

♦ First Presbyterian Church ♦

FAITH IN ACTION

This newspaper's featured articles showcase FPC's enduring legacy of service, where members actively engage with the community and strive for social justice. For almost thirty years, the congregation has aided those experiencing food insecurity, offered financial support and emotional care to people in need, and opened their doors to organizations working with marginalized groups.

Receiving the 1997 Elinor Curry Award for Outreach and Social Concern marked a major achievement. This honor recognized ministries that embodied the church's

Introduction

By Susan McGill

mission to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God," helping to transform the congregation through proactive outreach. In this edition, excerpts from the original award application highlight the projects and efforts that led to this recognition.

Other reports feature efforts by the church and local community, such as holding monthly lunches for families of those incarcerated at nearby facilities and expanding this outreach to offer wider support to prisoners. Additionally, the church has distributed food—at first through DFCS and later its own Food Pantry—to people in need and has assisted with utility bills

the Samaritan Ministry.

One article describes how three women who experienced vision loss founded a support group that lasted ten years, helping others facing similar difficulties. Other stories highlight community initiatives like launching a local recycling program, providing snacks and resources for the homeless through efforts such as the Milly Free Fridge, and offering meeting spaces for various support groups. Overall, these examples showcase the church's dedication to service and its two centuries of faith in action.

In this issue:

- Prison family lunch
- Green initiative, Prisoner support
- In-prison ministry
- VIPS, In Our Best Interest
- Food pantry, Samaritan Ministry
- Environmental justice, and more!



**Extra!
Extra!
Read all
about it!**

First Presbyterian Church

ELINOR CURRY AWARD

Our Program: Ministry of Justice and Mercy

The material here enclosed is to recommend First Presbyterian Church, Milledgeville, Georgia for the Elinor Curry Award for Outreach and Social Concern. This less-than-four-hundred member church has a commitment to be a church that fully embraces the "great ends of the church" in our Book of Order; and in its determination to be a church that "does justice, loves mercy, and seeks to walk humbly with God," it has had an impact on this community far deeper and far wider reaching than any other church in the community, including those that are three or four times larger in membership.

First Presbyterian Church is widely and favorably viewed as a major instrument of compassion in this community. But the church sees the ministry of compassion as inseparable from an equally deep commitment to justice.

That understanding has led to the church also being viewed, not always favorably, as a major voice for justice. To speak for justice has sometimes been costly for this church, its elders, and its minister; but this formerly "Old South" downtown church has moved from being a "Sunday branch of the country club" to a church that now has African American, Asian, and Hispanic members. It takes seriously the call of Jesus and what it means to read that call through Presbyterian eyes. This is frequently difficult in the Deep South where racism is often so deeply embedded in the community's life that people are not aware of its effect on their actions, so a ministry of justice and mercy often involves raising the consciousness of people. It is my hope that the Elinor Curry Award committee will look favorably on our whole

ministry as it demonstrates justice and mercy through a variety of specific programs. A positive response from such a group as yours would give valuable encouragement to a congregation whose members put their time, skill, effort, and finances into a wide range of caring ministries, and to people who at times against strong and powerful opposition (from the community and a from a very small group within the church) continue to choose to speak out for racial, economic, and environmental justice.

Meeting the Criteria

Much of the way in which our ministry meets the criteria for the Elinor Curry Award for Outreach and Social Concern has been described in the previous narrative. I note again that we see the various programs of justice and mercy as one ministry. Each is a part of our effort to view the

**ELINOR
CURRY
CONT.**

whole life of the church as fulfilling Christ's call in our community.

Each of the programs mentioned in the narrative involves a whole range of members—from pre-school to older adults. They serve and eat the prison-family meals together. The prison library program was operated by youth Deacons who solicited materials from all members. Our work in the women's prisons was coordinated by the women of the church. The worship services with the Hancock County women involved the whole congregation, including children and many elderly members, who walked through the rain and the red Georgia mud to get to that small, rural church. Children and adults participate in the food pantry program. In raising questions of justice in the public schools, our concern was to help older people raise moral questions and to contribute to the future of young people. Every program involves many people, of all age ranges, economic conditions, and political views.

In an area with five state prisons, the church's prison

ministry meets a tremendous neighborhood need. Our food ministries and our ministries of raising questions about justice in our society touch every part of this community.

The success of our prison-family program has led to the beginning of other similar ministries, taking families to prisons in other parts of the state. This church is held up as an example and encouragement for other churches. The questions that were raised about the Hancock County landfill led to the formation of a community group apart from the church, organized to oppose the landfill and raise legal defense funds. So far, they have succeeded in facing down the large, well-financed commercial interests. Our work with the Department of Family and Children's Services has led to and sustained programs that have helped young women get education and jobs. And, as stated earlier, our recycling program has been adopted by the city.

In every aspect of our ministry we attempt not just to provide help but seek solutions for underlying problems and to draw the attention of our members and the community to questions of justice and how our

profession of faith as Christians and Presbyterians relates to those questions.

This is a congregation whose whole vision of ministry is shaped by the church's call to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God." Over the course of the last 12 years, in every instance of speaking for justice and developing each ministry of mercy, the Session which reflects the diversity of the congregation, has voted unanimously. The church has faithfully pursued that ministry committed to being fully Christian and fully Presbyterian, at times in the face of great sacrifice and powerful opposition, and its heart for that ministry would be tremendously strengthened by recognition for the Elinor Curry Award.

(Source: Elinor Curry Award Application)



Elinor Curry at a party held in her honor in 1969 at Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA), an African American church she joined in the mid 1940's

First Presbyterian Church

PRISON FAMILY LUNCH

Ministry of Mercy

A particularly effective aspect of this ministry was the church's support for the families of prisoners. One key initiative was the Prison-Family Lunch program, which became one of the ministry's longest-standing and most impactful efforts. Fred and Faye Heal organized the first lunches at their home, later moving them to the church's Fellowship Hall on July 31, 1982. The program ran for more than 30 years; as the prisons began closing in 2009 and 2010, the number of visitors dwindled and serving the once-monthly lunches became more irregular. The program ended with a special worship service on September 19, 2019 commemorating this long-term ministry.

The church provided more than 15,000 meals to families visiting one of five state prisons in the Milledgeville area. Most inmates were from metropolitan regions, but the



remote prison locations made visits challenging. Long distances, prison environments, and officials' attitudes often made visitation difficult, particularly for children, parents, and the elderly.

In collaboration with Ed Loring and Murphy Davis from the Open Door community in Atlanta which provided transportation, the church helped facilitate and increase the number of visits. Lunch was

prepared and served in a manner designed to encourage fellowship among all participants, rather than to resemble a charitable handout. Over time, we built relationships with the families who attended, some of whom participated for as long as ten years. Our environment was intended to offer support and acceptance without judgment related to incarceration, (Continued on next page)

**FAMILY
LUNCH
CONT.**

fostering a sense of community. When a family or individual left because their loved one had been released, we collectively expressed our gratitude through prayers and shared in their joy.

The Prison-Family Lunch program, overseen by our Board of Deacons, involved many congregation members. Our goal extended beyond serving meals—we encouraged members to connect with families in these circumstances. By building these relationships, we hoped to break down community stereotypes and recognize everyone as part of God's family.

Each Thanksgiving, the Board of Deacons provided a complete Thanksgiving meal—including turkey, side dishes, table linens, and candles—to commemorate the occasion as a family. On one occasion, an incarcerated individual expressed their gratitude for this gesture, noting it was the only Thanksgiving meal his mother received. Every Christmas, the entire Session participated in organizing and serving a special holiday meal.

Many of our members—from preschoolers and elementary-aged children to youth, middle-aged adults, and seniors—took part in this ministry, along with some non-members. Several times a year, Girl Scout troops, which often included many participants outside our church, helped prepare and serve meals. Whenever meals were served, those helping with the meal also joined the families at the table to eat together.

The ministry was purposeful, aiming for more than just serving meals to visitors. It also sought to support inmates in managing life inside prison—echoing one inmate's words: "You can't make it on the inside if you don't have someone on the outside"—and to assist them in successfully staying out of prison after their release.

Through this mission, the church believed that it could also positively influence our society. Norman Hold and Donald Miller, in their study "Explorations of Inmate-Family Relationships," reviewed fifty years of research and found that prisoners with regular family visits had significantly lower recidivism rates than those without or with infrequent visits.

Prisoners who received regular visits from family had the lowest recidivism rates. Among the men studied, 70% of those with at least three ongoing visitors avoided parole problems and were not re-arrested. In contrast, individuals without any visitors were six times more likely to return to prison within their first year on parole compared to those who had three or more regular visitors. Only 2% of men with three or more regular visitors needed to be sent back to prison.

The Prison-Family Lunch program was fully funded by the congregation through the members' regular contributions to the church. Because of the success of our program, a second ministry of prison visitation was started in Atlanta, taking families to prisons in other parts of the state. The organizer of that program used First Presbyterian Church's work to try to encourage churches in other parts of the state to develop similar ministries.

(Sources: Original Elinor Curry Award application, Faye Heal, Millie Murphy, and church bulletins).



Photo from PW scrapbook, 1990

Following the Presbyterian Church's call for congregations to be active examples and advocates for the healing, protection, and nurture of the environment, the Session established an environmental concerns policy for the church in 1990. "The Session of First Presbyterian Church, Milledgeville, Georgia, recognizes the call to Christians to be good stewards of the earth God has given to humankind, a call most vividly declared in the shout of celebration and responsibility in Psalm 24.1."

Specific policies involved using reusable utensils, prohibiting polystyrene (styrofoam), using biodegradable plastic garbage bags, addressing environmental concerns or activities in the monthly newsletter, and encouraging participation in community recycling programs.

Around 1992, in response to the Presbyterian Church's initiative addressing environmental concerns, the Deacons, in partnership with Brownie Scout Troop 223 (led by Gloria Burns), established a recycling program. For a period, the church operated as the sole recycling center within this community of 20,000 residents, transporting collected materials approximately 35 miles to Macon, Georgia for processing. Approximately one year later, the city assumed responsibility for the program and now provides comprehensive recycling services.

Although the city did not recycle certain items like batteries and fluorescent light bulbs, the church managed the recycling of these materials on its own for many years. The church has also continued other conservation efforts, such as choosing reusable dishes and glassware instead of paper products and opting for compostable paper goods when necessary. Compostable waste was separated and used in the community gardens until recently. The use of Styrofoam and plastics remains discouraged, and for Vacation Bible School, church members frequently purchase water packaged in cartons.

Sources: Elinor Curry Award Application, Gloria Burns, PW Scrapbook 1990

PRISONER SUPPORT

Along with the Prison-Family Lunch program, FPC also supplied Christmas gifts to prisoners without families or whose families could not buy presents. We collaborated with inmates from the Frank Scott Correctional Facility's Honors Dorm, where the inmates started sharing some of their limited gifts with others who had none. Both our donations and their acts of sharing were organized by the inmates themselves, ensuring that their dignity was preserved and they didn't feel like outsiders were giving them charity.

A prison library support program run by two youth Deacons provided books of all levels to Georgia inmates, aiming to help them improve literacy and work toward diplomas. However, these programs were ended by a new Corrections Commissioner who eliminated self-development initiatives and restricted outside involvement under a stricter prison policy. (Cont. on next page)

In 1994, the church helped create child-friendly visiting spaces at the women's prison. They provided books, equipment, and toys to make the areas welcoming, allowing mothers and children to spend quality time together. The church's initiative was paired with parenting classes for the mothers. However, the program ended when Georgia relocated all female inmates elsewhere in the state to prevent additional sexual abuse allegations. (Source: Elinor Curry Award Application)

IN-PRISON MINISTRY

By John Lamsma

As the Milledgeville Central State Hospital began to close its doors, the Georgia Department of Corrections used a number of the vacant buildings to establish four State Prisons: Rivers, Men's, Scott and Bostick State prisons. Mary Barbara Tate and Jack Carlton began an in-prison ministry at the Men's State Prison. They held regular studies and discussions with inmates for a number of years. Bill Werts and John Lamsma continued their ministry at the Men's State Prison. When the Men's State Prison closed, Bill and John continued the church's ministry at Bostick State Prison, conducting weekly Bible studies with the inmates until it too closed.

When the Geo Group in 2011 opened a private prison, the Riverbend Correctional Facility, right next to the Baldwin State Prison in Milledgeville, John Lamsma continued our church's ministry at Riverbend. Bill Werts organized and began a new program at church, the Samaritan Ministry. As a result, he was not able to continue the volunteering at Riverbend. The Bible studies continued at the institution until the COVID epidemic halted all prison volunteer activities in July of 2020.

One of the inmates who regularly attended the Bible study meetings wanted to know the meaning of Romans 11. We began studying Paul's letter to the Romans. During our study time together he would periodically ask about the meaning and



context of Romans 11 in the letter. John mentioned that we would study the chapter when the other ten chapters were finished. Finally, he was told we would study that chapter at our next meeting. He was so excited. We would finally study Romans 11. When the next study session came, he was not present and missed the discussion. Earlier that week, he had been transferred to another prison. Unfortunately, he did miss the discussion. He was able, however, to receive the notes on Romans 11.

During the years of our ministry, we studied different books of the Bible so the participants could gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of Scripture. We encouraged them to live a Christ-centered, grace-filled life while incarcerated. We helped them understand how great God's love and grace was and continue to be for them and that forgiveness is a reality regardless of the offenses they committed even if they felt they could never forgive themselves. God does forgive and provides new life out of which they can live while in prison and after release to the community. The following statements summarized our ministry to inmates well. "Individuals can do nothing to make God love them more and individuals can do nothing to make God love them less." Chain-linked fences, topped with rows of concertina wires were never obstacles to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

VIPs



*By Susan McGill
as recounted by
Harry Beck*

As Harry Beck recalls, one Sunday after church Harry noticed Martha crying and she shared with Harry that she had recently been diagnosed with macular degeneration. According to Harry, after sitting on her pitty pot for two weeks, Martha decided to get off of it because it was not accomplishing anything.

So Martha, along with Milladene Grant and Marjorie Wood, started a support group for individuals with vision issues called the VIPs (Visually Impaired People) around 1990. Harry Beck and other church members provided transportation services for the members, and Harry agreed to be the voice of the group.

The group convened regularly at First Presbyterian Church, hosting guest speakers including local and Augusta-based eye specialists, representatives from companies offering innovative solutions for individuals with visual impairments—such as large illuminated magnifiers—and experts in low vision strategies who provided practical advice, such as methods for organizing currency within wallets.

Martha was honored with the Georgia Caregiver Volunteer Award, which is given by the Rosalyn Carter Institute. After Martha's passing in 2012, Harry explained that the group continued briefly but eventually stopped gathering because Martha had been its "heart and soul."

Sources: Harry Beck, Martha Tomlin (and obituary)

IN OUR
BEST
INTEREST



*By Linnesia Latimore
Victim Services Program Director
& Susan McGill*

We are so grateful for the generosity and support that First Presbyterian has continuously extended to us over the years. It has enabled us to provide an educational safe haven where women in our community and surrounding areas could learn and discuss the dynamics of healthy and unhealthy relationships while their children were safe and cared for on the same premises.

I have been employed by the Solicitor's Office since June 2001 and still fondly remember my first In Our Best Interest class. One of my responsibilities has been keeping up with the history of In Our Best Interest. Here is what my records indicate:

The first class of IOBI was held on January 14, 1999 at the First Presbyterian Church in Milledgeville, Georgia. Since then, over 2,000 women have participated in the In Our Best Interest Women's Group with several hundred of those successfully completing all 10 class sessions of the program.

Again, we thank the First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville for being our community partner for the last 27 years!

In addition, Presbyterian Women has provided financial support for childcare during in-person meetings for the In Our Best Interest group for many years.

FOOD PANTRY

By Donna Gautier

A key initiative within our ministry of mercy is the Food Bank, operated by the church in collaboration with the Department of Family and Children's Services. On one Sunday each month, congregants donate food, which is presented by our children during the opening hymn. Beyond these contributions, significant annual funding supports special food needs. The Food Bank serves nearly 3,000 individuals each year.

The Department of Family and Children's Services runs this program instead of the church, as we aim to preserve the dignity of those seeking assistance. We prefer working through a dedicated agency, so individuals don't have to approach the church directly, which can feel humiliating. We believe that justice and mercy should not come at the cost of anyone's dignity. Because the food pantry operates in this manner, many community members are unaware of its scope. We see this as a positive—our actions aren't extraordinary but represent basic human kindness and care. This reflects our commitment to "walking humbly with our God." As children from our pre-school and elementary programs bring food offerings during worship, they gain a meaningful understanding of Christian values and practices.

At the request of DFACS, this ministry relocated its operations to our facility. Storage space was allocated in a downstairs closet, where donations from the congregation were organized and placed until distribution day. Intake forms were developed to monitor the families assisted and the frequency of their support, which occurred at four-week intervals. Household size information recorded on these forms determined the quantity of food provided; single-person households received smaller

bags, while larger households received proportionally more. Bags were assembled onsite, often accommodating individual preferences through direct conversation.

When in-kind donations—originally collected on second Sundays but later shifted to the first Sunday to align with Communion—ceased to meet the demands of the Food Pantry, supplemental food purchases were made to address the shortfall. Volunteers procured essential items and submitted claims for reimbursement. At that time, there was no dedicated line item in the budget for the Food Pantry, so reimbursements were provided from broader mission funds.

When the pandemic struck and the building closed, the Food Pantry also briefly shut down. However, it quickly reopened with a new drive-through system: signs were posted by the street, someone waited in the parking lot to assist, and bags were placed directly into car trunks for contactless delivery. At that stage, all bags had the same contents—there were no small, medium, or large sizes based on household size. The items inside could support larger families for a shorter period and smaller families for longer, with additional food provided as available.

After reopening, some services changed while others stayed the same. Standard bags were pre-packed, 4-week intervals continued, and signs guided people to the parking lot. They entered through the nursery door to sign in and receive a bag of canned goods, a bag of dry items, and their choice of cereal from an assortment.

After normal operations resumed, Food Pantry was added to the budget for designated contributions. Some donate

FOOD PANTRY

continued

regularly, while memorial and honor funds are occasionally received. Community members and congregation supporters have also made in-kind donations. Recently, the manager received a debit card linked to the fund for purchases.

Reports indicate that Food Pantry serves an average of 12 households weekly. Depending on funding, volunteers prepare 10 to 15 bags, typically 12 per week. The pantry opens every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m., except on Christmas or New Year's Day, and closes once all bags are distributed.

Several members of the congregation make themselves available to help with the ministry when called upon, and Georgia College students have provided valuable assistance in the past few years.

Besides regular food bags, the Food Pantry frequently offers additional donated items for people to select. When there are foods that aren't typically included, they are made available as well. This winter, for example, a wonderful selection of colorful hand-knitted neck warmers was offered. Every fall or every few years, attractive calendars from non-profits—along with notepads and cards once given to church members—are eagerly taken home to brighten up someone's wall. The need is great, and we hope to keep sharing God's love and blessings with our community in many small ways.

Sources: Elinor Curry award application, Donna Gautier, Mary Baker



SAMARITAN MINISTRY

Started in 2011 by Bill Werts and Rev. Debbie Osterhoudt, the Samaritan Ministry helps local families pay utility bills with support from church member donations. Early volunteers included Frankie Holder, Jackie Bivins, and Ann Weathers. Over 400 people benefited from 2011-2020, and another 170 received help in the past five years.

The distribution of assistance varies according to the volume of donations received; in months with sufficient funds, all applicants are supported, while periods of increased demand necessitate the implementation of a lottery system. This year, the Session approved new guidelines to standardize procedures, which include a formalized six-month interval between aid, required documentation of current need (such as printed bills), and verification of residence or responsibility. All recipient data has been entered into a centralized database, and enhanced methods for information intake and tracking have been developed. Additionally, access to the Georgia Power portal has streamlined service delivery for individuals seeking assistance. This allows us to protect clients' privacy and to view assistance history without accessing sensitive details on their accounts.



First Presbyterian Church

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE *Ministry of Justice*

Several years ago, in a rural region situated between Milledgeville and Sparta, Georgia, an Atlanta-based landfill operator planned to establish the largest waste disposal facility in the Southeast. The proposal involved depositing ten thousand tons of refuse daily, sourced from across the Southeastern United States, at this location. Hancock County, where the site was to be placed, is predominantly African-American and ranks among the most economically disadvantaged counties in Georgia. Beyond the environmental implications, this situation also prompted concerns regarding potential environmental justice issues.

Only seven persons had "standing" before the court to oppose the landfill. The Hancock County Commissioners were clearly bought off and refused to oppose it. Three of the seven persons with standing



accepted the offer of the developer. One moved out of state. But three women stood firmly opposed. Together they were offered more than \$250,000 to drop their opposition. Their attorney, a member of First Presbyterian Church, was offered \$100,000 in legal fees to drop out of the case. He too refused. The developer, aware of the women's commitment to the tiny AME church which sat near the site, and of which were all members

made an offer to the church to pave its parking lot and air condition the church if these women would drop their opposition. His offer had the effect of dividing the church and putting additional pressure on the women. Still, the women would not give in.

The Session of First Presbyterian Church, aware of the situation and recognizing the call to stand for the environment and opposed to

**ENV.
JUSTICE
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environmental racism, decided to act for four reasons: 1) to encourage these courageous women in their stand; 2) to take an action that might provide for renewed unity in their church; 3) to hold before our young people an example of moral courage; and 4) to lend the strength of a larger, prominent, White church to that of a tiny Black church. We also wanted to recognize the integrity of the attorney who, at that point, could desperately have used the money offered to him.

The attorney warned that he couldn't guarantee what the women might do. He thought they would stand firm but the offers might go as high as a million dollars. The Session decided to take the risk. The women were contacted and along with all the members of their church invited to a Sunday morning worship service in which their action would be recognized. An AME Zion minister, Dr. Marcia Riggs, teaching ethics at Columbia Theological Seminary, was invited to preach for the service. It was a great celebration, covered by a television station from Macon, Georgia, and a national

television news magazine from California.

A check for \$4200 was presented to the Mitchell Chapel AME church, but in our conversations we determined that we should not presume to tell that congregation what to do with the money. So it was simply given in the name of these women. That congregation did decide to use it for air conditioning—a serious need in a tiny building in Georgia's long, hot summers. Following the worship service, the members of the two congregations shared lunch together in the church's fellowship hall.

One year later, the Mitchell Chapel AME church invited members of the First Presbyterian Church to join them for Sunday morning worship at their church, partly just to worship together, partly to show that the gift to the church had been seed money that encouraged them to make many improvements to their building. The Session voted to accept their invitation, and approximately 80% of the members who normally worshiped in our sanctuary went to this tiny, rural church for worship and lunch with that congregation.

Source: Elinor Curry award application

**JUSTICE &
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

The public schools in Baldwin County, Georgia, where Milledgeville is located, are more than 50% African-American. Two strong private schools—one a long-established military school, which was for many years the high school for white middle- and upper-class males, the school which many older community and state leaders attended; the other a school established during the years of desegregation of the public schools—contribute to a lack of support for public education.

In 1996, a bond issue was proposed to repair and replace public schools that were in deplorable condition, conditions few communities would tolerate in their schools. There was strong opposition in the community, expressed mostly in terms of the burden of increased taxes or in criticism that the schools were not efficiently administered. But beneath the surface criticisms was a strong racism by which many saw no need to spend more money to educate "those children."

The Session of First Presbyterian visited the

JUSTICE & SCHOOLS

continued

schools to assess building conditions, reviewed denominational position papers on public education, and recognized their faith's commitment to supporting all community children—not just their own.

The Session unanimously agreed to support the bond issue and send a letter outlining theological reasons and denominational positions to members, urging them to consider voting for it. They took this action fully aware that the self-interest involved in paying additional taxes and, for many, knew they were confronting the deep-seated power of racism in this community. They took their action out of a concern to be faithful to the call to work for justice and for social righteousness. The bond issue was overwhelmingly defeated but the Session had acted faithfully.

The first ESPLOST, a 1-cent county-wide tax to support capital improvements for the school system, first passed in 2000, and has continued to be re-authorized in five-year cycles as recently as March 2025. District-wide improvements have included renovations to Baldwin High School and the Administration Building, as well as technology and school security.

Sources: Elinor Curry Award Application, Baldwin County School District.

SPACE SHARING

By Jessica McQuain

A previous article highlighted the ongoing partnership with the In Our Best Interest program, which uses the church facilities for in-person

TEACHING TOLERANCE GRANT

With the \$1000 from the Elinor Curry award, First Presbyterian Church chose to further the work recognized by this national award by seeding a Mini-Grant program in the Baldwin public schools to promote tolerance and diversity in the world. Teachers, counselors, and other staff competitively applied for funding of these grants to promote tolerance and diversity in the Baldwin County public schools. These mini-grants funded a wide variety of activities, such as the purchase of Peace Talk videocassettes and other library resources, assistance to fund poet Alice Lovelace, and booklets and supplies for a violence prevention program for third graders. Successive grants were funded primarily through church donations and the amounts varied annually, about \$1000 per year and at-least three mini-grants were awarded per year for the next several years.

meetings. In addition to IOBI, there are other groups who utilize our space. These groups include PATH-Oconee Recovery Coalition, a Recovery Community Organization, which hosts an all-recovery meeting on Mondays at FPC. The local Narcotics Anonymous Never Alone Chapter also uses the church facilities for meetings three times a week. PFLAG Milledgeville, the organization for support, education, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ people and their families, also uses FPC space for their monthly peer support meetings and potlucks. Other groups that have used our space include the Milledgeville Community Garden Association and the Kiwanis Club of Milledgeville.

SANDWICH SQUAD

By Jessica McQuain

During the 2022 Lenten season, former administrative assistant and FPC member Lois Callender organized a service project in collaboration with Community Baptist Church. The recently opened Milly Free Fridge presented an opportunity to engage directly with the community through mutual aid. Members of both congregations gathered to make sandwiches and distribute them, along with water and lunch items like apples and chips, to the community fridge located in downtown Milledgeville.

After the Lenten season, the newly-formed "Sandwich Squad" established regular sandwich-making days on the last Sunday of the month following church service. For four years now, the FPC congregation has been one of the most regular contributors to the Milly Free Fridge. Though the original location is now shuttered, the squad continues to donate sandwiches and other items to the community fridge at Midway Hills Primary School.

Since closing, Milly Free Fridge has donated items to FPC for our snack pack and hygiene pack ministries. These items include toothbrushes, deodorant wipes, sanitary napkins, socks, and single-serve snack items that support our outreach to the homeless, many of whom were previously served by Milly Free Fridge's downtown location.

Current administrative assistant Jessica McQuain is one of the co-organizers of Milly Free Fridge and is happy to answer questions about how to get involved in mutual aid in Milledgeville.

FPC BOOK CLUB

By Millie Murphy

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church is made up individuals that enjoy reading and discussing the books they have read. We were often sharing books at church and recommending other books to friends. From time to time, someone would suggest that we should start a book club at the church. Alice Tenold took that suggestion and ran with it. She invited Millie Murphy to lunch, and they planned to start a book club. They discussed the idea with the pastor and asked her to get approval from the Session. Approval was granted, and the first meeting of the First Presbyterian Book Club met September 2015. The first book that was read was *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee. The second book read was *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Books are selected by recommendation from members of the group and the group meets monthly. Most of the selections we have made are non-fiction with a fiction book included from time to time.

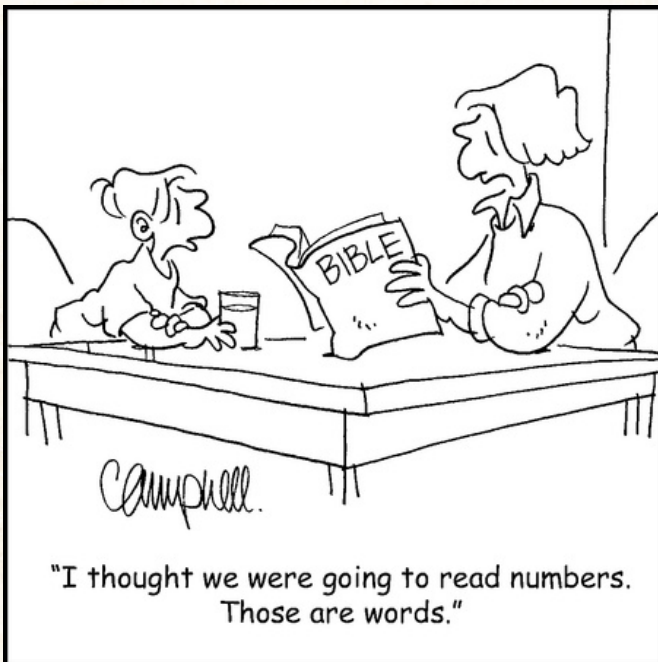
In the almost eleven years that we have been meeting, we have read 110 books! We know this because of the work of one of our members, Susan McGill. When Mike and Alice Tenold were here, Mike kept an updated printed list of our book selections. When he left, we neglected to keep the list current. When Susan joined the group, she immediately saw the need for an updated list. Taking Mike's list, she consulted members of the group, researched previous monthly newsletters, and compiled and

BOOK CLUB CONT.

printed an updated list for everyone. This was a time-consuming endeavor and was appreciated by everyone in the group.

The group supports local authors when there is an opportunity. We invite the author to come to our meeting to discuss their book, and we invite members of the church and community to join us. We have had Alan Gee, GSCU professor and Margie Dodd's son-in-law; local authors, Sandra Worsham and Marsha Fort Herren; and our own National Parks Ranger, Marion Robinson, when we read a book about Cumberland Island.

THE FUNNIES



SNACK PACKS & HYGIENE PACKS

By Jessica McQuain

The origins of the snack pack ministry are uncertain, but one thing is for sure- this is a labor of love. The snack pack ministry provides prepackaged on-the-go food for those struggling with homelessness or food insecurity. An anonymous donor keeps the main stock replenished and members of the congregation donate snack items, water, disposable cutlery, and ziplock bags to keep the ministry alive.

Members of the congregation have also donated travel size toothpaste, shampoo & conditioner, and soap to facilitate the creation of hygiene packs.

In May 2026, the FPC session approved the creation of an Amazon Wishlist to support ministry to the homeless through providing basic supplies such as shower wipes, sunscreen, toiletries, and other items.



First Presbyterian Church

FAITH IN ACTION

Join Us In Our Ministry

All of our ministries are made possible by the donations, time, and effort of our members and friends.

Designated contributions for the Samaritan Ministry and Food Pantry make these efforts possible. Making these part of our regular budget demonstrate FPC's dedication to being a Matthew 25 church.

Our regular sandwich squad gatherings are on the last Sunday of the month following church service. All are welcome to attend this service opportunity.

Thank you for reading and may God bless you and keep you!

