

July 8, 2018

Dear Christian Friends,

Dr. J.V.C. "Bing" Summerell, former pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Florence, Alabama and I met at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. It was the summer of 1955 . Bing was completeing a Doctor of Theology degree and I was a student pastor of the Grace Covenant Presbyterian Chruuch in Richmond, having just completed a Master of Theology degree at Union.

After discussing with Bing the need for another Presbyterian Church in Florence, I accepted a call from North Alabama Presbytery to be Associate Pastor of First Presbyterian Church. Subsequently, a new congregation, Westminster, was formed with ninety-nine charter members, ninety-two from First Church and seven others from the community.

You possess all the statistics and important dates in the past written histories of Westminster. There was one humorous event which occurred as the erection of the building began. I received a call while sitting in my church office. "Bob, get out to the building site; they are using the wrong brick!" I settled that mistake in the nick-of-time, and the building project resumed with the arrival of the correct brick.

I'm sure there were many other blunders along the way. I thank First Presbyterian for the privilege of being asked to help found Westminster. It was indeed quite a responsibility for a new young minister fresh out of seminary! Working with Dr. J.V.C. Summerell and under the tutelage of the great scholar and revered minister, Dr. D.W. Hollingsworth, was certainly a highlight of my thirty-six year career in the ministry.

The "cream-of-the-crop" families whom First Presbyterian gave up to pioneer the new church were hard-working, dedicated Christians and many couples became our life-long friends.

I brought my new bride to Florence and our first child was born there. Sadly, my mother's funeral service was the first to be held in the newly founded church.

Happy 200th birthday and may you celebrate many, many more years as First Presbyterian Church of Florence, Alabama!

Love and kind regards,

Robert H. Crumby

