

Our History

First Presbyterian Church, Lubbock

First Presbyterian Church has a long history and association with the city of Lubbock. In fact, First Presbyterian is older than the city itself as the church was established in 1903, some six years before the city was incorporated. FPC was organized on September 4, 1903, a time when Lubbock was a small isolated town with only 175 residents.

Humble Beginings

The Rev. O.G. Jones organized First Presbyterian Church with 13 members, who met for worship at various locations such as the Baptist and Methodist churches (long since demolished), the local school building as well as other buildings in town. Services were held irregularly and were conducted by available missionaries and traveling ministers, including R.M. Hammock, I.L. Cunningham and J.P. Word.

Word became the church's first permanent pastor in 1907. Word is credited with laying the foundation for much of the church's later progress. Concerned that the young church had no meeting place of its own, he persuaded the congregation to purchase six lots on the corner of 14th Street and Avenue N for \$300, an enormous sum at that time. In 1909, a small wooden structure was built on one of the lots. It contained a pulpit, an organ, a stove and wooden chairs.

During this time, Word's wife organized Missionary Bible Study group and the Ladies Aid Society. The women helped raise money to pay for the 14th Street lots and buy the first pulpit by selling tamales door to door.

In 1921, the decision was made to start building a permanent church facility. A 30' 50' half basement was built where the fellowship hall (Lewis Hall) stood at the former downtown location. This served the congregation until 1924, when the sanctuary and an upper floor were built over the basement. The original wooden frame building was converted into a manse for the pastor and his family. In 1922, the Rev. J.M. Lewis and his family moved into the manse and lived there for the next 20 years. Jack Lewis would serve as pastor for 29 years.



In 1939, First Presbyterian began a long history of reaching out to other areas of Lubbock by establishing the Locust Street Chapel in the Arnett Benson subdivision. After WWII, members of that chapel decided to organize as a church, which would become Grace Presbyterian and is now located on west 19th Street. Vanda Presbyterian began as a missionary outpost in East Lubbock in 1950, but due to population shifts in the city the church was unable to survive. In early 1947, a need was seen for a Presbyterian church in what was then southwest Lubbock. In 1948, 68 members of FPC agreed to become members of that new church, which became Westminster Presbyterian at 33rd Street and Indiana Avenue.

A Growing Building

First Presbyterian began to outgrow its facilities and undertook major building projects for the next 20 years. The Rev. Tom B. Anderson was called as pastor in 1951, taking over for the retiring Jack Lewis. A new larger sanctuary was built in 1951 and was in use by 1952. That sanctuary served the congregation until 2008, when the current facility was built in far south Lubbock at 130th Street and Memphis Avenue.



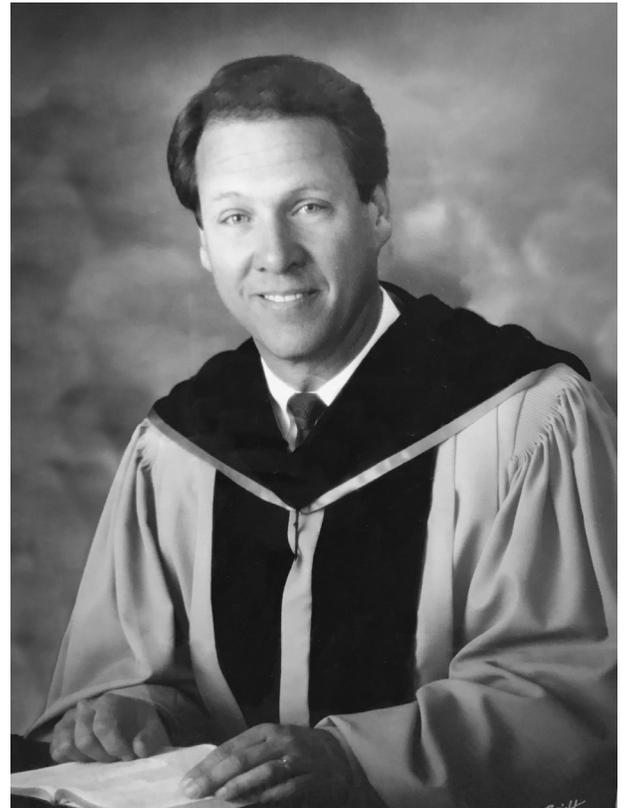
The building program continued with the arrival of Andrew Jumper as pastor in 1962. The education building was completed, the old sanctuary was razed to make way for Lewis Hall, the garden room and classrooms. Offices were also constructed.



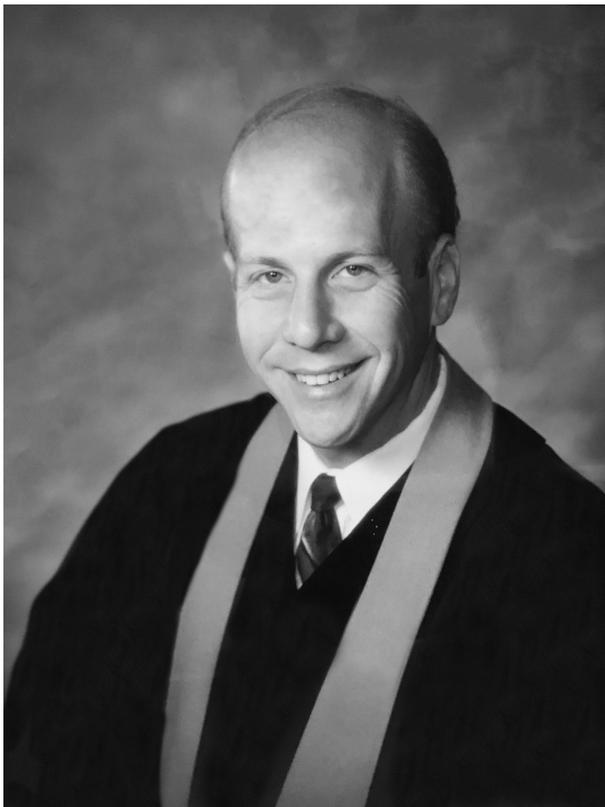
Jumper served as pastor until 1970 and was followed by Robert Dow Nicholson, who served as pastor until 1981. The membership, which had grown to 1,200 in the 1950s, was beginning to decline. Kirt Anderson was called as pastor in 1982 with the goal of increasing membership, which he succeeded in doing along with the purchase and installation of a new Schudi pipe organ for the sanctuary.

A New Start

It was under Kirt Anderson's direction, along with church member R.C. Douglas, that First Presbyterian began looking to increase its presence in the growing southwest part of town. According to Anderson, he and Dr. Douglas were looking at securing a piece of land in that area to establish a second campus for the purposes of youth ministry, choir, committee meetings and other such activities that could become a second worship experience. However, those plans failed to take root.



Pastor Kirt Anderson
1982-1987



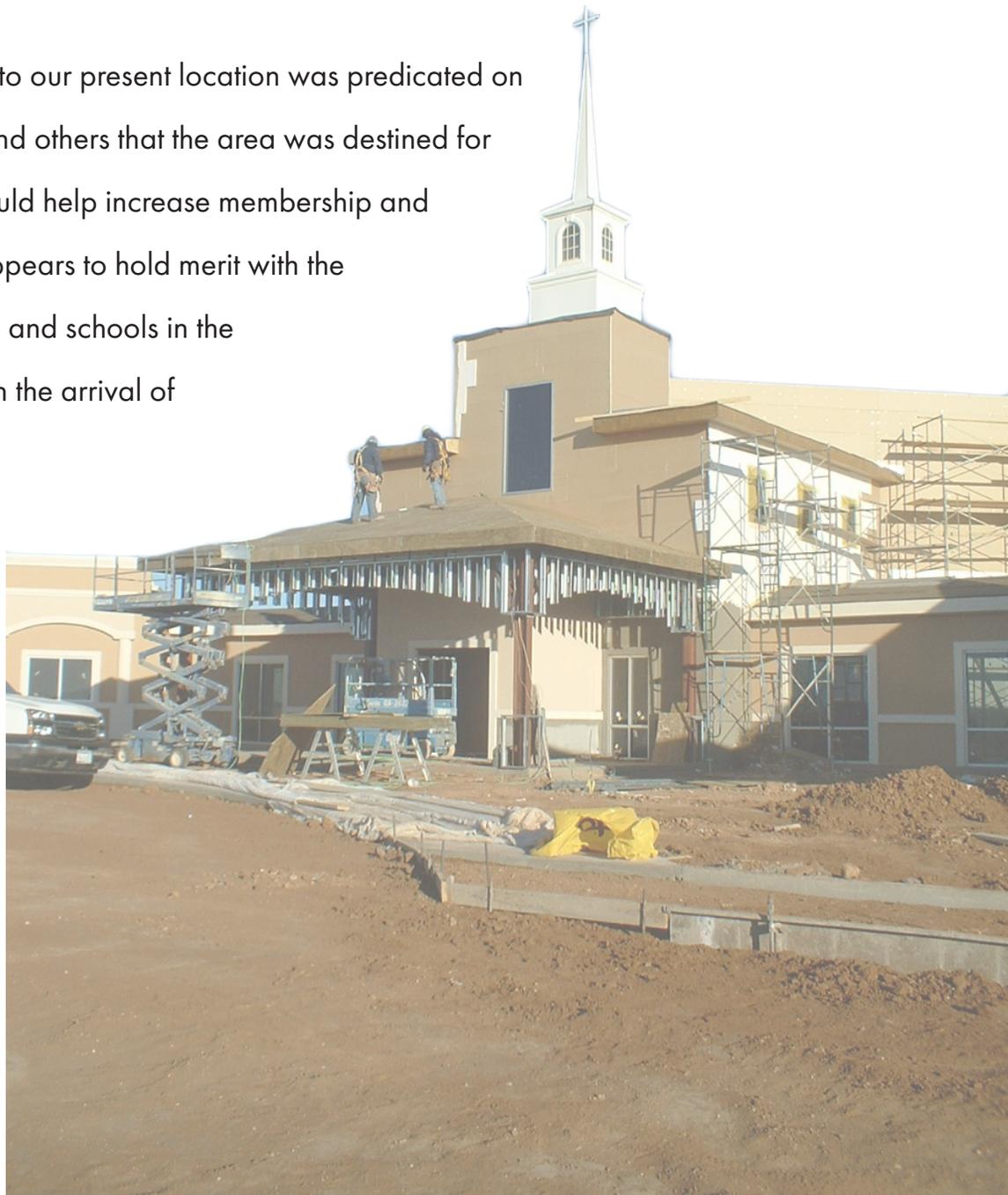
Pastor Ronald P. Wood
1993-2001

Anderson served as pastor until 1987. Robert Bullock arrived in 1988 as pastor, and served until 1992. Ron Wood became pastor in 1993. It was under Wood that the idea of establishing a church facility in southwest Lubbock arose again. Wood, Douglas, Dr. Frank Ryburn and Dr. Ted Hartman sought out land on the newly developed 98th Street. However, it was determined the time was not right for such a move.

Wood remained as pastor until 2001. The church was served by interim pastors and other clergy until 2003 when Bob Field became pastor. He served as pastor through 2022.

It was during Field's tenure that the church received a generous donation following the deaths of Dr. Douglas, who was a devoted churchman and congregational leader, and his wife Ruth, who was the daughter of longtime pastor J.M. Lewis. That donation enabled First Presbyterian to leave its downtown location and build a new church at 130th Street and Memphis Avenue in 2008, which is our current location. It is also why the Douglases were honored with the naming of the fellowship hall, Douglas Hall.

The feeling to move to our present location was predicated on the vision of Dr. Douglas and others that the area was destined for growth with the hope it would help increase membership and church attendance. That appears to hold merit with the construction of new houses and schools in the immediate area, along with the arrival of many businesses.





Much of the church's long history can be seen through the portraits of former pastors lining the hallway between the sanctuary and Douglas Hall. There are also numerous plaques around the church noting memorial gifts by past and present members as well as donations for the stained glass windows in the sanctuary.

First Presbyterian has also been greatly involved in the Lubbock community as members have included notable physicians, such as Drs. Douglas and Ryburn, attorneys, Texas Tech administrators and professors, local school officials, businessmen and women and many other civic leaders.

Church attendance took a hard hit in 2020 with the COVID pandemic. Since public gatherings were limited or outright banned, Field would conduct services at a distance in the parking lot.

The proposal by the city and state to build an outer loop would cause First Presbyterian to make some construction changes to the still fairly new facility. Loop 88, which is currently under construction, took away a majority of the parking lot in front of the church as well as access from 130th Street. That has forced the

church to shift its main parking lot to behind the building and also changed the main entrance to the back. It is hoped that traffic on the completed Loop 88 will enhance the church's visibility.

