



# The Tie That

# Binds

Winter-2018

*"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13.35)*

A Publication of FBC Greensboro Celebrating Our Homebound Members

## ***End of an Era: a Retrospective on Jennie Stewart***

*(Editor's note: The following is excerpted from Jennie Lee Stewart's November 18 memorial service at the River Landing at Sandy Ridge retirement community, where she and husband "Paul A." moved when it opened in 2003.)*

In a funeral plan that she sent by mail, Jennie noted that she had been a member of Greensboro's First Baptist Church "for ever." At least, that's what it looked like at first glance. On closer inspection she had actually written "for over." She had (at that time) been a member of our church "for over 70 years."

But if you knew anything of Jennie's personal history with our church, "for ever" is what you might conclude. Her father, the late Ora Earl Lee, came to us fresh out of seminary in 1921 to begin serving as our very first Education Director.

Prior to that, our staff had consisted only of a pastor, a secretary, and a janitor. So the arrival of "O.E." and wife Ethel marked the beginning of an era of significant advance in the life of First Baptist Church. The very next year O.E.

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## ***From a Substitute to a Standard: Kathy Livengood Edwards's Long Tenure at FBC Preschool***

*By Steve Pressley*

*(Editor's note: on the December Monday when this article was written, Kathy Edwards was celebrated with a Weekday Preschool luncheon honoring her retirement from her record-setting 33 years as a teacher.)*

On a Sunday morning in January of 1985, [Children's Minister] Jack Heath met me in one of the stairwells at church. He told me that [weekday preschool teaching assistant] Mary Comstock was down in her back. *Can you substitute tomorrow?* he said. I said I would.

"And here we are nearly 33 years later. It was the longest substitution in history!"

The first reason for that was that Mary Comstock found herself unable to return to her position. The second reason was that her lead teacher, the late Helen Ford, with whom Kathy worked that first winter and spring, found employment with the county school system and did not return to the FBC program the following fall.

"So next thing Jack said, *Can you finish out this school year?* And then he came back and said, *Can you take Helen's place and become lead teacher in September?* I said yes, and then I said yes again, and it turned out to be my life's work!"

Kathy was 30 years of age at the

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*(“Kathy Livengood Edwards,” continued from page 1)*

time, and she had thought she would spend her young adult years as a stay-at-home mom, occasionally caring for other children at her and husband Danny’s residence just off Hilltop Drive. Having previously graduated Wingate Junior College with an associate degree in early childhood education, she was well-qualified.

But something about Rev. Heath’s challenge inspired Kathy to go farther. For one thing, “It was the perfect job for a mother. I could be home every afternoon when the children got in from school.” And even more, “I was well-equipped to become a lead teacher of two-year-olds. I had learned so much from working under Helen.”

Kathy was likewise well-equipped to serve in an educational program that was church-based. Born in Winston-Salem in 1954 to Cecil and Becky Livengood, she was baptized into that city’s First Baptist Church when she was ten. The family’s pastor at that time was Dr. Randall Lolley (who incidentally would immerse Kathy and Danny’s son Josh as his first baptismal candidate upon returning to pastor FBC Greensboro in 1990).

So lifelong Baptist and firm-believer Kathy was thrilled at the prospect of blessing small children with distinctively Christian nurture. “In a church program you can instill Jesus into their hearts. You can have prayer with them, and you can teach them Bible verses. You can’t do that in other kinds of schools.”

Serving as lead teacher brought heavy responsibility for lesson planning and communication with church leadership and families, but “I was 30 years old! I knew I could do it!” And “do it” Kathy did for three years, during which she was assisted by Sherry Barlow, Debbie McKinney and the late Cebelle Pipes.

Come 1988, however, Martha Cox retired as Jean Shore’s assistant in the four-year-old class, and Jean invited Kathy to become her new assistant. Kathy would remain at that post for the following three decades.

Recalling that the overall preschool program “floundered” during the late 1980’s, Kathy attributes its renewed vitality to the arrival of Children’s Minister and Preschool Director Sandra Canipe in 1990. A Randall Lolley recruit, “Sandra did away with unproductive aspects of the program and placed all of the classes under the same administrative umbrella. She turned it all around in the first year, and stayed on for 19 years after that. I loved working under Sandra—she was just a great boss.”

Another person Kathy loved working alongside was Lynne Greene, a new lead teacher for four-year-olds, recruited by Sandra in the autumn of 1993. Lynne sported a UNCG bachelor’s degree with a concentration on children from birth through five years.

Lynne’s and Kathy’s became a professional marriage made in heaven. “We were a true team,” Kathy recalls. “We’ve been friends for 37 years, and we taught 22 years together. We absolutely knew what each other was thinking!”

When Lynne retired in the spring of 2016, lamented Kathy, “My world sort of fell apart.” Husband Danny was meanwhile experiencing health challenges, so a subsequent retirement for Kathy herself seemed logical.

Through the years Kathy has maintained a devotion to First Baptist and a variety of its ministries. During one eight-year period she spent afternoons working in the church kitchen alongside former food services director Phyllis Jones and her assistant Theodore Farrar.

“I had so much fun, but it was hard work! We would serve upwards of 350 people on Wednesday nights, and I also helped Phyllis cater weddings! No wonder I’m tired!”

Retirement finds Kathy “tired” of some things, perhaps, but not people. Church is a God-and-people business, after all, and she never intends to give up on the important aspects of that. “My greatest reward has been knowing all the people I have met through 33 years. I saw new faces year after year, and I’ve kept up with a lot of them!”



*Lynne Greene and Kathy Edwards.*

(“Jennie Stewart,” continued from page 1)  
launched the first-ever Vacation Bible School for North Carolina Baptists. It was a four-weeks-long, five days a week Bible school.<sup>1</sup>

The Lees also began rearing an impressive coterie of their own children, which would include three boys who would grow up to be a physician, a professor and a pastor.

Sole female sibling Jennie Rebecca would perhaps be the free spirit in the family. Growing up in the old First Baptist Church at the corner of West Market and North Eugene Streets, she remembered roller-skating in the church basement. Upstairs was the staid old sanctuary, which featured a central baptismal pool located to one side of the pulpit. Jennie recalled that, when nobody was watching, she might even steal upstairs and skate in the waterless baptistry.

At 14 years of age, Jennie captured the eye of a fellow four years her elder. Paul A. Stewart Jr., the only child of a prominent Greensboro optometrist, was working part-time for a Gaston Street corner grocery called Tillman’s.

Paul Stewart was graduating from Greensboro High School (now Grimsley), just as Jennie Lee was entering. Their relationship grew over the coming years, as she completed high school and he enrolled in and finished education at Edwards Military Academy in Salemberg.

Nobody knows what Jennie’s father O.E. Lee thought of Paul Stewart. That became immaterial, in any case, as the young religious educator died on the eve of World War II. His wife Ethel remained at First Baptist, and even assumed her own identity in ministry, as she came to paid staff, first as our

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Scott Culclasure’s *In Every Good Work*, p. 101.

# Happy Birthday to You!

## JANUARY

- **11 - Gertrude Royal** Abbotswood Assisted Living, 3504 Flint Street, Room 122, Greensboro, NC 27405 | 285-5235
- **15 - Elise Berkley** 1408 Garland Drive, Greensboro, NC 27408 | 275-7030
- **15 - Frances Bolen** Carolina Estates, Apt. #102, 4434 Old Battleground Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 855-1723
- **20 - Kathryn Hewitt** 1714 Noble Place, Greensboro, NC 27408-2614 | 288-2224
- **25 - Betty Campbell** 5212 Hooper Road, McLeansville, NC 27301-9612 | 697-0624 | bmcampbell56@triad.rr.com
- **31 - Ceil Sue** 1307 Hobbs Road, Greensboro, NC 27410-4823 | 617-3115

## FEBRUARY

- **2 - Marie Jones** Arboretum at Heritage Green #C9, 709 Meadowood Street, Greensboro, NC 27409 | 299-4130
- **13 - Freda Rushton** Brookdale at Lawndale Park Room 31, 4400 Lawndale Drive, Greensboro, NC 27455
- **18 - Leroy Hartgrove** 2216-C New Garden Road, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 286-3010
- **26 - Dixie Wimberley** 2434 Wanstead Court, Richmond, VA 23238-3059 | 292-1394

## MARCH

- **1 - Nell Beavers** 3560 Wildflower Drive, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 478-2175 | nrbeavers@aol.com
- **5 - Phyllis Abee** Brighton Gardens, Room 261, 1208 New Garden Road, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 292-5156
- **10 - Betty Lusk** Friends Homes West HC 30, 6100 West Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 299-7663
- **15 - Vernon Wimberley** 2434 Wanstead Court, Richmond, VA 23238-3059 | 292-1394
- **28 - Jerry Thompson** 4803 Trailwood Drive, Greensboro, NC 27407-8239 | 454-4354 | AJThompson@triad.rr.com
- **31 - Edith Edmonds** 218 Mistletoe Drive, Greensboro, NC 27403-1429 | 299-0578

church hostess and later as our visitor to homebound members.

Thus it was *Ethel* Lee’s opinion of Paul that ultimately mattered, and (according to him) he and Mrs. Lee “got along very well.” One thing bound to have helped was when Methodist Paul, previously sprinkled, at last relented and in 1944 underwent a proper Baptist baptism!

Even though it was wartime, the military would not claim Paul, because of his asthmatic condition. So on January 20, 1945 Dr. J. Clyde Turner married Jennie to Paul, and the newly-minted Stewarts relocated for a time to Atlanta, Ga., where Paul—following his father’s example—obtained training in the optical field.

A year thereafter a better offer

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*Jennie's 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday on last May 20.*

(“Jennie Stewart,” continued from page 3) came from his hometown, and Paul and Jennie returned to Greensboro, where he pursued a lifelong profession in optical sales, retiring in 1976. Through those years no children came to the Stewarts, and Jennie worked for a local bank, and later an insurance agency.

Always extroverted and sociable, both Jennie and Paul developed and nurtured warm friendships, especially within the congregation. Special friends included the late O.D. and Mary Ruth Apple, who became traveling partners to destinations like Hawaii, New England and the Bahamas.

The Stewarts also joined the Apples at the card table. Paul doesn't remember the name of the game, but it wasn't poker, he said. (His father had warned him that one can “lose one's shirt” playing poker.)

At church Jennie cherished the study of the Bible with her Hope Sunday School Class, and served with our Woman's Missionary Union. Being a career woman did not handicap her domestic skills, as she enjoyed cooking and entertaining at home.

In retirement the Stewarts relocated first to Presbyterian Home in High Point, moving to the new Sandy Ridge location in 2003. They continued to commute to church in Greensboro until a dozen years ago, when their health declined.

But life for Jennie and Paul in their latter years was pleasantly framed by the River Landing community. It became their world, and it was a world for which they both thanked the Lord.

*The Tie That Binds* is a quarterly publication to honor our homebound members. Birthdays and other news feature homebound members only.

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## *The Tie That Binds*

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“These Presbyterians have been good to us,” Jennie would say, “and we're doing everything we can do to show them our gratitude.”

A weekly bingo gathering of 40-60 residents rendered the Stewarts a “high profile” status, since they became the official “callers.” Lately they hadn't been up to the task. However, as recently as late October, Paul fetched Jennie from her health care room and rolled her wheelchair to the weekly vesper service. She was very much “herself” that afternoon, smiling, pleasant and outgoing, extending her arms to hug well-wishers.

Jennie Lee Stewart's Saturday, November 4 passing marked the end of an era, in some ways. But we who remain at her church give gracious thanks for the time God allowed us to spend together. And we pray for Paul, husband of 72 years, in these days of reflection and farewell.

—Steve Pressley

## IN LOVING MEMORY

### Remembering...

We honor those homebound who have gone to live with the Lord. We were graced by their presence.

**Helen Ford** – September 9

**Mack Conway** – September 13

**Ralph Tate** – October 22

**Bobbie Carter** – November 2

**Merrill Norris** – November 3

**Jennie Stewart** – November 4

**Louis Nipper** – November 24

**Jim Filipski** – November 27

**Lindsay Hill** – November 28