

Pittsgrove Presbyterian Church
312 Daretown Road
Elmer, NJ

Mission Study 2019



OUR VISION

We would like to hold true to our Vision Statement:

We are **GROWing--**

Worshipping the Lord with our whole hearts.

Offering opportunities for Mission

Reaching others for Jesus Christ

Growing in Faith

OUR THEOLOGY and BELIEFS

We believe that God loves us just as we are and desires for us to live in close communion with him. We believe that God sent his Son to die for us so that by believing in Jesus we will have eternal life. By accepting this unmerited gift of salvation, we are called to live a different life! We are challenged to walk in Jesus' footsteps and to invite the Holy Spirit to abide within us.

Our first priority is to love God wholeheartedly. Our next priority is to love others. Showing this love is our timeless challenge from which we can never rest. We believe that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us! (Isaiah 61: 1-3) Our faith must be expressed by our actions throughout our community and beyond. Where there are hungry people, we will feed them. When people are grieving, we will give them comfort. We will, with the knowledge and grace from the Lord, bring the splendor of the Gospel to the people. We believe that as Christ's church, we have been chosen to work actively and diligently to close the gaps that exist between what is and what should be. We know God loves us unconditionally and good deeds cannot earn our salvation. However, by accepting the grace that God gives to us, we are called to live by the Word and produce the fruits of the Spirit.

WHO WE ARE: OUR PAST

Presbyterianism officially began in the American Colonies in 1706 with the Philadelphia Presbytery. Some early Dutch Reformed and French Huguenot settlers came to our area from New York in the early 1700s; they would meet for worship at a log meetinghouse on the Woodstown-Daretown Road. These included the DuBois, Nieuwkirk and Van Meter families. During the First Great Awakening, Gilbert Tennent and George Whitefield preached to these families and the Holy Spirit lit a fire in them, prompting them to form a church. In May of 1740,

the congregation called its first pastor, Rev. David Evans, a Yale-graduate from Wales. Rev. Evans helped the church officially organize on April 30, 1741. As the number of believers increased in the 1760s, they decided to build a brick church. Through the faithful preaching of Rev. George W. Janvier, in 1842 a great revival swept through the community, and by 1857 the congregation numbered five hundred forty-seven. A larger church building was dedicated in 1867. In 2016 the congregation celebrated the church's 275th anniversary. The Heritage Committee formed in 2012 to preserve the church's historical archives. They have worked on inventorying over 2,400 historical papers and artifacts from the church archives, scanning irreplaceable old documents, and transcribing all 18th century records into a published booklet available to the public. Today, many descendants of the original founders attend the church with their families.

WHO WE ARE: OUR PRESENT

OUR LOCATION, BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Pittsgrove Presbyterian Church, often referred to as Daretown Presbyterian Church, is located in Daretown, New Jersey, a small village in a rural setting, with multiple generations of families. It is easily accessible to the I-95 corridor and metropolitan areas such as Wilmington, Delaware (24 miles) and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (32 miles). Although the church originated in an era when most members lived in close proximity to the church, over time, members have moved farther away with work, marriage and other pursuits. Still it is the norm for most of our active members to live within a twenty-mile radius.

The Old "First" Church (on the *Historical Register*) was built in 1767 and was restored in the 1930s and 1940s. The open sanctuary includes a balcony on three sides, a beautiful high pulpit, a patterned brick floor, and plaques on many of the pews containing names of the early parishioners. The church is still used for our



Sunday worship services several times throughout the year in addition to the Annual Memorial Service. The historic cemetery

includes the burial sites of twenty-eight Revolutionary War soldiers and a reproduction of the original 1741 Log College that was used to educate young men for Ministry, Law or Medicine.



Our New Church was built in 1867 and has a large air-conditioned sanctuary with seating for 330 people, a balcony, and two choir lofts. Downstairs is a social hall and a full kitchen, often used for delicious covered-dish suppers and other special events. A Sunday School addition was built in 1955 which includes a Nursery, Office, Lounge, three Sunday School rooms and four bathrooms. To make our church more accessible to those with mobility challenges, a chairlift and an outside ramp were added in 2017. The church has

a beautiful white steeple which is illuminated at night and can be seen for miles. The steeple houses a working bell which has been rung in times past to mark one hour before and the beginning of Worship.



The Manse was built in 1808 and is located directly across the street from the New Church. Its spacious interior consists of four bedrooms, one and a half bathrooms, living room, dining room, office, meeting/family room, and a modern kitchen. Refinished hardwood floors run throughout the house. There is an attached breezeway with a two-car garage. The property includes a large back yard with many shade trees.



Other church properties consist of a cemetery next to the New Church, a Recreation Field behind the Manse, and approximately twelve acres of farmland rented to a local farmer.

SUMMARY OF OUR COMMITTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Our congregation has committees which perform various tasks. Much of the work is done "behind the scenes" with no fanfare nor expected thanks. The Session, Deacons and Trustees each have nine members serving three-year terms with a possibility of a second term. Activities in these groups are as follows:

Session – Session meets monthly except during the summer. At each meeting they review the Deacons' and Trustees' minutes, hear the Clerk's and the Pastor's reports, discuss Old and New Business, then go over the various Committee Reports, offering input and direction and voting on changes that may need to occur. Recently they compiled a *Session Manual of Administrative Operations*, which lists our church procedures and policies. Two new policies are the *Youth & Child Protection Policy* and the *Sexual Misconduct Policy*.

Deacons – The compassionate arm of the church, the Deacons continue to serve those within our congregation and the community. In addition to various mission works, the Deacons also prepare Communion, visit and send greeting cards to seniors and shut-ins, provide funeral luncheons, give baptized babies their first Bible, and provide refreshments for special events like the Easter Sunrise Service and the Christmas cantata.

Trustees – The Trustees are hard at work, providing a safe and comfortable environment for worship, Christian education, and outreach by maintaining the Church building, grounds and manse.

Christian Ed – Our congregation has continued to value the importance of instructing its members in the Christian faith. Currently, we have an adult Sunday School class after the Worship Service, children's Sunday School classes during the Worship Service, and adult Bible Study on Thursday morning. On Sunday morning after a Children's Sermon, children are dismissed downstairs to sing, learn catechism and receive instruction from one of the three classes offered – Pre-school/Kindergarten, Early Elementary, and Upper Elementary/Middle School. Currently we use the Deep Blue Curriculum for the younger grades. Besides Sunday School, the youth participate in Easter and Christmas programs (thirty-two children participated in the Christmas program last year), Children's Day/Graduation Recognition (an end-



of-the-school-year service in which youth take part, followed by a picnic), Vacation Bible School, Trunk or Treat, Easter Egg Hunt, and occasionally singing during the worship service.

Congregational Life – provides activities and fellowship opportunities for our Church family and friends, including: “Soup”er Bowl Luncheon, Mother’s Day flowers for the ladies and Father’s Day candy for the men, Mother-Daughter luncheon, special church dinners, Blue Rocks baseball game outings, church picnic at Camp Crockett, picnic supper with Music at the Manse, Trunk or Treat food, Lenten Study, and the ladies monthly luncheon at the Woodstown Diner.

Memorial Fund – meets as needed to decide on how best to use donations given in memory of someone. They confer with the family on their desires and if needed, will give suggestions on current or anticipated needs of the Church.

Mission and Outreach – seeks to inform and involve the congregation in needs within and beyond our own community.

Nominating – members serve a one-year term. They select candidates for Elder, Deacon and Trustee, who are then voted on at a Congregational Meeting.

Old Church – oversees the building, grounds and cemetery of the 1767 church and opens it for various services throughout the year.

Personnel – oversees our salaried and part-time employees: Choir Director, Organist/Pianist, Secretary, Treasurer, Sexton, Nursery Coordinator, and Sunday Morning Building Attendant.

Presbytery – we send a Commissioner to our local Presbytery’s bi-monthly meeting.

Stewardship – speaks to the congregation a few weeks a year, encouraging their continued financial support of the church.

Worship & Music – works with the Pastor and Choir Director to plan meaningful and inspirational worship services and holiday programs. Our average Sunday Worship Service attendance during the year 2018 was 75, with a high of 128 on April 1st (Easter Sunday) and a low of 44 on June 24th.

Finance – oversees the income/expense, budget, and investments.

OUR MISSIONS

Missions are important to our congregation. Annually, 10% of our total offering goes to designated mission causes. Of that, over 80% goes to local recipients. At this time we have allocated funds to support the following missions: General Assembly, Good News Home for Women, Family Promise of Gloucester County (for homeless families), Salem County Habitat for Humanity, Atlantic City Rescue Mission, Salem County Meals on Wheels, Disciples' Pantry of Woodstown, Ranch Hope (adolescent ministry), Cornerstone Women's Resource Center, Oasis Soup Kitchen in Salem, the Victory Assembly of God Food Pantry, and a discretionary special relief fund which is often given to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

Our Deacons support several missions including the Mitten Tree (warm items for children at both Cornerstone and A Step Ahead) and the Christmas Angel Tree (gifts for children involved with Ranch Hope and Family Promise of Gloucester County.) The Deacons provide gift cards to the needy and sick, Thanksgiving meal baskets to local needy families, Student Remembrance boxes during college final exams, and restaurant gift cards for new parents. They also organize the Prayer Shawl Ministry. The Deacons oversee the Lillian Robertson Fund for needy people, giving financial assistance to those experiencing hardship.

We have many caring and thoughtful congregants who do "Good Samaritan" deeds that are often unrecognized. Individual members organize mission projects, such as Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Ministry, the CROP Walk (a walk to raise funds to combat hunger locally and globally), Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls, and "The Church Has Left the Building" service projects.

The church also contributes to One Great Hour of Sharing and the Christmas Joy Offering. The church provides funds for child care and supplies in support of West Jersey Presbytery's Hispanic Lay Leader Ministry. It also partially funds "Free"dom Books, a ministry in which secular and religious books are collected and distributed free at local food banks, soup kitchens, county fairs and flea markets, etc., in order to promote literacy.

In the past we have supported other missions, such as the World Vision's 30-Hour Famine, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Compassion International's child sponsorship. In the distant past we sponsored two immigrant families. To this day the families keep in contact with individual members of our congregation. As a congregation and as individuals we strive to share with those in need.

OUR MUSIC

Our music program here has historically been important both during the worship service and beyond. Our voices are used to praise our God weekly with an adult choir and praise band that plays several times a month. We have two working organs played by several talented musicians. The Jardine Tracker organ, located in the balcony, is often referred to as "uniquely historical" with its exposed pipes. It is played most Sunday mornings pre-service. A newer organ, the "Moller," in the front of the sanctuary, is used during the worship service. An annual "Dueling Organs" concert is a popular program we host, drawing a churchful from several counties. A piano, as well as guitars, keyboards,





and conga drums, round out the usual worship instruments. Sunday School classes and individual youth sometimes share their musical talents. Other musical endeavors include combined choirs with neighboring churches for special seasons in the church calendar. In summers past we have had "Music at the Manse" with the praise band leading songs from the porch. We love our music here, both traditional and contemporary!

OUR WORSHIP SERVICE

"Traditional" is how most would describe our 10 am Worship Service. However, with our Praise Band's contemporary music and our increased use of technology, our historic church is definitely keeping up in the 21st century! We have a website and a social media presence in Facebook. WiFi is available throughout the church, although it can be difficult at times to access in the basement social hall. In 2016, a retractable projection screen was installed at the front of the church without spoiling the beauty of our sanctuary. It has been an asset to our worship service, providing a "hands-free" alternative during singing, Bible readings and responses. We are still finding ways that this addition can enhance our worship experience. Listening devices are available at the back of the church for those with hearing difficulties. Our worship service uses many individuals to help it run smoothly: the minister, those involved in music, sound and screen projection technicians, greeters, offering collectors, and a lay leader. We also provide a nursery during the worship service. During our monthly communion service, elders and deacons assist the pastor with distribution.

OUR FINANCES

Our annual offering/income does not meet our yearly expenses which requires money to be taken from decades of prudent investments, as shown in the chart below:

	2015	2016	2017	2018
TITHES/OFFERINGS	123,104.17	126,224.41	134,624.05	131,464.00
TOTAL INCOME	137,306.03	134,545.51	148,328.12	161,275.48
TOTAL EXPENSE	151,781.94	142,982.15	149,677.20	166,800.44
TRANSFERS FROM INVESTMENTS	30,500.00	15,000.00	28,000.00	17,365.00

As this is a concern for us, we would like to see tithes and offerings increased to meet our yearly budget and require less dependence on investments. Prayerful stewardship and responsible budgeting will continue to be encouraged.

WHO WE'D LIKE TO BE - OUR FUTURE

As we have been **GROWING IN FAITH**, we have learned the importance of a Pastor as a “teaching elder” and hope our next Pastor will lead us with Biblical teachings and continued weekly Pastor-led Bible study. We are in the process of preparing the younger generation to fill the positions of Elder, Deacon and Trustee. We have 20 – 30 children in our congregation and would like to see our youth program expand as they grow. We feel intentional home-visitation is important and would like to see all church families contacted regularly by either our minister or a church member. This would provide a warm atmosphere in which members can share their thoughts, joys and burdens.

We are interested in developing ways of **REACHING OTHERS FOR JESUS CHRIST**. As we think about the future of our church we would naturally like to see our membership grow numerically as well as spiritually. We recognize that with Upper Pittsgrove Township (the municipality in which the church is located) leading New Jersey in acres of “Preserved Farmland,” the potential for new housing/commercial development is almost non-existent. However, there is possible growth from surrounding communities. We could also consider ways to rejuvenate our inactive members and develop an evangelism outreach for our non-churched neighbors and friends. As a family outreach, we might offer a church family retreat to a nearby attraction, such as Lancaster, PA, Cape May, NJ, or Ocean City, MD. Youth mission trips, summer camps, and the Presbyterian Youth Triennium are opportunities for life-changing experiences. We also have a well-maintained ball field that could accommodate various outreaching activities for youth.

While we are currently **OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION**, we are also open to new possibilities, including reaching out to the growing Hispanic population, the homeless, and the underserved in our county and surrounding areas. We would like to see most of our church members personally involved in at least one of these missions.

As a compassionate congregation with extended families, we want to continue **WORSHIPING THE LORD WITH OUR WHOLE HEARTS**. We believe in actively praying and caring for one another, as we truly love God, seek to follow Jesus and are inspired by the Holy Spirit. We want to continue to joyously worship and serve God, as we have in the past, are now in the present, and hope and pray to be in the future.



God has blessed this church for almost 300 years. We would like our rich traditions to continue and flourish. Therefore, we are seeking a minister who honors who we are and discerns where the Lord might lead us in the future, a minister who is interested in staying here for many years, living in our manse, and becoming an active part of West Jersey Presbytery, our community, and our congregation.