



# THE EXTENDED FAMILY

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## *Steve's Slant...*

It's that time of year again—when I offer my personal perspective on the State of Our Union here at Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church.

The short version of this account is that, despite facing significant challenges, our church remains one of the most vibrant and vital smaller churches in our Presbytery.

Please know this isn't just my overly cheerful opinion. Rather, Anne Rodgers, our Committee on Ministry liaison with Presbytery, and Bobbi White, our general executive here in the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, have both affirmed the vitality of our congregation. And after the big day we enjoyed with him on January 17<sup>th</sup>, I suspect that Heath Rada, the Moderator of PC(USA), might also concur with this view. (See page 5)

In case you're still pondering what these challenges we're facing are, exactly, we've touched on them before: changing attitudes toward religion in the wider culture; a remote location (if strikingly beautiful) here in the Swannanoa Valley; and an unusual context, sited, as we are, on the campus of a small liberal arts college. (To cite just one way this is a factor, I am periodically asked if we are a church that's open to the wider community, or if we are a college chapel that is primarily focused on serving the need of the campus community.)

These are not small challenges, and more than a few smaller churches, even ones that are located in more densely populated areas, or that are unmistakably traditional neighborhood churches, have struggled, and even failed, to keep their doors open in the face of them.

By God's grace, and thanks to the faithful, generous, prayerful, ongoing support and investments of our membership, we continue to defy this downward trend.

I have made the above points before, of course. But I repeat them again here because this is why we are investing so much time and energy in our forward planning process. We want not just to defy this trend. We want to rise above it so that we can remain a viable congregation well into the future.

For now, as measured by size, our numbers remains stable. Admittedly, we gained just one more member than we lost last year, but in light of current trends for churches of our size, maintaining a stable membership is itself a noteworthy achievement.

On the stewardship side, after one down year, we have returned to more solid financial footing. In 2015 our pledges fell well short of our challenge budget, such that we expected to transfer from our Memorial Fund over \$20,000 to meet our obligations. The good news is that we picked up several new pledges during the course of the year, which served to cut that deficit substantially.

The better news is that in 2016 our congregation responded wonderfully to the Challenge Budget and our pledges and other projected income sources are strong enough that we expect to transfer less than \$10,000 to balance the budget this year. Obviously we need to fully close this gap. But prayerfully, we expect this positive financial trend to continue.

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The Warren Wilson Book Group will meet at noon on Thursday February 11th in the Fellowship Hall . "The First Rule of Swimming " by Courtney Brkic will be discussed. Bring a sandwich. .. drinks and snacks will be provided.

(Submitted by Sandy Brauer)

The annual Pancake "Just for Fun" Supper (Shrove Tuesday) will be Tues. February 9 at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall. Enjoy pancakes, a variety of toppings, sausage, egg casseroles and a King Cake. A sign-up sheet will be in the Narthex. If you would like to contribute fruit or a casserole, indicate the item on the sign-up sheet.



Ash Wednesday

**ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE** We begin our Lenten journey with a contemplative service, including the imposition of ashes, on Wednesday, February 10, at 5:30 p.m. in the Chapel. Following the service, we will share a simple meal of bread and soup in Fellowship Hall.

**NEW FACES IN CHURCH FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT.** At the end of December, 2015 Tom Eller stepped down as Church Treasurer having replaced Bill Corbin as Disbursing Treasurer earlier in the year. We owe both of them our deep gratitude for the time and knowledge they have freely given to the church as they have overseen our finances during times of great change. As an indication of the increasing complexity of the world in which we live, what used to be taken care of by one and then two individuals will now be handled by four people. **Bob Gambrell**, a relatively new member of the church has agreed to be Disbursement Treasurer responsible for overseeing church finances and the disbursement of funds. He will also serve as church corporation treasurer. **Ray Stock** will continue as Receiving Treasurer, keeping up with all donations to the church. **Nan Woodard**, who started last October, is contract bookkeeper working about 20 hours a month taking care of day-to-day management of our finances. **Alisa White**, Assistant Treasurer volunteers to record and deposit donations every Sunday with help from John Laney and Mike Levi. When you have a chance, please thank all of these individuals for the behind the scene work they do that is essential to the successful operation of our ministries.



**PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS:** Tom Moore; Neil Satterfield; Bob Keener; Shirley Raines, staff at SVCM; Barbara Robinson, Jack Ballard's mother; Chuck & Lue Stephenson and Mary Moorrees.



Thanks to all of you, who have participated in the process of forward planning for our congregation. As you've heard before, there are several, maybe many, good reasons for doing this work: We want to be the people that God has created us to be, and led in the service to which the Spirit draws us. And, it's just good practice for keeping an organization alive and vital to make time for having a closer look at itself. Also, there are challenges all around us, which we can see for ourselves and read about in the news, challenges that can create obstacles for the vibrancy of any worship group. So again, thank you for being part of this. You can review that data and synopsis on our website or a hardcopy in Donna's office. As you know we recently held two follow-up sessions to ask for your additional response to the information harvested from the first eleven listening sessions. That information is being synthesized. We've asked Marylyn Huff to lead our Session retreat on February 5-6, to give even more in-depth consideration to what we've heard, so we ask for your prayers of support as Session continues this work. More information will be shared in the next Extended Family.

From the forward planning leadership team:

Sally Broughton, Mike Levi, Kathy Rouse, Eloise Murchison, Steve Runholt



## Mission Statement

Using the energy of the Super Bowl to mobilize youth in a united national effort to care for people in their local communities who are hungry and those in need.

**Vision Statement** Transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.

We believe: The idea for Souper Bowl of Caring is a gift from God

- Young people have the ability to serve and should be given opportunities to lead their communities in helping others
- Every dollar given by our congregation will be donated directly to a local charity dealing with hunger issues in our area (selected by WWPC session)
- People of all backgrounds and beliefs can work together
- Hunger and poverty have a negative impact on individuals and the communities in which they live, yet there is joy in serving and giving to those in need
- The excitement and energy surrounding the Super Bowl can be used to engage young people in service while producing lasting hope for all people

**We will be collecting for the Souper Bowl of Caring on Sunday, February 7, 2015.**

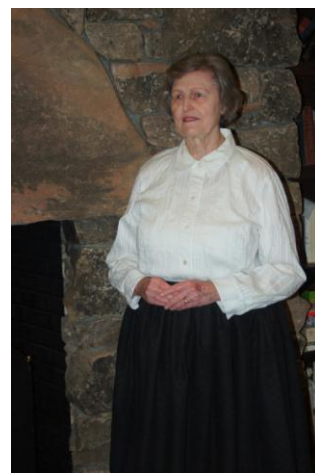
## Celebrating 90 Years of History



The first part of November was an exciting time for the congregation of our church as we prepared to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of our Church. First, Ernst Laursen who has spent his entire life here, except while attending NC State and serving in the Army, and has a wealth of information as well as artifacts, and Diana Sanderson, College archivist, created an historical exhibit in the Narthex.

At Just for Fun on November 11, Diana presented a most informative display and presentation about the founding of our church and its history. Participants had fun adding their information to the time line created by Kay Stockdale. This time line will be kept, and expanded by members, for our 100<sup>th</sup> celebration.

On Sunday, November 22, the exact founding date of the congregation, the worship service centered on our history through word and song. Following dinner in the Fellowship Hall, several members of the congregation portrayed earlier members. Kay Stockdale, dressed as Miss Elizabeth Williams, a founding member of the congregation and revered life-long English and Bible teacher, told of Miss Williams traveling by train from Ithaca, New York and dedicating her life to help educate the boys, and a few girls, from 1895 to 1924 and beyond retirement.



Ernst and Pat Laursen brought Ernst's parents Bernard, affectionately known as 'Fessor, who managed the farm and taught Danish gymnastics and singing games, and Kathrine who managed the dining hall with all student help. They both emigrated from Denmark, met and married at the Danish Lutheran Church in Boston, came to Warren Wilson in 1933 and devoted the rest of their lives to the Asheville Farm School, which became Warren Wilson College, our Church, and the students.

Rodney Lytle read "First Lady" and "Daddy B," poems that captured the essence of Dr. Arthur Bannerman, long time President of the College, and his "First Lady," Lucile Patton Bannerman who lived her entire life in the Swannanoa Valley and served so graciously as the College's first lady.

Billy Edd Wheeler wrote the poems in honor of his in-laws. Lucy Wheeler, granddaughter of the Bannermans, read her grandmother's words about serving the College as being like a janitor with no keys. Dr. Bannerman came to the Asheville Farm School in 1928.



Dennis Stockdale, complete with guitar, reminisced about Dr. Henry Jensen, affectionally known as Doc Jensen. Dr. Jensen, a graduate of Harvard University, and his wife Thekla arrived on campus in 1933 for one year, and like so many others, spent the rest of their lives here working diligently for the students in so many capacities. He served longest as the Academic Dean.

Bill Mosher read the words of Beverly Ohler that so thoughtfully captured the life of Fred Ohler, long time religion teacher and minister of the Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church. Fred and Beverly worked as a team to incorporate the arts into the religious life and thoughts of the members of the College and the Congregation. When asked why he stayed so long in one place, Fred expressed the thought of so many who dedicated their adult lives to the College and Church. "I've stayed in one place, but by staying, have been to many places, preached to different congregations, taught thousands of students, been a part of so much growth and change – that made it possible." And as Beverly concluded, "It was imperative that we grow and change and become – along with the College and Church." May the Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church and College Chapel continue to grow and change and become as we seek to do God's "will on earth as it is in Heaven."

Many thanks to the members of the Anniversary Celebration committee for their hard work and devotion: Ernest Laursen, John Laney, Kay Stockdale, Babs Gardinier, Kristen Williams, and Diana Sanderson.



Sunday, January 17, was a special day in the life of Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church.

At our 11:00 service, we welcomed Moderator Heath Rada as our guest preacher. Bobbi White, the general executive of the Presbytery of WNC also helped lead the service.

Following worship, we enjoyed what Heath described as "an enormous covered-dish lunch", with visitors from the Asheville Islamic Center as our esteemed guests. Huge and heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped with set up, who brought food and who helped with clean up. This was an important part of this special day.

At 2:00 Moderator Rada and Imam Mohamed Taha of the Asheville Islamic Center led a public forum centered on building bridges of peace, understanding and friendship between our two faith traditions and our two faith communities.

Some four hundred people – members of local Presbyterian churches, members of Warren Wilson College, and members of the larger community – attended.

As Pastor Steve said to a reporter from the Citizen-Times, "We see this as a first step in what we hope will be an ongoing conversation, and an ongoing relationship, with our Muslim neighbors."

## **ANOTHER VERY GOOD YEAR WITH HABITAT AND A SPECIAL YEAR AHEAD**

Once again Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church members and friends helped make Habitat for Humanity's mission a success in 2015 with donations that helped pay for Presbyterian/Methodist House # 24 in West Asheville, and with 174 hours of volunteer labor in August, September and October.

In 2014 WWPC led all churches from both denominations for volunteer labor hours, and our total hours rose slightly in 2015.

Work began on Aug. 6 when five WWPC members, the first construction volunteers on house # 24, installed the subfloor in one day even though they were interrupted by mid-day rain.

Our volunteers were back at work at the site six more times by early October, and the house (below) was finished at the end of the year.



Catalina Martinez, who will be the homeowner, along with her son, Raul, attended our worship service on September 27 and expressed their thanks for our support. Then a special offering for building materials was received and totaled more than \$1,600.

Closing is scheduled for Feb. 18, and Catalina will also participate in a dedication event at Habitat's offices that day for her house and three others in the neighborhood.

On behalf of Habitat, Catalina and Raul, a very special "thank you" goes to the following people for donating a day, or more, to help build Presbyterian/Methodist House # 24:

Sally Broughton, Genevieve Butler, Don Collins, Anne Dale, Jamie Dale, Andrew Daugherty

Derron Daugherty, Bob Gambrell, Larry Griswold, Ned Guardenier, Bill Heck, Toby Ives

Sally McDuffie, Georgena Millar, Ken Murchison, Kathy Rouse, Steve Runholt, Jerry Vaneman

Another very special "thank you" also goes to everyone who contributed to the special offering.

## A SPECIAL YEAR AHEAD

The Habitat for Humanity house the Presbyterian and Methodist denominations will sponsor and build this year will be extra special because it will be # 25.

Construction of the final house in the Hudson Hills neighborhood where we have worked for the past two years will start in April. At that time Habitat will return to Asheville's traditionally African-American Shiloh community where it has built 42 homes in the past, and plans to build 15 more this year and next. Work on Presbyterian/Methodist # 25 house at Shiloh is scheduled to begin in late August. \_\_\_\_\_

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### *Steve's Slant continued...*

But that's just the quantitative side of our life together. Qualitatively, I think you can feel for yourself that we are a lively church.

We continue to see growth in the number of kids who come forward during the children's time on Sunday morning. And of course, the children are here because their parents are here. Which in turn means that while our membership remains stable, we are steadily getting younger as a congregation—an absolutely essential condition if we hope to remain a viable congregation into the long-term future.

And from Sunday school classes, to Just for Fun programs to our outreach programs to our new Back Porch Sessions alternative worship service, our programs are well planned, well supported and well attended.

I am grateful for all of these things, not just because they point to our vitality as a congregation, but because it means our members and, I hope, our visitors and guests, are being fed, nourished and cared for here.

But I am perhaps most impressed by the breadth and depth of participation we've seen in our Forward Planning Process. The care with which the process has been planned, and the investment our members have made in response, signifies our shared commitment to discerning who God is calling us to be, and what God is calling us to do, as we move into our future.

Of course we have also experienced some difficult losses in the past year. Beloved friends, faithful members, have passed away, or moved away, and they simply cannot be replaced, and we will continue to miss them. And Steve Williams' departure at the end of this academic year will be felt, and mourned, for some time to come.

But by God's grace, and by your faithful, generous, prayerful, ongoing support for and investments in our life together, we have cause to believe we will remain a strong, vibrant congregation for today, and one with a bright, hopeful future as we look to tomorrow.

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**“One day our descendants will think it incredible that we paid so much attention to things like the amount of melanin in our skin or the shape of our eyes or our gender instead of the unique identities of each of us as complex human beings.”**

—Franklin Thomas, activist, philanthropist, and former president of the Ford Foundation



At Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church we are mothers and fathers, single and married, gay and straight, young and old, black and white, prosperous and poor, uncertain and sure, broken and whole. We are the many faces of humanity-yet as a community of faith, we are committed in our diversity to be one in Christ!

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# *The Extended Family* ◻