

Second Presbyterian

Celebrating 150 Years

Serving Christ in Downtown Chattanooga

1871 - 2021

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL...

MISSION & MISSIONARIES

The generational changes in words in the English language have always fascinated me. A word may sound the same, be spelled the same, but because of some catastrophic event, political happenstance, or even a popular song may convey to the contemporary generation a totally different meaning than to the older population. For example, the word *transparency* has taken on a different/expanded meaning in the past year due to the distrust of “things” political.

Similarly, in observing brochures of companies or organization, page 1 or 2 apprise the reader of the group’s *Mission Statement* (an *overworked* term for justification of existence).

Webster’s dictionary states: *Mission*, a sending out or being sent out with authority to perform a special duty, as by a church, government, etc.; *Missionary*, a person sent on a *mission* specifically by the church to preach, teach, and proselytize. Church *mission* projects appear to fall into three categories, local, national, and international.

The subject of *missions* of the Presbyterian Church as related to Second Church in Chattanooga is recorded in Session minutes and other articles and writings found in the church’s Archives. Almost from the formation of the church in September 1871, the clergy and members of the congregation have participated in multiple *mission* projects from international to local. Found in a church history written on the occasion of the centennial of Second Church pertaining to the pastorate of Dr. W. J. Trimble was the following:

“Second Church had not only grown itself but had carried on work at home and abroad.

...In 1886 a chapel in North Chattanooga eventuated in the founding of Northside Presbyterian Church. A unique class for deaf and non-speaking was a feature of the Park Place Church, which was also begun in 1886. In the years that followed, missions were carried out at Apison, Cohutta, Mowbray, and Hamill Road. Six missionaries, three of them members of the Irwin family, went abroad in the decades before 1900; Mrs. Jessie Dunlap Newton had a long career in India in this period. In the years after the turn of the century, ten more members of Second Presbyterian went to the mission fields in the US and abroad. Two of the Elmore (the pastor’s sons), Keith Postlethwaite, and Mrs. Janet Ensign Hall served as *missionaries* in the US and overseas.”

Dr. E. A. Elmore assumed the ministry in 1900 and led drives during World War I on behalf of the Red Cross and Liberty Loans. A local mission was established at Newton Center, a part of the Leonard Street Presbyterian Church. Initially a Freedman’s School, it continued to provide education for the African-American community until the 1940’s. This is when it became a day-care center for the West Side.



HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL...*MISSION & MISSIONARIES (CONT.)*

Dr. Robert M. Stimson came to Second Church in December 1927, and under his leadership a period of extreme interest in *mission* activity was cultivated. Nine members of the congregation went into the mission field in the US and abroad in the years from 1930 to 1950 and eleven undertook this commitment in the 60's and 70's. The desire of Dr. Stimson to execute a local mission to impact the children of the West Side resulted in the establishment of the Stimson Weekday Bible School. The school was under the leadership of Mrs. L. A. Hillard who expanded the school to include services to mothers as well as the children. The school was closed as the result of the removal of the residences from the West Side when Interstate Highway construction began.

In the years that followed—the 1950's through 2020—led by the pastors, Spencer, Stewart, Jump, and McCallen, the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church participated prayerfully and financially in the support of foreign and local *missions*. The annual *School of Missions* led by Martha R. Davis from 1958-1988 provided a continuing connection between those in the PCUSA's foreign mission service and congregants of Second Church. Additionally these pastors guided the members of Second into developing and working in a multitude of local *mission* projects. (Among some of the more memorable and effective ones: St. Matthew's shelter and Lenten noonday services for downtown workers.)

The following is a partial list of the *missionaries* that were recognized by the *School of Missions* and/or on occasion during their furloughs to the US visited with the Second Church's membership: Dr. & Mrs. (Marion) Stanton R. Wilson, Korea; Rev. & Mrs. (Peggy) Morton S. Taylor, Iraq (Rev. Taylor was ordained at Second Church in 1952); Rev. & Mrs. (Maryanna) Melvin A. Cassady, India; Miss Nannie McLean Hereford, Japan; Rev. & Mrs. (Betty) Glen W. Bays, New Guinea; Rev. & Mrs. (Eleanor) A. Don Robb III, Columbia, SA; Rev. & Mrs. (Helen) Francis Scott, China.

During this same period the congregation was enhanced by membership of a number of persons who had served the greater church in the foreign *mission* field: Miss Carrie Gould (India), Miss Margaret Winslett (China), Miss Mary Donaldson (China, India), and the Rev. & Mrs. Henry Bucher (Philippines). Their influence immeasurable! The parents of Mrs. Dick Brewer (Keiko), a regular attendee and valued participant at Second Church, were missionaries to Japan. She called Japan home until sent away to the United States in 1941.

In more recent years our closest association with foreign missionaries has been with Nancy and Shelvis Smith-Mather who began their service in South Sudan but due to the turmoil in the region have been thwarted in their efforts. Some of the *missions* closer to home, however, have moved slowly but steadily ahead in spite of the restrictions placed on the community by the pandemic. These are: St. Mather's Shelter, Hope House, Newton Center, Welcome Home, Salvation Army, Ronald McDonald House, Northside Neighborhood House, Moccasin Bend Worship Companions, and Beloved Woman.

As we are getting ready to open the doors of our church following an unanticipated "long winter's sleep," I sense an excitement, enthusiasm, and surge of energy. In concert with our new leadership the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church can prayerfully pick up the strains of old missions and/or go forward assured of God's hand in yet unimagined directions.