

First Presbyterian Church History Bennettsville, South Carolina

A movement began in Marlboro County in the early 1850's to establish a church in Bennettsville. A Building Committee was appointed, a one-acre site was purchased, and a wooden-frame church was constructed in downtown Bennettsville. The church was established on December 1, 1855. The Rev. Pierpont Edwards Bishop was called as the first pastor. He died after serving 3 years and is buried on the church grounds.

In 1861 an elder of this church, Dr. J. Beaty Jennings, was a Commissioner to the General Assembly at Augusta, Georgia, when the Presbyterian Church in the United States was formed.

Plans were made for a new church building in 1905. The new structure was completed on August 25, 1907, burned on the very same night, and was a complete loss. The same building committee immediately commenced plans to erect another church building which was completed and dedicated in 1911.

In the fall of 1939, ground was broken for a Sunday School building and Chapel, both of which are now a permanent part of the church property.

In 1958, this church had the honor of initiating discussion of a Presbyterian camp in Marlboro County. Soon Camp Pee Dee was born. The Bennettsville church shares with others great pride in the history of Camp Pee Dee.

The Rev. Ray A. Howe was pastor at First Presbyterian from 1976 to 1997. During his pastorate, the first lady, Catherine Rogers, was elected to the Session.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Bailey Andrews became pastor in 1999 and continues to serve the church. During his pastorate, three capital campaigns for renovations and expansion have been completed, youth and children's programs expanded, church weekend retreats established, a preaching and lecture series endowed, annual mission trips (Mexico, Haiti, Atlanta) undertaken, and many local mission projects established.

One highlight of the church's service in the Lord's name is the Marlboro Thanksgiving Feast, in which the church makes and delivers 1,400 dinners to people in Marlboro County on Thanksgiving Day.

Most recently, the church raised funds for and built Brogdon Hall, a new fellowship hall constructed in memory of James E. Brogdon, who served as church treasurer for fifty years. Brogdon Hall was dedicated in September 2021 and ensures that everyone has "seat at the table of the Lord" in the family of faith and community.

As the congregation moves into the future in worship, study, service, fellowship and witness, God continues to bless this family of faith with grace, mercy, and peace as well as challenge her to grow in discipleship. To God be the glory forever and ever!