

The Nashes 268 Myhr Green Nashville, TN 37221/2820

Dear Friends,

We celebrate with you today as you proudly commemorate the 200th anniversary of your congregation. What a celebration this must be! We regret not being able to be there with you. We appreciated Rev. Miles' readily agreeing with our request to send greetings.

The first Sunday in June 1996 Ann Craig welcomed us at a gathering as "...the first interim we've ever had". The work of the committee approved by the Session was complete; the interim was in place and the journey would begin. At the same time this was a new experience for you and there were things to be learned together. So, we joined hands.

It's fair to describe our work together as a time of sharing the past, carefully choosing what you wanted to continue, discovering what might be best discarded and clarifying your identity as a congregation. This sentence sounds rather academic, almost as though there were no hiccups, no human beings, no long-held traditions, all moving parts of a vibrant congregation to be considered.

You fully entered in to the work that we set out to do. And, truth be told (as the saying goes) the hiccups, the human beings, the long-held traditions and the moving parts were the dynamics that made our time together so memorable and special.

We had two significant family crises while we were living in Florence. Jim was diagnosed with prostate cancer, had surgery and was given a 6-weeks medical leave with full salary and benefits. This is usual for an installed pastor but for an interim it was exceptional. As we have said many times and from our hearts, "Thank you!" Even with several health issues for Jim since we've moved to Nashville all his doctors keep giving positive reports and encouragement. Our twin grandsons, Emery and Ben, were born at 27 weeks and you walked so closely with us through the earliest days of their lives. They've just completed their sophomore years in college, Emery at Davidson and Ben at Middlebury! And, again, "Thank you!"

Several years later you and the Presbytery of North Alabama requested that Jim return as Temporary Stated Supply, 3 days a week for 3 months, and we found ourselves together again. The tasks were different than before but, again, we joined hands. During those 3 months you began to heal and trust the sure foundation upon which your faith and work were built. When Dean Zickler tragically died you proved over and over again that you were a loving, strong and faithful community of God's people.

So here we are today, gratefully acknowledging your 200th anniversary, recalling our days together and facing a future with unknowns but also affirming God's loving care and guidance. We salute you for the accomplishments of the past 200 years. First Presbyterian Church, Florence, Alabama and you will forever hold a special place in our hearts. We are grateful. We trust that you will walk into your future with open hands and hearts, honoring your past and meeting the challenges ahead.

Happy Anniversary!

Our love,

Barbara and Jim