

First Presbyterian Church, Charlotte – a Racial History

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Since its founding in 1821, evidence supports that First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte has always tried to act consistent with the will of God. The Gospel was consistently preached, members were enlightened by God's Word, many people in need were helped in the city and beyond, and the city has benefited from FPC's leadership. First Presbyterian Church has always tried to follow Jesus Christ.

Generally, FPC pastors have been revered by members and the community. They have been moral leaders of Charlotte. And they have worked tirelessly to translate God's Word and Christ's teachings into action.

It's also clear that the leaders and members of FPC, as human beings, are susceptible to a range of temptations and urgings. And that they are part of a larger society that also influences their behavior. Looking back, this is particularly evident when it comes to race. In his landmark 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois famously stated "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line". Indeed, it was, as it had been in the 19th century. And it continues well into the twenty first century. Christian churches have played a major role in that history, not always in a positive way.

This report attempts to look at First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte and its role in the issue of race over its first 115 years (1821-1936) and the Civil Rights era of the 1960s and early '70s. The life of FPC covered a number of racial time periods – slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction and relative freedom for those newly freed, strong white supremacy backlash, Jim Crow laws, terrorism against Blacks (e.g., lynching), World Wars and their racial effects, the Civil Rights era, and strong moves toward justice (Brown vs. Board of Education, Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act). Each time some progress was achieved there was a white backlash clawing back some of that progress.

We did much of this work as part of the "Racial Justice Task Force." This group was charged with looking at FPC finances, personnel practices, and the facility from an "antiracist" perspective. We worked on the facility segment... which came to focus on sanctuary plaques honoring several of our previous pastors. What role did these pastors play in racial justice? What was happening in the country, state, and city during the time they served? What responsibility did they have to recognize when society and other church leaders were not acting consistently with God's Word?

We spent countless hours in the church archives, reading old Session minutes and other material there. We read many texts about the racial history of the city, state and country. We studied approaches of Princeton Theological Seminary and other institutions. Finally, we developed and shared our own conclusions and recommendations, which were approved by Session and then implemented.

Summary of Principles and Recommendations

The work is deeply rooted in the biblical words and presence of Jesus Christ. We attempted to look at history through the lens of African Americans of both the past and present. Our Christian charge is to "love our neighbors as ourselves," which means to work to see this history from the African American point of view. Our charge is that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

We tried to be guided by a number of principles developed by Princeton Theological Seminary when they researched their racial history, found on pages 17-18 of this report... among them, "One of the central challenges of historical work involves locating people and issues in their own context and not seeing them as contemporaries of the researcher or the reader. This, of course, does not mean that judgments cannot be made about what people did or did not do."

Ultimately, our objective is to make our church more welcoming and equitable today.

Our basic conclusion was, "we believe FPC has essentially mirrored privileged white society, giving moral cover to white supremacy."

The recommendations that were acted on came from the model of "truth, confession, repentance and repair":

- Truth: Share this history with the congregation in thoughtful/meaningful ways.
- Confession: In the context of our Christian faith, confess our moral failings unequivocally, not as superior agents casting judgment on the past, but as sinners likewise in need of God's grace.
- Repentance: FPC consciously repents of our racial past
- Repair:
 - Relocate the eight sanctuary plaques and five pew markers to another location where their historical context can be explained: they were moved to a new History Hallway, and every senior pastor was included along with a short bio and photo, with links to more substantial information.
 - Add a new statement that includes confession of our past sins and a statement of repentance. Recognize specific people who were enslaved at FPC: this was done via a "Repentance and Resurrection" statement displayed in an art piece in the History Hallway.

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Note: there is a companion PowerPoint file to this report containing photos.

Church founding through the Civil War

James Baldwin, 1964: *“The people who settled the country had a fatal flaw. They could recognize a man when they saw one. They knew he wasn’t anything else but a man, but since they were Christian and since they had already decided that they came here to establish a free country, the only way to justify the role this chattel was playing in one’s life was to say that he was not a man. If he wasn’t, then no crime had been committed. That lie is the basis of our present trouble.”*

In the pre-Civil War times, slavery was very common in Mecklenburg County. In the 1850s, about a quarter of the population were slave holders and this group held considerable power over the society as a whole. The slave holders included a small number of wealthy planters and townsmen and a larger group of medium level farmers and townsmen¹. It’s safe to assume that many of our church members were slave holders.

In his book, The History of Mecklenburg County From 1740 to 1900, published in 1902, church member J.B. Alexander has chapters on “Negros Before the War Between the States” and “Patrol in Slavery.” Here are a few excerpts from those chapters:

- The price in the early times for a grown negro, either man or woman, did not exceed three hundred dollars; but before the Nineteenth century was half over, the price of a good looking man or woman would range from \$1,000 to \$1,800. The market price varied according to the price of sugar, rice, tobacco and cotton.²
- The affection that existed between master and slave was wonderful indeed. It was common when the white children should be sick, for the negroes to show a great deal of solicitude for the little one’s welfare.³
- It is characteristic of the negro to be happy when well fed, well clothed and not oppressed with over work.⁴
- The negroes in the time of slavey were emphatically religious people. Often carried away by their emotions, they were easily thrown into a state of enthusiasm...⁵
- It soon became the custom to sell all the bad negroes; in fact, the good people of a neighborhood would not tolerate a bad character at home, either man or woman. One who was smart and given to crime, had a most pernicious effect on those with whom he came in contact; hence he was promptly sold out of the State.⁶
- It was to prevent negroes from holding meetings at night and on Sundays for planning mischief, that our county courts organized the patrol to keep the negroes from congregating at places unbeknown to their masters.⁷

¹ Sorting Out the New South City, by Thomas W. Hanchett, 2020; page 18.

² The History of Mecklenburg County From 1740 to 1900, by J. B. Alexander, 1902, p. 125.

³ Ibid. p. 126

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. p. 127.

⁶ Ibid. p. 329.

⁷ Ibid.

We date the founding of the Presbyterian Church in Charlotte⁸ to 1821 and identify our first pastor as Rev. Robert Hall Morrison. The church had five pastors before and during the Civil War – Robert Hall Morrison, Abner Johnson Leavenworth, Cyrus Johnston, Arnold DeWells Miller and Alexander Sinclair. The recorded history is mostly very positive (with a possible exception of Rev. Leavenworth who “left his charge and left our bounds in what we regard as an irregular way.”⁹) It was stated that Rev. Cyrus Johnston “...was fearless in denouncing immorality in every form.”¹⁰

During the pre-Civil War time period, there are several mentions of enslaved people and servants in the Session minutes (note – these are hand written and often hard to read):

- July 14 (not sure of year) – Maria, colored woman belonging to Rev. Cyrus Johnston was examined as to her experimental religion: the result being satisfactory to the members she was unanimously admitted to the church membership. (Rev. Johnston, mentioned just above, was pastor of FPC from 1846 – 1855)
- Nov. 29, 1851 – Joe a slave formally the property of James Irwin was received on certificate from Philadelphia Church.
- April 11, 1854 – Sophia, a servant of Joseph H. White was received as a member by certificate from Rocky River Church.
- July 10, 1855 – The Session then attended to the examination of Charity, as servant girl of Mr. Irvin of So. Ca. but released (?) to this town to live and without a certificate. The girl was then admitted as a member.
- August 26, 1855 – The Session then attended to the examination of Charles, a servant belonging to the estate of the late Rev.(?) John Williamson and then by a unanimous vote received him as a member.
- July 8, 1856 – Alexander a servant of Miss Nancy (?) Henderson was received as a member by Certificate from Mallard Creek Church.

There were also references to “colored” Christian education:

- A class of colored persons have received instructions regularly on the Sabbath and a few sermons were delivered especially to the blacks during the past summer.
- 1859 Session minutes: Feb.7 Report to Presbytery – “A colored Sunday School was started in the course of the winter, now has about 60 scholars.” Evidently the colored people’s classes, referred to off and on since 1851, had been allowed to lapse, and this was a new beginning.
- Report to the Congregation, Feb. 12, 1860 – Deacons have expressed their desire that the pastor shall preach to the colored people, and the Session decided to begin on the 4th Sabbath in February, and have a sermon to the colored people once a fortnight.

Although slavery was very common in the pre-Civil War times, it’s worth noting that there was also a knowledge of its moral hazard. In 1818, The Presbyterian Church General Assembly

⁸ The title, First Presbyterian Church was not used until Second PC was founded in 1873

⁹ A History of First Presbyterian Church 1821-1983 by Elizabeth Williams, p. 19

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 21

report condemned slavery as “a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God.”¹¹ But as it elaborated on this statement, it was not as focused and no actions were identified.

Robert Hall Morrison (1798 – 1889; pastor at Charlotte’s Presbyterian Church 1827-1834)

The first pastor of FPC and founder / first President of Davidson College was a leading church leader in the 19th century. This section provides an overview of his life, focusing on slavery, based on three sources: The Davidson College report on race and slavery, a book on the history of the Presbytery of Concord, and a Virginia Tech Masters Thesis on Morrison and slavery/secession. Below are some findings:

- The Davidson College Commission on race and slavery provides a timeline as part of historical facts about Davidson. In 1835 it reads, “Concord Presbytery authorized a committee chaired by Robert Hall Morrison, a slave owner, to raise funds for the establishment of a manual labor school. Farmers and merchants in central North Carolina and northern South Carolina, many of whom owned enslaved people, pledged \$30,900 in support of the establishment of the school.” It also mentions other connections to slavery in the early years of the college.¹²
- Morrison was active in the formation of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. His paper, presented on July 10, 1861 to the Concord Presbytery, was amended and adopted as follows:
"Whereas the late General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, convened in Philadelphia, passed Resolutions demanding all ministers and Churches to encourage, strengthen and obey a Government now seeking by unjust and unconstitutional means to destroy our liberties, pillage our country and desolate our homes and altars - and whereas we owe allegiance to a different Government for whose safety and prosperity we are bound to pray and labor - and whereas we are thus forced by all that we hold dear on earth to seek a new organization, identified as we believe with the interests of Religion and Patriotism; Therefore, Resolved 1st That this Presbytery approve of the plan of holding a convention composed of delegates from all the Presbyteries in the Confederate States to adopt measures necessary to form a New General Assembly...¹³
- The Virginia Tech Masters Thesis, “Religion, Slavery and Secession: Reflections on the Life and Letters of Robert Hall Morrison”¹⁴ is a 54-page examination of Morrison’s life and his stance on slavery and secession. Below is a brief summary.

¹¹ Princeton Theological Seminary and Slavery historical timeline - <https://slavery.ptsem.edu/historical-timeline/>

¹² Report to President Carol Quillen from the Commission on Race and Slavery, download from <https://www.davidson.edu/about/commission-race-and-slavery/commission-report-and-initial-actions>

¹³ *Confronted by Challenge – A History of the Presbytery of Concord 1795 – 1973* by Neill Rodeick McGreachy

¹⁴ “Religion, Slavery and Secession: Reflections on the Life and Letters of Robert Hall Morrison,” Masters Thesis by Sara Marie Eye, 2003, Virginia Tech <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/34049>

- The thesis covers Morrison's life and his many contradictions. He struggled with the morality of slavery, but could not find any good solutions. Slavery had always been a part of his life, and he knew how entangled it was in the culture.
- In an 1822 letter to his cousin, he wrote, "I have long looked upon Slavery as a traffic in itself detestable and justified by no principle either of nations or of nature. Their condition is truly one of a most lamentable nature."
- Morrison married Mary Graham, who was from a wealthy family, in 1824.
- Complicating things for him, his wife inherited a sizeable estate in 1836; they became members of the planter elite class, including as many as 66 enslaved people.
- Slavery had always been a part of Morrison's life. He was a slave holder before Mary Graham received a part of her father's land and slave population. In 1821, Morrison himself inherited a slave, Mary, from his father. In 1824, Mary, a year older than Morrison, married Bagwell, and Morrison then purchased Bagwell. Mary and Bagwell produced four sons.
- He pastored several Presbyterian churches, and was instrumental in starting Davidson College as a means of training clergy for men coming out of North Carolina colleges.
- Morrison and his wife had a large family, which was very involved in the Civil War – three of his sons-in-law were Confederate generals (including Stonewall Jackson).
- The thesis ends with, "Rather than eulogize or condemn Morrison, this analysis of his life and letters portrays a human portrait of Morrison—a flawed man who made great achievements in education and religion, a man vulnerable to his fears in a turbulent time in the nation's history."

In his 2022 book, What Kind of Christianity? A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church, Columbia Seminary Professor William Yoo gives a scathing account of the Presbyterian church's involvement with slavery and racism. Some quotes from the book:

- "Where was the Church and the Christian believers when Black women and Black men, Black boys and Black girls, were being raped, sexually abused, lynched, assassinated, castrated and physically oppressed? What kind of Christianity allowed white Christians to deny basic human rights and simple dignity to Blacks, these same rights which had been given to others without question?" – Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon, the first African American woman ordained in the PCUSA.¹⁵
- Presbyterians in the US were one of the most pro-slavery of all religious groups.¹⁶
- After 1830, white slave-owning Presbyterians and other proponents of slavery responded to the growth of the abolitionist movement with a ferocious flurry of literature in periodicals, pamphlets, and books to justify Black enslavement. One

¹⁵ What Kind of Christianity? A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church, Columbia Seminary Professor William Yoo, p. 1

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 21

historian estimates that white clergy produced “almost half of all defenses of slavery published in America,” and Presbyterian pastors were responsible for more proslavery writings than clergy from any other Christian tradition.

In the southern states, it was difficult for a white Presbyterian pastor to be anything other than proslavery. The few who were note... were forced to leave their ministries.¹⁷

Post Civil War through 1900

We usually think of Reconstruction as the period between the end of the Civil War and the end of military occupation of the South in 1877. But that generalization is misleading, particularly in the case of North Carolina. It obscures a protracted struggle for racial equality and political democracy that spanned more than three decades, from ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment and the abolition of slavery in 1865 to Black disenfranchisement and the reestablishment of white rule at the end of the nineteenth century. During this long era of Reconstruction, freedmen and a disaffected white minority forged political alliances on the basis of common economic interests and shared understandings of the rights of citizenship. In the late 1860s and again in the late 1890s, they used the ballot box to win control of both the General Assembly and the governor’s office. Once in power, they reorganized state and local government according to democratic principles, liberalized election law, and expanded public investment in the welfare of fellow citizens. Together these reformers sought to build up a new order from the ruins of a society that for the better part of two centuries had been firmly anchored in the institution of racial slavery.¹⁸

In May 1868, voters ratified the [inclusive] constitution... and gave the biracial Republican Party six of North Carolina’s seven congressional seats and control of more than two-thirds of the seats in the state legislature. In North Carolina the percentage of whites who crossed the color line and made common cause with former bondsmen was larger than in any other southern state.¹⁹

Between 1877 and 1900, forty-three black lawmakers served in the state house of representatives, eleven were elected to the state senate, and four held office in the U.S. House of Representatives.²⁰

During the time period between 1865 and 1900 there was a continuing conflict between wealthier white conservatives (Democrats) and the alliances between less affluent whites and freed slaves. Blacks made significant progress in many areas, including education and government representation. At different times, conservative whites fought back, such as with the Ku Klux Klan, which perpetrated horrific violence throughout the state, but particularly in

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 158

¹⁸ *Fragile Democracy, the Struggle Over Race and Voting Rights in North Carolina*, by James Leloudis and Robert Korstad (professors at UNC and Duke, respectively), 2020, page 5

¹⁹ Ibid. p 10

²⁰ Ibid. p 12

the Piedmont (there is evidence the Klan met in our church basement in the 1870s; see page 9). During a period when conservatives (i.e., Democrats) were on top politically, church member Zebulon Vance was elected governor (1876).²¹

In the 1890s, the alliance between blacks and less affluent whites was known as the Fusion movement (this included the Republican Party in which were the bulk of the state's African American voters). A backlash was led by the white elite, who searched for a wedge issue. In 1898, the Charlotte Observer noted, "The Ex-Governor says That White Supremacy is the Issue."²²

Over the next months, Democrats hammered away relentlessly at the theme of black evil, white unity. The statewide election of 1898 showed the effectiveness of the racial drumbeat. In 1900, the Democratically controlled state legislature passed the disfranchisement amendment, which added a literacy test in order to cast a vote. For the next 60 years, due to similar laws instituted throughout the region, the Democratic Party would reign without serious challenge in the South.²³ The period of Jim Crow had started.

First Presbyterian Church was almost certainly part of the town elite, supporting the Democratic Party.

After the war, a number of former Confederate soldiers worshiped at FPC, including Lt. General D. H. Hill (a ruling elder from 1867-1876), and General Rufus Barringer. They were brothers-in-law; their wives were daughters of Rev. Robert Hall Morrison (Mrs. Stonewall Jackson was also a member of the church). Barringer was an example of a leader at that time who was sympathetic toward the newly freed slaves, bucking the culture of his peers. There are many possible reasons for this, including the probability he fathered two sons with an enslaved woman before the war, with some evidence he continued to occasionally support them afterward. He also interacted with northern soldiers (and had a brief meeting with President Lincoln) as a prisoner of war at the end of the war. His support for the freed slaves probably had personal moral aspects, informed by these past experiences.

Barringer supported the Republican party, which was the party of Lincoln and the party of former enslaved people, and he supported Reconstruction. He ran for state lieutenant governor as the Republican Party candidate in 1880 and lost.

The following describes a famous incident between brothers-in-law Rufus Barringer and D.H. Hill at FPC, as described in a biography of Barringer²⁴:

²¹ Ibid. Chapter 1

²² *Sorting Out the New South, Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*, Second Edition by Thomas W. Hanchett, 2020, pages 81-85

²³ Ibid. pages 86-87

²⁴ *Fighting for General Lee, Confederate General Rufus Barringer and the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade*, by Sheridan R. Barringer, 2016, p. 254

“Hill and Barringer and their families worshipped at First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. Bishop Cheshire and Mary Alves Long remembered that the caustic and temperamental Hill refused to serve Rufus at communion. In accordance with proper procedure, Hill should have passed the elements to Barringer. Not surprisingly, church elder Hill considered Republicans “unfit to sit at the Lord’s Table.” He refused to serve Barringer the bread and wine, passing them instead to another person, who in turn passed them to Barringer. Angered by such treatment, Barringer resigned from the First Presbyterian Church in 1874 and began attending the new Second Presbyterian Church²⁵ of Charlotte. Hill fully embraced the “Lost Cause,” even in defeat, and never supported Reconstruction.”

This incident is also included in the history of Second Presbyterian Church Charlotte, and in Elizabeth Williams’ History of First Presbyterian Church of 1983.

One chapter in church member J. B. Alexander’s 1902 history of Mecklenburg County²⁶ is titled, “Reconstruction Times in Mecklenburg.” It was described as a very bleak time. Below are a few excerpts:

- With the end of the war came reconstruction. The county of Mecklenburg never saw trouble before or since equal to the annoyance we were made to endure for seven years. Immediately on the disbanding of our armies, the Federal soldiers, six thousand strong, camped in and around Charlotte, to keep our people quiet.
- ... for a “consideration” in the way of a private fee, the captain would grant the employer of negroes permission to use a “persuader” to increase the amount of work gotten out of the freed man. The negroes had never enjoyed freedom before, and if they had not been led astray by unprincipled white men, they would have listened to their best friends, their former masters.
- All the leading white men of the State were disfranchised. All who would not take the oath to support the Emancipation Proclamation, setting the negroes free, and giving them the right of suffrage, were prohibited from voting... This exceedingly bitter pill was forced upon us, when we were in this helpless condition.
- A man by the name of Ed Bizzell was mayor at this time, and had his office in the old frame building on West Trade Street nearly opposite the Presbyterian Church... The man Bizzell, the mayor at the time – a northern man – was a fit representative of the party that was preying upon what was left of the once glorious county of Mecklenburg. He had a negro wife and family of mulatto children! A chief ruler, where he was not fit to serve.
- Within a few months after the Federal soldiers took charge of the town and county, they organized the Loyal League, a preliminary to the Republican Party. All over the county meetings were held at night to encourage negroes to join... It went from bad to worse until the “Ku Klux” was organized for self-protection.

A major event at FPC in August, 1889 was the funeral of Stonewall and Anna Jackson’s only daughter, Julia. She died of typhoid fever at age 26. The earliest known photograph of the

²⁵ Second Presbyterian church is now, after a merger with Trinity PC, Covenant PC.

²⁶ *The History of Mecklenburg County from 1740 to 1900*, by J. B. Alexander, 1902, p. 360-365

interior of the church shows her coffin in the front of the sanctuary, with a large Confederate flag behind it, stacked rifles on either side, and Stonewall's sword beneath it. The flag had draped Stonewall's body after he died.

Founding of the Colored Presbyterian Church of Charlotte

The former slaves who worshiped in the Charlotte Presbyterian Church were asked to worship in the basement, perhaps because of lack of space in the sanctuary as troops returned. Although some freed people continued to worship there (probably connected to white families they continued to serve), many soon left the church to form the Colored Presbyterian Church of Charlotte. This church is the predecessor of First United Presbyterian Church (FUPC). There is a well-known story that newly freed Mrs. Catherine Hayes called on her fellow freed people to "come down out of the gallery to the ground floor..." which led to their departure. They were aided by missionaries from the northern Presbyterian Church in finding a building. Their name was changed to Seventh Street Presbyterian Church when they built their own beautiful sanctuary at Seventh and College in 1894-6 (which is their current location and current sanctuary). In 1967 Seventh Street Presbyterian Church merged with Brooklyn Presbyterian Church – when the Brooklyn church was torn down for Urban Renewal – to become First United Presbyterian Church.

Appendix C provides information which was used during the 150th anniversary of First United Presbyterian Church in 2016.

The *All Black Governing Bodies* 1993 report provides some insights on conditions at the time:²⁷ ... during American slavery there was little need for special evangelistic work among Negroes apart from the normal duties of the average pastor. The slaves were members of the white churches and received the same message at the same time as the other members of the church, and the pastoral oversight from the session as other members received.

How the same message and oversight could apply to enslaved and masters whose situations were totally different, if not inimical, is hard to understand. It was such a lack of sensitivity that led Southerners to expect Blacks to submit to their former status of inferiority in order to continue to worship with their former masters.

Black ministers, understandably, demanded equality and were, therefore, disposed to leave the southern church and affiliate with the northern church, which was establishing separate Black congregations. The northern church declared the South to be missionary territory and sent large numbers of teachers, evangelists, and missionaries to work among the freedmen, especially in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and to a lesser extent in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Tennessee.

²⁷ *All-Black Governing Bodies*, A Report of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Approved by the 205th General Assembly (1993), p. 25

Findings about FPC pastors during this time period:

Rev. Arnold DeWilles Miller, pastor for much of the post-Civil War era (from 1855-57 and 1865-1892), was likely complicit with the Klan meeting at the church (see page 13), and with many church members' opposition to Reconstruction, to the detriment of the freed enslaved. Miller was described as a "violent secessionist," and "it was understood that he has always believed in the Divine origin of slavery."²⁸

John Alexander Preston, pastor from 1893-1896, did seem supportive of African Americans. He developed a reputation for openness, giving an "eloquent and timely" address at Biddle University (later Johnson C Smith University). He preached at a revival at the Seventh Street Church (today's FUPC).²⁹ There is a stained-glass window in the FPC sanctuary in Preston's memory.

Dr. James Robert Howerton, pastor from 1897-1906, is quoted in the Charlotte Observer in an address to Synod, "The negro is our neighbor, and we should love our neighbors as ourselves... If other sections had left us alone, by the end of the nineteenth century the rising tide of civilization would have stamped out slavery without the loss of a drop of blood.... We will take care of the negro. We will give him justice. The way to draw a line between the races is for there to be no mixture of a white man with any man with even one drop of negro blood in his veins. We cannot afford to have a yielding of any degree. The separation of the races must always continue."³⁰

1901 – 1936

The Democrats' triumph in 1900 cleared the way for a new order characterized by one-party government, racial segregation, cheap labor, and grinding poverty. Having regained control of government, black subjugation was at the top of the Democrats' agenda. Over time they developed an elaborate regime of law and custom that came to be known as Jim Crow, a name taken from the blackface characters in 19th century minstrel shows. It was a system of power and plunder that concentrated wealth and opportunity in the hands of the few and mobilized racial animosity in defense of that accumulation. Laws were crafted that separated seating for blacks and whites on trains and streetcars, drinking fountains, toilets, and cemeteries. Segregation also divided most forms of civic space – including courthouses, neighborhoods, and public squares. By 1910, Charlotte had been thoroughly "sorted" along lines of race and class.³¹ This lasted, in different forms, until the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts of the 1960s.

²⁸ Charlotte Democrat, August 13, 1880

²⁹ Charlotte Observer, March 14, 1894; Charlotte Observer, "Colored Presbyterians," March 19, 1895

³⁰ Charlotte Observer, November 13, 1903, p. 6

³¹ Leloudis & Korstad, p. 27-28.

One of the most memorable events ever held at FPC was the funeral of Mrs. Stonewall Jackson on March 25, 1915. The Charlotte Observer noted, “Whole City Unites in Services at First Presbyterian Church.” It was highly orchestrated including her lying in state at her home near the church; thousands attended.³²

In the 1923 “A Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church” by Mrs. J.A. Fore, Historian of Auxiliary, one paragraph states:

“The Ku Klux Klan of the seventies, an organization that saved the Anglo-Saxon race in the South, held its councils in the basement of the Church, where they were summoned by the signal – a weird whistle. As many of the adherents of the Klan were members of the Church, it is evident they met at this place with the sanction of the Session. The writer was personally told this fact by the late Major Brenizer, by the late Mr. W.E. Shaw, Mr. William Wilson and Mrs. Margaret Springs Kelly.”³³

This entry would indicate that the Klan met in the church in the 1870s, and it was sanctioned by the church leaders. And, it would indicate that it was reasonable to say that the Klan “saved the Anglo-Saxon race” in 1923 by a prominent church member. It’s an indication that FPC was going along with society norms of Jim Crow. (also see note - ³⁴)

On Sunday afternoon, November 22, 1936, FPC celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (the Southern/Confederate Presbyterian Church). At the same time, the 105th anniversary of FPC was celebrated (using 1832 as the organizing date). During the service, the brass markers on pews honoring five former members of the church were dedicated – John Irwin, Mrs. Stonewall Jackson, Lt. Gen. D.H. Hill, C.S.A., Zebulon Baird Vance, and Rev. Walter M. Moore.³⁵

This celebration and pew marker dedication would indicate the continued reverence given to Civil War leaders associated with the church (Confederate heavyweights Mrs. Stonewall Jackson, Governor and Senator Zebulon Vance and Lt. Gen. D.H. Hill). Note that on February 8, 2021, the Charlotte City Council voted to rename West Hill St, Stonewall St, and Zebulon Avenue.³⁶ The pew markers are now displayed in the History Hallway.

³² Charlotte Daily Observer, March 26, 1915, p. 1

³³ Mrs. J. A. Fore, *A Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte*, published in the Charlotte Observer, October 21, 1923., p. 6

³⁴ There emerged a controversy in 1949 about whether the Klan had meet in the church basement – a dispute between church members Victor Shaw (who was Charlotte’s mayor), and Miss Julia Alexander (historian, politician); Shaw said his father joined the Klan at the church, and Alexander disputed that it happened. See Charlotte Observer articles on 12/15/1949 p. 1, 12/22/49, p. 21, and 12/23/49, p. 19.

³⁵ Elizabeth Williams, *A History of First Presbyterian Church 1821-1983*, p. 192.

³⁶ <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article249117385.html>

1937 - 1972

We did not closely examine material between 1937 and 1960. We did examine Session minutes from 1960 – 1972, looking for references to the Civil Rights activity taking place across the country. (As a reference, Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" was written in April, 1963 and he was assassinated in April, 1968.) We found no independent actions recorded by the Session, but three "letters" from the General Assembly:

- On January 26, 1969, "Outline of a report by Dr. Stoffel concerning polarization in the Church" is provided in the minutes. Dr. Stoffel's report was critical of the letter from "Concerned Presbyterians," and shows the stress on the church at that time. Here are two of his points:
 - It is highly irresponsible and dangerous, perhaps even actionable, to throw a blanket of suspicion over the ministry by referring in general terms to either "some liberal ministers" or even "some conservative ministers" without naming them and giving proof of charges.
 - We may be able to afford a polarized church. We cannot afford a church which is so divided into groups that it is not recognizable as the Body of Christ.
- In May, 1969, a letter is recorded in the minutes from the Office of the General Assembly regarding "Justice, Law and Order." It's a numbered 180-line letter ending with: "And finally, that in seeking law and order we, as Christians, demand:
 - That law and order never be ends in themselves, much less a retreat from their proper purpose of justice, but must always exist for the sake of achieving justice for all;
 - That law and order not consist of suppression of rightful criticism and conscientious dissent, but always uphold the civil liberties so central in our heritage;
 - That law and order never be used as a cover for repression of racial minorities, but always function to extend the full privileges of life to all citizens;
 - And that law and order not serve as mere protection for vested interests over against the rights and the needs of those who are exploited and oppressed in our society."

No Session discussion of the letter is included in the minutes.

- In the June 15, 1969 minutes, it was noted that Rev. Dr Stoffel introduced a "Black Manifesto," and the floor was opened to general discussion (no detail of discussion was recorded). The six-page Manifesto was in the minutes; it was presented by James Forman and adopted by the National Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit, Michigan on April 26, 1969. As an example, one statement is "We are therefore demanding of the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country. We are demanding \$500,000 to be spent in the following way,..." (10 items are listed).

There is significant current knowledge in our church about activities in the 1970s to the present, many of which were very much in support of antiracism. For example, church Elder Judge James McMillan issued the order that resulted in integrating public schools via busing in Charlotte. This ruling became a cornerstone in the efforts of the Federal judiciary to enforce Brown V. Board of Education in the country.³⁷ Dr. Stoffel helped protect Judge McMillan when he and his family were threatened by inviting them to stay in his home.

Pattie Cole and Lemma Howerton

Christian education rooms at FPC have long been named for Pattie Cole and Lemma Howerton. Here is some information on them:

Pattie Cole (Mrs. E.M. Cole, 4/13/1875 – 10/24/1969) was a very active church member, and was known for her teaching Sunday School. An undated Observer article on her in the church history books says attendance could be 100 people, including many visitors (averaging 300 visitors annually). She was involved in foreign missions, president of the church woman's auxiliary, on the YWCA religious education committee, president of the Interdenominational Missionary Union, member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and a member of the Stonewall Jackson chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy.³⁸

Lemma Howerton (4/22/1905 – 8/23/1947), was wife of Philip Fullerton Howerton, son of FPC pastor Rev. Dr. James R. Howerton. In about 1941 the younger women in the church were organized into a second Sunday School class (in addition to the one taught by Pattie Cole). This eventually became the Lemma Howerton Bible Class.³⁹ Her obituary in the Charlotte Observer states she taught the Young Matrons' class for the last eight years, had prepared auxiliary programs including historical and biographical studies of the Presbyterian church and its leaders, and was active in the work of the summer conferences at Montreat.^{40 41}

White Christian church's role: race and white supremacy

In his Letters from Birmingham Jail in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr said:
“When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and

³⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/07/obituaries/james-b-mcmillan-78-judge-who-challenged-segregation.html>

³⁸ Charlotte Observer article, “Women Builders of Charlotte” undated, in FPC history books.

³⁹ Ibid. Elizabeth Williams, p. 138

⁴⁰ Charlotte Observer, August 24, 1947, p. 19

⁴¹ For Lemma Howerton and Pattie Cole, also see page 9 of link; <https://www.firstpres-charlotte.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/tw.201011.pdf>

misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows... I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother."

In his 2020 book, *White Too Long*, Dr. Robert P. Jones traces race in the white Christian church from slavery times to the present.⁴² He focuses on Southern Baptists, but includes Catholic and mainline white Christian churches in his analysis. Some of his points:

- "The theologically backed assertion of the superiority of both 'the white race' and Protestant Christianity undergirded a century of religiously sanctioned terrorism in the form of lynchings and other forms of public violence and intimidation... it is time – well past time – for white Christians in the United States to reckon with the racism of our past and the willful amnesia of our present. Underneath the glossy, self-congratulatory histories that white Christian churches have written about themselves is a thinly veiled, deeply troubling reality. White Christian churches have not just been complacent; they have not only been complicit; rather, as the dominant cultural power in America, they have been responsible for constructing and sustaining a project to protect white supremacy and resist black equality."⁴³
- After Civil War – how do you square the ideas of providential power and white Christians as God's chosen people with military defeat? The religion of the Lost Cause.⁴⁴
- Lost Cause theology's direct descendant, the individualist theology that insists that Christianity has little to say about social injustice, was created to shield white consciences from the evils and continued legacy of slavery and segregation... and it lives on in white evangelical churches and increasingly in white mainline and white Catholic churches.⁴⁵

Note: The book, *White Too Long* gets its title from this quote by civil rights leader and author James Baldwin in 1968⁴⁶: "I will flatly say that the bulk of this country's white population impresses me, and has so impressed me for a very long time, as being beyond any conceivable hope of moral rehabilitation. They have been white, if I may so put it, too long..."

⁴² Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long*, the Legacy of White Supremacy and American Christianity, 2020; also see his Atlantic Magazine article, [White Christian America Needs a Moral Awakening](#).

⁴³ Ibid, p. 5-6

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 89-90

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 105

⁴⁶ New York Times, February 2, 1968

Conclusion

We did not examine the current time – any time after 1972. But based on our church historical findings up to then, and the actions of white people in Charlotte, North Carolina and the country.... We believe FPC has essentially mirrored privileged white society, giving moral cover to white supremacy.

Principles for Assessing our Past and for Future Actions

Princeton Theological Seminary has developed a report titled, *Princeton Seminary and Slavery: A Journey of Confession and Repentance*.⁴⁷ It has several sections, including a timeline and the report itself. Within the report, the Reflection section is particularly helpful in identifying principles to guide our thinking and actions. Here are four from that section:

- One of the central challenges of historical work involves locating people and issues in their own context and not seeing them as contemporaries of the researcher or the reader. This, of course, does not mean that judgments cannot be made about what people did or did not do.
- Princeton Theological Seminary's historical connections to slavery are complicated and multifaceted, and we must never hesitate to tell the truth about our history in all of its complexity... Speaking the truth is a Christian discipline. Only when we tell the truth about ourselves can we come before God in confession and repentance.
- In confronting this history, Princeton Theological Seminary must first acknowledge that its institutional history with regard to benefiting from slavery is sinful. Sin is not merely an individual infraction. Sin is violating the relational call to embody love and justice within community, especially measured by our engagement with the "least of these" in society.
- We confess these moral failings unequivocally. Yet we do so not as morally superior agents casting judgment on the past, but as sinners likewise in need of God's grace.

In addition, Princeton Theological Seminary, in the section of their report on slavery called "Response"⁴⁸ offers these points:

- In the Christian tradition, repentance is a turning away from individual and communal forms of sin and turning towards the way of life that God intends. Repentance is predicated on confession, telling the truth before one another and before God about the way in which our actions or inactions have damaged our relationships. Repentance thus requires not only spiritual atonement, but may also demand relational and material repair.
- As a means of repair, repentance involves looking back to acknowledge wrongdoing in our past, but it also involves looking forward with a commitment to renew or recast relationships in the future. Accordingly, these recommendations seek both to redress historic wrongs and to help us be more faithful to our mission... of the church in the present and future.

⁴⁷ <https://slavery.ptsem.edu>

⁴⁸ <https://slavery.ptsem.edu/action-plan/>

- These are costly and consequential forms of repentance, not only in the financial commitments they imply but also in the cultural change that they require. They are a means not only of contrition for what has been, but of commitment to reimagining what this community of faith and scholarship can be.
- In the Reformed tradition, confession and repentance are a means of acknowledging our fundamental dependence upon the grace of God. As we make serious and substantive commitments to making change in our life together, we call upon the faithfulness of God, who is always doing the work of reformation among us through the Holy Spirit.

Recommendations

These recommendations were first offered to a panel of Black Presbyterian pastors, who provided some excellent input. Then they were refined and taken to FPC Session, which basically accepted them. We used the model of Truth, Confession, Repentance and Repair.

We believe FPC has essentially mirrored privileged white society, giving moral cover to white supremacy.

- Truth – Share this history with the congregation in thoughtful/meaningful ways.
- Confession – In the context of our Christian faith, confess our moral failings unequivocally, not as superior agents casting judgment on the past, but as sinners likewise in need of God's grace.
- Repentance – Session and pastors lead the church into a process of repentance for our racial past.
- Repair:
 - Relocate the eight sanctuary plaques and five pew markers to another location where their historical context can be explained.
 - The sanctuary is a place to honor God, not people.
 - Add a new statement that includes confession of our past sins and a statement of repentance. Recognize specific people who were enslaved at FPC.

>> This work took place during FPC's 200th anniversary, when there was much focus on our history... and also a sanctuary renovation – which closed the sanctuary for over a year. When the sanctuary reopened, the plaques had been relocated to a newly designed History Hallway.

History Hallway, Repentance and Resurrection Statement / Art

The History Hallway is behind the sanctuary, in a heavily traveled area. It was decided to not only display the eight sanctuary plaques and five pew markers, but display photos and short biographies of all the senior pastors of FPC – 16 in all. Additionally, longer biographies are linked to the short ones by QR codes.

The statement of Repentance and Resurrection was developed using the thinking of Senior Pastor Pen Perry and Princeton Theological Seminary words from their work on their history and slavery. The statement was approved by Session.

The form of the Repentance and Resurrection statement evolved to an art piece – actually a triptych with scripture on one side, a dedication to former enslaved people on the other side, and the statement in the middle. It was done by liturgical artist Amy Gray⁴⁹ using silverpoint in her own hand, and a representation of a tree with roots emerging out on each piece. Amy had been a member of the FPC choir before leaving for further education in the Washington DC area. The triptych was created using a historic door from the original choir loft that had been removed during the 2020 renovation.

The content is on the next page.

⁴⁹ <http://amygraystudio.com>

Repentance and Resurrection

Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... And... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Since its founding in 1821, the roots of First Presbyterian Church have wound inextricably through the roots of Charlotte, exerting a powerful impact both as a body of Christ and as a group of dedicated individuals acting throughout the community. Countless examples exist of faithful, compassionate, even courageous ministries spread by FPC and its members.

But because the Church is a human instrument used by God for divine purposes, there are also examples of human failings and sinfulness. Thus, the soil of our history includes numerous incidents of exclusion, racism, sexism, and other affronts to the promise of God's inseparable love for all people. In particular, FPC and its members have condoned, sanctioned, and given moral legitimacy to slavery and white supremacy.

We confess these moral failings unequivocally. We do so not as morally superior beings casting judgment on the past, but as sinners in need of God's grace. The purpose of confession and repentance is to acknowledge our need for grace before God. To be a covenant community means we must own the sins of the past if we are to repent and respond to God's call to a new and better future together. We are committed both to remembering our history and to continuing to take steps towards repair.

As we work to repent of our sins, we look forward to the promise of forgiveness, and to the promise of resurrection – both of which remind us that change and a new way of life are not only possible, but are assured through Christ our Redeemer.

In memory of all those who entered and worshipped at First Presbyterian Church as enslaved or otherwise subordinated people, including these described by name in Session minutes: Marie, a colored woman belonging to Rev. Cyrus Johnson; Joe, a slave formerly the property of James Irwin; Charity, a servant girl of Mr. Irwin; Sophia, a servant to Joseph H. White; Charles, a servant belonging to John Williamson; and Alexander, a servant of Mr. Henderson.

Appendix A – Benchmarks to consider regarding plaques and markers

History is about what happened in the past while commemoration is about the present. We put up statues and celebrate holidays to honor figures from the past who embody some quality we admire....as society changes, the qualities we care about shift.

Heather Cox Richardson, Historian

UVA, Davidson College, and Princeton Seminary: All have done a detailed study of their racial past and taken actions in response.

- UVA has constructed a Memorial to Enslaved Laborers⁵⁰ and developed a detailed report, with accompanying actions (including renaming two buildings after enslaved workers).⁵¹
- Davidson has created a Commission of Race and Slavery, which is administering an on-going process.⁵² They are making changes to create a just and equitable campus where everyone feels welcome.⁵³
- Princeton Theological Seminary has done similar work, sharing their history and creating helpful tools available on their website.⁵⁴

Sewanee: The University of the South: All Saints Chapel removed a pane of glass depicting Confederate symbols.

First (Scots) Presbyterian, Charleston, SC: Doing book studies, etc., nothing involving their building.

St. John's Episcopal, Montgomery, AL: Removed plaque and pew marker on the "Jeff Davis pew."

Christ Church Cathedral, Cincinnati, OH: Removed plaque honoring Leonidas Polk (Episcopal Bishop and Confederate General)

Duke University: Removed Robert E. Lee figure from chapel.

Second Presbyterian Church, Richmond, VA: Following the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, formed a committee called "Moving Forward Together." They had just completed a sanctuary refurbishment leading to their 175th anniversary celebration. This church is younger than FPC, but their building pre-dates the Civil War. They are in the early stages of developing a plan. Some ideas include moving plaques, etc. to a current history room, where they can be displayed with proper context. Removed the Stonewall Jackson pew marker. Exploring the possibility of

⁵⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/museums/a-powerful-new-memorial-to-u-vas-enslaved-workers-reclaims-lost-lives-and-forgotten-narratives/2020/08/12/7be63e66-dc03-11ea-b205-ff838e15a9a6_story.html

⁵¹ https://uvamagazine.org/articles/an_unflinching_report

⁵² <https://www.davidson.edu/about/commission-race-and-slavery>

⁵³ Davidson Commission on Slavery and Race Zoom public session, December 9, 2020

⁵⁴ <https://slavery.ptsem.edu>; <https://antiracism.ptsem.edu>

creating appropriate banners which could be hung to hide some prominently displayed plaques in the sanctuary. These plaques cannot easily be removed, as they are imbedded in the plaster. They are taking cues from St. Paul's Episcopal, which has been studying and moving forward on this issue for several years.

St. Paul's Episcopal, Richmond, VA: This was the church home of Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee during their time in Richmond. They have created a "History and Reconciliation Initiative." Their task is divided into three parts: (1) History – studying US history and church history together to understand the time/place; (2) Liturgy – writing confessions and laments for use during congregational worship; and (3) Memorials – some were removed, some could not be removed, but were burnished to remove offensive symbols, and some will be or have been covered. The church has lost members because of this, but they have also gained some members as a result of their work.

The Episcopal Church: Many of their churches have removed signage honoring slave holders; several dioceses (including Maryland, Texas, and Georgia) are launching reparations programs. Minnesota spokesman, Rev. Curtiss DeYoung says, "Minnesota has some of the highest racial disparities in the country – in health, wealth, housing, how police treat folks. Those disparities all come from a deep history of racism."⁵⁵

Charlotte Legacy Commission: This commission was tasked with studying street names and monuments honoring Confederate soldiers, slave holders, or segregationists in Charlotte. As a result of their work, they are proposing a placement of interpretive panels in the historic Elmwood Cemetery to give context to the various Confederate markers and monuments located there. Although they found 70 city streets they believe honor slavery, slave holders, Confederate veterans, supporters of white supremacy or "romanticized versions of the antebellum south," they are prioritizing renaming 9 streets named for Confederate leaders and white supremacists, while also expediting the changing of names requested by neighborhood associations, etc.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ AP story, "More US Churches are Committing to Racism-Linked Reparations," December 13, 2020
<https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-new-york-slavery-minnesota-native-americans-4c7dbcae990bd11dee5a5710c63ece25>

⁵⁶ <https://citycharlottencgov.azureedge.net/Legacy-Commission-Recommendations.pdf>

Appendix B – FPC plaques, stained glass windows and room names

Sanctuary plaques:

<p>Robert Hall Morrison, D.D. 1798-1889 First Minister of This Church 1827-1833 First President of Davidson College 1837-1840 How Great is God's Goodness And How Great is His Beauty Zechariah 9:1</p>	<p>This tablet is erected to the glory of God and in affectionate remembrance of David Hopkins Rolston D.D. The beloved pastor of this church from 1911-1917 "To me to live is Christ and to die is gain."</p>
<p>Arnold DeWilles Miller, D.D., LL. D. Beloved Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church 1855-56, 1865-92 Born in Charles, S.C. Oct'r 26, 1822 Died in Charlotte, N.C. January 10, 1892 His last words were: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." To his Sainted Memory this tablet is dedicated by the Ladies of his Congregation.</p>	<p>Albert Sidney Johnson, D.D. 1881-1971 Pastor of this church 1918-1940 Holding forth the word of life that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain neither labored in vain. Philippians 2:16</p>
<p>James Robert Howerton, D.D., LL. D. 1861-1924 Pastor of this Church 1896-1906 "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"</p>	<p>William Addison Alexander 1896-1956 Pastor of this church 1941-1944 "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ"</p>
<p>William Morris Kincaid 1851-1910 Pastor of this Church 1906-1910 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"</p>	<p>Charles E.S. Kraemer, D.D. April 25, 1909 – June 23, 1988 Minister of this church 1945-1954 President Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, Virginia 1954-1974 Moderator of the 1973 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. Pastor Emeritus 1980-1988 "What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (II Corinthians 4:5)</p>

Stained Glass Windows in Sanctuary:

We are not recommending changes in the stained-glass windows out of practicality. There aren't any obvious racial issues.

In memory of Rev. John Alexander Preston D.D., born January 17th, 1853, died September 13th, 1896, by the Commercial Travelers, May 23rd, 1897 (**note: Alexander was the sixth pastor of FPC**; see page 9 for more information on his connection with Black institutions)

Addison Gorgas Brenizer, January 19, 1839 – April 15, 1918; Frances Gilmer Brenizer, September 19, 1841 – June 20, 1904

In memory of John McCorkle Scott, born April 25, 1866, died October 27, 1945; Bleecker Springs Scott, born May 4, 1869, died February 20, 1949

In memory of Julia Baxter Springs, born October 24, 1827, died February 27, 1902

In memory of Robert M. Miller, 1823-1908, Ann C. Miller 1827-1908

In memory of Benjamin Terry McAden, born November 5th, 1859, died November 5th, 1888; George Swepson McAden born April 6th, 1862, died March 12th, 1890

To the glory of God and in loving memory of Ivey Withers Stewart, February 3, 1888 – April 26, 1966; Lillian Wallace Stewart, May 10, 1894 – April 19, 1942

The angels are the reapers, the wheat will then gather into my garner; To the Glory of God and in loving memory: Joseph Harvey Wilson; Mary Louisa Wilson

In memory of John L. Morehead, 1833 – 1901

In memory of my mother, Anne L. Overman, born 1815, died 1874

Pew Markers:

Zebulon Barid Vance, governor and U.S. Senator of N. C.; Harriet Espy Vance, members of this church

Mrs. Stonewall Jackson (Mary Anna Morrison); member of this church

Lt. Gen. D.H. Hill, CSA; Ruling Elder, 1867-1876

Rev. Walter W. Moore D.D, LL. D., President Union Seminary; son of this church

John Irwin; A charter member; In grateful remembrance of his gift 1835

Other plaques and windows:

Orr Memorial Chapel, in loving memory of our parents, Harvey Howell Orr, Sallie Summey Orr, given by their children

This window is erected to the Glory of God and in token of love and esteem of the congregation of this church for John C. Burroughs, who by his most generous contribution to the building fund, rendered possible the erection of this edifice for the Sunday School of this church

Wood Fellowship Hall; To the Glory of God and to honor the dedicated ministry of The Reverend Dr. William Pape Wood, senior minister, First Presbyterian Church 1983-2010; for Christ in the Heart of Charlotte

To the Glory of God and in memory of Margaret Overman Whitted Efird (1907 – 1999), Church School Teacher

To the Glory of God and in memory of Frank Robinson Hand (1917-1999) Elder and Historian

Given in honor of Janis Rikard for her dedicated service to First Presbyterian Church Weekday School, 1990-2014

In loving memory of Earl F. Berg, 1915-1986, Director of Music 1941-1960, 1973-1982; Given by his Choir members

Room names:

Frances G. Browne Dining Room (note: Frances Brown was involved in the Coalition of Presbyterians for Racial Harmony in the 1990s and early 2000s).

Lemma Shepherd Howerton Room

To the Glory of God in loving memory of Pattie Morris Cole, April 13, 1875 – October 24, 1969; Given in gratitude by Mary and Morris Newell (plaque identifying room)

Appendix C – History of FUPC related to FPC

History of First United Presbyterian Church Relating to First Presbyterian Church

This summary is written by Bill Harris, FUPC and Ross Loeser, FPC – 8/13/16

It is based on research by Dr. William U. Harris, preliminary research by Rev. Dr. Julia Robinson (UNC Charlotte), and the 2016 4-week joint series, “United by Faith, Divided by Race”

In the pre-Civil War time period, many African American Presbyterians worshiped at FPC. Between 1841 and 1856, records show 7-9 free colored members. But there were many more enslaved people worshiping at FPC.

There is evidence that ministers and officers at FPC were slave holders. The conditions of this time led to contradictory actions:

- Enslaved people worshiped at FPC, but they were always separated from the white parishioners – worshiping in the balcony.
- Enslaved people were taught to read and write in the church, using the Bible, which was unusual at the time.
- Enslaved people were taught the “proper way,” not as the abolitionists did, but were not allowed to become ministers or officers in the church.
- Enslaved people were baptized by FPC, affirming their humanity, but were still looked at askance as scientifically and intellectually inferior.

The basis of white Christian views was that blacks were scientifically inferior, and threatened white civility... and that the Bible supported slavery. There were several Bible verses cited, but most notably the “Curse of Ham” was used to justify perpetual slavery for blacks.

After the Civil War, the freed enslaved people continued to worship at FPC, but to their dismay, they were now told to worship in the basement. Then Mrs. Catherine Hayes, one of the dissatisfied freed-people, led a movement to sever relationship with FPC. She challenged her fellow worshippers to “Come down out of the gallery to the ground floor...”

Her efforts coincided with a movement by the Northern Presbyterian Church to send missionaries down south to assist in the education, evangelization and Christianization of recently emancipated enslaved people. Mrs. Hayes’ dreams were realized when Rev. Samuel C. Alexander of Pittsburgh, PA assisted their endeavors by purchasing land (and an existing building) at the corner of Third and Davidson Streets in his own name and then transferring it to the ex-slaves who were not permitted to purchase property themselves.

Thirty members of the newly formed Colored Presbyterian Church of Charlotte first worshiped for six months in a room of another black church in 1866, then moved to the building on Third and Davidson Streets. In 1869, with growing membership, they purchased a wooden Lutheran church at FUPC’s current location (Seventh and College Streets). Their own members constructed today’s beautiful sanctuary from 1894-6, and their name was changed to Seventh Street Presbyterian Church in 1895.

In 1911, an African American Presbyterian Church was established in the Brooklyn neighborhood of the city of Charlotte – the Brooklyn Presbyterian Church. By the 1950s, it had nearly 500 members. But in the 1960s, the Brooklyn neighborhood, including the Brooklyn Presbyterian Church, was demolished in the name of Urban Renewal. In 1967, Brooklyn Presbyterian Church merged with Seventh Street Presbyterian Church to establish First United Presbyterian Church.

First United Presbyterian Church is celebrating 150 years of life in Jesus Christ this year... as it was 1866 that they formed the Colored Presbyterian Church of Charlotte. There are still members of FUPC who can trace their family back to their founding.

Given this history, the two leaders of the 2016 series, “United by Faith, Divided by Race”* conveyed their perspective on our current time:

Confronting this history is complicated for both First Presbyterian Church and First United Presbyterian Church. It can only be done through trust in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For FPC – which Dr. Robinson calls the “Mother Church” of FUPC – its part in slavery and all the racial issues of the past (Jim Crowe, the Civil Rights era, etc.) must be acknowledged. The white privilege that it has practiced, and continues to practice, needs to be addressed. Relying on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, FPC needs to recognize that racism within the body of Christ is a disease, and to embark on a fearless moral inventory of its racial past, working toward reconciliation with FUPC.

For FUPC – it needs to celebrate its role in providing comfort and inspiration to its members for 150 years... and to work with FPC, recognizing we are all one within the body of Christ.

This is a particular point in time – in our church history and in our society – that is ripe for bringing our two churches together... so that they can provide leadership by example to our city and nation.

* “United by Faith, Divided by Race” was led by Dr. Julia Robinson, Associate Professor of African-American Religion and Religions of the African Diaspora, UNC Charlotte, and Dr. Rodney Sadler, Associate Professor of Bible, Union Presbyterian Seminary