



Stockbridge Presbyterian Church



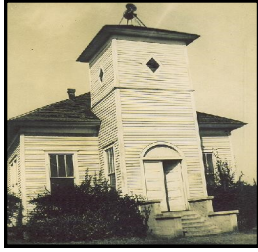
1909 - 2009

Serving Henry County since 1909



It's all about relationships - with God, with each other, with the world

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From a small weekly Sunday School class (which interestingly enough was called "Sabbath" School) and a once-a-month preaching service, the Stockbridge Presbyterian Church emerged!

Through the efforts of Mrs. Harriet Tucker Hawkins and J. J. Gossett this congregation was organized by the Presbytery of Atlanta in the spring of 1909. On May 28, 1909, the organizing commissioners were Evangelist Frank D. Hunt, Rev. J. H. Patton and an elder from the Jonesboro church. There were 20 charter members in this new congregation:

J. T. Bellah	Mrs. Alice Bellah
Miss Artie Bellah	Mary Evans
Nora Evans	J. J. Gossett
Miss Lois Gossett	Miss Corry Gossett
Howard Gossett	Mrs. Harriet Hawkins
Howard P. Hawkins	Mary R. Hedrick
Annie May Hinton	Martha Jarret
T. T. Jones	Miss Fannie Milam
Mrs. A. H. Swann	Mrs. Bessie Ward
Mrs. W. W. Ward	W. W. Ward

Seventeen of the members were by transfer from the Flat Rock Church, some at one time having been members of the Morris Grove Church.

Flat Rock Presbyterian Church, 6 miles out of the city in Henry County, was organized by the Atlanta Presbytery on September 21, 1884. It became Hemphill Memorial Church on October 21, 1919.

Morris Grove Presbyterian Church, in the northern part of Henry County, was organized by Atlanta Presbytery on August 23, 1896 with 36 members. The church was dissolved by the Presbytery on April 15, 1908, and the members joined the Flat Rock Church.

In the new Stockbridge Church, H. P. Hawkins and J. J. Gossett were the first ordained elders and W. W. Ward and John T. Bellah were ordained deacons in the new church. Rev. James Bradley was the supply preacher, conducting two services the second Sunday of each month.

Plans for a sanctuary were the next step. Elder H. P. Hawkins headed the subscription list with a \$50 donation, followed by Deacon W. W. Ward who pledged \$100 and a very desirable lot on which the building was subsequently erected. Through the dedicated labor of many, funds were obtained and construction began. The building was placed on the lot facing Burke Street.

An interesting and sad event occurred during this period in the life of the young congregation. Elder J. J. Gossett suffered a heart attack while moving windows for the building from the train dock to the building site. He subsequently died; and, along with his wife, is buried in the Dodson cemetery at the corner of Bel Air Drive and Flat Rock Road in Stockbridge.

The first service in the new sanctuary was held on the second Sunday in June, 1910. The first church musician was Mrs. W. W. (Annie Eve) Ward. Subsequent musicians included Grace Ward, Linda Thompson, Ruth Sammons, David Alston, Janet Satterwhite, Louise Lee, Melissa Hensel, Cary Castellaw, Michael Nunemaker, Donald Dunlap, and David E. Dillard, who is the current Minister of Music.

There were two infant baptisms the first year in the new church - one of these being Abner Ward. A number of ministers and students from Columbia Seminary came at various times and led the Stockbridge congregation in worship during its first twenty years, as there was no regular pastor. Included in this group were Frank D. Hunt, I. H. Miller, W. S. Coleman, Mack Hollingsworth, J. C. Rhodes, Wallace Alston, T. P. Cleveland, M. M. McKay, William Huck, H. P. J. L'heureux, Russell Nunan, A. R. Woodson, Rev. A. B. McClure, and Rev. William H. Chapman.

Presbytery minutes of 1916 show 39 members. The annual budget was \$264 (\$144 incidental expense

and \$120 pastor's salary). In 1920 there were 52 members with an annual budget of \$382 (\$170 of which was the pastor's salary).

By the year 1923 there were 52 members as well as an organized Sunday School and Ladies Auxiliary. Church officers were Elders Joseph A. Cook, Brannan G. Ward and Deacons W. W. Ward, John T. Bellah, and D. P. Shields. During the mid-1920's Walter Lee became Sunday School Superintendent, a position he held until his death in 1945.

Dr. William Huck, pastor of Rock Springs Presbyterian Church in Atlanta and later Secretary of the Home Mission Board of Atlanta Presbytery, provided leadership for creation of a parish consisting of Stockbridge, Kelley, and Hemphill Memorial churches. On May 14, 1933, Rev. W. Harvell Jackson was called and ordained as pastor in the newly created parish. SPC's (Stockbridge Presbyterian Church) portion of his salary amounted to \$120 annually plus use of the manse. Property at the corner of Highway 42 and Club Drive was purchased by the parish from Mr. Rosser Ward at a cost of \$62.50 and a manse was built for the pastor. The debt on this manse was retired in January 1940.

The Presbyterian Men of Henry County was organized in the fall of 1933. This group, consisting of men from the five Presbyterian churches in Henry County, was recognized by the General Assembly in later years for its long and valuable contribution to the work in this area.

During this period, Presbytery records show 35 members (24 of whom were active) and 32 members in Sunday School. The preacher received an annual salary of \$146.

In 1937 the church had three Sunday School classes with Mrs. Artie Hinton, Mrs. Annie Warren Ward, and Mrs. Joe Cook as teachers. There were 30 people enrolled in the program. Ms. Eunice Thompson served as president of the Women of the Church. Rev. David G. Davies was called to be the pastor. In 1940 three classrooms were added to the back of the chancel. Rev. Davies took a leave of absence to serve in World War II as a Chaplain with the 79th Field Artillery in Fort Bragg, N.C.

While Rev. Davies was away, Dr. James I. Paisley was the Interim Supply. Adding much to his ministry were the Paisley's twin daughters, Martha and Florence (affectionately known in their younger days as Muff and Fluff). Sharing some of their memories, the twins tell of getting their driver's licenses while here and loving to visit church members with Dr. Paisley so they could drive. They related differences in Stockbridge living and the mission field they had just served... living in a manse for the first time, riding school buses, and using outdoor toilets! Dr. Paisley would ask for toilet tissue in Korean when he went shopping feeling that the words should not be spoken in public!

A very interesting memory that is shared is that of riding around with their friends on Sunday afternoon. When the group stopped for ice cream, the girls couldn't buy any because their parents lived by the commandment to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy. Martha said she never remembered feeling deprived or guilty or different, but she now marvels that her parents raised them with such a spirit of reverence.

In 1943 Presbytery records showed 45 members, and 6 Sunday School classes with 40 enrolled. The pulpit furniture which is still in use today was given in memory of Mrs. John Bellah by her daughters. The first Vacation Bible School was organized in 1943 with Mrs. Artie Bellah Hinton as leader.

The war ended and Rev. Davies returned in 1946. The manse was remodeled and a Young People's organization was begun in cooperation with Methodist youth. Leaders included Lucille Moseley, Imogene Gardner and Bill Hightower. The church used a bulletin for the first time, compiled and typed by Rev. Davies. This was followed in 1952 by a new format, a snapshot of the church made by Patty Holloway on the cover, with another coming in the 1970's, a pen & ink sketch of the church by one of the members, Bill Elder. Another contribution of the Elder family was the sharing of a miniature Italian village scene which was set up in the narthex each year during the Christmas season.

The church purchased adjoining property on Highway 42 from Mrs. John Ward for \$1,100 for future

growth. The property contained a small building which was occupied by the Masonic Lodge at the time. Rev. William Pardin was serving as pastor.

Mr. Claude Lee purchased chimes in memory of his wife, Julia James Lee, and his brother, W. Walter Lee. In November 1947, the chimes were dedicated in their memory to the glory of God. Each day at noon the sound of great hymns of the church could be heard throughout the town. Also of interest, the church bell which was used up until the installation of the chimes was donated to a local African American congregation.

A group of young people including Gloria Moseley, Patty Goodwin, Barbara Thompson, and Marvin Furber led by Sarah Belle Lee, contracted to clean the church building each week for two years to raise \$149 to purchase a field organ in 1948. This same year the old pot-bellied stove in the sanctuary was replaced by more up-to-date gas heating. In 1948 Rev. Jesse Cook was called as pastor at a salary of \$660.

The year 1949 saw more changes in the now 40 year old congregation. The SPC Sunday School won an attendance banner over other Henry County churches. The church's first choir was organized by Mrs. Jesse Cook. The church had a total enrollment of 74 members and a Junior League with an enrollment of 12 was organized under the leadership of Sarah Belle Lee and Patty Goodwin (Holloway).

At a cost of \$1,000 the sanctuary was moved and turned to face Highway 42, and three additional classrooms and a kitchen were added in September 1950 at a cost of \$5,000. There were 74 members and an annual budget of \$4,585. Twice this year the WOC entertained the Henry County MOC group.

Sheryl Glynn, infant daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Hal Keller, was baptized in September 1951. Another big event this year—the church became self-supporting, having been assisted by Atlanta Presbytery up until this time.

In 1953 there were 84 members with 81 attending Sunday School, an annual budget of \$3,678, and a pastor's salary of \$1,300. Restrooms were added to the church.

Significant events in 1954 included the church's first electric organ purchased at a cost of \$1,400 and played by Mrs. Grace Ward. The organ which had been in use up until this time was donated to another congregation in Stockbridge. A nursery for the Sunday School was organized and served for many years by Mrs. Cornelia Turner Moseley.



Rev. George Dameron and Rev. William Satterwhite served the parish churches during this time. In September 1954 columns and a porch were added to the front of the church building in memory of John Gossett and W. Walter Lee. A round, ornate window was also added in the section over the columns. There were 76 members with 81 in Sunday School, an annual budget of \$4,900 and a pastor's salary of \$1,650.

Many events occurred in 1955: the manse was sold at public auction to William Hooper for \$7,500 and construction was begun on Flippin Road property donated by Mrs. Annie Warren Mann. The Men's Bible Class sponsored the addition of paved sidewalks around the side of the church; and on October 16, 1955, Sunday School at-

tendance was 93 ... an all-time high!

The joint parish was dissolved in 1956 and Stockbridge Presbyterian Church called its first full-time pastor - George Dameron, who with his family, moved into the recently completed manse. Four air conditioning units were added to the sanctuary and ground was broken for the education building. By 1960 the final unit of the education building was completed. The Men of SPC organization was chartered on March 27, 1958. In 1962 the church had three circles in the WOC. In May of this year Mrs. Lollie Moseley was honored for her faithful service to the glory of God in the women's work.

Stories about the wonderful “whole church trips” to St. Simon’s Island are rampant among members who thoroughly enjoyed them all. It’s been said that often after church worship service on Sunday evenings a group of men would leave to go deep-sea fishing. It seems some were so anxious to be on the road that even the preacher (Rev. Dameron) was heard on at least one occasion saying the final “Amen” on his way out the door. Seems he also was known to participate in the “reward” for catching the largest fish.



The year 1965 saw SPC calling Rev. Frank Clark to serve as minister. Records show 145 communicants and a budget of \$16,100. The first woman deacon, Mrs. Bill (Doris) Hooper, was elected and ordained on February 9, 1969.

The early 1970’s introduced the rotation system for members of the session and the number was fixed at nine. Doug Scott assumed the post of church treasurer, a position he continues to hold today

Interim pastors Sidney Anderson, Bonneau Dickson, James Carr and Eugene Wilson served the church until James O. Watkins was called, ordained and installed in 1971. In 1973 the youth group, consisting of 20 plus teenagers, hosted a Joint Youth Renewal Weekend with area Presbyterian churches. A few years later the same type renewal services were sponsored by the youth group to include the entire congregation.

During this period, led by the youth, many families enjoyed a week of spiritual renewal at the Presbyterian Conference Center in Montreat, NC. From a group of 13 junior high youth with two leaders in 1973, as many as 70 parents, youth, and children could be found making the trip to the mountains each July for about 13 years.

For many weeks the women of several circles met to construct Chrismons (white and gold, glitter and beaded ornaments signifying the life of Christ) to adorn beautiful live trees in the sanctuary during the Advent and Christmas season. This practice is still observed in the church with the form of the ornaments changing over the years. According to tradition the limbs of the trees should be burned to mark the beginning of Lent and the trunk of the tree used to form the cross which stands in the sanctuary bare from Maundy Thursday until Easter sunrise when it is adorned with lilies. In recent years, there has been a bare cross displayed on Easter morning and families bring live flowers to put on the cross to form The Living Cross.

Tragedy struck on December 7, 1974 when fire damaged the education building. For two weeks the congregation met in the court room of the city hall. In 1975 the congregation voted to adopt the unicameral form of church officers and the number was set at twelve.

The Rev. William Satterwhite was called as pastor in 1976 with a total package of \$19,084. The Stockbridge MOC was reactivated in 1977 with Rip Gardner as president. The church purchased the adjoining lot from Mr. and Mrs. Abner Ward for \$40,000. All four Holloway children received awards for perfect attendance in Sunday School - Mary Katherine 12 years, Hal 15 years, Cynthia 16 years, and Lynn 21 years.

The original building was dismantled in 1977 and ground broken for a new sanctuary. Cost estimate was \$185,000; however, the final cost was \$211,912.97. The congregation met each Sunday for worship in the downstairs fellowship hall of the education building. The mortgage on this debt was retired in 1988.

As the old sanctuary was torn down, Janet Satterwhite retrieved some of the old heart pine timbers and these were fashioned into mangers for the members of her Sunday School class; each child made the figures to be used in his or her manger. One of these mangers is still used to adorn the church at Christmas time. The timbers were so hard that many saw blades “bite the dust” in their construction! The second Sunday in June 1978, a packed house of worshippers dedicated the new sanctuary.

The Children’s Choir (the Sarah Belle Wee Singers) presented a musical pageant, “Stranger In The Straw,” in December 1979. And early the next year the parking lot was paved. In March 1981, W. L. Wyatt, who served as clerk of session for more than 20 years, passed away. Mack Goodwin became clerk of session and

served for almost as long. After his death in 1996, Crandall Smith and James Beisner filled the position of clerk of session. After his retirement, Linda Roberts then assumed the position and is currently fulfilling those duties.

Hal Keller, a "son" of this church, was called as its minister in 1982. A Soup Kitchen ministry was begun with Louise Lee as one of the chief cooks. Many more church members were involved in this project over the years. The Gold Rush Gang was born during this year. This group for the "50+" crowd is still going strong today. Among the leaders have been Lucy Cox, Lawrence Waits, George Stanford, and many others. John and Carol Abbott are presently leading the group. With much support from this group a church van was purchased in 1988, though it has since been sold.

In 1983 family night suppers became part of the soup kitchen ministry and Christmas for the Needy was begun. This outreach program grew to the extent that it has become a part of a county-wide ministry to needy families at Christmas time, now facilitated through Connecting Henry. Funding for the outreach ministries presently comes from the proceeds raised by the Annual Golf Tournament which is in its 11th year now.

Another outreach that was started during this time that continues today is Joseph's Pantry. This ministry provides non-perishable food supplies and fresh foods from Food Depot to help those who need immediate assistance. Members of the church bring canned goods each week for the pantry with a once-a-month emphasis called "Five on the First."

A program called "Musictyme" was established by Lona Bennett for any member wishing to take music lessons—voice, piano or other instrument. Many took advantage of this opportunity and for several years a church band made up of youth members added to worship. During the 1990's Mrs. Bennett donated hand chimes to the church. The chimes were first played by the young people during a Youth Sunday service.

An ongoing outreach ministry of this church is support of a chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. For more than 25 years this group has met and used the SPC building for their twice-weekly meeting.

In 1991 a Boy Scout troop was chartered with 5 boys and 5 adults. In 1999 the troop had grown to include 50 boys and 15 adult volunteers. The influence of this group is far-reaching, including 3 Eagle scouts in one family who were members of this congregation.

In 1995 sanctuary windows were replaced with glass to match the beautiful glasswork on the front of the building. During an interim from July 1995 to July 1997, Dr. E. Moss Robertson served as pastor. In June, 1997 the congregation expressed its appreciation to the Robertsons at a congregational dinner attended by more than 200 people. A beautiful scrapbook with a page from each member family was presented.

Among community service projects led by this church are several activities that are ongoing. The church is used each weekday as a pick-up point for Meals-on-Wheels volunteers. The food is dropped off here and then picked up by volunteers and delivered to shut-ins. The church facility is also used periodically as a distribution center for surplus government food. Most recently within the past two years, the church has also been a voting precinct for county, state and national elections. For several years, the church was also used by the AARP to provide tax preparation assistance to the local residents.

In July 1997, Joseph J. Clifford, a Columbia Theological Seminary graduate, was called, ordained and installed as pastor. Joe and his wife, Jennifer, moved into the community and were soon blessed by the births of young John and Katie.

The monthly newsletter sent to all church members and many friends of the church was expanded and given a new format in 1999 and within the past several months, has also been made available as a computer generated .pdf version. Within the last ten years, the church has also obtained a world wide web page (www.spcusa.org) in an effort to stay relative to the times, along with email (spcusa@bellsouth.net).

A Back to School program began in 1998 as an extension of the Christmas for the Needy ministry. School supplies are given to those in need at the start of the school year. If clothing is also needed by the children, it is provided.

Stockbridge Presbyterian has had the distinct honor to have two members live to be over 100 years of age. Ruby Gardner Hicks died just a few days short of 105 years of age and Lona Bennett made it to 105 + 1 month years of age.

Heritage Sunday, May 23, 1999, SPC celebrated its 90th anniversary. In that year, there was an annual budget of \$209,815; 280 members; 100 in Sunday school; 7 people on the staff; and a church facility valued in excess of \$1,000,000. Church activities included worship, Sunday school, fellowship breakfasts, an adult choir with director and several musicians, senior and junior high fellowships, activities for elementary students, adult weekly Bible studies, Boy Scouts, AA, Christmas for the Needy, Back to School, quilting group, Gold Rush Gang, Women Of The Church (4 circles), and many fellowship activities.



In 2000, Joe Clifford was called to pastor another church and two interims filled the pulpit until a permanent pastor was found. Dr. Beverly Brigman Thompson and Rev. Gary Bagley carried on the ministry of the Word until 2001, when the church called Rev. Tracey Davenport as pastor.

Under her leadership, the sanctuary was remodeled and refurbished giving it a more up-to-date appearance. A sound system was also installed which greatly enhanced the worship.

Rev. Davenport participated in many activities of the church such as Ladies Bible Study, Sunday School, Wednesday Night Live classes, youth mission trips, young adult/couple ministry, children ministries, and much more.

In 2007, Rev. Pem Cooley accepted the call as an Interim Pastor for just over a year. Then in January 2009, Rev. Susan Bennett accepted the call to SPC.

Through the years, various ones have assisted the Pastor in the day to day office duties, such as Carolyn Francis, Mabel White (17 years) and Levena Karr Hemmle (10 years) who is currently in that position. Tom Francis has served the church as the custodian for many years. Other staff members currently serving SPC are Mary Thompson, Christian Education Coordinator; David E. Dillard, Director of Music Ministries; Stephanie Dunn, Youth Director; Stephanie Phillips, Nursery Coordinator; Charlotte Culpepper, Nursery Attendant; Sarah Wharton, Nursery Attendant..

As we look back on 100 years of growth and service to God, our prayer is that what we have done and what we continue to do will be for God's honor and glory; that this church in this place will exist to carry out the mission statement we have adopted:



The mission of Stockbridge Presbyterian Church is
to worship and enjoy God;
to live and share the good news of Jesus Christ;
to teach God's Word;
to nurture a fellowship of Christian love;
and to serve this community and
the world in the Spirit of the Servant Christ.

May 2009

Photos of Pastors



Rev. Susan Bennett
2009—Present



Rev. Pem Cooley
2007-2008



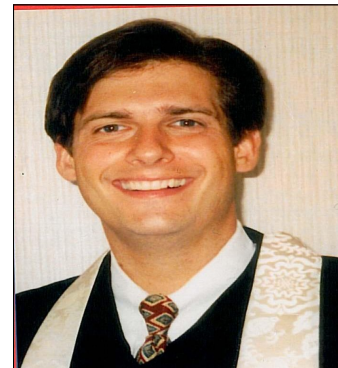
Rev. Tracey Davenport
2002-2007



Rev. Beverly Thompson
Interim Pastor



Rev. Gary Bagley
Interim Pastor



Rev. Joe Clifford
1997-2000



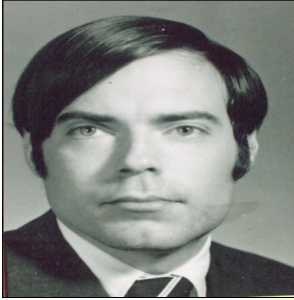
Rev. Moss Robertson
Former Pastor



Rev. Hal Keller
Former Pastor



Rev. Bill Satterwhite
Former Pastor



Rev. James Watkins
Former Pastor



Rev. Frank Clark
Former Pastor



Rev. Marvin Randolph
Former Pastor



Rev. George Dameron
1st Full-time Pastor



Rev. James I. Paisley
Former Pastor



Rev. Bonneau Dickson
Former Pastor



Rev. Eugene Wilson
Former Pastor



Rev. V.P.J. L'heureux
Former Pastor



Rev. Jesse Cooke
Former Pastor



Rev. Wallace Alston
Former Pastor



Rev. Harvell Jackson
Former Pastor



Rev. David Davies
Former Pastor