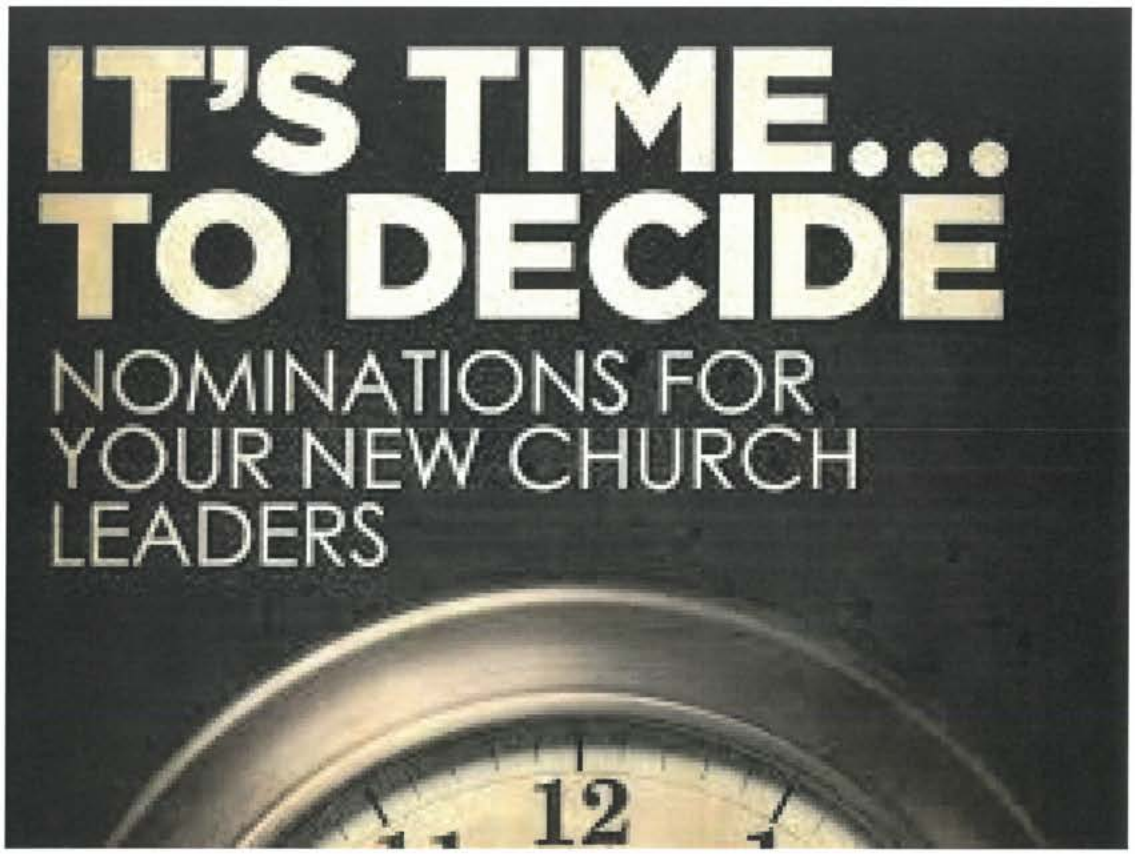


Report of the Nominating Committee

February 21, 2021

Submitted by the
2020-2021 Nominating Committee
Dawn Carsey (Ruling Elder, co-chair)
Mary Ann Compton (Ruling Elder, co-chair)
Christy Gudaitis (Deacon)
Walt Barron
Clarabelle Brown
Carlo Diy
Jean Wilson

First Presbyterian Church 305 E. Main Street Durham NC 27701

Nominees for Ruling Elders Class of 2024



Stephen Berry has been a member of First Presbyterian since 2015. He is an active member of the young adults Scratch group and has previously served as a Deacon. Stephen resides in Hillsborough with his wife Mary, ten month old son August, and pug Frank. Stephen enjoys running (mostly half-marathons) and indoor cycling, collecting records, reading both fiction and non-fiction, traveling with his wife and son, and spending time with his dog. Stephen works for Medidata Solutions on their Professional Services team delivering software to support clinical research.



Tony Chavez has been a member of FPC since April of 2016. He served as a Deacon for 3 years and duties include membership committee member and chair. Tony was born in El Salvador and came to the USA in 1981 as a young boy along with his sister Xiomara. He grew up in Pacoima, LA area in California and attended school there until he graduated high school and joined the US Army for 4 years. Through his journey in the military, he has lived in Germany, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Tony went to college for graphic design and currently owns Chavez Graphics in Durham, an apparel and gift incentives company. He has served on many non- profit boards including Partners for Youth Opportunity, Visual Rehabilitation Services of GA, Vinings Historic Preservation Society, and Smyrna Business Association. Tony is in a loving relationship with Mary Gitata, which they enjoy walking, hiking, golf, movies, cooking and travel. During the pandemic, he has learned to make pizza from scratch.



Leah Graves has been a member of FPC for the past 4 1/2 years. She currently serves on the Session and as Chair of the Personnel Committee. Leah moved to Durham, NC from Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2016 to work for Veritas Collaborative where she is Vice President of Nutrition and Culinary Services. She has 2 adult children, Lee and Mary Lyn, who will both live in New York City as of March. Leah loves the arts and cannot wait for live performances to resume.



Fred Moore was born and raised in South Korea, the child and grandchild of Presbyterian missionaries to Korea and China. In 1975 he moved to the US for his post-high school education and received undergraduate, medical school and residency training in MA, WV, and OH. He moved to Caswell County, NC in 1986 where he met and married his wife, Jo Ann, and where they raised their two daughters, Laura and Hannah. Fred worked for 30 years as a family physician, community college teacher and a public health administrator until 2016 when he retired for health reasons. During this time he also served as an elder and in other positions of leadership in the small Presbyterian and Methodist churches they attended. Jo Ann and Fred moved to Durham in 2019 to be near their daughters and grandchild who live and work in the area. After visiting several other churches in the area, they visited First Presbyterian, and it immediately felt like home. They became members in January 2020. Since joining, COVID has limited the opportunities for face-to-face fellowship but they have participated in weekly online worship and the Lectionary Sunday School class. Fred also enjoys volunteering with several NC based non-profit organizations.



Beth Stringfield (she/her/hers) moved to Durham in 1997 and joined FPC in 2004; in 2010 Beth and Cris Rivera were blessed in the FPC sanctuary. Beth has served FPC as a confirmation mentor, Deacon, member of the Mission Study Committee, Pastor Nominating Committee, and preparing and serving fellowship lunches. Beth works at the Center for Health Policy and Inequalities Research at Duke addressing HIV, mental health, substance use, immigrants' access to care, LGBTQ+ health, and clergy wellbeing. She loves to be in the North Carolina mountains fly fishing, but during the pandemic has contented herself with bird/squirrel/bunny watching in the backyard and lots of crafts.



Julie Whiddon recently retired from the medical field where she worked for over 25 years. Presently she is day trading forex and stocks. Julie has lived in Durham for the past thirty years and is originally from South Georgia. Her hobbies are gardening, playing with her cats, and playing chess. She loves to cook. Julie has been a member of FPC for over six years and a member of the Women Spiritual Formation class. She has served as a Deacon and chair of the Fellowship Committee and has also been active on the Property Committee. Julie does volunteer work for the Red Cross one day a week.



Emily Wilkins is a preacher's kid. She grew up in Richmond, VA, and Geneva, Switzerland. Living internationally, she learned French, German and Spanish. Oikoumene, the ecumenical sense that we belong to each other and to God, is how she seeks to live her faith. A member of FPC since 1990, she has worked on Habitat houses, helped welcome visitors, and currently participates in bagging rice/beans monthly+/- and enjoys furthering her faith in Journeys and F&C Sunday School classes. When she is able, she joins the Racial Equity Task Force, Creation Care Committee, and book readings/talks. Emily is active in the Presbyterian Peacemaking Network of the Presbytery. She and Neal have a son, Kennedy, 22, and a daughter, Sophie, 18. A retired teacher, she works during elections as a Chief Judge at Club Blvd. Humanities School, Precinct 21. She enjoys open water swims, skiing, knitting, and is a lifeguard for the City of Durham.

Nominee for Ruling Elder Class of 2022



Tom Bacon has been a member of FPC since 2005. He is currently a member of the Session and is Chair of the Service and Mission Committee, and previously chaired the Stewardship Committee. Tom is retired from UNC where he directed a program to educate health professionals for service to rural and other underserved communities in North Carolina. He and his wife Ellen enjoy travel, hiking, and spending time with their grandkids. They have two children, Michael, who lives in Durham with his family and is a member of PFC, and Kathryn, who lives in the DC area with her family and works in international development.

Nominees for Deacon Class of 2024



Jennie Belle initially began attending FPC in 2014 while pursuing a dual MDiv-MSW degree at Duke and UNC. She and her husband, Ian, joined the church a few months later and were married at FPC the following year. Over the years Jennie has delivered occasional messages (and sometimes a liturgical dance) at First Pres and Iglesia Emanuel as she is bilingual. She has also led discussions about immigrants and refugees for the Faith & Community class from her work with the NC Council of Churches and Church World Service. Jennie currently works for the City of Durham doing community engagement. In her free time, she enjoys playing trivia and exploring Durham with her husband and two fluffy dogs.



Jean Cary and her husband, George Danser, joined FPC in 2000. Jean has served as an elder and Clerk of the Session. She enjoys working on the gardening and landscaping team and has recently started work helping to deliver flowers. Jean moved to Durham in 1967 as a Duke freshman where she became involved in the Civil Rights anti-war movements. Following graduation, she attended Georgetown University School of Law. She returned to NC to practice law as a legal aid lawyer in Charlotte. Seven years later she moved to Durham to begin teaching in the UNC Law Clinic. In 1988 Jean married George Danser, a Durham stained-glass artist, and became a stepmother of identical twin eight- year-old boys. The following year she became a professor at Campbell University School of Law where she taught family law and trial advocacy until 2018. Jean and George now enjoy retirement and being grandparents to five year old Jack and ten year old Clara.



George Gentithes and his family, wife Annie and daughter Ruby (13), have been attending FPC since December of 2019; they became members in the spring. He is committed to the church's core values of inclusivity, social justice, and community. George grew up in northeast Ohio and lived in Chicago before moving to Durham, Annie's hometown, about ten years ago. He works as an Account Manager in specialty additive chemical sales for Evonik Corp. In his free time, George spends early mornings exercising outside and cheers for Cleveland sports teams.



Mark Higgins joined First Presbyterian in April 2020, having been a regular attendee for several years. A native of Evanston, IL and a cradle Presbyterian, his ecumenical faith journey has brought him full circle, most recently from the Catholic Church. He has been a Stephen Minister, lector and cantor. A Durham resident since 1992, Mark is the former owner of Hall-Wynne Funeral Service. He serves on the board of Durham Nativity School where he tutors in Spanish. Mark's passions include travel, art history, playing the hammered dulcimer and entertaining.



Jancy Johnstone moved to Durham in 2000 and joined First Presbyterian in 2003 or 2004. She is a semi-retired RN, planning to do contract work going forward rather than being full time staff. She has 2 daughters, both raised at First Presbyterian. Annie is living in Brooklyn, working on the film crew for TV shows. A year ago, she married her high school sweetheart. They are both doing well. Her second daughter, Kate is living in New Orleans and loves it. She has a pet sitting business and plans to go to Beauty School when the pandemic is under control. Jancy currently lives in Hillsborough with 2 cats. First Presbyterian has been the center of her life almost from the minute she joined. She has worked with Christian Education and has served as a youth group volunteer. Jancy was an elder many years back. In the last decade Jancy has been through some difficult times and First Pres has provided her with the friendship, love, and support that she needed. Jancy hopes to do the same for others in the church, whatever need they might have.



Julio Manceras was born and raised in Dallas, Texas. In the past few years, he has moved around the North East and has now ended up in Cary, NC. Julio enjoys playing with technology and spending most of his working hours developing processes and systems incorporating artificial intelligence to serve clients better and improve efficiency and productivity. After work, he usually spends his evenings working on his second Masters in Cyber Security Operations. During his free time, Julio enjoys traveling, meeting new people, and experiencing other cultures. The pandemic has made him realize how much he enjoys the outdoors and will definitely keep up with the hiking and other outdoor activities. Julio feels that he was blessed to find and join FPC in the fall of 2019. Shortly after joining FPC, he started to get involved in the church choir as a tenor, and he looks forward to serving the community and FPC in any possible way.



Grace Mbuga and her family have lived in Durham and have been members of FPC since December 2007. Their son Lawrence loved attending FPC daycare and loved hanging out with the youth especially before COVID-19 hit. He's in high school now. Their daughter Leone was baptized here and is soon to be in Middle School. We love the warmth the members show us as a family. Grace and her husband work in the hospital and have been blessed to remain healthy this past year. Grace is a registered nurse at Duke Raleigh Hospital. She loves the outdoors; hiking and the beach. She also loves to cook.

Nominees for Deacon Class of 2023



Bob Pleasants is married to Adrienne Allison and has two daughters, Izzy (11) and Nora, (6). He is the Associate Director for Student Engagement at the UNC-Chapel Hill Office for Undergraduate Research, and he also teaches in the Gillings School of Global Public Health. He has been a member of FPC since 2017, and he has served a deacon for three years, including two as the chair of the Pastoral Care committee. He enjoys spending his free time hiking and playing games with his family, running, reading, and cooking.



Theodora Brown (Teddie) and her husband Tony joined First Presbyterian Church of Durham in January 2020 and are on the Service and Mission committee. They moved to Durham from Simsbury, Connecticut in 1993 for Tony to join the faculty at Duke University. About a year later, Teddie joined him at Duke in the Sanford School of Public Policy working as his program coordinator as well as working in many other capacities with various professors until 2008 when she retired. Teddie also taught Developmental English at Durham Technical College. Teddie earned a Master's degree from The University of Connecticut in English and elementary education. She participated in Leadership Durham class of 1994 sponsored by the Durham Chamber of Commerce which introduced her to Durham and volunteer opportunities. Over the years she has been a board member and eventual chair of the boards of One World Market (now Bull City Market), Habitat for Humanity of Durham, and Meals on Wheels. Presently she teaches English as a Second Language at the Durham Literacy Center. Over the years here, Teddie has participated in two mission trips to Haiti to work with Family Health Ministries, and two trips to Honduras to build with Habitat for Humanity. She also works with Iglesia Emanuel bagging food for the food pantry. Teddie's other interests are her two local grandchildren whom she adores, tennis, travel, friends, selling her collections on E-Bay and volunteer work. She looks forward to the training to become a Deacon for the church and being an active church member.

Nominating Committee for 2021-2022



Brent Curtis has been members of FPC since he and his family moved to Durham in 2000. He has served as a Deacon and Elder. He currently serves the Christian Education Committee, teaches middle school Sunday school and is a high school youth group advisor. Brent makes music in about all the ways he can think of. He retired from teaching elementary school with DPS and currently works at the Nasher Museum of Art. His wife Lesley chairs the Department of Population Health Sciences at Duke, their son Graham is a freshman at Duke and their daughter Sydney lives and works in DC.



Carlo Diy joined FPC in 2013. He grew up in El Segundo, CA, a small city west of Los Angeles. Carlo is an undergraduate alum of Pomona College and a graduate alum of Duke where he earned a master's degree in teaching. He runs HaitiHub.com and teaches Entrepreneurship at Jordan High School. He and wife Emily Durham Diy have one child, Anna Ruth, who was born in October of 2018 and are expecting their second (a boy) in February 2021. Carlo and Emily participate in the Scratch group. Carlo has served on the Stewardship Committee.



Thilo Fullenkamp has been a lifelong member of FPC and is active in Sunday School, Christian Education, and youth group. He is 14 years old and goes to Lakewood Montessori Middle School for 8th grade. He enjoys books, games, tennis, videos, and hanging out with his cats.



Marie Sappenfield is a retired nurse and has been a member of First Pres for 30+ years. She has served as Deacon and Elder in past. At present she is a member of Service and Mission Committee, is a Walk in Ministry volunteer and a member of a Faith Team that supports a justice involved member of the community. She enjoys volunteering at Iglesia Emanuel food ministry, Urban Ministries café, and is a member of executive Board of Step Up. She is married to David and they have a daughter Laura who lives in Durham.



Jean Wilson has been a member of First Presbyterian Church since 1970. During the past 50 years, she has served on several committees, including the Worship and the Arts Committee. She has been an active member of Presbyterian Women and the Faith and Community Sunday School class, and has served as a deacon and as an elder.