Norway, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands; German U-boats' attacks on merchant ships in the Atlantic; the beginning of the Battle of Britain; and Italy's invasion of Greece.

The Session at its September 1, 1940 meeting designated Sunday, September 8 as a "day of prayer in accordance with the proclamation of President Roosevelt setting the day...for the nation to pray for peace. Our church will remain open throughout the day for those who desire to go apart and pray."

Our first manse continued to have FPC ties in the early 1940s

The church's first manse, built in 1895 on Ft. King Street, eventually was sold, but



continued to have connections to FPC. **Mr. and Mrs. W. L. McLean**, parents of long-time member **Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Townsend**, rented the house when they moved to Ocala. Mrs. Townsend lived in the

house from 1940 to 1948. The McLeans ran it as a boarding and rooming house for over 35 years after purchasing it in 1940. The September 21, 1980 *Ocala Star-Banner's* "Historic Ocala" feature noted, "Military personnel studying at a local army air training center patronized the establishment. In the height of business, Mrs. McLean



served as many as 33 people for dinner." Horse farm workers lived in upstairs rooms.

Mrs. Townsend, an FPC

member since March 31, 1941, remembers that her mother made biscuits for Men of the Church breakfasts. FPC member **Freddie Mackenzie** and **Gordon Peek Smith**, son of FPC's member-of-longest-standing **Mrs. Virginia Peek Smith**, recalled having eaten many delicious meals at the McLean dining room when they were growing up in Ocala. The McLeans eventually sold the house to Dr. Sheedy. Mr. McLean died December 26, 1973; Mrs. McLean on January 20, 1982. Grace Episcopal Church now owns the building and uses it for office space.

Deacons suggest solutions to concerns about money and church attendance

On December 8, 1940, the FPC Deacons, responsible for money and financial matters, reported to Session that the church needed funds. Session created a committee of two Elders and two Deacons to study and lay plans for raising funds. Session adopted the committee's report and called a congregational meeting for December 29, 1940. (No minutes of the congregational meeting appear in church records.)

Preachin' to the preacher...?

During its February 2, 1941 meeting, Session heard and "recorded as information" a letter to Clerk of Session **James K. Dickson** from the Diaconate, that stated, "*The Diaconate recommends to the Session that the Session*

suggest to the pastor that he try in his sermons to make the content of his sermons a little more in line with the trend of the times. It is felt that he could probably reach more members of this congregation through his sermons if he could approach them through practical rather than idealistic thoughts."

The letter continued, "...the Session is requested to join with the pastor in visiting every member of the church, active and inactive, before the end of the present church year, in an effort to improve church attendance. It is felt by the Diaconate that if the interest of the congregation could be improved through church attendance, that it would greatly influence their attitude towards contributing to the church budget. They feel that the Session could render an invaluable service to the church through such visitation." Subsequently a joint meeting of the Session and the Diaconate was called for March 2, 1941.

Session proclaimed the week of February 2-9, 1941 as a week of self-denial for missions and asked that "we be much in prayer" during that week.

In April 1941, FPC's **Cliff McLeod** passed his ordination examinations.

As the early '40s involve us in WWII, young Edwin W. Albright preaches and we celebrate Dr. McMurray's 17 year tenure

As the world's war situation intensified, Session endorsed the General Assembly's June 29, 1941 **National Emergency Sunday** that was designed to provide voluntary contributions to this cause.

Young **Edwin W. ("Buddy") Albright**, son of **Rev. George E. Albright** of Weirsdale, preached the five Sundays in August, 1941 during Dr. McMurray's vacation. Edwin would become FPC's pastor in 1966 and serve until 1982.

In April 1942, **Elder George MacKay** presented the church's Baptismal Fount in memory of his wife, **Frances.**



World War II affects the church

One week after the U. S. entered World War II, Session decided to keep the church doors open every weekday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. for all who wished to enter for prayer. In the spring of 1942, an FPC committee was authorized to print and regularly send cards to those in service. **Benjamin B. (David) Todd**, 24, was FPC's first recorded military casualty. He died November 7, 1942, a member of the RAF, the British Royal Air Force.

In December, 1942, Session announced that the names of all church members serving in the war would be read at morning worship each Sunday.

On January 3, 1943, Session received **Robert C. McGee** by letter of transfer from Burlington, North Carolina's First Presbyterian Church. This was especially notable inasmuch as the Japanese were holding Mr. McGee as a prisoner of war in the Philippines at the time.

Also at its January 1943 meeting, Session approved the formation of a **Defense Committee** to include a member of the Men of the Church, the Women's Auxiliary, the Young People's group and an Elder. Thanks were expressed to an unnamed member who donated military service flags that were received in a **flag acceptance program** on February 14, 1943.

The Session named **Elder G. A. Purdom** to secure **rationing books** for the church at its February 21, 1943 meeting.

On a different 'battlefield'

Meanwhile, **Dr. McMurray** solved his ongoing displeasure with noise during worship services. His solution: the establishment of the church nursery. Member **Mildred Smith** informed long-time member **Eileen Collier Nemeth** that Eileen's older sister, **Linda Lee Collier Sanchez**, provided the "final straw" that led to our having a church nursery! Linda, born in April, 1943, became a boisterous, fun-loving toddler who regularly attended worship with her parents. An older Linda (r) is shown in the



accompanying picture with her younger sister Eileen, born in 1945. (Photo courtesy of Eileen Collier Nemeth.)

FPC celebrates Dr. McMurray's 17 years as its pastor

On April 2, 1943, the **children's choir** helped celebrate Dr. McMurray's 17th anniversary with FPC.



Pictured are *Bottom row (left to right): Trusty Drake, Juanita Gaskins, June Blodgett, Elizabeth McLeod and Bobby Newsome. Center row: Marguerite Dillman, Marie Hocker, Ruth Rawls and Juanita Vincent. Top row: Sam McLean, Nancy Ellis, Alice Hocker, Ruth McKay and Ben McLean.* (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Townsend.)

We say goodbye to Dr. McMurray who donates our World War II memorial

On July 14, 1943, the congregation accepted the resignation of the **Rev. Dr. John A.**



McMurray, effective September 1, 1943. On August 9, Dr. and Mrs. McMurray thanked the church for all the things done for them while he was our pastor.

Dr. McMurray donated the \$100 cost of a World War II service plaque to be placed in the vestibule of the church as a memorial to the men and women who served. Session accepted the gift (pictured) with the names engraved of those who served, including the following: (*names that are italicized and underlined indicate those who did not return from the war.*)

E. P. Anderson, William T. Alsop, Patricia R. Andrea, Robert J. Black, Jr., William Richard Black, Milton B. Boswell, James A. Brewer, Jr., Erwin Bryan, Jr., A. P. Buie, T. P. Burgess, Gideon R. Cameron, John Cameron, R. C. Cumming, Watson Polk Drake, William Hocker Drake, Eugene M. Gardner, Clyde A. Gleason, Eagleton Hammock, Eagleton Hammock, Jr., David S. Herbertson, George W. Herbertson, I. W. Hogan, Charles T. Hunnicutt, H. Herbert Hunnicutt, M. Reese Hunnicutt, Jr., Edward F. Johnson, C. O. Kirkland, Jr., Homer J. Klay, Jr., Reginald G. MacKay, Alfred J. MacKay, Robert C. McGee and A. L. McKay

Others listed include B. M. McKay, John Henry McKay, Benjamin McLean, Neil M. McLean, Samuel McLean, William L. McLean, James L. McLeod, Jennings McLeod, Robert A. McLeod, Joe Michael, Jr., C. Guy Miller, Jr., Elizabeth Davis Miller, Carney W. Mimms, Jr., McCluer Mimms, Richard Moxley, H. Cline Nichols, Jr., Robert M. Nichols, E. G. Peek, Jr., Glenn A. Purdom, Jr., Charles B. Rawls, Jr., Wesley Rawls, Hugh M. Ray, W. Carl Ray, Jr., Fordice A. Redman, Wilmary Rose Richard, George K. Reid, Jr., James G. Richardson, James M. Smith, Jr., James J. Taylor, Jr., David Benjamin Todd, George B. Thomson, John Thomson, E. Philip Townsend, Jr., T. Randolph Townsend, Lanas Troxler, Leslie H. Wade, John Allen Webster, William A. Wilds, Archibald M. Withers, David M. Withers and Boyd L. Woodis, Jr.

The plaque, entitled **First Presbyterian Church Service Roll**, remains as a

memorial in FPC's vestibule and names **Rev. John A. McMurray, Pastor 1926-1943, Tablet Donor.**



T. Randolph (Randy) Townsend is the only current FPC member who served in World War II.

We mourn one of our own...

On November 21, 1943, the Session recorded "with sincere sorrow the death of **Robert A. McLeod**, killed in action in the European area, who 'went down' over France on September 11. He entered the U.S. Air Force on November 2, 1942."

Dr. Jones begins his FPC pastorate and challenges the congregation



The **Rev. Dr. W. Ted Jones** preached his first FPC sermon on December 19, 1943. The budget for the period showed that Dr. Jones received a salary of \$3,600. The 1943 statistical report showed a net membership of 342.

After preaching his first sermon, **Dr. Jones** met with the Session. The minutes of the meeting noted, "Our new preacher...spoke to the Session and asked for our cooperation in *our* work of the church." The Suwannee Presbytery received Rev. Jones on February 6, 1944.

At the September 25, 1944 congregational meeting, Sunday School Superintendent **A. Kimbrol Smith** (pictured) was re-elected



"for his faithful and diligent work so well done." **Elder C. F. Gamble** was elected Assistant Sunday School Superintendent. During the meeting, **Rev. Jones** "stressed to the congregation the

importance of paying off the church debt as soon as possible."

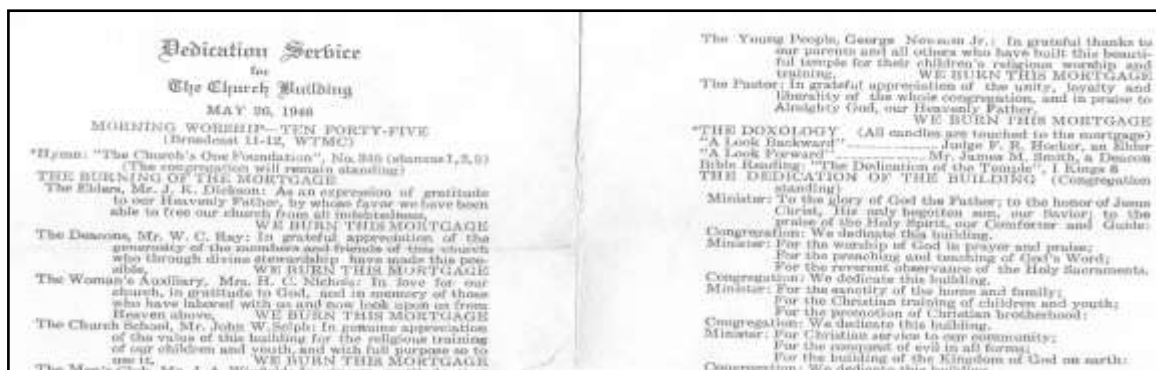
Dr. McMurray returns to help FPC burn the building's mortgage!

Two years and five months after Pastor Ted Jones stressed the importance of paying off the church debt FPC held its **Dedication Service for the Church Building** (the burning of the mortgage!) on May 26, 1946. **Dr. John McMurray**, FPC Pastor (1926-1943) who encouraged building the new church and served during its construction, returned for the occasion and preached the day's sermon, "God's Builders."

The bank's letter stating we'd paid off the mortgage. The letter ended with Vice-President C. C. Long's note, "It has been a pleasure to be of service to the church in the handling of this account...and we are mighty glad to see the debt paid in full."

All segments of the church represented in the burning of the mortgage service

In addition to **Dr. Jones** and **Dr. McMurray**, others who took part in "**The Burning of the Mortgage**" ceremony included representatives of the Elders, Deacons, Women's Auxiliary, the Church School, the Young People and the Men of the Church. **Dr. Richard C. Cumming** sang a solo, "Open the Gates of the Temple." Committee members who planned the service included **Elder J. J. Gerig, Deacon E. Colin Lindsay** and **Music Director/Organist Mrs. W. Earl Ellis.**



A portion of the actual May 26, 1946 Dedication Service bulletin

That evening, **Dr. Jones** preached the high school commencement sermon at First Baptist Church. FPC members who graduated that evening included **Dorothy Edmondson, Paula Mayberry, Laird Meffert, Guy Miller, Jr., Barbara Turnipseed** and **Mildred Winfield.** The following evening, **Dr. McMurray** spoke at the Men's Club supper.

In mid-1940s, FPC considers outreach, evangelism, directional signs and on-site kindergarten

In July, 1946, after the church's big May 26, 1946 dedication service and the burning of the mortgage, Session named a committee to investigate forming an outreach church in north Ocala. Elder **J. A. Winfield** and Deacon **Colin Lindsay** were named to the committee and were to be joined by a member of the Women's Auxiliary.

At the July 5, 1946 Session meeting, it was announced that the fall meeting of the Suwannee Presbytery would be held at FPC.

A lengthy discussion during the September 3, 1946 Session meeting, focused on the advisability of holding an evangelistic meeting in the near future. Elder **Richard Boyce** made a motion seconded by Elder **G. A. Purdom** that an evangelistic meeting be held as soon as practical, preferably in the spring of 1947. The motion carried.

Also on September 3, Session asked the Diaconate to erect, at strategic points, signs directing people to the church. A year later, on September 8, 1947, Session approved purchasing directional signs---jointly with First Baptist Church---to be placed on Ocklawaha Avenue at Sanchez Street, on Main and Third Streets and on Magnolia and Third Street.

Much discussion and debate on using FPC as a proposed kindergarten site; rebuffed advocates demand a special Session meeting

Also at the September 3 meeting, Session approved a motion by Elder **Glen Purdom**, (shown) seconded by Elder **Gerig** and amended by Elder **Boyce** that stated the Session "was favorably inclined to the use of



the church for a kindergarten, but required that details of the plan be submitted for final approval." During a Session meeting on September 15, 1946, a motion by Elder **J. H. Kohli** stated that "there be no action as to the use of the church for a kindergarten at this time."

Two days later, on September 17, 1946 there was a called meeting of Session to reconsider action taken on September 15 regarding using the church as a kindergarten site.

Mrs. Leslie Wade and **Mrs. D. R. Smith** were present and explained and answered questions about the proposal. Mrs. Smith said it would be a non-profit community school for children aged four and five. The hours would be from 9 a.m. until 12 noon. A monthly charge of \$8 would cover operating costs.

Elder **G. W. Newsom** stated he'd been contacted by several church members who favored the project. Deacon **Kenneth H. MacKay** said he would be responsible for the plumbing. Deacon **John B. Selph** would see that any damages to church property would be paid. Deacon **J. J. Taylor** said he'd get donations if the school were to be self-supporting. After a very lengthy discussion, Elder **J. A. Winfield** moved that a congregational meeting be called to act on the matter. There was no second to Winfield's motion; but Elder **Judge F. R. Hocker's** motion to use the church basement for a kindergarten with the details of its operation to be left to the Deacons was approved. On June 15, 1947 Session approved the kindergarten's use of the basement's Sunday School rooms during the following year.

Pastor Jones expresses displeasure at Sunday School's low attendance

At a joint meeting of the Session and Diaconate on November 3, 1947, Rev. Jones reviewed the progress of church programs since he'd been at FPC. He commented that Sunday School was not up to standard; that its membership should be at least one-half of the total church membership. He called on church officers to attend Sunday School to help the church, stating each should make it "your own personal obligation."

We say goodbye to Rev. Jones and with the 1950s' simple selection process elect Rev. Fred P. Turner as Pastor

After serving as our pastor since 1943, **Dr. Ted Jones** resigned at a congregational meeting on April 10, 1949, at which time we

had 468 members and a Sunday School enrollment of 232.

In the mid 1950s selecting a pastor was simpler and took much less time than the lengthy process current search committees undergo. Following Session's May 16, 1949 meeting, a letter requested that all church



members attend all worship services the following three Sundays to hear visiting ministers. A month later, on June 12, 1949, the congregation elected **Rev. Fred P. Turner** of Bowling Green, Kentucky as our pastor.

He was to receive \$4800 per year, a manse and moving expenses.

...getting him to Ocala became more difficult than selecting him...

On July 3, 1949, the Pulpit Committee's Elder **James M. Smith, Jr.** read a letter from **Rev. Turner** in which he said his church had refused to accept his resignation. Bowling Green, Kentucky's church officers were

unanimous in asking him to reconsider his decision for another week, hoping he'd agree to continue as their pastor.

On August 7, 1949, FPC's Clerk of Session read a letter from the **Rev. Paul Watson**, Stated Clerk of the Muhlenberg Presbytery announcing presbytery's dismissal of Rev. Turner to the Suwannee Presbytery so that he could come to Ocala's First Presbyterian Church on September 1, 1949. Rev. Turner was installed as our pastor in a 7:30 p.m. service on November 13, 1949. Gainesville's **Rev. Dr. U. S. ("Preacher") Gordon** delivered the evening's sermon.



A little bit of 1940s FPC trivia!

During this time in our history, worship services were broadcast on **WTMC Radio**. The church's phone number was **33**.

A house was not necessarily a suitable home

By April 17, 1950, it had become apparent that the church's second manse (I), located on the site where Fellowship Hall now stands, had become "outmoded as a residence." There also was the continuing problem of finding suitable Sunday School classroom space. Session named a



committee to "study the problem of the acquisition or building of a new manse, including the location, size, type, and method of financing the same, and the desirability of using the present manse for additional classroom space for the Sunday



School..." On June 11, 1950, at a called meeting, Session approved recommending to the congregation the purchase of a three-bedroom house in The Pines on Camp Drive [S.E. 14th Avenue] (r). Rev. Turner's family lived in the new manse for the remainder of his time with us.

By 1952-54, membership's up; Sunday School attendance soars; and we consider plans to build

With 1949-50's Sunday School enrollment at 256, providing classroom space continued to

be a major concern. Holding some classes in the old manse provided relief, but not a total solution. Sunday School enrollment increased to 274 in 1951 and the April 1952 statistical report showed 533 members and a Sunday School enrollment of 282.

Session focuses on future building plans

Considerable discussion at the December 8, 1952 Session meeting focused on future plans for the church and Sunday School. It was agreed that FPC needed additional buildings. Consequently, Session recommended to the church's Board of Deacons that we begin a building fund in January, 1953, with a minimum goal of \$125,000.

Meeting jointly on December 12, 1952, Elders and Deacons approved plans to increase and improve the church's educational facilities. Elder **Dr. Richard C. Cumming** was elected temporary treasurer of the building fund.

1952-53 End-of-year statistics

The church budget for 1953 included \$500 for fuel, lights and water. Pastor Fred Turner received a \$5400 salary and a \$600 car allowance. Year-end statistics for 1952-53 showed 521 members. Sunday School enrollment had increased to 356.

FPC mourns former Pastor's death

The congregation mourned the January 30, 1953 death of the **Rev. Dr. John A. McMurray**, pastor from April 1926 through August 1943 who challenged the church to grow and to build the Third Street building, which it began in 1927 and completed in 1928.

Deacons propose air-conditioning

At a special called joint meeting of Session and Deacons on June 14, 1953, the Deacons proposed air-conditioning the church, stating that 90 percent of the funds were on hand to complete the job.

FPC Young People commit to sponsoring missionary

First Presbyterian's **Young People** were responsible for a memorable event occurring in 1953 when they initiated action to sponsor **Mr. John Somerville's** Korean mission.

Session minutes of July 26, 1953, stated, "Our missionary, Mr. John Somerville, who is being sponsored by the efforts of our young people will be commissioned for his Korean assignment on August 5, 1953 at Montreat, North Carolina. He will leave the United States in September." (John and Virginia Somerville served as missionaries in Korea until they retired in 1994.)



1954 year-end statistics reflect huge Sunday School growth

In 1954 the church year changed from April through March to January 1 through December 31.

The December 31 statistical report for the nine-month "short year" showed that fuel and utilities totaled \$433.67. Telephone service was \$161.97. Installing air-conditioning, a "special project" cost \$3500. Membership was 578. The Sunday School roll had grown to 447 (Nursery Department, 20; Kindergarten, 30; Primary Department, 50; Junior Department, 50; Pioneer Department (Junior High), 42; Senior High, 25; Men's Bible Class, 60; Women's Bible Class, 40; Mixed Bible Class, 100; and Officers and Teachers, 30.) Average Sunday School attendance was 235.

Building plans continue

FPC was still considering differing types of church expansion. On February 1, 1954, **Elder Kenneth H. MacKay** reported on the committee's preliminary plans for a fellowship hall. Session received the building plans report "as information." Elder MacKay returned in April and displayed drawings for changes in the basement and an outside new building.

Southern and northern Presbyterian Churches reunion was being discussed

Reflecting concerns and opinions regarding the possible union of northern and southern Presbyterian churches, Session minutes of April 5, 1954 noted, "There was much discussion on the union of northern and southern churches to be voted on at General

Assembly at Montreat in May. Our pastor, the **Rev. Fred P. Turner**, is a commissioner (to General Assembly). **Elder Miles Hiers** asked Mr. Turner if he would vote for the union and his reply was that he would vote for the union." (*Reunion did not occur until 1983.*)

After 28 years in the 3rd Street building, FPC spends much of the '50s contemplating whether to sell our property and build elsewhere or to stay put and add on

FPC experienced growing pains for a long time. In December, 1952, Session had a long discussion about the future needs of the church and agreed we needed additional buildings. They began a building fund. Various ideas were submitted. Some campaigned for an entirely new building on a different site; others for a fellowship hall; others for Sunday School classrooms. Under Pastor Fred Turner's leadership, the church debated further considerations in the mid-1950s as reflected in church minutes....

- **Feb. 1, 1954:** Session received "as information" preliminary plans for a fellowship hall.
- **May 30, 1955:** Session discussed selling the 28 year old Third Street church in order to build a new church or adding to and remodeling the present structure after buying a parking area.
- **Sept. 8, 1955:** Deacons reported on negotiations with a committee of First Baptist Church to sell our property to the Baptists for \$190,000. The Baptists declined the offer.
- **Sept. 18, 1955:** The congregation approved \$45,000 to purchase all property on the block across from the church on the west for parking as required by Ocala Building Codes in conjunction with any building expansion.
- **Nov. 7, 1955:** The Plans and Architect Committee reported having interviewed three architects. Two others were to be

interviewed before the committee would make any definite recommendations.

We discussed 'Plans I and II'

- **Jan. 30, 1956:** We considered "Plan I"--\$385,500 in additions and enlargements of our church plan, including remodeling (\$50,000); adding an "L" shaped education building (\$225,000); social hall (\$40,000); parking lot (\$45,500); and furnishings (\$25,000).
- **Jan. 30, 1956:** After receiving cost estimates to build an entirely new church at a new location ("Plan II"), the Deacons and Elders appointed a committee "to feel out the sentiment of the congregation as to whether it would be wise to stay at this (Third Street) location or to move."

Should we sell to the Christian Church?

- **Feb. 13, 1956:** After surveying the congregation, the committee recommended that we remain at the Third Street site. One group, however, supported investigating the Christian Church's interest in purchasing our property. Those opposed to selling and relocating stressed the amount of debt we'd develop.
- **April 30, 1956:** Elders and Deacons decided to remain at the Third Street location after hearing the Plans and Architect Committee's report. The report emphasized that our first consideration should be the construction of an educational building.
- **June, 1956:** With 24 teachers, Vacation Bible School enrolled 400 kids.
- **April 8, 1957:** With 208 families having made building fund pledges, FPC's Elders and Deacons authorized the Building Committee to get bids on constructing the building.

December 22, 1957 Rev. Turner and Mrs. Georgia Newsom at the laying of the Education Building's construction.



At last! A decision's made!

- **July 14, 1957:** The congregation unanimously adopted the July 8, 1957 Board of Deacons resolution to contract for and build an Education Building.
- **August, 1957:** FPC broke ground for the Education Building.
- **Dec. 22, 1957:** The Education Building's cornerstone was laid.



Various stages of the Education Building's development in 1957 and 1958.

- **Oct. 26, 1958: At last! The Education Building opens!**



We end the '50s with staff and worship changes; work with CFJC and Florida PC

Dorothy Jane Warren served as Director of Religious Education from August 1954 until May 1956. Sunday School enrollment was 447 at the end of 1954, with an average attendance of 235. 1956's Vacation Bible School hosted 400 children taught by 24 teachers.



Mary Moore became Director of Christian Education in September 1956. **John. F. Wickham** (r) succeeded **James E. Kirk, Jr.** as Sunday School Superintendent in 1957.



In November 1954 **James K. Dickson**,



Clerk of Session for 30 years, resigned effective December 31, 1954. On December 6, there were three nominations for the position. As noted

in the minutes, "None were willing to accept the Clerkship." Mr. Dickson was the father of long-time FPC leader **Elizabeth Donnelly**.



In January 1955, Elder **Edwin G. Mauk** became FPC's Clerk and served through December 1968.

Mrs. Dorothy Leonard Ellis was pictured on the cover of the 1956 Mother's Day bulletin that noted, "This Mother's Day we feature a mother of our own congregation...our gifted and beloved Organist and Choir Director for the past twenty-four years."



(Mrs. Ellis' daughter, FPC member **Nancy Robertson**, shared the bulletin.)

At the August 1956 Session meeting, Elder **J. Marshall** mentioned that "unfavorable publicity had resulted from a square dance held in our church by the Pioneer Group."

John Bishop became Director of Music and Choir Director in July 1957. He served for 32 years before retiring in 1989.



Rev. Turner secured woods from around the world for our Centennial Memorial

When FPC celebrated its centennial anniversary 50 years ago, **Pastor Fred Turner** spent a great deal of time and effort developing a **Centennial Memorial**. The November 3, 1957 **Centennial Observance**



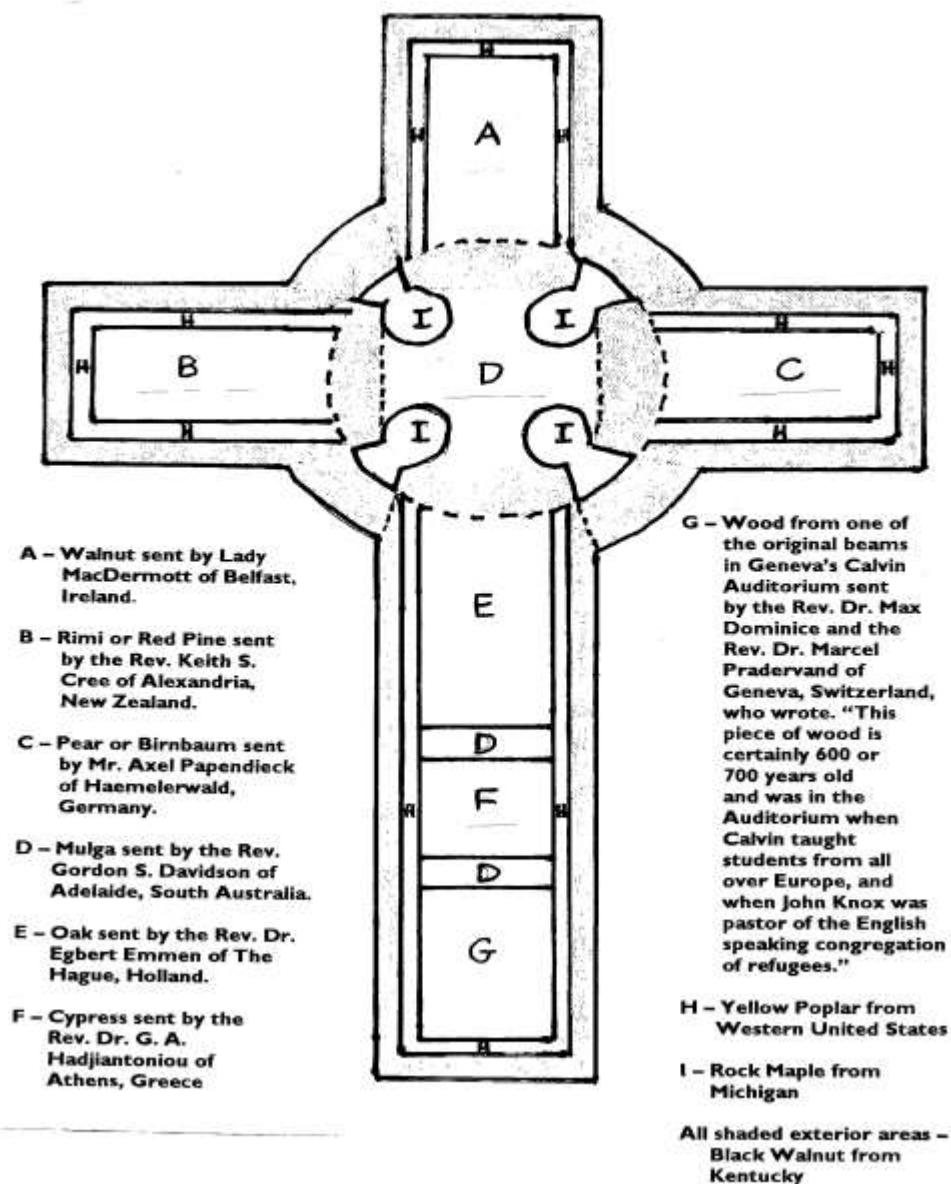
booklet noted, "The session of our church has authorized a Centennial 'piece'---a Celtic cross to be inlaid on the top of our Communion Table. This table is one of the few items of furniture that is not a memorial. Wood to

make the cross has come from friends of our pastor, and is thin sections of native materials from **South Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Holland, Scotland, Switzerland, Germany and Greece.**" Black Walnut from Kentucky, Rock Maple from Michigan and Yellow Poplar from Western United States also were used.

The table was abandoned and resurrected

The cross, inlaid in the mahogany top of the church's Communion Table, was used until the remodeled sanctuary was dedicated in 1972. For many years the table top was unceremoniously stored in the Education Building's dank and dark underground "dungeon" and more or less forgotten. Long-time member **Elizabeth Donnelly**, instrumental in relocating the table top, asked **Joanne Yancey** to clean and restore it. New legs were attached and the table once again was used. For the past few years it has served as the Contemporary Worship Service's Communion Table.

The article also noted, "The Celtic Cross has been identified with the Presbyterian Church both through heritage and use. The cross itself is the symbol of God's sacrifice for mankind, and the circle is the sign of eternity. Together they signify the eternal nature of salvation. The center of Celtic Christianity was on the isle of Iona, off the West Coast of Scotland."



Also in the late 1950s....

In 1958 the new **Central Florida Junior College** was authorized to hold convocations in our Sanctuary on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Also in 1958, **FPC** was one of 24 local churches signing resolutions in support of locating **Florida Presbyterian College** in Ocala. We thus joined countless civic organizations and governmental offices in this pursuit. Ultimately St. Petersburg---"going over the top in its fund drive for the college"--- won out. The college was renamed *Eckerd College* in 1972.

In the fall of 1959, **The Apostles' Creed** became a part of the worship service and **Rev. Turner** received permission to wear a robe during worship "as he so desires." This reversed Session's 1956 decision against our pastors wearing robes.

The Session receives two out-of-the-ordinary requests

In September 1960 a mother in our church requested placing her two eldest children in the denomination's Thornwell Orphanage in Clinton, South Carolina while she went on to complete her University of Florida nursing degree. In October of the following year, it was announced that her three children were admitted to Thornwell under our joint sponsorship with the Clearwater church. A letter from Thornwell on June 2, 1969 reported that the children were nearly grown. One daughter was married and wanted a younger sibling to live with her in St. Petersburg and attend school there. FPC's Session approved the request.

In September, 1960 **Mrs. William Kidd**, chair of the Happy Hearts Kindergarten Board asked that we consider opening a first grade in connection with the kindergarten for 1961-62. Session appointed a study committee, but in July 1965 Session decided against starting a private school.

The big news in December 1960 was that the balance on the Education Building had been paid. Also that month, Session approved **Elder J. M. Smith, Jr.'s** motion "that socializing and drinking coffee during the church service be stopped."

Phyllis Campbell, Dorothy Hall and Rev. Bridgman join staff



In January 1961, **Phyllis Campbell** began working part-time as Christian Education Secretary. In April she was approved as Director of the Daily Vacation Bible School. Phyllis retired as Christian Education Secretary in May 1974. In September 1993 she became Coordinator of Volunteer Ministries, a position she held until May 1996.

Dorothy Hall began her long tenure as Church Secretary in May 1961. The Rev.



David Bridgman was called as Assistant Pastor in December 1961 and served until 1967.

FPC works to develop church in Ocala's Highlands area

The establishment of **Ft. King Presbyterian Church** began in November 1962 when the



Session and Diaconate jointly approved purchasing property on Citrus Drive north of Ft. King Avenue. The congregation approved the purchase on March 17, 1963.

In June, Session continued conversations about building a chapel church and on December 2, 1963 a new church in the Highlands area was authorized. In April 1965, 47 FPC members met at the Ft. King Chapel and transferred their memberships. They constituted the charter roll of the Chapel Church that would become Ft. King Presbyterian Church.

It was the Sixties and the times they were a changin'

By 1963, the country was well into the Civil Rights Movement. In August---responding to a request from the Diaconate---the Session developed a statement of policy to be followed "if and when Negroes sought to attend any of our services."

On November 25, 1963 FPC's church bell tolled throughout the funeral of assassinated **U.S. President John F. Kennedy.**

In 1964 we elected our first women Elders and Deacons. **Bernice Gerig, Mary Steddom** and **Margaret Camp** became Elders and **Eloise MacKay** and **Cora Smith** became Deacons.

We experience a change in pastoral leadership

We said goodbye to **Rev. Fred Turner** on November 7, 1965. He had served since 1949. Six months later, on May 29, 1966, the congregation unanimously elected the



Rev. Edwin W. Albright, Sr. as our pastor. He began on August 21, 1966 and served until July 18, 1982. In January 1969 Rev. Albright proudly helped install his son **Edwin Albright, Jr.** as Associate Pastor of Jacksonville's First Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Albright was elected *Pastor Emeritus* on May 6, 1984.

We decide to build...again

In May 1965 questionnaires asked Elders and Deacons whether they favored remodeling the existing sanctuary or constructing a new sanctuary. A slight margin favored remodeling.

By March 1968 we were close to having a building campaign for a fellowship hall. **Elder Miles Hiers** felt it might be advisable and economical to make the fellowship hall a two-story building. On April 13, 1969 ground was



broken. The hall was ready for the December 17th Christmas dinner that year. We dedicated Fellowship Hall on June 25, 1970. It served as our

sanctuary until January 16, 1972 when renovations to the main church building were completed.

In December 1969 FPC accepted the gift of a grand piano from the Women's Club.

In the '70s we expanded facilities, programs, staff and our community involvement

FPC dedicated Fellowship Hall in January 1970 and by June thoughts returned again to building a new sanctuary. In July, however, it was decided to renovate the sanctuary and increase its seating capacity; incorporate the overflow room as a transept; install an elevator, rework the electrical wiring system and improve the heating and air conditioning systems.

On January 16, 1972 we dedicated the renovated sanctuary and office spaces with former Pastor **Rev. Fred Turner** (1949-65) delivering the dedication sermon. Also present was **Dr. E. F. Montgomery**, grandson of the **Rev. J. W. Montgomery**, our first Stated Supply Pastor (1867-70). The Wicks Organ was installed in 1972. The stained glass windows were dedicated a year later, on January 28, 1973.

1st Presbyterian's New Sanctuary Ready Today

By JO HAYWARD
Sentinel Correspondent

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Ocala will worship in their newly restored sanctuary for the first time this morning.

First Presbyterian church has been a vital force in this community since 1857, and two years ago launched an ambitious program to enlarge its facilities and restore the sanctuary.

When the congregation's family and friends gather there this morning at 11 a.m., they will worship in a room that is both new and faithful to the character of the old church.

The sanctuary has been enlarged to seat 400 and air conditioning system and an elevator installed.

Beautiful new stained glass windows are being installed in the sanctuary. The theme of the chancel window is "come unto me," depicting a large figure of Christ with outstretched hands. The windows on either side of this large chancel window will be an incarnation window and a resurrection window.

THE THEMES of large windows in the side of the sanctuary will be Christ and the little children; the Crucifixion and Jesus with his friends at Emmaus. The window over the balcony is the world mission window showing Christ sending out the twelve apostles. All of these windows are memorial windows and will create a beautiful symbolism throughout the sanctuary.

The first part of the church expansion was the building of a wing to house fellowship hall, a kitchen, and an educational unit for the nursery.

Members of the building committee which has guided the church throughout the entire program are William Alsop, chairman; J. Miles Heirs, J. Carlyle Ausley, Jr., John W. Selph, Jr., Dr. Harold List; Mrs. J. J. Gerig; M. M. Thomas, Jr., Angus A. McRae, Everett Pearce and Robert Matthews. The architect for this building program is Angus McRae and Carlyse Ausley was the contractor.

WORLD COMMUNITY day services will be observed Friday, Nov. 5 at two services. The morning service will be held at First Christian Church at 9:30 a.m. The evening service will be at Blessed Trinity Catholic Church at 7:30 p.m.

These services are sponsored by Church Women United of Marion County and give local citizens an opportunity to join with more than 5,000 other communities across the nation in the observation.

The 1971 emphasis will be on the theme "Build a New Earth." The program will focus on our community and our human responsibility for the environment as stewards of God.

REV. THOMAS KNOX, associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church, will be speaker for the services. He will share a survey made last summer in regard to areas of our own city which may provide a channel whereby Ocalans may become involved.

The world community day offering will go for intercontinental missions. This year's will go for ecological causes such as the ministry in the national parks.

A \$2000 certificate may also be purchased and designated for blankets, school supplies, tools and materials "where most needed."

Chairman Mrs. W. E. Williams and Mrs. Russell Stein are asking that everyone attending services will stop to pick up some litter on their way to service. This will be used at a specified time in the service.

Elders Cora Smith and Dr. Peek receive recognition honors; several assistants and staff members come and go

In 1970 Elder Cora Smith became



Suwannee Presbytery's first woman moderator and Dr. E. G. Peek, Sr. was elected Elder Emeritus.

Rev. Tom Knox became our



Assistant Minister in July 1971 and served until September 15, 1974.

David

Cozad, who grew up in First Presbyterian Church and graduated from seminary under its sponsorship, was ordained on September 24, 1972. On February 15, 1976, he became FPC's Associate Pastor and served until July 1977 when he became Chaplain at Eckerd College.

In November 1977 the church called Assistant



to the Minister Miki Vanderbilt who stayed until January 1984 when she left to enter the ministry.

Others on staff in the '70s included Financial Secretaries Evelyn Weaver and Eleanor Levitzky, Staff



Secretaries Marie Flowers and Dorothy Buss and Sexton



William Sancho.

FPC takes on major community involvement projects; helps begin a new church

With **Pastor Albright's** enthusiasm and encouragement, the church formed a task force to determine FPC's mission to our area. Led by **Dr. William Butscher**, the task force developed **VISION**, Volunteers in Service in Our Neighborhoods. **VISION** began in February 1972 with an office in Room 1 of the Education Building and Karen May as its director. It eventually became the **Volunteer Service Bureau**.



In 1974 **Meals on Wheels** started operations from FPC.

Silver Springs Shores Presbyterian Church was the second local church initiated by Ocala First. In January 1973 the

Ft. King church informed Session of a canvas having been made concerning the possible need for a church in the Silver Springs Shores area. A committee under Chair **Bob Emery**



conducted a survey to determine the interest in such a church. In May 1973, an organizational meeting started the new church that was formally organized on June 1, 1974 with **Dr. Lester Hale**, recently-retired University of Florida administrator, as its pastor. The newest Marion County Presbyterian church had 33 charter members.

Elder **Charles (Chuck) Wildy** became FPC's Vocational Guidance Director. In December 1974 Session began the **Katherine Taylor Endowment Fund** for young people choosing to enter the ministry after receiving an endowment for this purpose.

Handbells become part of our music ministry

FPC member **Bob Emery's** dream of having an FPC handbell choir was realized when the Session authorized it in December 1974. In October 1975 it became the **Robert Emery Bell Choir** after Bob unexpectedly died at a young age on August 27, 1975. Bob had served as the church's part-time DCE since 1969. In 1988 the choir added the fourth octave bells.

The late '70s and early '80s bring changes in staff, parking and FPC's form of government

In 1977 **Eileen Birch** became church hostess succeeding **Eleanor Blair** who had become the first hostess in 1970. Eileen retired from the position in September, 1981.



Yvonne Hope

became hostess and -- as **Yvonne Miller** -- retired in 1996.



Mary Kells became Church Administrator as well as church organist in 1977.



In 1978 the church designated two parking spaces for the handicapped. We also decided we didn't need a copy machine!

During **Rev. Albright's** pastorate the church changed to a unicameral form of government wherein the Diaconate was eliminated and the Session was increased to 36 Elders.

In 1980 the church began its *General Trust Fund* and in 1983 filed its *Articles of Incorporation*. In July 1980 the Session decided to allow members to play non-gambling card games in Fellowship Hall! That September we began printing children's bulletins.

Blaine Walker, another young man who grew up in the church, began his work at Union Seminary in 1980. He was ordained and installed at Lake City Presbyterian Church on September 9, 1984.

In March 1981, a task force from the Marion Oaks community met with representatives from the area's three Presbyterian churches about establishing a Marion Oaks church. On April 12, 1981 a group of Marion Oaks citizens met with the three churches' ministers and formed the **Marion Oaks Presbyterian Church**.



In September 1984, the Session decided to establish a church in the State Route 200 area. In March 1986 the congregation approved lending the Presbytery up to \$91,000 to purchase property on State Route 200 and in April, gave Presbytery \$18,000 toward the property's purchase.

Countryside Presbyterian Church ultimately was organized in 1987.



Our pastor since 1966, **The Rev. Edwin Albright** (I) retired on July 18, 1982, becoming *Pastor Emeritus* in 1984.



Interim Pastor **Dr. Roland Sims** served from September 1982 until April 1983, with Assistant to the Minister **Miki Vanderbilt** continuing on staff.

The Rev. Dr. Ray C. Ruark, Jr. began his FPC ministry on September 23, 1983. Dr. Ruark, a Georgia Tech Textile Manufacturing graduate, received a U.S. Naval Reserve commission and served two peacetime years of active duty. He subsequently received his Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1963 and his Doctor of Ministry degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1978. His 38 years of ministry began as Assistant Pastor at Memorial Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Alabama, where he served from 1963-65. From 1965-67, he was Associate Presbyterian Campus Pastor at the University of Georgia. Prior to coming to Ocala in 1983, he was Pastor at the Gulf Breeze Presbyterian Church from 1967-71 and Pastor at Jacksonville's Lake Shore Presbyterian Church from 1971-83. He served on numerous committees of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, including the Committees on Ministry, Nominations, Judicial Business and Review and Evaluation. He led four groups to Israel. Rev. Ruark retired on October 1, 2001 and was elected *Pastor Emeritus* on October 22, 2006.



After the Ruarks purchased an Ocala home, the congregation approved selling our SE 11th Street manse in December 1983.

The Rev. James Hedges became Associate Pastor in June 1984, leaving in November 1987 to lead Tampa's John Calvin Presbyterian Church. We began the **Pastoral Care Team** in 1984.



In November 1987, retired missionary **The Rev. Dan Whallon** became Parish Associate. He retired in 1989.



FPC Youth **Kyle Michael** was elected our Presbytery's Youth Delegate to General Assembly in 1986.



In June 1988, **The Rev. Linda Dickerson** became Associate Pastor, a position she would hold until leaving in November 1994.

Several hold position of Staff Coordinator/Business Administrator

Mary Kells, Staff Coordinator since 1977, resigned in October 1985 to become Co-director of Montgomery Conference Center with her husband **Dean**. (Mary commuted from Keystone Heights to continue as our Church Organist until 1994)

In November 1985---after becoming church treasurer that September---**Reese**

Clemons became Staff Coordinator, a position that was elevated to Business Administrator on January 1, 1986. He retired in 1989. He was



succeeded by **Kay Yancey** who'd begun as receptionist in 1986 and became Coordinator of Volunteer Ministries in 1987. She retired in 2002.

In the mid '80s and early '90s, many serve in various staff positions and new projects are undertaken

Choir members **Ruth** and **Bob Lee** arrived in 1985 and both eventually became elders.



At times **Ruth** was Clerk of Session, Chapel Choir Director, part-time organist and worked with Volunteer Service Bureau.



Howard Mullen served many years as Sexton. 1980s secretaries included **Marie Flowers** and **Helga Etcorn**.



Jeanette Bryant served as Financial Secretary.

Sue Candler became Director of Christian Education on July 1, 1989. She retired in March 1996.

After Director of Music **John Bishop** retired in 1989, **Gene A. Lawton** accepted the position and continued through 1994.



FPC installed a sound and video system in 1988 that allowed

services to be televised to those seated in the choir loft and in Fellowship Hall if needed.

In 1990 FPC became an Ocala Habitat "Covenant Church," donating \$5,000 and manpower toward building the first home.

The church held the first of its **Jesus in the Marketplace** Vacation Bible Schools in 1990 and repeated the popular event in 1995, 2000 and 2007.

Also in 1990, we dedicated 417 copies of the new inclusive language *Presbyterian Hymnal* and began the *First Presbyterian Church Endowment Fund*.

Martha Carrasco began her duties as Youth Activities Director in January 1991. She resigned the position in 1992.



Arsonists took aim at churches in Ocala and other north central Florida communities in the early '90s. FPC suffered slight damage on **October 24, 1991**

when arson completely destroyed the buildings of our neighbor, First Baptist Church. Shortly afterwards FPC installed its fire and smoke detection system. In **March 1994** we purchased First Baptist's three lots, completing negotiations begun in **May 1992**.

LOGOS, our popular children's program began in **1992** with 112 enrolled. The children had a full afternoon and early evening program.

That same year, **Pat Herbert** began a term as our Volunteer Coordinator.

A Celtic cross replaced the original arrow weathervane on the church's spire in **1993** and in November Boy Scout Troop 72 moved to the "Green House" across the street. In **October 1994** we went on record as opposing casino gambling in Florida.

In **1994**, **Joe Fleming** chair of our 125th anniversary in 1982, retired as director of the Robert Emery Bell Choir, a position he held for 20 years.



In October 1994 we hosted a reception to honor the

retirement of **John and Virginia**

Somerville, whom we'd supported throughout their 42 years as missionaries to Korea.



In February, **Dr. Sean McCarthy** began his four years as FPC's Director of Music/Organist.



In **1995** the church began working with *Church without Walls*, an organization devoted to



helping troubled Juvenile Detention Hall youth.

Debbie Kirk, who grew up in the church, was ordained as a PCUSA minister in 1995.

Staff changes in the mid- to late '90s



We welcomed **Rev. Gary Marshall** as Associate Pastor in **June 1995**. He remained here until April 2001 when he left to become the pastor at Countryside Presbyterian

Church.

Martha and Andrew Miller began as Director of Christian Education and Director of Youth Ministry, respectively in 1996. They left in July 2000 when Andrew began studies for the ministry.



In **1999** we said goodbye to retiring Volunteer Coordinator **Leona MacDonald** and hello

to **Claudia Gatewood**, part-time Director of Music (1999-2002).



In October **1999** work began on construction of a recreational field on one of the three lots purchased from First Baptist Church.

Secretaries in the '90s included **Delores**



Dyer, Kay O'Connor and Jan Wegner.



Jean Reasonover served as Financial Secretary for many years.

Anna Moody (not shown)



served as organist from 1999 to 2000. **Weldon Albright Davis** began as Volunteer Ministries Coordinator in November 1999.

In 2000 and 2001

In **2000** FPC's Youth made a memorable mission trip to Alaska and the Christian Education Committee presented its third *Jesus in the Marketplace* VBS.



Rebecca Bishop became Volunteer Coordinator in 2000, leaving in 2004. Former Volunteer Coordinator **Leona**

MacDonald filled in as interim coordinator for nine months. **Dr. James Kohler** (r) began as part-time organist in 2000. **Patrick Tyler** was Youth Director from 2000-2001.



In **March 2001** middle service Music Directors **Don and Doris Tyler** retired.

Carol Denton (l) began as Parish Nurse in **September 2001** and left in 2004.

**From 1992 into the 2000s---
a long, difficult period in which
we contemplated FPC's future**

From 1992 through the mid 2000s, a major preoccupation of the church involved how to use the recently-acquired Baptist properties based on a demographic study to determine future space needs. The following summarizes this activity in these years:

A **July 1992** study indicated FPC's total membership was 1,536 persons---1,100 members and 400 children under 14. Projections estimated we'd grow to 1,750 persons by 2000 and 1,950 by 2010. In **September 1995** the Property Expansion Committee presented four options: (1) remodeling the old sanctuary with more seats and an enlarged choir loft; (2) building a new sanctuary; (3) doing something special with the land such as adding a new fellowship hall; or, (4) doing nothing. In the fall of **1996**, a committee visited several churches for ideas. In **February 1997** an architect developed a master land use plan. In **March 1997**, the committee reported it would not consider expanding our sanctuary because "it was not good stewardship and the final result would not be aesthetically pleasing." In **April**, the committee became a *Task Group* to recommend a plan. By **May** the Task Group had hired an architect whose master plan the congregation approved 224-34 on **October 12, 1997**.

After a feasibility study was presented at the **May 1998** Session meeting, Pastor Ruark commented (1) that a third worship service wouldn't solve all of the sanctuary's space problems; (2) we should build all we could afford to build on the new lots, even if we didn't renovate present buildings or construct the bridge connecting the two sets of buildings; (3) we shouldn't assume a debt that would cripple our programs or outreach to the community or PCUSA's worldwide mission; and (4) we should ask our architect how much a given amount of money would build. In **August 1998** the task force presented five options for new construction and gave projections for 10-year budgets and construction loan options. The task force recommended building a fellowship hall, classroom space, a new kitchen and restroom facilities at a proposed cost of \$2,606,973. On **November 16, 1998** Session affirmed the entire master plan and recommended to the congregation the construction of a fellowship hall, nursery, educational wing, media center, choir room, kitchen renovating to the existing fellowship hall for offices at a total cost of \$3,841,985---with no more than \$500,000 in long-term debt. If necessary, the nursery, media center and choir room would be cut to meet the budget.

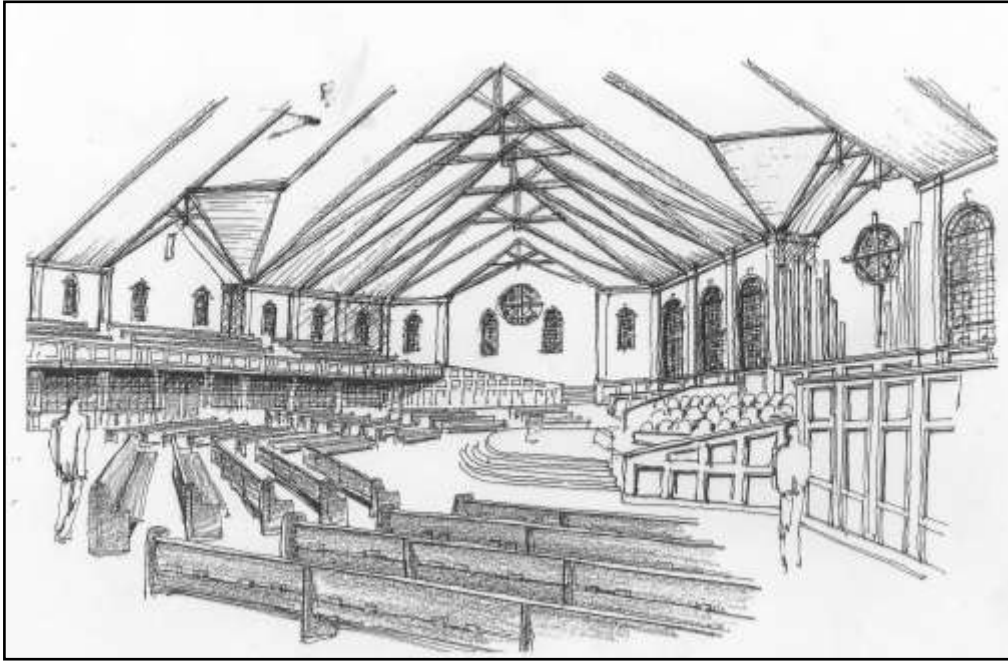
In **June 1999** Session approved plans to build a Christian Life/Ministry Center and the narthex portion of the master plan along with kitchen, nursery rooms and classroom space. The existing Fellowship Hall would become office space. The total estimated cost was \$3,616,020.

The Session formed a Church Building Fund Committee to prepare a capital fund-raising campaign. The committee then began plans for construction if a capital campaign were successful.

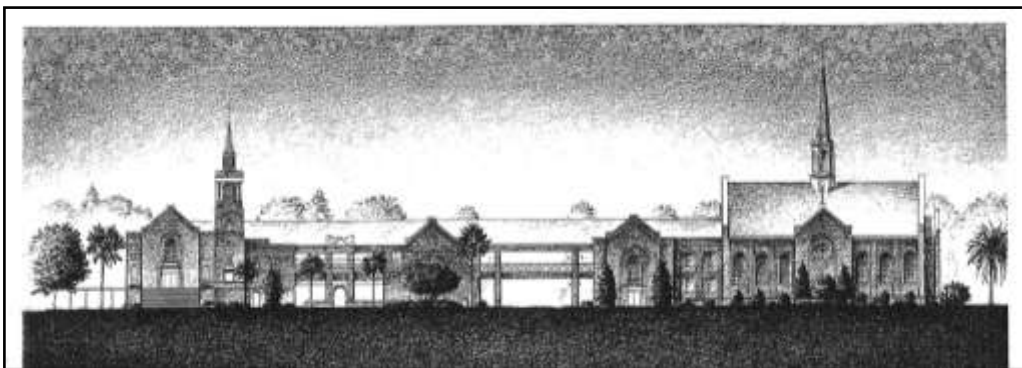
In **November 1999**---after meeting with potential lead givers in the congregation--- Session decided to inform church members that while the master plan was fully embraced, financial commitment and fund-raising leadership didn't exist.

At the **January 2000** annual meeting it was announced that plans were on hold until funds became available. Nothing else happened until **2002**, which is discussed later.

Some of the numerous plans and architectural drawings in considering property expansion in the 1990s and early 2000s.



Architect's rendering of FPC's sanctuary



**Architect's rendering of FPC
(viewed from the south, Third Street)**

Here an interim...there an interim... (almost) everywhere an interim...and we explore building projects again

The church operated under *Interim Pastors* after Associate Pastor Marshall's April 2001 departure and Rev. Ruark's October 2001 retirement.

Interim Associate Pastor **Rev. David McChesney**, who arrived before Rev. Ruark's retirement, basically covered both pastoral positions



until January 2002 when Interim Head of Staff **Dr. Harry Cole**



arrived. Dr. Cole left in April 2004; Rev. McChesney in December 2005.

More thoughts of expansion...

As mentioned earlier, from 1992 until 2000 FPC contemplated what to do with the church's properties. Lacking adequate financial support, a proposed expansion was put on hold in January 2000.

Without a permanent Head of Staff, it was unusual that an **Expansion Investigative Committee** was formed in **May 2002** to make recommendations about building a Family Life Center and renovating Fellowship Hall. In **August 2002** the expansion committee supported building a Christian Life Center. In **2003** an architect developed a virtual model of the proposal. Nothing happened. The Christian Life Center Finance Committee dissolved in **April 2004** when Interim Pastor Dr. Harry Cole left.

The long, bumpy road in the development of a contemporary worship service

In **October 2002**, Interim Pastor Cole felt that the middle service needed to evolve into a **contemporary service** that reflected Presbyterianism's dignity of worship and the Reform heritage.

The middle service's history was long and diverse. In **September 1997** after earlier uneventful attempts, the Session asked the Worship Committee to reconsider adding a third service. That **December**, the committee recommended against a third service after meeting with staff---the majority of whom did not want it.

At their **January 1998** retreat, most Elders asked that FPC try adding a "contemporary" service as a third worship service, feeling it would reach a younger generation and relieve 11:00 a.m. seating problems. The Session asked staff to propose *when, where* and *how* a third worship service could be provided.



In **February**, staff sought clarification of the reasoning for a third service---and asked for a definition of "contemporary" worship at FPC. In **May 1998**, staff suggested a third, simpler 9:45 a.m. service in Fellowship Hall. Although simpler, it would be *traditional*, with an opening hymn, prayer, sermon, creed, hymn, prayer and closing hymn. The pastors would not wear robes. Communion would be the service's only sacrament; there would be no children's service or baptisms. The Music Director would not participate. It would continue through April each year until a new sanctuary might be completed. Session approved it in **June 1998** and it remained as described until Interim Pastor Cole's **2002** intervention.

After continued study and visiting contemporary services in other churches, FPC evolved its middle service into what we have today...much less "traditional" but, as Dr. Cole hoped, reflecting Presbyterianism and the Reform heritage. The Music Director works closely with **Praise Team** musicians. There is a children's service. Baptisms and Communion are celebrated. In **October 2003** the service was renamed **The Living Praise Contemporary Worship Service**.

...and we had other interim personnel...and staff changes...

In the "interim pastor" period before **The Rev. Dr. Raymond Guterman** arrived as Head of Staff in June 2004, we also had interim *staff members*, including **Shannon Guse**, Interim Director of Youth Ministries from July 2002 until becoming director in June 2003; **Dr. James Kohler**, Interim Director of Music from November 2002 until becoming director in September 2003; and **Norman Slade**, Interim Organist until becoming Organist in November 2002. Shannon Guse left in 2006 and James Kohler in 2004.



Judy Truscott served as DCE from January 2001 until retiring in 2005. She organized and presided over a book study group as well as Bible study groups. With the Christian Education Committee, she developed **WIN**, the Wednesday Intergenerational Night program.



Michael Lapp, FPC's cook/custodian, began in November 2002 and left in August 2007 after which **Rhonda Kirk** accepted Wednesday night cooking duties.

Amy Howard began as Administrative Assistant in 2002 and became Business Administrator when Kay Yancey retired later that year. Amy resigned in December 2004. In January 2005 she was succeeded by **Mary Kash** (l), who had been employed as Financial Secretary in January 2004. Mary's title was changed to Business Administrator/Finance Administrator.



Ralph Adkins began as sexton in December 2004 and quickly became FPC's beloved jack-of-all-trades "Superman."



Vicky Juliano became our Director of Music Ministries in

2005 and quickly added her mark to FPC's tradition of having strong music ministries. The Cherub and Rainbow Singers choirs grew in numbers and presented programs such as "The Unfriendly Beast," the Christmas pageants and "Motion in the Ocean." The Chancel Choir added musically to worship with programs such as "Journey of Promises," and a Maundy Thursday readers' theater presentation, "A Miracle's Witness" in addition to spiritually-enriching Advent and Easter programs. In their "spare time" they presented a secular program in Fellowship Hall, "Two Blocks off Broadway." The contemporary service is blessed each week with music by FPC's Praise Team that has offered special services such as "The Story." The Robert Emery Bell Choir continues to add richly to worship services. In 2006 Vicky and **Helen Lawton** developed the Ocala String Orchestra that quickly grew and provided added worship enrichment. Vicky's musically-inclined family---



daughter **Amanda D'Amico**, son **Joey D'Amico** and husband **Ralph Juliano**---all add their talents to FPC services and programs.

Devoted FPC organist and musician **Norman Slade** is a native of England, where he became an active church musician when he was 17 years old. Immigrants to the U.S., Norman, his wife and children became citizens in 1981. Music---both as a church musician and concert pianist---were avocational to Norman's business career. Prior to retirement, his last 17 years were spent as a computer programmer. Norman was quoted as saying he feels honored to be serving such a "warm and welcoming family at First Presbyterian." He also is active in the local group that presents Ocala's annual Bach Festival.



Toni Joseph began as Administrative Assistant in October 2005. Adept at computer and desktop publishing skills, Toni produces *The Spire* newsletter and the *FPC Occupational Directory*. She produces numerous brochures for staff and church organizations and is FPC's webpage administrator.



Secretary **Pat Greer** returned to Michigan in 2006.



Jennifer Gordon became part-time DCE in December 2005 and left in 2006 when her family moved to Alabama. Prior to being DCE, Jennifer served on the Pastor Nominating Committee that brought Pastor Raymond Guterman to FPC.



The Rev. Rhonda Link-Cummings served as Interim Director of Children and Educational Ministries in 2005. She became moderator of the Presbytery of St. Augustine in 2007.



Brooke Cole began as Director of Children's Ministries in June 2006. She energetically has brought dramatic changes to the Children's Ministry program and introduced the successful **FaithWeaver** Sunday program with its "Midweek Friends" follow-through. Other programs included the fall festival, "Heroes Unmasked," the pre-Christmas "Hanging of the Greens," the "Kids' New Years Eve Bash," and the "FROG Festival" ("Fully Rely on God"); many Easter-time activities; and many "Kids Night Out" and "Indoor Campouts." Children's Ministries offered its first course to explain communion. A short course on "Learning Your Bible" followed the presentation of Bibles to FPC's third graders. 2007's popular **Jesus in the Marketplace** Vacation Bible School was the fourth offering of the program since FPC introduced it in 1990.



Church Secretary **Marcella Pasay** worked one year before resigning for health reasons in August 2007, after which



Heather Roberts assumed the position. Heather creates bulletins for all worship services, is responsible for maintaining the membership data base and assists with financial records. She also works with the Inquirers' luncheon program.



Pastor nominating committees work from October 2001 until February 2004 to find a new head of staff...the search ends...finally...and Pastor Raymond joins us in 2004

Under PCUSA procedures, a church may not begin the process of searching for a new pastor until the former pastor is no longer on staff.

The process began in October 2001. By July 27, 2003, the Search Committee was assured that their candidate was willing to accept a call from FPC. With great enthusiasm, Session called a congregational meeting for August 17 to issue a call to the new head of staff. In a major upset of plans, however, Session learned the following at a special called meeting on August 4, 2003: Pastor Nominating Committee Chair Stephen Stock detailed recent events that culminated in the withdrawal of the committee's head of staff candidate. Having been approved by Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, the candidate visited Ocala several times. After attending a staff meeting, the candidate contacted the PNC chair and removed his name from consideration, citing various issues and challenges that would prevent his acceptance if he were called by the congregation.

At the August 17 congregational meeting, a motion was approved to dissolve and dismiss the current Pastor Nominating Committee with thanks and appreciation and to instruct the Session's Nominating Committee to present names for a new PNC.

Two members of the original PNC agreed to be nominated and served on the new committee.

Picking up where the previous committee had terminated, the new PNC made a decision by February 22, 2004. Session scheduled a

congregational meeting for March 14, and the **Rev. Dr. Raymond Guterman** was issued a



call to serve as FPC's head of staff effective June 1, 2004.

Born in Donalsonville, Georgia and a life-long Presbyterian, Pastor Raymond received his bachelor's degree in accounting at Georgia Southwestern State University. He enrolled at Columbia

Theological Seminary in 1976 and, in 1980,

became the seminary's youngest grad to receive the Doctor of Ministry degree.

Pastor Raymond was pastor at Columbus, Georgia's Morningside Presbyterian Church. In his nine years as pastor, the suburban church tripled in membership and accomplished three building programs.

In October 1989, he became pastor of Northwood Presbyterian Church in Clearwater, Florida. By 2004 Northwood had grown to more than 1200 members and faithfully funded two building programs including a Family Life Center.

We welcome staff newcomers in the new millennium

Bob Hill was Director of Youth Ministries from July 2001 until leaving in 2002.

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Pickard became Parish Associate in January 2006. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, his MCE degree from Presbyterian School of Christian Education, and his Doctor of Ministry degree from McCormick Theological Seminary. Prior to his retirement, Pastor Joseph served as an Assistant Pastor (Greenville, NC), an Associate Pastor (Winston-Salem, NC), the Associate General Presbyter/ Associate Stated Clerk (Barium Springs, NC), the Associate Synod Executive (Richmond, VA), and the Medical Benevolence Foundation's Associate Executive Director (Richmond, VA).



Active in pastoral work and counseling since joining us, Pastor Joseph also is an active teacher in the *Disciples* Bible study program and participates in Sunday worship services.

On May 21, 2006 the congregation called **The Rev. Darren Bess** as its Associate Pastor for Congregational Care and Small Groups. The Presbytery of St. Augustine received Pastor Darren on July 8, 2006. He was ordained at his home church, Deland's First Presbyterian Church, on July 23, 2006. He was installed formally as our Associate Pastor in ceremonies on December 17, 2006. Pastor Darren entered the ministry after careers in nursing and owning a lawn care and irrigation business. He graduated from the Master of Divinity program at the Dubuque Theological Seminary in May 2006.



Pastor Darren's time is spent in pastoral duties and with small group ministries. Along with other FPC pastors, he teaches in the *Disciples* Bible study program. He's offered unique Bible study courses---*Jesus in a Bucket, Lunch and Learn* and *NOOMA*---and began an FPC Easter Sunrise Worship Service.

Director of Youth and Young Adults **Dale Cook** joined us in May 2006. The step-grandson of Rev.



Edwin Albright, Sr. and stepson of Rev. Dr. Edwin Albright Jr., Dale received his Masters in Religion degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He came to FPC from Sarasota's Presbyterian Church of the Palms. The Youth have participated in local mission projects including the local "Mission Adventure Day" and the "Habitat for Humanity Play House" project. The group has attended retreats at Montreat, Camp Montgomery and Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina. Recent Christian fellowship events have included a skiing

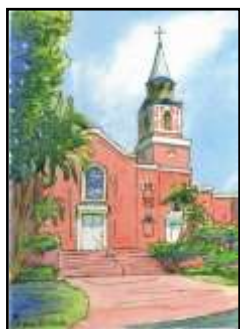
weekend, a paintball tournament and discussions at a local coffee house. Middle school girls attended their very own retreat at Camp Montgomery. The Youth have raised funds through "flocking" activities and "Souper Bowl Sundays" and have shared their talents at annual talent shows. In addition to Sunday School classes, Dale has provided a Youth Bible Study program.

Presbytery received FPC's **Gene Anderson** as a ministerial candidate in 2006. He graduated from Louisville Presbyterian Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in the spring of 2006. He completed his Presbytery requirements in 2007. He served as FPC's Student Parish Assistant in the early 2000s.

We 'dig into' the Bible...have mission trips...increase our children's and youth programs and celebrate our 150 years in the mid 2000s

In **2006** FPC began offering an exciting Bible study series, **Disciple** as well as many other long- and short-term study classes.

Local and international missions: In March 2006 active recruiting began to get volunteers to participate in mission trips to aid Hurricane Katrina victims. Food, furniture and household items were obtained and transported to the Gulf coast, where several mission trips were made. Note cards featuring artwork by **Joan Woods** were sold



to raise additional funds for Katrina-related projects. FPC adopted a Pascagoula, Mississippi family. Also in 2006 and 2007 members volunteered for mission trips to Guatemala and Jamaica.

Our **Youth** made a mission trip to Gulfport, Mississippi in July 2007.

In 2006 FPC was recognized as being one of the top five contributors to the mission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine.

In the 2007 budget FPC increased its support from two to four **missionary families**.

Throughout the 2000s, each year's vast **Giving Tree** project continued to contribute full Christmas experiences for over 40 families.

Presbyterian Women continue to provide leadership and labors-of-love at FPC. Women in its **We Care** projects produce finger babies, ethnic dolls with clothing, gowns and baby knits (sweaters, mitts, hats and blankets for premature babies). The We Care "**Christmas in July**" donation drive provides funds for materials with which to sew and stuff stockings for underprivileged children in Marion County.

Women in PW's **Shawl Ministry** knit and distribute many prayer shawls for persons hospitalized, homebound or in nursing homes.

PW continues to work with **The Marion County Homeless Children and Youth Program** in obtaining school supplies, clothing and other necessities for the over 1000 homeless children in the county. PW's "**Blanket Fund**" project continues to provide blankets in worldwide emergency areas. Its annual "NetWorkers' Mothers' Day Project" contributes to a PCUSA project that provides mosquito netting and malaria education for African women and their young children.

The **Kirkin' o' the Tartans** ceremonies continue to be an inspiring annual event.

The **Men of Faith** decided to meet for weekly rather than monthly breakfasts and expanded their mission in the church and community.

A **sesquicentennial capital funds drive** provided much needed carpeting in the sanctuary, new tiled floors in the narthex and vestibule, new air conditioning/heating systems and a new church bus.

In 2007 FPC introduced its first **Occupational Directory** of members' professional services. A 2007 **church-wide yard sale** netted over \$3200 for FPC mission trips. Unsold items went to Interfaith Emergency Service's Thrift Shop.

During 2006 and 2007 we laid plans to return to having an elected **Board of Deacons** charged with caregiving responsibilities rather than raising annual funds and caring for buildings and grounds as southern church deacons did prior to the 1983 reunion of northern and southern churches.

A dedicated group of FPC members provided leadership in attempts to get a Florida-based **Cursillo** program of Presbyterian lay-led retreats.

Many events are scheduled as we celebrate FPC's 150 years

A **Sesquicentennial Committee** began work in September 2006 with Chair **Tom Weaver** and members **Evelyn Weaver, Cathy Albright, Pat Bishop, Fran Clemons, Shirley Hannah, Biddie Kirk, Betty Jeanne Spencer, Florence Tacker, Eleanor Willis, Joanne Yancey** and Ex-Officio members **Pastor Raymond Guterman, Pastor Darren Bess, Director of Music Vicky Juliano** and **Administrative Assistant Toni Joseph**.

The committee developed monthly celebration events throughout the year that included the following:

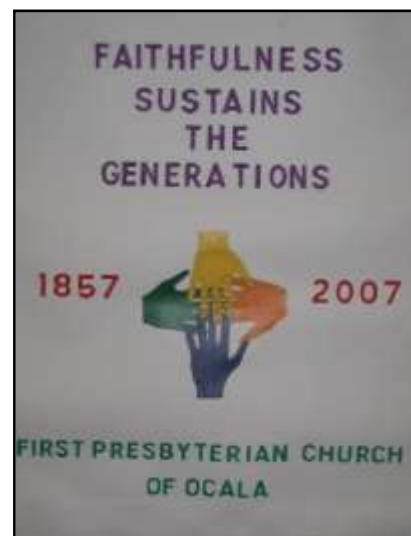
November 2006: All families in the congregation received a **Christmas ornament** celebrating the beginning of FPC's Sesquicentennial Year.

December 2006: The anniversary's commemorative calendar went on sale.



January 2007

1. On January 14, "**Banner Sunday**," banners and posters were presented as a continuous reminder of the church's 150 years of serving God and community.



2. The Pastor read the following letter from **Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**: (The letter and the PC(USA) certificate have been framed for display in the church.)

Dear Friends in Christ: Congratulations on the 150th Anniversary of the founding of First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida. One hundred and fifty years of continuous and growing ministry is cause for thanksgiving and great joy.

Historical records show that the First Presbyterian Church was organized as a home mission church in the summer of 1857 by the Presbytery of Florida with 11 charter members. Since its organization, First Church has been witness to many events that have helped to shape our identity as a people of God, and has served both those desiring to follow the Presbyterian form of worship and the community at large. First Church is a great community church fulfilling its mission: "to worship God and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ."

As you begin the celebration of this important milestone in your history on Sunday, January 14, 2007, I pray that your ministry will be renewed and refreshed. May the grace of our Lord continue to bless your work and worship.

Cordially yours,

*Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly*

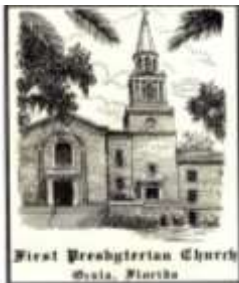
3. We heard "**Through all the Years**," a poem written by **Al Gilkes** for FPC's sesquicentennial. (The poem appears opposite the forward to this book.)

February 2007: On Sunday, February 4, **Boy Scout Sunday**, we recognized the long tradition of **Boy Scout Troop 72** and the place it deserves in our 150th anniversary celebration. The troop, organized in the mid-1930s, lists a distinguished history. Fifty-two of its Scouts have earned the rank of Eagle Scout. The troop continues to serve many boys in our community. **Sandy Clardy** continues his long tenure as Scout Master, assisted by Committee Chairman **Don Slone**, Charter Organization Rep **Van Akin** and committee members **Jim Swanger, Karl Goedert, Joe Kays, Conrad Melancon, Greg Rowland, Henry Hicks, Alan Drake** and **James Tanous**.



March 2007

On Sunday, March 4, **Presbyterian Women** presented **Celebration of Women**, another great tribute to FPC's 150 years. The day-long event featured the creativeness of many women in our congregation. **The Rev. Dr. Debbie Kirk**, who grew up in our church, led an inspiring worship service, after which delicious foods could be sampled and many forms of artistic creativity could be viewed. **Ruthanne Reiss** is the 2007 PW Moderator.



Also in March, we began selling FPC Sesquicentennial **commemorative note cards** featuring the drawing that appeared on our bulletins for many years since the 1970s. Our young people sold many boxes of the original note cards to finance trips to Montreat.

April 2007

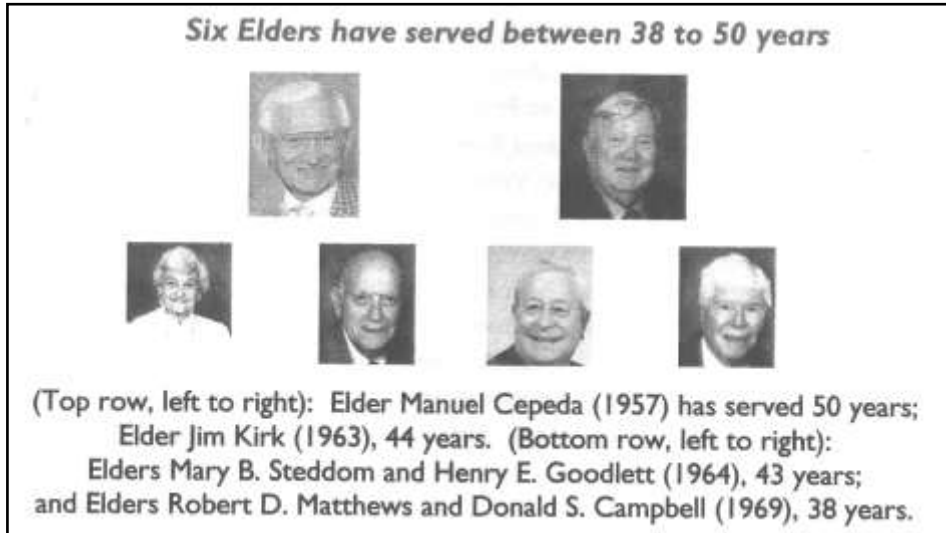
We were treated to a wonderfully reminiscent fashion show, **150 Years of Faith and Fashions** written by Fran Clemons and performed by a host of FPC members. Great fellowship followed, centered on marvelous reception food and conversation!



May 2007

On Sunday, May 6 we were pleased to recognize and thank all Elders and Deacons who were ordained and installed here and continue to be members of First Presbyterian Church.

The six Elders who have served between 38 to 50 years include **Manuel Cepeda, Jim Kirk, Mary Steddum,**



Henry Goodlett, Robert Mathews and Don Campbell. There are 129 other FPC-ordained Elders currently on church rolls as of April 2007 as well as 10 Elders who were ordained elsewhere and later installed as FPC Elders.

FPC became a unicameral system in 1974 and hasn't had Deacons since then. Current members who were ordained and installed as Deacons at FPC include **Richard Rickenbach, Manuel Cepeda, Jim Kirk, Robert Mathews, Don**

Campbell, Scotty Andrews, Randy Townsend, Howell Winfree II, Sandy Clardy, O. Joseph Fleming II, L. Reid Jackson III, Tom Weaver, Robert Heenie and R. S. (Bo) Williams.

Also in May: The **Rev. David Bridgman**, who served as FPC's Assistant Pastor from 1961-67, was the second of seven guest ministers invited to preach during the anniversary year.



June 2007

On Sunday, June 10, we were pleased to recognize and thank 30 persons who have been members for 50 or more years. Six of these have been with us for 65 or more years! They include **Mrs. Virginia Smith** (82

years), **Mrs. Roberta Collar** (79 years), **Mrs. Iris Nix** (73 years), **Mrs. Bettie Rickenbach** (68 years), **Mrs. Barbara Brown** (67 years) and **Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Townsend** (66 years).



The 24 others who have held membership at FPC for 50 years or more include the following:

T. Randy Townsend (60 years)
Paree Russell (60 years)
Archibald Patterson (60 years)
Ivy Bitzer (59 years)
Sandra W. Owens (57 years)
Patricia Bishop (57 years)
Sara A. (Kitty) Mathews (56 years)
Charles (Ray) Newhouse (56 years)
Richard V. Rickenbach (56 years)
John S. (Sandy) Clardy (55 years)
Robert D. Mathews (54 years)
Lucille S. Griggs (54 years)

James E. Kirk (54 years)
Mary F. (Biddie) Kirk (54 years)
Manuel N. Cepeda (53 years)
Ethel Jackson (53 years)
L. R. (Reid) Jackson (53 years)
Diane C. Andrews (53 years)
Velma M. Fox (52 years)
Veta W. Jackson (52 years)
Donald S. Campbell (50 years)
Phyllis N. Campbell (50 years)
Eileen Nemeth (50 years)
Maria Myers (50 years)

Note: We were saddened by the deaths in 2007 of **Moot Thomas** (62 years) and **Nina Weeks** (56 years).



First row: Biddie Kirk, Roberta Collar, Mary Elizabeth Townsend, Paree Russell, Virginia Smith and Maria Myers. **Second row:** Ray Newhouse, Lucille Griggs, Randy Townsend, Don Campbell and Phyllis Campbell. **Third row:** Pat Bishop, Jim Kirk, Diane Andrews, Sandra Owens, Eileen Nemeth and Sandy Clardy. Also attending, but not pictured: Bettie and Rick Rickenbach and Veta Jackson.

Also in June 2007: We welcomed guest ministers **The Rev. Dr. Paul Hooker**, Executive
Presbyter, Presbytery of St. Augustine on June 10 and **The Rev.**



Dr. Ray Ruark, *FPC Pastor Emeritus* on June 24.

And...we began selling FPC
Sesquicentennial
commemorative plates.



July 2007

On **Sunday, July 1, 2007** The **Rev. Dr. Edwin W. Albright, Jr.** (shown with **Biddie Kirk**), Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, was our guest minister. Rev. Albright, the son of **Rev. Edwin W. Albright, Sr.**, FPC's pastor from 1966-1982, also is the stepfather of FPC's Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries **Dale Cook**.

On **July 10**, we held the dedication service for our **National Register of Historic Places plaque**. We received a plaque from the **Historic Ocala Preservation Society** celebrating the event.



On **Saturday, July 14**, the Presbytery of St. Augustine held its summer meeting at Ocala First. Elder **Don McCormick**, dressed as his great grandfather, **Rev. J. W. McCormick**, a founder of FPC, presented a brief history of the church.



On **Sunday, July 15**, former Associate Pastor the **Rev. Dr. Linda Dickerson** was our guest minister. Dr. Dickerson served at FPC from 1988-1995.



August 2007

On **Sunday, August 28**, the **Children's Ministry** in conjunction with **FPC's Youth, the Men of Faith, Presbyterian Women, numerous church organizations and committees** and two valiant pastors (**Pastor Raymond** and **Pastor Darren**) celebrated our Sesquicentennial with a super-colossal **Ole Timey Rally Day and Picnic on the Grounds**.



Also in August 2007

The Sesquicentennial Committee previewed its pictorial **Inventory of Memorials and Gifts**.



The book – located in the glass top cabinet in the narthex – is available for review.

September 2007

During worship services on **September 2 and 9**, the **Chancel Choir** helped introduce the FPC Sesquicentennial Hymn, "**God of All the Ages**" to the congregation. **Director of Music Vicky Juliano**, commissioned by the Session, wrote the words and music for the hymn. (A copy of the hymn is included in this book.)

On **Sunday, September 23**, we welcomed former Associate Pastor the **Rev. Gary Marshall** as our guest minister. Rev. Marshall served from 1995 until 2001. He is pastor of Countryside Presbyterian Church, Ocala.

On **Sunday, September 30** we were treated to the musical talents of **Director of Music Vicky Juliano** and **Organist Norman Slade** who presented a piano and organ concert featuring music of the past 150 years.



October 2007

On **Sunday, October 21** we introduced **Jim Kirk's** poem created especially for FPC's Sesquicentennial. (The poem appears at the end of this book.)

On **Thursday, October 26**, the **Children's Ministry** presented an evening of Family Fun with outdoor activities.

Also on **Friday, October 26**, we hosted an intergenerational evening at a **Contemporary Christian Concert** in "the big tent"!

On **Saturday, October 27**, we enjoyed a musical dramatization of our 150 years written and directed by **Director of Music Vicky Juliano**. We also shared memories of **FPC brides and family trees**.

On **Sunday, October 28**, our three worship services blended into one blended **Homecoming service** in "the big tent." We welcomed one-another and were excited to visit with former church staff members, former church members and other guests! We followed the worship service with **Dinner on the Grounds**, where we enjoyed more fellowship.

Your Sesquicentennial Committee



Bottom row: Fran Clemons, Eleanor Willis and Biddie Kirk. **Middle row:** Betty Jeanne Spencer, Ann VanDenburgh, Shirley Hannah, Tom Weaver. **Back row:** Florence Tacker, Pastor Raymond Guterman, Toni Joseph, Pat Bishop, Vicky Juliano, Evelyn Weaver and Joanne Yancey. **Not shown:** Cathy Albright and Pastor Darren Bess.

A talented writer and composer, Director of Music Vicky Juliano was commissioned by the church to write a sesquicentennial hymn, which she titled "God of all the Ages." She also wrote and directed a musical historical tribute to FPC and its 150th anniversary, "The Tie that Binds."

God of All the Ages

Original composition by Vicky Juliano commissioned by FPC for the Sesquicentennial Celebration on October 28, 2007

words and music
by Vicky Juliano

God has brought us to this place through
Al - ways build - ing still we're grow - ing on
Time is ev - er mov - ing on things

3
times of smiles and tears. Our
God our cor - ner - - stone. With
change most ev' - ry day. But

5
faith and trust in His great power has sus -
God as our will foun - da - - tion, we will
God's love will re - main with us then, —

7
tained nev - - us through the years.
nev - - er and through be a - - lone.
now, and through al - - - ways,

8
Sing prais - es to the God of all the

11
ag - es; He has led us through our tri - als to this

14
day. Sing prais - es to the God of all the

17
ag - es; the God who leads our child - ren on their

20
way. A ————— men.

Voices from our past...in the present

During the anniversary year we welcomed as guest ministers:

- **The Rev. Debbie Kirk** who preached at Presbyterian Women's "Gifts of Women Sunday." Rev. Kirk grew up in Ocala and was a member of First Presbyterian.
- **The Rev. Dr. Paul Hooker**, Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of St. Augustine.
- Former Assistant Pastor (1961-1967) **The Rev. David Bridgman.**
- **The Rev. Dr. Edwin Albright, Jr.**, son of Pastor Edwin Albright, Sr., Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.
- Retired FPC Pastor (1983-1991) and Pastor Emeritus **The Rev. Dr. Ray Ruark.**
- Former Associate Pastor (1988-1995) **The Rev. Dr. Linda Dickerson.**
- Former Associate Pastor (1995-2001) **The Rev. Gary Marshall.**
- Former Associate Pastor (1976-1977) **The Rev. David Cozad.**
- **The Rev. Dr. John Somerville**, missionary to Korea (1953-1994).

Acknowledgements

Appreciation is expressed to the following as we complete this history that commemorates the events and people of Ocala's First Presbyterian Church during its wonderful first 150 years:

Mrs. Rex Greene Todd, Church Historian, whose *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala, Florida: 1857-1932* inspired us to "dig in" and learn more and more about our beloved church, and to those whose manuscripts, circulars and other information she used: **Mrs. Mary Allred Allen, Mrs. W. H. Dodge, Mrs. W. V. Newsome, Mrs. W. W. Condon, Mrs. G. S. Scott, R. L. Anderson, Miss Annie Sharp and T. W. Troxler.**

Mr. Rex G. Todd for his histories of the Men of the Church organization.

Mary Carolyn McCullough for recorded PW history information.

Biddie Kirk for supplying pictures of certain events.

The dedicated Elders who served as FPC's Clerks of Session and, therefore, provided much of the material for this book, including **James E. Dickson, Edwin G. Mauk, Mary Steddom, Chuck Wildy, John Hulton, Ruth Lee, Joanne Yancey, Diane Freeman, Kathy Kuhns and Tom Weaver.**

Evelyn Weaver for invaluable proofreading, suggestions and moral support.

FPC's Administrative Assistant Toni Joseph for inspiration to get involved in all this and for her excellent computer skills and talents ... and patience!

Tell the story ...

A small group of Presbyterians was meeting in the local Methodist Church in the year 1857 in the county seat of Marion County, Florida, a town known as Ocala. Let's listen in as they consider their future.



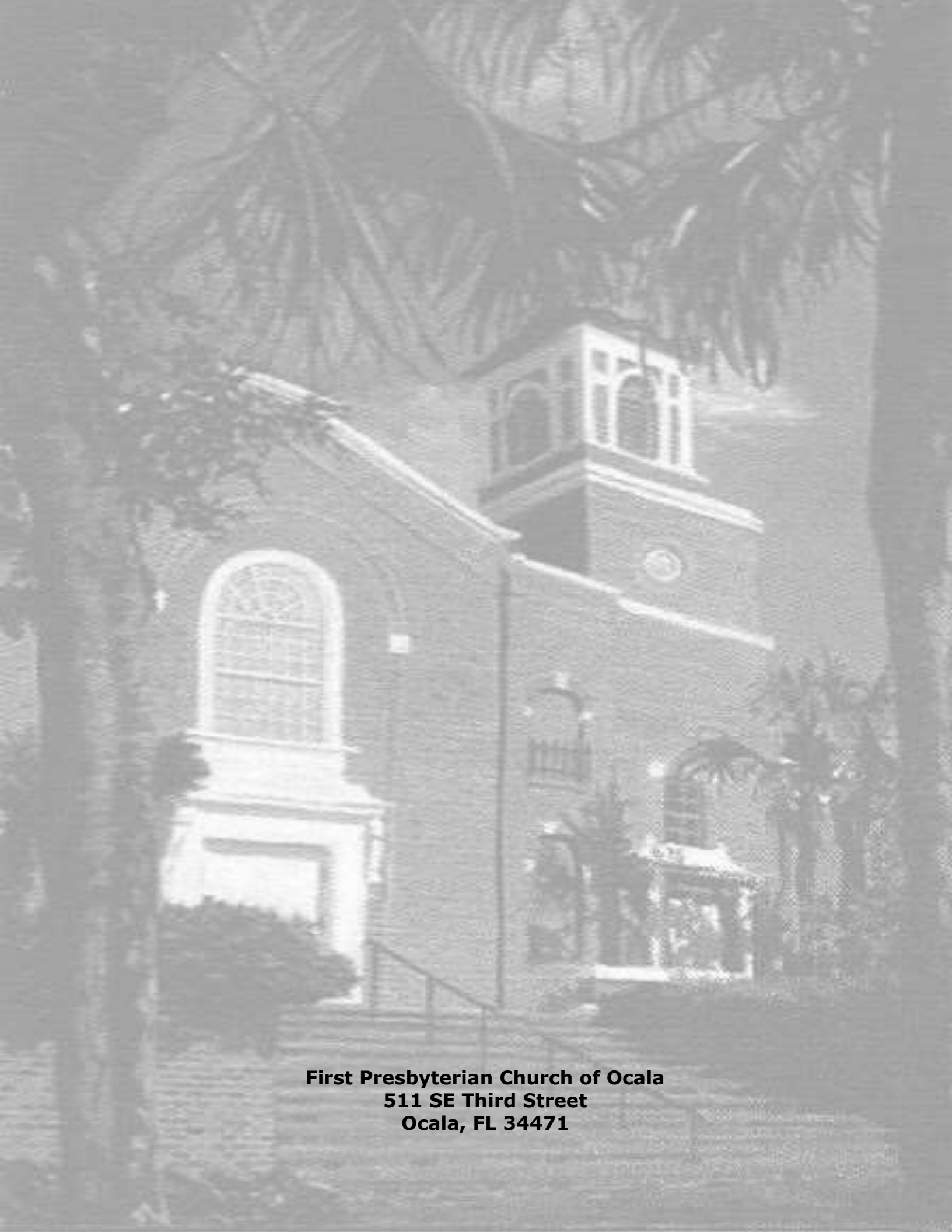
Although our numbers be not great,
we gather here to praise
the Lord for blessings in the past
and for the coming days.
We know our mission is to serve
and witness, Lord, for you.
So now, dear God, for future's sake
please tell us what to do.

No voice was heard from Heaven's horn,
no lightning struck the ground.
They stood with arms uplifted
but still they heard no sound.
Then someone said, "Let's kneel and pray
that we may tell the story,
and ask our God to show us ways
to lead other folks to glory."

That was when the church was born,
for God made all agree,
to live for Jesus was their goal
for all the world to see.
They did not need to hear the Lord,
they felt His loving hand,
and they were moved to do his work
in this their favored land.

One hundred and fifty years ago
they said, "Let's tell the story,
for God is asking us to live
so we can share the glory."
Their faith was Presbyterian strong,
it came from God above.
It said, "Just tell the story
of Jesus and His love."

***Jim Kirk
2007***



**First Presbyterian Church of Ocala
511 SE Third Street
Ocala, FL 34471**