

Report to the Congregation

First Presbyterian Church

August 2021 - July 2022



Do justice.



Love kindness.



Walk humbly with your God.

Introduction

First Pres Family,

It's been quite a program year, and soon you'll read all about it. But first, here's what we've heard around First Pres this past year:

"I don't remember how we did it last year, but pre-COVID I think we did..."

"Where did we put X, and who normally does this part of ministry?"

"How do I get into the church? (Quickly followed by, "We have a preschool entrance?")

"When will the construction be finished?"

And this is what we've heard around Scripture through all the years:

"For God so loved the world..."

"Peace be with you."

"The Lord is my shepherd..."

"Great is thy faithfulness..."

Some have said we are crazy to continue a capital campaign including major construction during a pandemic. Supply chain issues, indicators of an economic recession, denominational membership decline, ongoing impact of COVID—this is no time for change. That is crazy. Well, a lot of people of faith have been called crazy. Moses was crazy in multiple ways, not the least talking to a burning bush for unsolicited career advice and hitting a rock with his walking stick expecting it to win (which it did). Noah was crazy for building an ark in dry conditions, not a drop of rain to justify this crazy neighbor. Mary was crazy to think God would choose her—a betrothed woman with no royalty in her lineage—to be the mother of a Christ-child. Perhaps being called crazy isn't the best measuring stick when it comes to faithful decision-making, for our hope (and prayer) is to be faithful, even if a bit of crazy is warranted.

In this year's Annual Report you will read about our "crazy" First Pres ways. You'll find us bucking the trend in worship attendance during a pandemic, meeting stewardship goals, connecting in creative ways, and serving one another, our community, and the world with love and faithfulness. You, the body of Christ, the people of First Pres, have worshipped, nurtured, and served together. And for this, we give all glory to God. Thanks be to the God of grace, mercy, and even us crazies.

With faith, hope and love,
David, Aram, and Rachel

"He has told you,
O mortal,
what is good;
and what does the
LORD require of you
but to do justice,
and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly
with your God?"

Micah 6:8



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Faith Grows Here

It is a momentous time when a congregation celebrates the new thing God is doing in their midst. One of these joyous occasions is the dedication of a new space where the ministry of the congregation will take place. We are celebrating such a dedication here in 2022 as we complete major renovations and finalize new construction. This is the fourth such major dedication in the life of First Pres. The first one took place in 1856, with the dedication of the sanctuary of Charlottesville Presbyterian Church at the corner of 2nd and Market Street. This building would serve the congregation for over 40 years.



The second dedication took place in 1898, right across 2nd Street (southwest corner) on Market Street, where the congregation would participate in God's mission for over 50 years.

With the need to either embark on major repairs or build anew, the congregation elected to relocate to 500 Park Street, where the congregation's original school house was located in 1828.



Today, 67 years after that cornerstone was laid and over 150 years since the first sanctuary was constructed, we re-dedicate this space with the prayer and trust that God will continue to bless this small part of the body of Christ as we worship and respond to the promptings of the Spirit to nurture and serve our community in the name of Christ.

With Glory to God, we rejoice that God continues to inspire women and men in service and faith to shine the light of God's love in Charlottesville and beyond.



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Do Justice

Serve one another, our community, and the world with humility and love, relying on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to lead us in witnessing to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Last fall First Pres was awarded the Above and Beyond Faith Community award by the United Way of Greater Charlottesville. To be clear, it's not our building that was recognized. It was YOU—boots on the ground, partnering with local mission partners, and witnessing the faith of Jesus. We are a church who **serves together**, living out our vision and mission with steadiness and joy.

For the second year, First Pres has developed a "mission rhythm." In the fall our mission partners are invited to the **Mission Fair** where parishioners learn about each mission partner. In the spring our mission partners provide a bite-sized, two-hour opportunity at **Mission Matters**.

Our local mission partners for 2021-22 are listed below. We also supported the Presbytery of the James, Montreat Conference Center, and Palmetto International Missions in Honduras. We learned about the needs in Honduras and commissioned two members to serve there. You contributed funds for building materials as well as packable items for our Honduran friends.

We have ongoing partnerships with the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and Region Ten's Blue Ridge House for their annual Thanksgiving meal. With COVID precautions, our Soup Kitchen resumed serving indoors. Additional efforts where your stewardship provided specific support have included, but are not limited to:

Abundant Life: property upgrades and annual Christmas Cares gifts; landscaping work

AIM: on-going leadership & deliveries for Secure Seniors program

Georgia's Friends: care packages and gift cards; hosting gardening class

Habitat: built wooden tool kits and assembled cleaning supplies caddies; fulfilled year three of a five-year pledge for Southwood redevelopment

Haven: dinners for guests temporarily housed at La Quinta

International Neighbors: support for refugees and people with special immigrant visas; rental relief during pandemic

PACEM: hosting during two winter months, offering space in our newly renovated Agape Classroom; purchasing new cots and pillows

Loaves & Fishes: promoting nutritional education for clients; supporting a new, small garden to teach clients about homegrown vegetables

With our **Mission and Benevolence Endowment**, First Pres committed gifts such as a new laser for IRIS (International Response to Improve Sight) in Cameroon, funding for a mechanic for Charlottesville Community Bikes (which partners with The Haven, IN, and PACEM), emergency relief for Ukraine through the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, meals for Ukrainian refugees through World Central Kitchen, cottage repairs for Georgia's Friends, and refugee relief assistance for Afghans, Syrians, and Congolese families living temporarily at Massanetta Springs Camp & Conference Center who partnered with Church World Service.

In countless and active ways, First Pres continues to **serve faithfully**, obeying the command to love God by loving our neighbors, near and far.



Do justice.



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Love Kindness

Nurture our faith in Jesus Christ through education and fellowship, growing in wisdom, and deepening our relationship with God and one another.

Fellowship is an integral part of life at First Pres. After a hiatus in our Sunday picnics because of COVID, we held an outdoor Sunday brunch in September and resumed the traditional Sunday picnic in May. The summer weekday Picnic on Park, begun in Summer 2021, continued again this July.

Indoor Fellowship Time on Sundays resumed after the COVID break, with a new twist – it is now held just off the Sanctuary in the new Fellowship Hall. The adjacent new patio allows folks to talk and enjoy refreshments outdoors if they prefer. On Pentecost, we enjoyed a celebration with a birthday cake for the church in the fellowship space.

Our New Member Team continued to facilitate the process of welcoming new people into the church, and an in-person Getting to Know First Pres class was held in the Chapel. Twenty-five people joined this past year.

Additional ministries nurtured and supported members and the larger community: Blood Drive (through local options rather than onsite at the church), Card Ministry, Flower Delivery, Prayer Team, Visitation, and more.



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Family Ministries

The families and children of First Presbyterian are so resilient, and just as our world has known many transitions, so has our church family.

Sunday School resumed. In October we transitioned from the outdoor setting for Sunday mornings and traditional Sunday School resumed. What a joy to have our nursery and four classes back in the building and in person. We are grateful to the 10 teachers who anchored learning and growing together in God for our children.

Our February Love and Service Day returned. During the Sunday School hour, parents and children met three mission partners, learned about each, and participated in giving or doing for each.

SPARK began for 4th, 5th, and 6th graders on Sunday mornings as a hybrid of Sunday School and Youth Fellowship. SPARK is a transition to a new model of ministry, focusing on the unique needs of tweens, especially as the pandemic has disrupted their connections with one another and our church family. The students were anchored by excellent Bible teachers and parent leaders who created the program around shared food, Bible study, service projects, group play, and music. SPARK learned to play chimes and led in worship.

An Advent Workshop for children and parents and The Journey to Bethlehem for the community gathered us together in joy and hope in December.

We transitioned into the new year with new Worship Bags, a return to the annual Easter Egg Hunt, a Pentecost Parade, and a week-long VBS with more than 50 kids.

Families supported a transition among the staff in June as they said farewell to Director of Family Ministry Laura Holbrook in June, and welcomed our new Covenant Pastor for Families, Rachel Sutphin.



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Youth Ministry

Youth @First Pres is a home away from home. The friendships are deep, and the loyalty to one another unparalleled. Matters of faith, religion, and current events are discussed together. As a witness to the gospel to love one another, our youth are committed to outreach opportunities within the larger Charlottesville community. During the 2021-22 program year, we continued to adjust ministry with youth as COVID continued to impact the traditional ways of gathering. The Pilgrimage to DC closed its ministry doors during COVID, so sadly we missed this year's annual outreach in DC. However, we did finally return to Montreat Youth Conference after a two-year hiatus. Our new Covenant Pastor for Families, Rachel Sutphin, led our group of ten youth, and the group is bonding already.

This upcoming year, the youth will decorate their own indoor space (formerly Room 216), complete with new couches and furniture. During the 2021-22 program year, however, the youth pivoted with ongoing construction and gathered for Sunday School in the new office conference room and also squeezed into David and Aram's office for Sunday Youth Group times (Our youth are flexible, in body, mind, and spirit.) Our class of six confirmands, led by their teacher Chris Dean, met in the library, even when there were no doors, over the course of six months.

No matter the weather, COVID, or on-site construction, our youth fellowshiped and studied Scripture regularly for "Wednesday Devos" at Bodo's or Panera and enthusiastically walked to the Downtown Mall for Sunday Youth Group (pizza and/or dumplings, and ice cream routine at Chap's).

Our youth continued their leadership roles in the Journey to Bethlehem during the Christmas season, with even some returning college students participating. We shopped for PACEM pillows and linens, participated in church-wide events such as the fall Mission Fair and the spring Mission Matters, and led a meaningful Youth Sunday as is our First Pres tradition.

With the various circumstances impacting our world, our youth have stayed the course and ran the race of being faithful together, learning how to love one another in times when the world's messages seem insurmountable. Youth @First Pres keep the faith with our team of committed adult mentors and teaching volunteers who have been a mentoring, caring, and prayerful presence. That's another note worthy to share: our youth **pray together**. Perhaps it is exactly this practice of faith that has sustained us during another pandemic year. Prayers no matter any pandemic—our youth are equipped, prayerful, and ready to keep on keeping on. For this, we give thanks and continue our ministry with, for, and by them.



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Adult Ministries

This past year has been a period of transition in our church and for Adult Ministries. In the fall, we began to move from exclusively Zoom Sunday School to in-person classes as the congregation began to gather more and more in person. To aid us in these efforts, we surveyed the church membership in January 2022 for their thoughts on Christian formation issues. You told us that:

Your most favored topics were Current Events from a Christian Perspective (91%); Bible Study (87%); Theology (82%); Comparative Religions (80%); and Biblical History (72%).

You favored in-person classes that utilized lecture either with Q&A or with facilitated discussion. You felt that having a Zoom option where practical was a good idea.

We began to implement these findings in our class offerings. We started an occasional series of classes on "Scripture in the Headlines." We offered a class on "The Kingship of David," which offered a Zoom option for those who were still worshipping from home. This summer we offered a revival of a familiar class, "Scripture of the Day" with our pastors leading us in an exploration of the Bible texts used in worship. We also offered classes on "Bumbling Through Faith" with Cynthia Rigby of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and on Kathleen Norris' book "Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith," (our last two Zoom only Sunday School classes, ending on October 5). In-person classes started as the fall term progressed and into 2023 including "Theology of Mission," "Christian Hospitality," and two Lenten series, "The Grace of Les Miserables" and "The Bad Boys of Easter." We also offered a report on FPC's Honduras mission trip during Sunday School and live-streamed the presentation for those who could not be present.

We continued to offer spiritual growth opportunities during the week both in-person and via Zoom. These included the Monday Morning Bible Study, the Brown Bag Bible Study, Lectio Divina, Weekly Women's Bible Study, and the return in April of the Men's Luncheon. We explored adding a new opportunity - a discussion group on the Video series "The Chosen" - and decided to begin it in September.

All these efforts were in service of our mission statement goals to provide an environment for: Learning Opportunities, Nurturing Experiences, Centering Activities, and Engaging the World.



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Walk Humbly with God

Worship God faithfully and joyfully, prayerfully seeking God's direction for our lives.

Worship was held throughout the year following COVID-19 protocols and CDC guidelines. We were able to safely provide in-person worship for most of the year. Worship was successfully transitioned inside, and social distancing measures were removed. Masking remained recommended inside during worship, per CDC recommendations. Both worship services were live-streamed, and the recording was available online.

Communion was transitioned from single-serve disposable cups to being served by intinction at both services. Officer of the Day, Ushers, and musicians (i.e., Praise Team, Choir, and Handbells) resumed regular duties in support of weekly worship services.

Hanging of the Greens resumed this year, allowing members of the congregation to participate in decorating the church for Advent and in singing Christmas carols. Journey to Bethlehem was held outside on December 21. Two Christmas Eve services were held inside: the 4:30 p.m. service was a family-friendly service with music led by the Praise Team, and the 8:00 p.m. service was the traditional Lessons & Carols service led by the Sanctuary Choir. Ash Wednesday service was held in person. During Holy Week, we offered in-person worship services on Maundy Thursday (with communion, in the Sanctuary), on Good Friday (the Sanctuary Choir presented Stainer's Crucifixion), and for two services on Easter Sunday (8:30 and 11:00 am). Welcome & Worship continued to engage volunteers for service roles in support of weekly worship services, and attendance remained steady.



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Music at First Pres

This year, the members of the Music Ministry continued to find ways to make music during the pandemic in praise of God. A highlight was the presentation of two major works by the choir, Gounod's *Requiem* for All Saints Day, and Stainer's *The Crucifixion* for Good Friday. The Praise Team faithfully served the early service each week, and all music groups benefited from the addition of new members. A full offering of Music on Park Street concerts helped to serve the community at large. It is hoped that the musical offerings were a source of joy and hope during another challenging year.



Do justice.

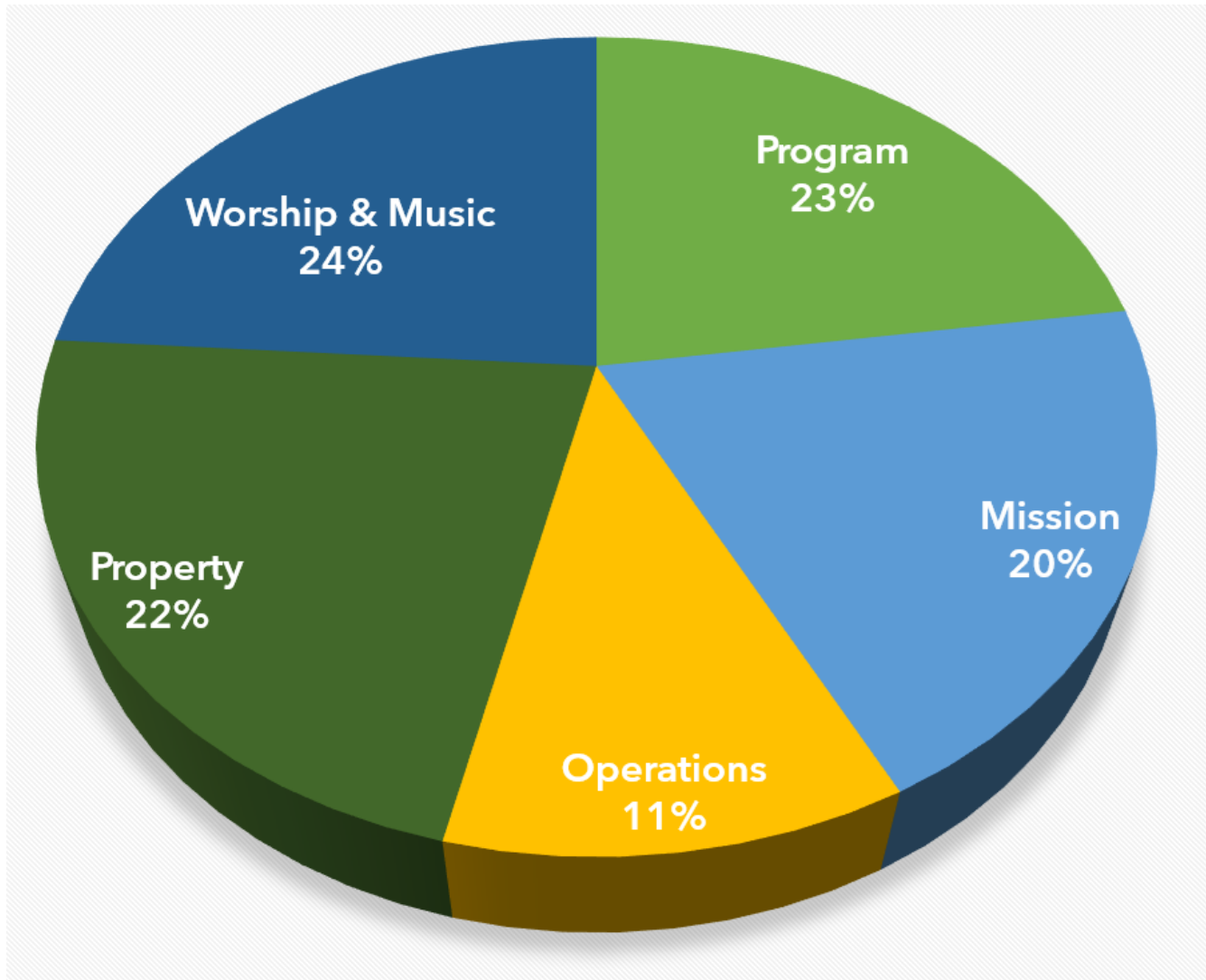


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First Presbyterian Church Expenditures



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Active Members

1,037

New Members

25

Baptisms

8

Average Worship Attendance

252

Faith Grow Here Pledges

204



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Staff



- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Rev. Dr. Aram Bae | Associate Pastor |
| Maria Brown | Preschool Director |
| Susan Carl | Office Administrator/Receptionist |
| Rev. Dr. David G. Forney | Pastor and Head of Staff |
| Laura Holbrook | Educator |
| Michael Joyce | Facilities Manager |
| Christine Kelly | Assistant Preschool Director |
| Nancy Lutz | Faith Community Nurse |
| Ashley Ravitsky | Assistant Director of Children’s Music |
| Ellen Roberson | Program Coordinator |
| Tracey Schoch | Communications Director |
| Jen Snook | Finance Director |
| Rev. Rachel Sutphin | Covenant Pastor for Families |
| David Thompson | Custodian |
| Dr. Jeremy Thompson | Director of Music |

Leadership

Class of 2022

Elders of the Session

- Christine Dean
- Amy Gillespie
- Rich Lutz
- Cathy Meaney
- Monika Mentzer
- Wayne Mullins
- David Schmidt

Board of Deacons

- Nancy Brewbaker
- Susan Carl
- Anna Farrell
- Thom Waite
- Missy Witherow

Class of 2023

Elders of the Session

- Judy Blair
- Robert Brewbaker
- Victoria Kean
- David Maloney
- Carolyn Pettit
- Reid Thompson

Board of Deacons

- Matt Benefield
- Jill Campbell
- Kara Chandeysson
- Lisa Dugan
- Lynn Ferguson
- Glenn Forloines
- Michael Loret

Class of 2024

Elders of the Session

- Charlie Chadwick
- John Dillery
- Linda Hitt
- Jocelyn Kelley
- Jolene Kidd
- Vasant Kumar
- Trip Walker

Board of Deacons

- Amy Richardson
- Johanna Chase
- Brent Isaacs
- Mark Sackson
- Brooke Lambert
- Sally Clarry
- Greg Ravitsky



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In Memory

Roger Barron

Myron Borsdam

Shirley Brown

Evelyn Conley

Dot Craig

Cam Eiseman

Ed Gatewood

Carleton Luck

Oran Oakey

Sandy Oelstrom

Cal Pennock

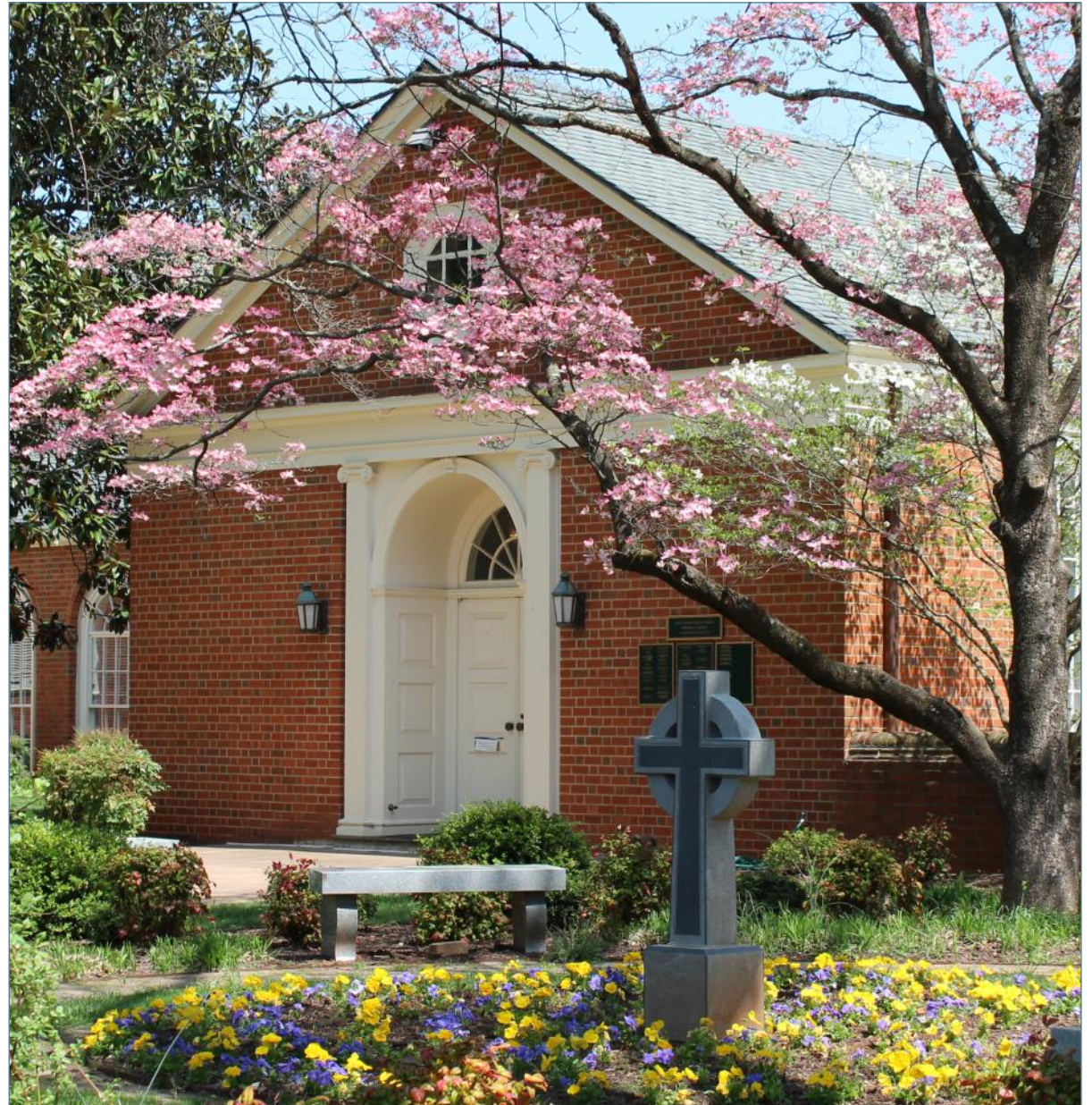
Bill Poole

Ann Quinn

Mary Evelyn Rogers

Sue Smith

Joan Standish



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