

First Presbyterian Church of Pilot Mountain

In 1946, with a number of Presbyterians living in and around Pilot Mountain, Miss Zeta C. Davison, Home Missionary and Director of Christian Education with the Winston-Salem Presbytery, was sent by Rev. Ralph Buchanan, Superintendent of Home Missions, to conduct a survey to determine the need for a Presbyterian Church in Pilot Mountain. As a result of the survey, it was determined that sufficient interest existed to establish a church.



Figure 141: First Presbyterian Church in 1951.

Miss Davidson helped to organize a Sunday school program that met in the old Pilot Mountain High School building. Rev. Buchanan and retired Presbyterian minister, Rev. John D. Smith, began worship services twice a month.

Charter members of the church were: Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Ashburn, Keith Badgett, Irene Smith Badgett, Roland Bell, Virginia Childress Bell, Virgil Conrad, Ruby Smith Conrad, Jane Covington, Zeta C. Davidson, Mildred Watson Flynn, Ray Von Hole, Beatrice Hole, Joe Jessup, Mrs. Virgil D. Jessup, Sr., Virgil D. Jessup, Jr., Adam Jessup, Sarah Collins Jessup, Everett Matthews, Cora M. Matthews, P. B. Plyler, Nina Carson Plyler, Carson Plyler, Howard Riggins, Nina Flippin Riggins, Charles Ray, Etta Smith Ray, Joanna Ray, Stella Ray Simmons, Alden Smith, Mrs. John D. Smith, Jarvis K. Smith, Ida Smith Smith,

J. Porter Smith, Gladys M. Smith, Raymond M. Smith, D. Talmage Smith, Elizabeth Stark, Mallie Hill Stone, Angie Hatcher Swanson, Walter Venable, Nellie Venable Willard, Mr. and Mrs. Prather Willard, Thelma Willard, and Myrtice Joyce Wilson.

Rev. Carl H. Stark, Jr., a retired Army Chaplain, was hired as the first pastor. A manse was purchased on Lynchburg Road, and Rev. Stark and his family moved to Pilot Mountain on October 6, 1946.

Under the direction of Rev. Stark, a lot was purchased on the corner of East Main Street and Needham Street, and in 1947, an Army chapel, located at the Overseas Replacement Bureau in Greensboro, was purchased, dismantled, and trucked to the East Main Street lot where it was reassembled in only two weeks. The exterior of the building was bricked by a local contractor, C. Roland Bell, who was also a charter member of the Church.

On September 26, 1948, the forty-five charter members took part in the official Organization Service of First Presbyterian Church. Rev. Stark was installed as pastor and the church officers were ordained. The dedication service was held on 9 September 1951.



Figure 142: First Presbyterian Church of Pilot Mountain, 2012.

Rev. Stark resigned in January 1952. In September 1952, the church became a member of a five-church field known as the "Larger Parish." Rev. R. T. Barham was the pastor. The Pilot Mountain church removed itself from membership in the "Larger Parish," and formed the Pilot Mountain field with Hills Presbyterian Church. This association lasted from 1965 through 1970.

Pastors who have served the church include: Carl H. Stark, Jr., R. T. Barham, Gerald Reiff, Gaston Boyles, Burriess M. Bender, Sr., Fred Childress, William O. Nelson, Harry S. Thomas, Jr., Lester E. Sheppard, John B. Talmage, Jesse W. Bledsoe, Bruce Hodges, Dr. O. Leighton Culler, and Kristi Mills Rolison.⁶⁹ The church has recently hired a new pastor, Travis Milam.

⁶⁹ Historical Records of First Presbyterian Church.