

# LIGHT & LIFE

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*First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs at 150 Years*

BY SUSAN A. FLETCHER







FIRST PRES  
COLORADO SPRINGS



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*Light and Life: First Presbyterian Church at 150 Years* by Susan A. Fletcher

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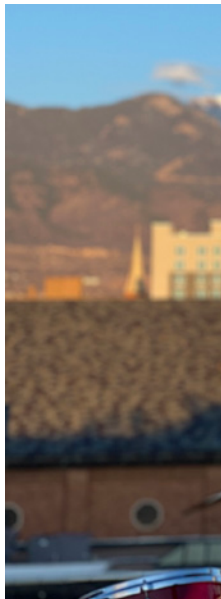
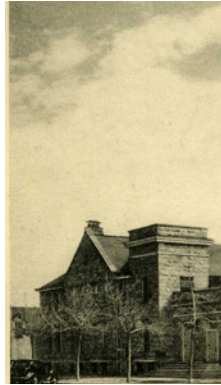
**This book is dedicated to the pastors, staff and volunteers who have faithfully served the Lord through First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs from 1872 to the present.**





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OPPOSITE PAGE: Rev. Dr. John Stevens greets teachers and mothers picking up their children after Sunday school in 1974. (First Pres Archives)

TOP LEFT: The exterior of First Presbyterian Church, following the Sunday school annex added to the east in 1911. (First Pres Archives)



TOP RIGHT: Rev. Dr. Howard Hansen prepares communion during worship. (First Pres Archives)

BOTTOM: On April 12, 2020, Rev. Dr. Tim McConnell and the worship band lead a sunrise Easter service atop the First Pres roof. Restrictions on public gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited the congregation from coming together in person that year, so worshippers tuned in virtually to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. (First Pres Digital Collection)



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# FOREWORD

*From Lead Pastor Tim McConnell*

“If I have seen further than others, it is only because I stand on the shoulders of giants.” So said Isaac Newton in 1675 writing to a friend about the great scientific advances they were making. Newton’s understanding of gravity, physics, optics and mathematics opened the door to the modern era. As a fervent student of Scripture and the church fathers, he knew his contributions were only a part of the long history of the people of God rising in understanding and capability.

Here we sit in 2022 celebrating that our church, First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, which we lovingly call “First Pres,” has completed 150 years of faithful

ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. We stand on the shoulders of giants. What doors are opening for us? What can we see?

None of us were there when church planter Sheldon Jackson set plans in place through prayer. None of us were present when the church was granted a plot of land by the city founders. None of us were there when the bell was set into the steeple, or to witness the first worship service on August 17, 1872. We were not present to see the Bible open in the hands of Henry Gage when the first sermon was preached to eight enthusiastic founding members, five women and three men. We were not there

to see the water poured into the baptismal font when the first new believer was baptized. Nor to see the stone building rise on the corner of Nevada and Bijou. But here we sit 150 years later, and even though we were not there then, we are here now, and it is our job, our privilege and our responsibility, to celebrate and bear witness. For 150 years, God has been faithful to the ministry of this church to the glory of His name.

From the inception, the mission has been the same. The people of this city are searching for something. The city itself was established for one purpose only, to bathe in the beauty of creation. The people who gathered here were looking for satisfaction of

**“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

*Matthew 28:19–20*

the soul. Many sought it in pursuit of quick riches in gold. Others in freedom from the strictures and war-weariness of the East. Some in wild living. Still others came in desperation to find health. To these people, our church brought the message of Jesus. Whatever your heart searches after, the satisfaction of all your longings are met in Jesus Christ.

The stories and accounts on these pages are a testament to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. In every chapter of the story of First Pres, God has called men and women to come and serve, to lead, to teach, to

love, to encourage...to help! We have known the faithfulness of the Lord in every season through the love we have experienced in one another, and our mission has contributed significantly to the flourishing of our city. But these stories are only a thin veneer of the rich history of souls that make up 150 years of First Pres. Only Jesus can hold all those stories.

What now for us? We stand on the shoulders of giants. We stand at the precipice of a great mountain of witnesses who have faithfully served Jesus right here. The mission continues. We are called to be Light and Life for the City. If we

can see further and if we have strength to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is only because behind us we carry the strength of a cloud of witnesses who all say to us, “Jesus has been faithful! God is on the move! Carry on! Keep going! The Kingdom is before you and the best is yet to come.” And it is only because the Spirit of God continues to draw us forward in faithfulness. May these pages pour that encouragement into your own heart. What a privilege we have to walk with Jesus and serve His church called First Pres.

Yours in Christ,  
Tim





# THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

We live in a world God made. In our city, we strive to build a society to match our scenery. But we struggle. We are an imperfect people, touched by sin and guilty of transgressions by which we have been separated from God. The message of the gospel we have faithfully proclaimed is this: God sent His Son Jesus Christ to be a perfect, atoning sacrifice. He took on our sentence and paid our penalty. He did not only die, but He died in our place. Then Jesus rose from the dead. His bodily resurrection is a testimony to all the world that His sacrifice was a success, our sins have been forgiven, and there is eternal life for all who call on His name. This we have proclaimed for 150 years. This we will faithfully proclaim until the end. Whatever satisfaction, help or peace your heart seeks, Jesus is the life you want, the light you need, and the way home to God for eternal life.

**“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

*Matthew 6:33*









# PREFACE

For 150 years and counting, First Presbyterian Church has used its location in the heart of Colorado Springs to launch the gospel into the city, the nation, and the world. From the time the original eight members worshiped in any space they could find in the isolated frontier town up to today, the church has helped generations of worshipers love like Jesus and bring glory to God. According to Pastor Emeritus Dr. John H. Stevens, “Here at the base of Pikes Peak, God has raised up a church whose membership, reputation and influence far exceeded what one would expect from a congregation located in a city that, for a large part of its history, was relatively small and isolated. And yet, here in Colorado Springs, God

**The First Presbyterian Church story is evidence of the Lord’s ongoing faithfulness to His people across three centuries.**


has given birth to a church that has truly become one of the most dynamic and effective congregations in America.”<sup>1</sup>

As First Pres seeks to reflect the love of Jesus to be Light and Life for the City, this body of believers carries the faith and courage of its founding members into the future for a city and a world that needs the good news of the Kingdom of God. The First Pres story is evidence of the Lord’s ongoing

faithfulness to His people across three centuries. Today, the church is a community of believers following Jesus, devoted to God, and looking to help others know and worship Him for eternal life. Loved by Jesus, we want to love our city. We are still excited to be a gift to our city in Jesus’ name. We know Jesus can change lives and the truth of the gospel changes everything.







1861 – 1886

## *Chapter 1*

BE READY FOR  
A TOWN THAT IS  
SURE TO COME

*Looking west toward snow-capped  
Pikes Peak as a horse-drawn wagon  
and walkers cross the Bijou Street  
bridge in 1905. (First Pres Archives)*

In 1870, Rev. Sheldon Jackson and his apprentice, Henry Gage, looked at maps of Colorado, praying about strategic locations to plant new churches on the western frontier. They picked out a promising spot near the entrance to Ute Pass by Pikes Peak and began making plans to raise up a congregation in the area. At the time, the boisterous community of Colorado City, located at the base of Ute Pass, was 12 years old. The city of Colorado Springs existed only in the dreams of a Civil War general from Philadelphia named William Jackson Palmer. With easy access to the mining camps of the mountains and an increasing population on the plains, Jackson knew this region held strategic spiritual importance.

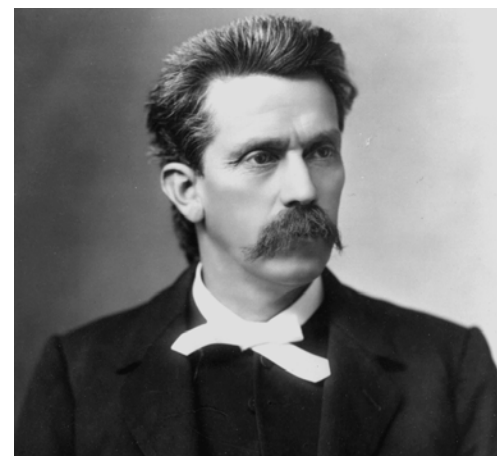
Gage later recalled,

“Dr. Jackson said, ‘I want you to go down there, near Pikes Peak, and to be ready for a town that is sure to come to be located somewhere near the Garden of the Gods, the [mineral] springs, and Monument park.’ That is the reason why I came to be here a year in advance of the location of this beautiful city [Colorado Springs] and was preaching here three months in advance of a Methodist minister.”<sup>1</sup>

Gage and Jackson established First Presbyterian Church on August 17, 1872, about 12 months after the founding of Colorado Springs. According to Pastor Emeritus Dr. John H. Stevens, “The church and the city have been together since the beginning.”<sup>2</sup>

“Our official name ‘First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs’ doesn’t really tell the whole story of who we are today. It sounds like it belongs to another era in history. But in the 1870s, when this church began, it was an exciting gift to give a city to say: here is the first outpost of the Presbyterian church in the new city of Colorado Springs!”<sup>3</sup>

When the first stakes marking the development of the Fountain Colony (later renamed Colorado Springs) were driven on July 31, 1871, this new community was the latest chapter in the ongoing, ancient story of this region. There is evidence of human presence on the eastern side of Pikes Peak dating to at least 3,000 years ago.



*TOP: Rev. Sheldon Jackson turns his personal disappointment into an opportunity to help spread the Christian faith throughout the west as a church planter, which leads to him being the founder of First Presbyterian Church. (First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM: Henry Gage is the first pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, earning \$40 a month. (First Pres Archives)*



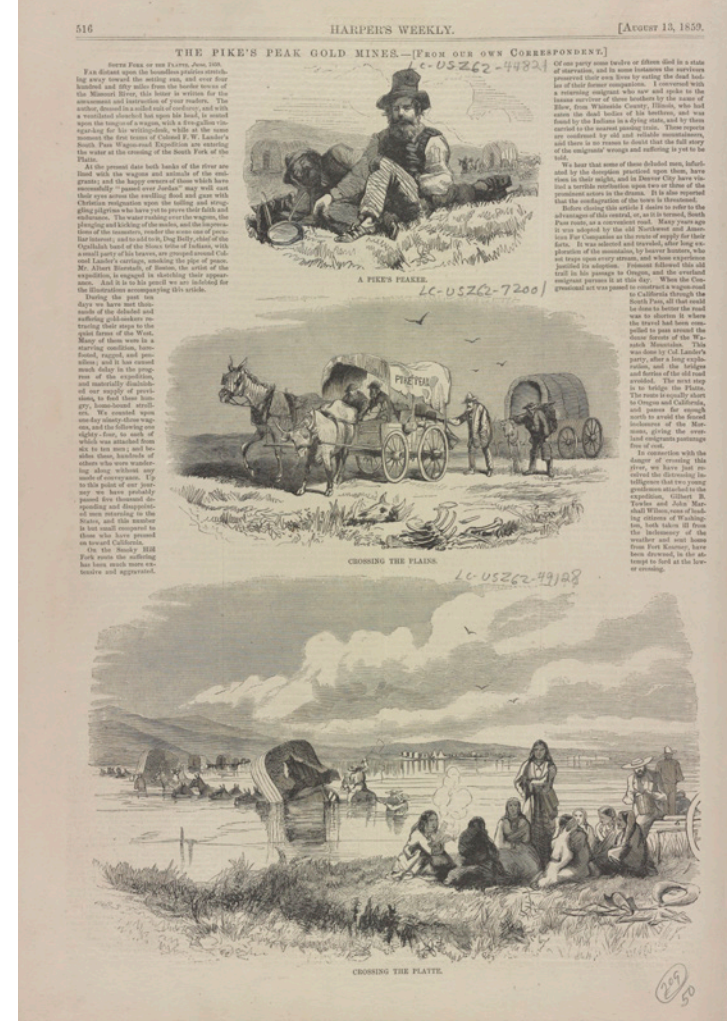
**"...in the 1870s, when this church began, it was an exciting gift to give a city to say: here is the first outpost of the Presbyterian church in the new city of Colorado Springs!"**

The stone hearths and fire rings in the Garden of the Gods bear testimony to the lives of the Indigenous people who called this region home.

The Ute people—who are the Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Northern Ute—claim this region as their ancestral homeland. The area was also a cultural crossroads for many other tribes including the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche and Apache. Despite forced relocation, this land still holds the stories and traditions of these Native peoples. Today, Indigenous people from many Native nations live here and continue to make ongoing and significant contributions to the unfolding story of our Front Range communities.

The most iconic peak in the region has been called many names over the years, including Tava ("Sun Mountain,") Montana del Sol, El Capitan, and James Peak. Settlers eventually started calling the mountain Pike's Peak, in honor of explorer Zebulon Pike's expedition in the area in 1806.

The Pikes Peak Gold Rush of 1858-59 brought a wave of European Americans to the Front Range of the Rockies. Settlers hoping to take advantage of the economic opportunity to supply miners traveling the mountains established the town of El Dorado at the foot of Pikes Peak, and later renamed the community Colorado City. The city served as the territorial capital for a brief time when the new Colorado Territory was established in November 1861. Today, this area is a historic district called Old Colorado City, located two miles west of downtown Colorado Springs.



*The Pikes Peak Gold Rush begins in 1858 and is featured in the Harper's Weekly edition of August 13, 1859. The gold strike led many fortune seekers to the area before Colorado Springs was settled. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)*



*ABOVE: William Jackson Palmer, a Civil War general and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, has a vision for Colorado Springs after witnessing the natural beauty of the area. (Picture courtesy of The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum)*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: Map of the principal marches of the Fifteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, circa 1865. (Image courtesy of The Navigators Archives)*

Between 1869 and 1870, two young men came to the Pikes Peak Region for the first time, each bearing the name of “Jackson”—General William Jackson Palmer and Rev. Sheldon Jackson. The first, a decorated Civil War general. The second, an enthusiastic missionary and church planter. Their arrival laid the groundwork for the establishment of Colorado Springs and the founding of First Presbyterian Church. Rev. Jackson and General Palmer were born only two years apart (1834 and 1836, respectively) and died in the same year (1909). Their adventurous spirits and deep commitment to their faith led them out west.

## WILLIAM JACKSON PALMER

William J. Palmer came from a Hicksite Quaker family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His faith compelled him to oppose slavery, and he was active in the abolition movement. When the Civil War erupted in April 1861, young Palmer made the heartbreaking choice to renounce traditional Quaker pacifism to join the Union Army. He gathered volunteers from the best and brightest young men in Philadelphia to fight alongside him. In a letter to his best friend, Isaac Clothier, Palmer explained:

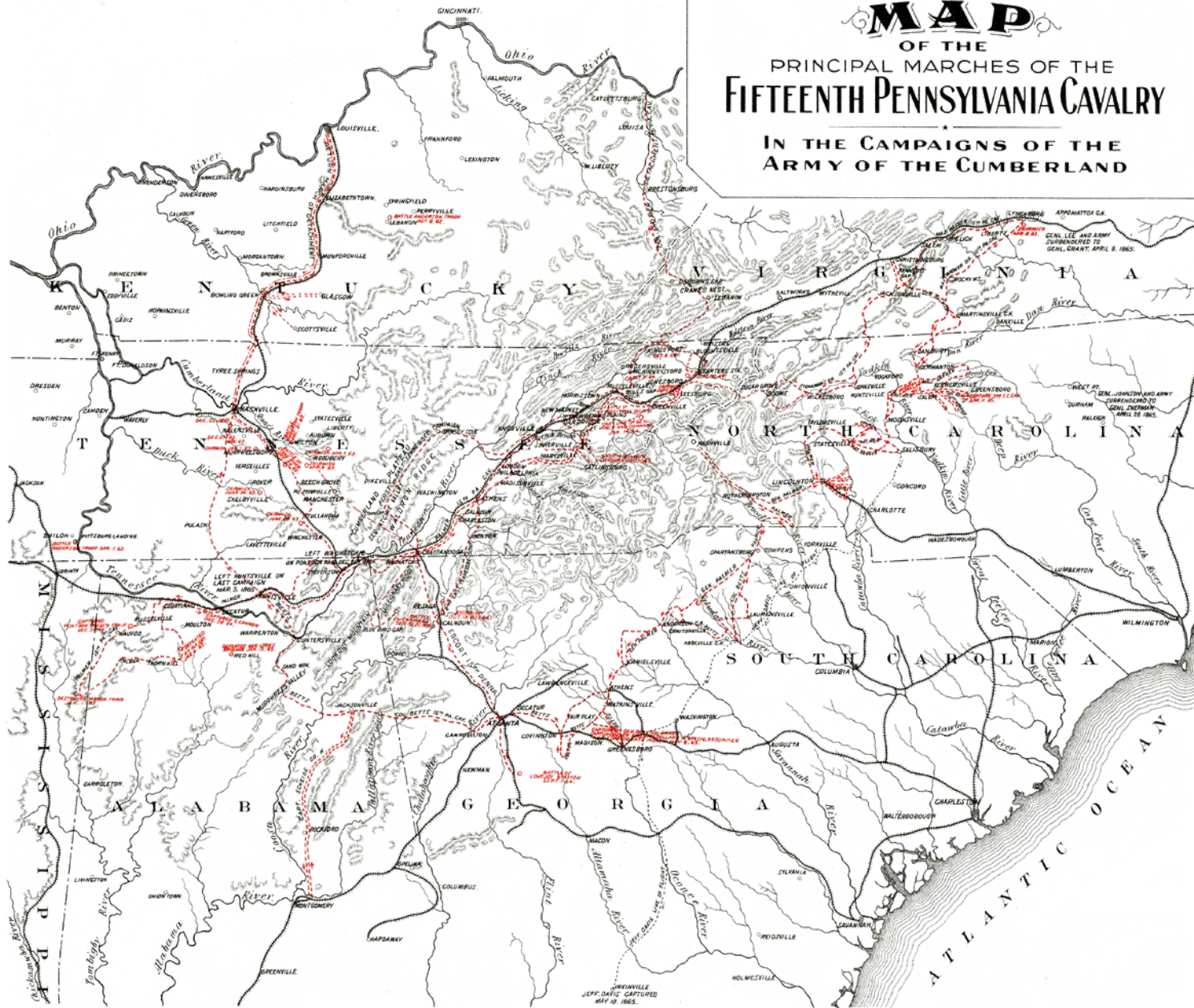
“...while I believe war to be inconsistent with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, and therefore wrong, yet I know that it would have been wrong for me to have refrained from becoming a soldier under the circumstances as they presented themselves in this country in 1861. If it be asked how I reconciled the conflicting principles, I reply that I cannot reconcile them, any more than I can reconcile the opposing mysteries of free will and fate.”<sup>4</sup>

Captain Palmer quickly proved his talent for leadership as the commanding officer of the Pennsylvania Fifteenth Volunteer Cavalry. He had a harrowing wartime career and spent six months in Confederate prison camp Castle Thunder in Richmond, Virginia, after being captured during an espionage mission in 1862. After his release, Palmer and his men saw action at the battles of Lookout Mountain, Shiloh and Chickamauga. In March 1865, President Abraham Lincoln confirmed Palmer for appointment to the brevet grade of brigadier general. He would later receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

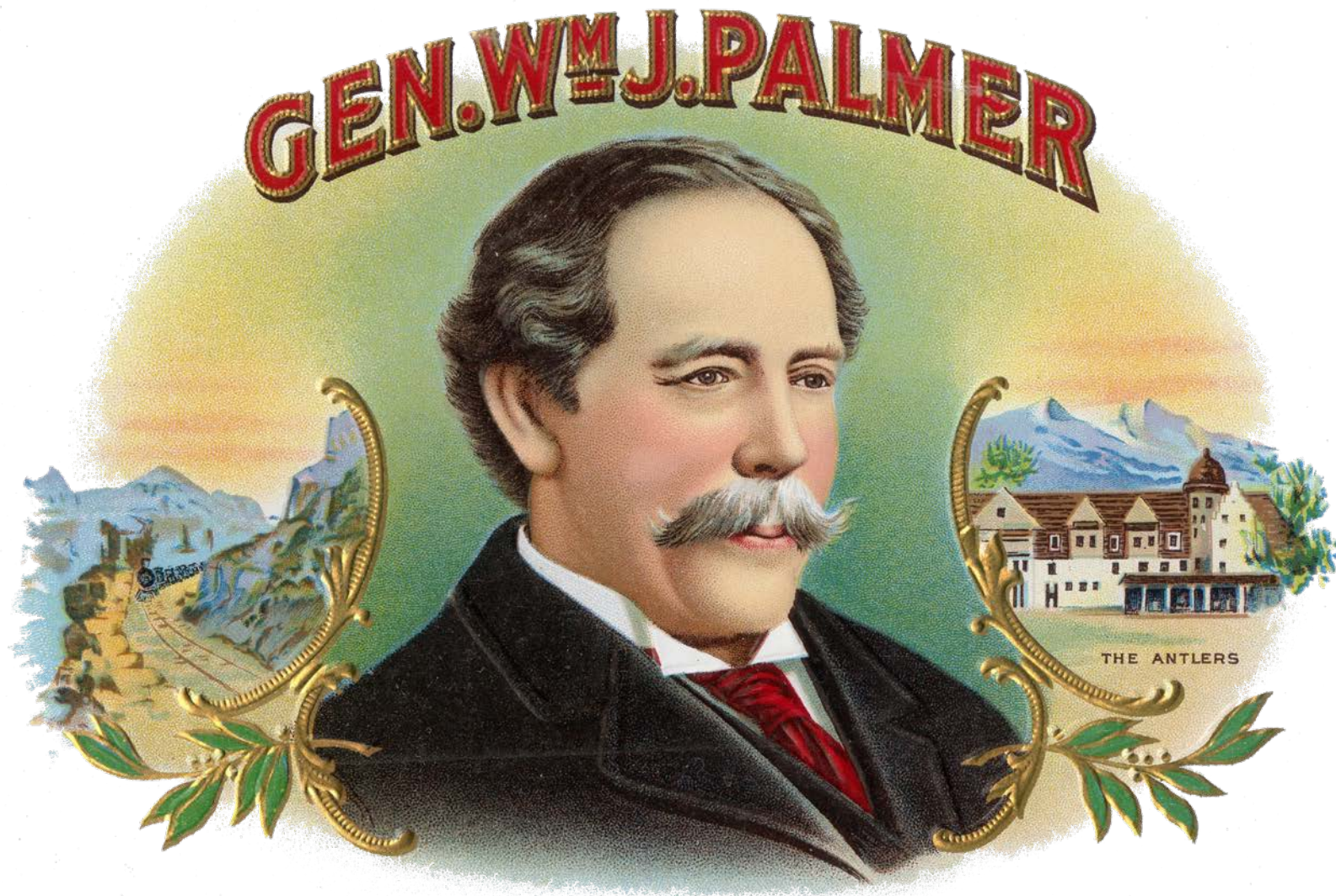


# MAP

OF THE  
PRINCIPAL MARCHES OF THE  
**FIFTEENTH PENNSYLVANIA CAVALRY**  
IN THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE  
ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND







*Embossed label from a cigar box shows the railroad, Palmer and The Antlers hotel. (Image courtesy of The Navigators Archives)*



After the Civil War ended in April 1865, Palmer returned to his original career in the railroad industry and joined the Kansas Pacific Railway, a spur line of the transcontinental railroad. On July 26, 1869, Palmer was surveying possible routes along the Colorado Front Range. Palmer and his teammates took a stagecoach from Denver to Colorado City that evening. Drowsy from a long journey and the swaying coach, Palmer fell asleep. The bright summer moonlight roused him from slumber, and he looked up to find a silvery light shining on the summit of Pikes Peak. The sight enchanted him. The party camped for the night and the next day they explored the area, hiking around Garden of the Gods and bathing in Fountain Creek. Palmer wrote a letter to his fiancée, Mary Lincoln (“Queen”) Mellen, telling her that he was confident there would soon be “a famous resort”<sup>5</sup> near “the finest springs of soda and the most enticing scenery”<sup>6</sup> at the confluence of Fountain and Monument creeks. He informed her that he intended to build a narrow-gauge railroad from Denver to Mexico and that he wanted to establish a colony at the base of Pikes Peak.

## REV. SHELDON JACKSON

During that fateful summer of 1869, a young Presbyterian minister named Sheldon Jackson began a missionary tour of the American West, using the transcontinental railroad and stage lines. The transportation infrastructure that men like Palmer had worked so hard to build in the aftermath of the Civil War proved vital to spreading the gospel in the west.<sup>7</sup>



TOP: A view of Cheyenne Mountain, looking south from Colorado Springs, circa 1900. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

LEFT: Map of the Denver and Rio Grande railroad with an early rendering of Colorado Springs. (Image courtesy of The Navigators Archives)



*ABOVE: Cascade Avenue in the 1880s, with the Antlers hotel at left. (First Pres Archives)*

*CENTER: Majestic views are seemingly everywhere in Garden of the Gods Park. This looks to the west toward Pikes Peak. Garden of the Gods Park is a world-renowned tourist destination, with annual visitors from all 50 states and approximately 60 countries. (Photo courtesy of Alma Photos)*



*BOTTOM: Unique rock formations are part of the mystery and wonder of Colorado Springs' popular Garden of the Gods Park that spans 1,367 acres on the west side of town. The land is donated to the City of Colorado Springs in 1909 by the family of Charles Elliot Perkins, in honor of his wish that the land should become a public park. (Photo courtesy of Alma Photos)*



Born in eastern New York, Jackson was a Princeton Theological Seminary graduate who felt a call to do mission work in India. However, due to his delicate health, the Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church in the USA instead offered him an assignment at the Choctaw Mission Spencer Academy in the Oklahoma Territory.<sup>8</sup> He worked there for a year in 1858-59 until an attack of malaria forced him to go back east. After recovering, he received a new assignment to La Crescent in southeastern Minnesota. Jackson was a passionate evangelist and enthusiastic church planter. In the Upper Midwest, he planted 23 churches in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

According to historian J. Aurthur Lasell, one day Jackson and some of his pastor friends walked up to Prospect Hill on the banks of the Missouri River near Sioux City, Iowa. They looked

“westward so that they might visualize the plains and mountains beyond the horizon where there were people who needed the church. They talked about the opportunities for the church in the West and the importance of keeping pace spiritually with the men and women who were on the distant frontiers...The church, they felt, had to assume the responsibility of going after these people.”<sup>9</sup>



Jackson was promoted to serve as the Superintendent of Home Missions in the Rocky Mountain Region, based in Denver. He had a vision of starting churches throughout the territories of Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Montana. Later in his career, Jackson organized churches in Alaska and eventually founded Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka, Alaska.

In 1870, General Palmer and Rev. Jackson were both busy making their western dreams a reality. In November, Palmer married his fiancée Queen, and the pair honeymooned in England. While in the United Kingdom, Palmer mixed sightseeing with attempts to secure investors for his railroad and colony. Soon, he and his associates, including his Civil War comrade Major Henry McAllister and friend Dr. William Bell, had enough money to purchase 15,000 acres of land in what became El Paso County, Colorado.

Palmer established the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) in 1870 and formed the Colorado Springs Company to oversee the development of his proposed Fountain Colony at the base of Pikes Peak. He and his team planned 1,000 acres of lots with wide streets and parks.<sup>10</sup> It was to be one of the most beautiful cities in the west, designed to attract cultured and curious settlers to the region. According to Leah Davis Witherow, curator at the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, “Their vision for Colorado Springs was always as a community for families that would attract people to invest long term, and to do that you needed those stabilizing institutions, like schools and churches.”<sup>11</sup>

## EARLY MINISTRY IN THE PIKES PEAK REGION

While Palmer and his associates were busy planning the townsite for the Fountain Colony, Jackson traveled to the Pikes Peak Region in 1870 during a church-planting trip to Colorado and New Mexico. He had met a promising young Princeton Seminary student named Henry Gage during his missionary travels, and he took him under his wing. Gage later recalled,

“In the fall of 1870, Dr. Sheldon Jackson and I studied the maps of Colorado, and decided that towns of importance must be located, if not already commenced, near the mouth of each great canyon, which were the natural passes into the mountains, and at the same time the natural center of agriculture in the valleys.”<sup>12</sup>

They decided that Colorado City, at the entrance to Ute Pass, fit this geographical qualification perfectly. It was the entry point to the mining camps in the mountains, and inevitably “a [larger] town of more than common importance was sure to come in a short time.”<sup>13</sup>

Jackson established the First Presbyterian Church in Pueblo on February 27, 1870. The next day, on February 28, he started a small Presbyterian congregation in Colorado City, which he had faith was in a strategic location for the advancement of the gospel. There were four founding members, including Judge Robert Douglas, his wife, and daughter Helen.

Jackson hired Gage to be a circuit-riding supply preacher for both congregations. Sharing a preacher who served many communities in one area was a practical solution for tiny churches without the resources to attract a full-time pastor. Gage came to Colorado City in October 1870. According to an early history of First Presbyterian Church, Gage “began at once to preach in all the surrounding country; established and maintained preaching stations, giving them services every two weeks from the top of the divide (now Palmer Lake), as far south as John Irvin’s ranch 20 miles from Pueblo.”<sup>14</sup> According to Gage’s recollections, Jackson may have already heard rumors that a larger town was about to be built nearby, and he wanted Gage to be ready for it.

After years of planning and dreaming, on July 31, 1871, the first stake for Fountain Colony (soon renamed Colorado Springs) was driven at the corner of what are now Pikes Peak and Cascade avenues, about 2.5 miles from Jackson’s Presbyterian church in Colorado City. General Palmer had a grand vision for his city. He told Queen, “My theory for this place is that it should be made the most attractive place for homes in the west—a place for schools, colleges, literature, science, first-class newspapers, and everything that the above imply.”<sup>15</sup>

Although the city would quickly grow to exceed Palmer’s expectations, the colony had a humble start. “There was only one house to be seen in any direction, that on the west side of Monument Creek, near its mouth. There was an old destroyed sheep corral, and there was a race track, a straight one a mile long, which crossed the lots on which the Presbyterian church was built on Weber Street.”<sup>16</sup>

Although the stunning Rocky Mountains rose high to the west, the rough terrain of the colony site held little charm. According to the recollections of T. Wynne Ross, “the townsite was covered with grass, soap-weed, and cactus. There were no trees, no water in the ditches, no fences, and no planting began.”<sup>17</sup>

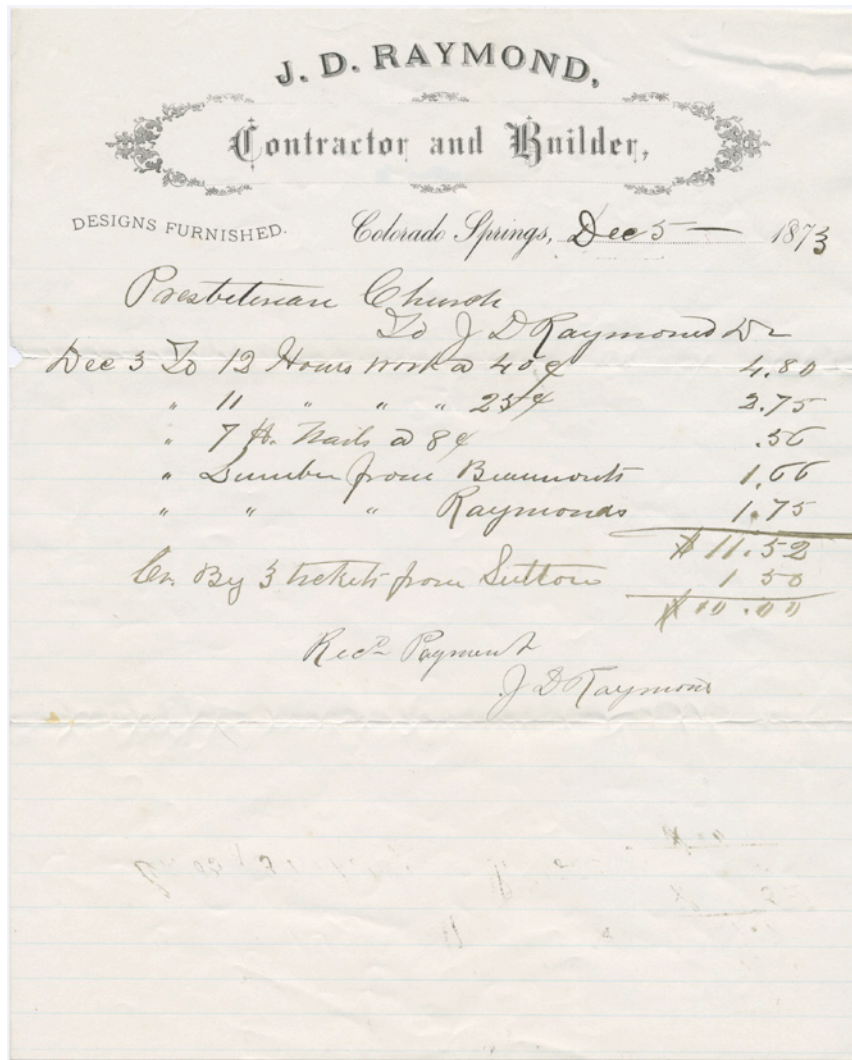
## THE FOUNDING OF FIRST PRES

Henry Gage preached what he later claimed was the first Christian sermon in Colorado Springs on Sunday afternoon, September 10, 1871. He gathered an audience of workers from the Denver and Rio Grande grading camp and the earliest settlers in the fledging town. The worshipers met in a boarding house for the D&RG workers near the train tracks. They sat on rough wooden planks and intently listened to Gage’s sermon on Job 28.<sup>18</sup> After the service, Gage officiated a wedding for his friend, Alva Adams, and the daughter of the boarding house owner.<sup>19</sup>





*An image of Colorado Springs in 1899 with Pikes Peak in the background. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)*



This invoice dated December 5, 1873, from contractor and builder J.D. Raymond details various costs totaling \$10 that was submitted to First Presbyterian Church. (First Pres Archives)

The following Sunday, Henry and Alva got permission to use an unfurnished storeroom at the Field & Hill Shipping merchants. Adams even helped Gage sweep out the wood shavings on the floor. Gage recalled, “We carried in rough boards and put them on nail kegs for pews and used a common barrel covered with a red tablecloth for a pulpit. So, we went from storeroom to storeroom till we secured a hall.”<sup>20</sup>

The congregation continued to meet wherever they found space until landing in Foote’s Hall at Cascade and Huerfano (now Colorado Avenue). This all-purpose room was on the second story of a building constructed in 1871 by Smith C. Foote, which housed a drugstore, a doctor’s office, and the “Colorado News Depot” offices on the first floor. The worshippers crafted a makeshift pulpit in this upper room using a table with a white towel stretched across it. As the congregation grew, they moved to a meeting hall on the second floor of the *Gazette* building at the corner of Tejon and Huerfano. They later shared

**“We carried in rough boards and put them on nail kegs for pews and used a common barrel covered with a red tablecloth for a pulpit. So, we went from storeroom to storeroom till we secured a hall.”**



a building with the First Methodist Church, the first purpose-built house of worship in Colorado Springs.

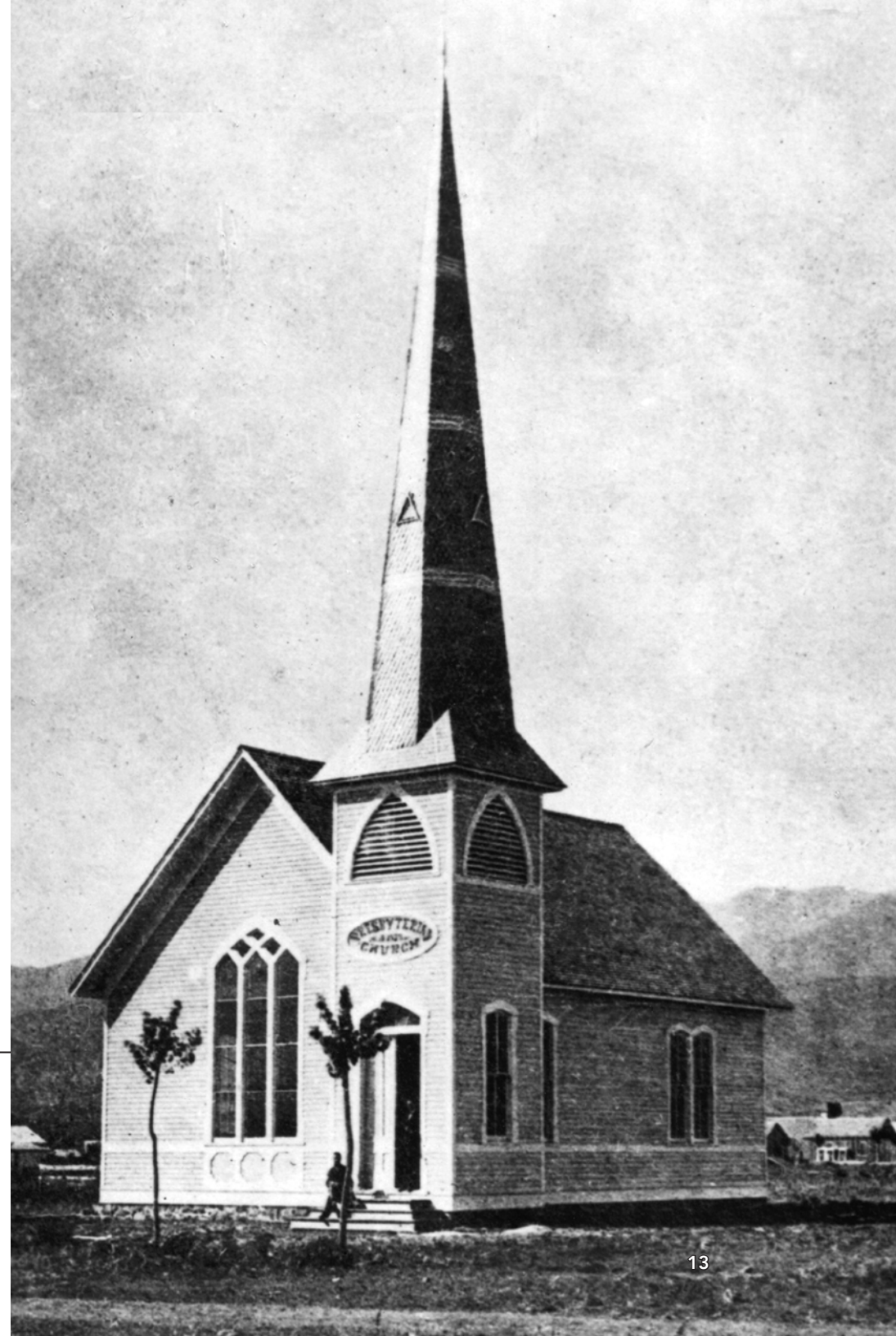
This tiny congregation seemed interested in becoming a formal, permanent church, so Gage returned home in the fall of 1871 to raise money for them. His old friends donated money to build a permanent structure for the Presbyterian congregation, and the Lord provided \$300 out of their generosity.

On August 17, 1872, Sheldon Jackson and Henry Gage organized First Presbyterian Church, one year after the town's birth. Since Gage was not yet fully ordained as a minister, Jackson officially oversaw the formation of the church. There were 1,250 residents living in Colorado Springs by that time, and eight of them joined the little church: Mrs. J. B. Riggs, Mr. and Mrs. George Summers, Mrs. A. Sutton, Miss Martha Fairbrass, Mr. Dwight Lathrop, and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Copely. The Presbytery received the church on September 8, 1872. After passing his exams, Henry Gage was ordained and installed as the first pastor on a part-time basis at \$40 a month. Edward Copely was the first elder.

Palmer's vision for his colony involved encouraging the town's spiritual life to attract high-quality residents, so he set aside lots for several major denominations to

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*The original First Presbyterian Church building opens for worship in December 1872 and is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Kiowa and Weber streets, where the City Auditorium is now located. (First Pres Archives)*







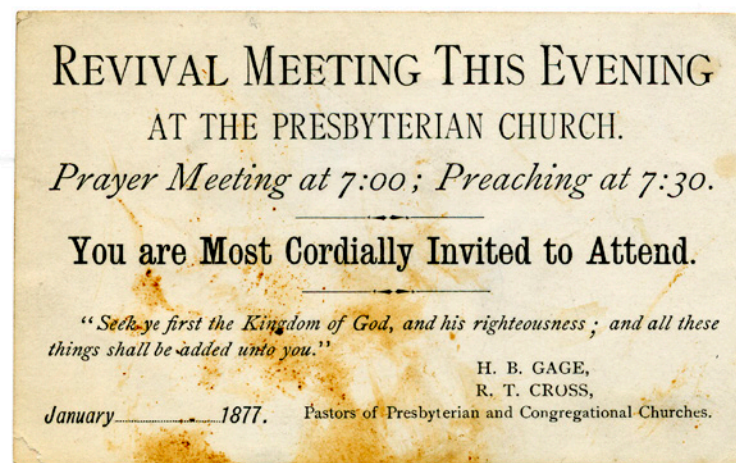


build churches. According to Witherow, “He’s trying to create an equitable or level playing field so that congregations don’t have to have a lot of wealth before they become established. If everybody has a free lot, they’re on an equal playing field. No one congregation will be more powerful than another.”<sup>21</sup> By 1879 the City Directory indicates that Episcopal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Cumberland Presbyterian, Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, Congregationalist, Unitarian and Catholic churches were operating in the city, many on the lots that Palmer had provided for them.

When Palmer heard about the Presbyterian congregation operating in the town, his Colorado Springs Company donated three lots at the southwest corner of Weber and Kiowa Streets, where the City Auditorium now stands.

Construction work for the First Presbyterian Church building began soon after that. Gage and Copely did much of the physical labor. The pair spent the summer of 1872 working on the structure and soliciting donations. To fund the project, members of the congregation and friends of the church raised \$2,300 in addition to the money Gage’s friends back east had given the year before, and \$700 came from the National Board of Church Erection. The church bell was a gift from Gage’s friend in Chicago, and the organ was a gift from a friend in New York.

The pretty clapboard church building opened in December of that year. It had a tower with a bell inside and a steeple that rose to the heavens. The congregation dedicated the building on January 12, 1873. That morning, Rev. James Gibson Lowrie preached the sermon, Pastor Gage prayed, and everyone sang the doxology in closing. An article in the *Colorado Springs Weekly Gazette* remarked, “The house is the neatest structure in the Territory for its cost, four thousand dollars, exclusive of furnishings. The pews are remarkably neat and comfortable. The choir sang very appropriate anthems at the opening of both morning and evening services.”<sup>22</sup>



ABOVE: *Serving God and shepherding the people of Colorado Springs has always been the first priority for First Pres, as evidenced by this revival meeting invitation from 1877 welcoming all to attend. (First Pres Archives)*

OPPOSITE PAGE: *The Sanctuary as it looked in the original church, following an addition to the building which can be seen through the doors on the left. (First Pres Archives)*

Gage held services for his Presbyterian congregation at 11 a.m., followed by Sabbath school at 3 p.m., and the Baptists shared the Sanctuary for their 7 p.m. services. Shortly thereafter, Gage started holding Wednesday evening prayer services too.

The church members must have been surprised and sad when Gage resigned a few months later. He answered the call to serve churches in Central City and Black Hawk,

leaving Colorado Springs and moving to the mountains northwest of Denver. Rev. Lowrie, who had preached the dedication sermon earlier that year, was called as the church's second pastor. Another Princeton graduate, he was known for his terse and to-the-point preaching style. According to Gage, Lowrie's "thorough gospel preaching and his rich exposition of the word of God will long be remembered by those who sat under his ministry. The Church was fed and grew in numbers and spiritual power."<sup>23</sup> In 1874, the Presbytery dissolved the church that Sheldon Jackson had planted in Colorado City four years earlier, and their congregation merged with First







*OPPOSITE PAGE: Children and adults wearing their Sunday best gather after Sunday school for a photograph outside the original church building in the 1880s. (First Pres Archives)*

*ABOVE: A gathering of First Presbyterian Church women enjoy themselves during a formal tea in the 1880s. This tea occurred in the newer part of the church that was built onto the original building as seen in the left of the photo on page 14, through the double doors. (First Pres Archives)*

Presbyterian Church. The church grew to around 100 members under Lowrie's pastorate.

In 1876, Gage returned from the mountains to step back into his role as pastor of First Presbyterian Church. It was a momentous year: the United States celebrated its centennial, and Colorado became a state. Gage preached a sermon for the occasion, remarking, "The great need of this Centennial State is a consecration on the part of God's people such as they have never known before."<sup>24</sup> After serving in Colorado Springs for another three years, in 1879 Gage received a call to preach in Pueblo, so he resigned again. The church had grown to 125 members and was self-supporting. They hired Rev. Dr. Thomas Carter Kirkwood, an experienced pastor from New York, to replace him.

The population of Colorado Springs was booming in the mid-1880s, with approximately 4,563 people living in the area. This society town had earned the nickname "Little London" because of the large population of people of British heritage, and its sophisticated culture. According to Pastor John Stevens, "This town proved to be very fertile soil because of this Little London deal. Presbyterians tended to be an upper class, educated group from the likes of Philadelphia."<sup>25</sup>

The town boosters promoted the fresh, clean mountain air and abundant sunshine. They sent promotional material all over the world, and people flocked to the region. Some came to behold the natural wonders of Garden of the Gods and Pikes Peak. Others, such as author and activist

Helen Hunt Jackson, came hoping for miraculous cures from tuberculosis and other lung diseases. A wellness industry flourished in Colorado Springs and Manitou (the city officially changed its name to Manitou Springs in 1935), attracting patients and their families, which boosted the region's population.

Dr. Kirkwood was one of those health seekers who came to Colorado hoping to see some real improvement in his condition. Kirkwood was known for his wit and humor in the pulpit. According to the *Canon City Record*,

“After filling several pastorates in Illinois and Wisconsin, he came to the First Presbyterian Church here on July 6, 1879. His pastoral and missionary work in the west have [built] for him a monument that will ever endure in the hearts of all who knew him.”<sup>26</sup>

The rapidly growing congregation of First Presbyterian Church needed more space to gather on Sunday mornings, so Kirkwood oversaw construction for an addition to the Sanctuary and a new parsonage on Kiowa Street.

First Presbyterian Church was to be Dr. Kirkwood's last pastorate. In 1884, he suffered an accident that took a toll on his health, so he left full-time pastoral work to become the Superintendent of Missions of the Synod of Colorado. Despite leaving the First Presbyterian Church pulpit, he remained an active member of the church, and his family lived in Colorado Springs until he died in 1909.

In 1884, Scottish minister Rev. Dr. James S. Black became the next pastor of First Presbyterian Church. He and his wife came to Colorado Springs looking for a cure for her poor health but, tragically, she passed away. Under Black's leadership, the congregation had grown to 234 in 1887, and they needed a new church building. A new chapter in the history of First Presbyterian Church was about to begin.

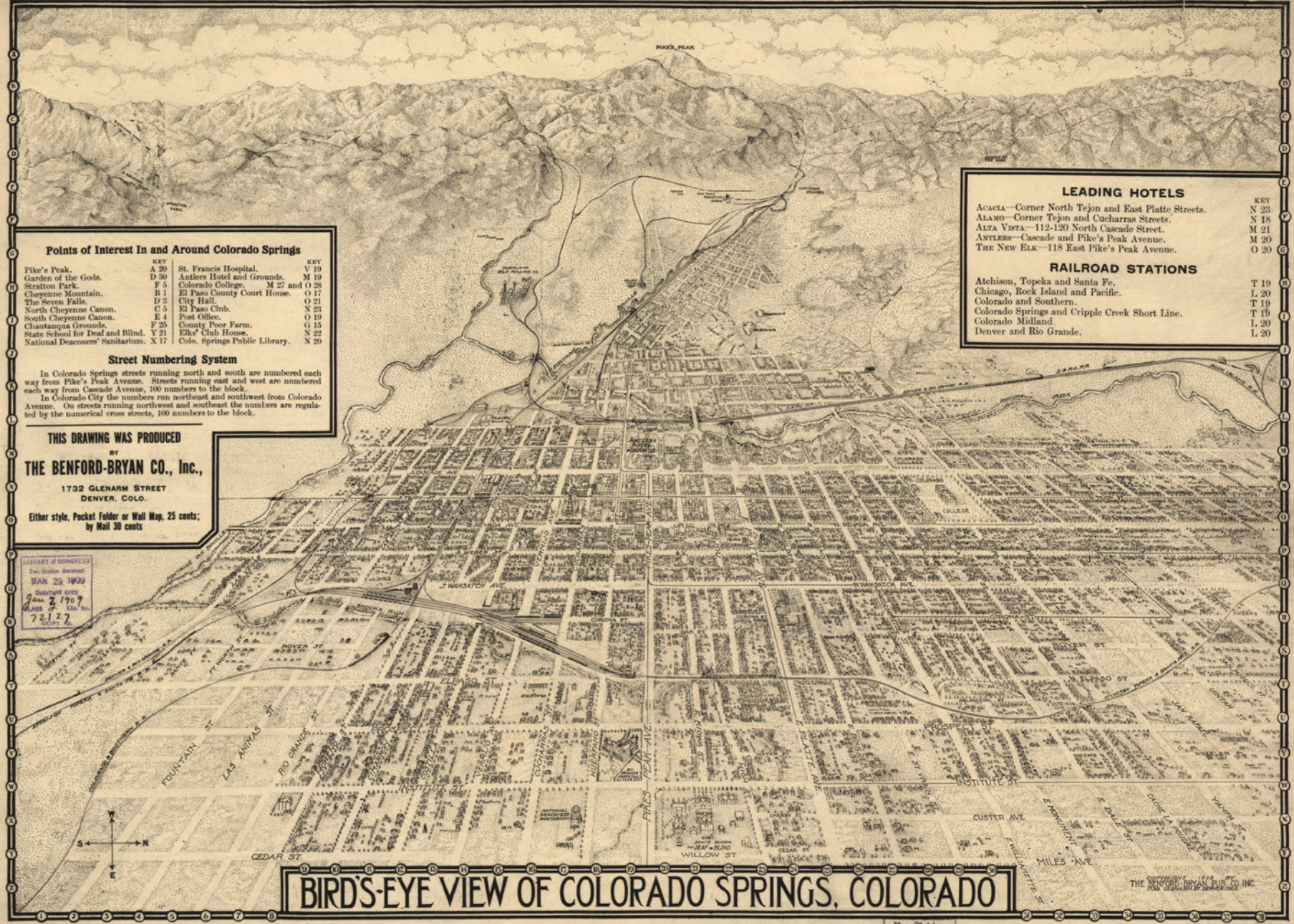


TOP: Dr. Thomas C. Kirkwood, known for his wit and humor in the pulpit, is the church's pastor from 1879 to 1884. (First Pres Archives)

BOTTOM: Scottish minister Dr. James S. Black becomes First Presbyterian Church's pastor in 1884. (First Pres Archives)

OPPOSITE PAGE: A drawing details the layout of Colorado Springs, including Pikes Peak, as it looked in 1909. (Image courtesy of the Library of Congress)





**Points of Interest In and Around Colorado Springs**

KEY	Point of Interest	KEY	Point of Interest
A 20	Pike's Peak.	Y 19	St. Francis Hospital.
D 30	Garden of the Gods.	M 19	Antlers Hotel and Grounds.
F 5	Stratton Park.	M 27 and O 28	Colorado College.
B 1	Cheyenne Mountain.	O 17	El Paso County Court House.
D 5	The Seven Falls.	O 21	City Hall.
C 5	North Cheyenne Canon.	N 23	El Paso Club.
E 4	South Cheyenne Canon.	O 19	Post Office.
F 25	Chautauque Grounds.	G 15	County Poor Farm.
Y 21	State School for Deaf and Blind.	N 22	Elks' Club House.
X 17	National Deaconess' Sanitarium.	N 20	Colo. Springs Public Library.

**Street Numbering System**

In Colorado Springs streets running north and south are numbered each way from Pike's Peak Avenue. Streets running east and west are numbered each way from Cascade Avenue, 100 numbers to the block.

In Colorado City the numbers run northeast and southwest from Colorado Avenue. On streets running northwest and southeast the numbers are regulated by the numerical cross streets, 100 numbers to the block.

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**LEADING HOTELS**

ACACIA—Corner North Tejon and East Platte Streets.	KEY N 23
ALAMO—Corner Tejon and Cucharas Streets.	N 18
ALTA VISTA—112-120 North Cascade Street.	M 21
ANTLEES—Cascade and Pike's Peak Avenue.	M 20
THE NEW ELK—118 East Pike's Peak Avenue.	O 20

**RAILROAD STATIONS**

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe.	T 19
Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific.	L 20
Colorado and Southern.	T 19
Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek Short Line.	T 19
Colorado Midland.	L 20
Denver and Rio Grande.	L 20

**BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO**

75-493127

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## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

The music program at First Pres has led generations of worshipers to God over the last 150 years. Ruth Ann Ridley, a former volunteer pianist for the junior and senior choirs, recalls that the music program is what drew her family to First Pres after they visited the church during a July 4<sup>th</sup> concert. Ridley recalled, “They were singing Battle Hymn of the Republic, and it was just glorious. I thought, ‘I’ve got to start coming here!’ The music was wonderful, inspirational, and exciting.”<sup>1</sup> Once her family joined the church, she quickly grew to love “the music program and choir, and the finesse and expertise of the musicians that glorified God.”<sup>2</sup>

Music has been a beautiful part of the church’s life since First Presbyterian Church began in 1872. In the early days of the church, Henry Gage traveled back east to ask his friends to donate money and material goods for the new congregation in Colorado Springs. His friends from Chicago gave them a bell, which arrived by train. Sebastian and Gennie Greenway gave First Pres a beautiful pump organ from Carpenter, Scott, and Wise. The congregation enjoyed singing, and the choir and organist led worship. In 1886, Dr. James Black gave First Presbyterian Church a new pipe organ after he grew weary of the original instrument’s “gruntings, groanings, and wheezing of the asthmatic hurdy-gurdy, which for politeness’ sake we call an organ.”<sup>3</sup>

When the congregation constructed a new building in the late 1880s, the old church bell was donated to First Presbyterian Church of Eastonville, Colorado (now the Black Forest area).



When the new building was dedicated in 1889, Dr. Black wrote a new hymn called “The Church, Our Heritage.” In 1898, a reporter visited First Presbyterian Church, remarking, “The auditorium was crowded and fully 800 people were present to listen and learn... The music was one of the leading features.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1923, the church bought a three-manual Austin Organ with 29 stops. It replaced the organ Black had given to the church, and that organ was subsequently sold to a church in Manitou. A few years later, organist Bertram Wheatly gave a series of concerts to help fund the purchase of sheet music for the choir. In 1931, the church recruited a quartet to sing with the choir and hired Mrs. Charles Edwards to play the organ. During the Great Depression, a shrinking church budget eliminated the quartet, leaving them with only one soloist. In 1935, the church had a volunteer “Vested Choir” that grew from 23 to 45 members.



## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

There were several exciting developments in the music program during the 1950s. In 1951, Orien Johnson, who had been director of music for three years, resigned and Walter Illian took over as full-time minister of music and assistant to Rev. Dr. Howard E. Hansen. Before his arrival, the music program at the church had centered around the Sanctuary choir and organ; Illian added several new ensembles, including a women's chorus and men's chorus, and programs for children and youth. The Sanctuary choir had 60 members who performed a weekly 15-minute program on KRDO radio. They also produced a record for Christmas season. In 1955, Illian resigned, and Charles A. Meeker, the head of the vocal department at Colorado Springs High School, took over part-time.

The music program continued to develop throughout the 1960s. In 1966, the Crusader Choir, comprised of fourth through sixth graders, attended a summer music camp, and a few months later they wore red robes for the Christmas concert. In 1967, Leonard Wecks, a Fuller Seminary graduate, was called to be the full-time Minister of Music. The following year, the Crusader Choir presented "The Gallant Tailor" operetta at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. When Dr. Hansen retired in 1970, the choir recorded an album featuring Hansen's parting sermon "The Past is Prologue," along with "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and Beethoven's "Hallelujah."

Jim DeJarnette, a graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, became Minister of Music when Wecks retired in 1982. DeJarnette recalled, "During the first years that



*OPPOSITE PAGE:  
The First Presbyterian  
Church choir in 1938.  
(First Pres Archives)*

*LEFT: Longtime First  
Presbyterian Church  
organist Dorothy  
Schlegel. (First Pres  
Archives)*



*BELOW LEFT: The  
Crusader Choir,  
featuring children from  
grades four through  
six, in 1969. (First Pres  
Archives)*

*BOTTOM: Leonard  
Wecks and the choir  
lead congregational  
singing. (First Pres  
Archives)*



## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES



*TOP: A large group participates in a handbell workshop. (First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM LEFT: First Presbyterian Church has an extensive music library. Anne Barnes and Carolyn Hock are pictured in the music library in 1985. (First Pres Archives)*

*UPPER BOTTOM RIGHT: The preschool Lamb Choir had more than 90 children during its peak years. (First Pres Archives)*

*LOWER BOTTOM RIGHT: The Boys Handbell Choir enjoys a rehearsal. (First Pres Archives)*





## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

I was at First Pres, I inherited a fantastic worship and music ministry from Leonard Wecks, my predecessor, who was a tremendous scholar and a great classical musician.”<sup>5</sup> DeJarnette enjoyed creative partnerships with each of the senior pastors he served alongside. “My partnership with John Stevens was one of the great privileges of my life,” he said.

“We worked so diligently at putting together vital worship Sunday by Sunday. John was a master in the pulpit because he was capable of generating tremendously fresh and creative messages week by week, and I tried to serve him to the best of my abilities through new music for the congregation at First Pres to highlight the theological themes that the pastors were preaching about.”<sup>6</sup>

Under DeJarnette’s leadership, there was a proliferation of creative opportunities for all ages, including children’s choirs, musicals and camps. They had a graded music program for children led by dozens of volunteer directors. At the height of the children’s choirs, hundreds of kids participated, including over 90 kids in the preschool Lamb Choir. During Advent, the children sang during candle lighting services and in original Advent musicals. During MOPS meetings, teachers would organize the children in their classes into little choirs. Kathy Boyles, Carolyn Hock and many other staff and volunteers led these children in worship. “It was a very intentional and huge part of the ministry at First Pres,” DeJarnette remembered. “I cherished those days, and will never forget them.”<sup>7</sup>

There were opportunities for senior choirs as well. Sarah Ogden, director of The Servant Choir, took her singers to bless the residents of local nursing homes. Ridley, the volunteer pianist, occasionally traveled with the group to play with them. “It was wonderful because it was all done for the glory of the Lord; Sarah really wanted us to serve others,” Ridley recalled.

With significant changes to worship music in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the music program at First Pres blossomed to include both classical and contemporary elements of music. The church developed a blended worship service in the 1980s and ’90s that included classical music and hymns alongside praise choruses and contemporary anthems. Today, the four Sunday morning services at First Pres include two traditional worship services and two contemporary services.



*The passing of the baton from Rev. Leonard Wecks to Jim DeJarnette, on July 8, 1982. DeJarnette served as Minister of Music while leading the Big Blue choir for 39 years at First Presbyterian Church. He retired late in November 2022. (First Pres Archives)*

## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

*TOP: Jim DeJarnette leads choir rehearsal in 1992.  
(First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM LEFT: The Messiah concert, a precursor to the  
annual Christmas Joy event, packs the house at the Pikes Peak  
Center in 1987. (First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM RIGHT: Senior Organist Don Dyck helps lead  
worship for nearly 36 years. (First Pres Archives)*





## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

Traditional and contemporary worship are vital parts of the spirit of First Pres. The contemporary worship service has come into its own over the last 15 years. In 2009, the church hired Matt Holtzman to be the worship leader for the contemporary service, which he co-led with Rachel Smith. Eventually, the church held two contemporary services: one in the Fellowship Hall and one in the Sanctuary. That meant the worship band had to disassemble their set-up in Fellowship Hall and bring all of their instruments and AV equipment to the Sanctuary every Sunday.

When Lead Pastor Timothy McConnell came to First Pres in 2016, he committed to making the contemporary worship service an integrated part of Sunday mornings. The church transformed Fellowship Hall into a \$1.7 million worship space, which opened in March 2017. “It was a monumental decision for a church like First Pres,” said Creative Director Chris Cullins. “With the completion of the Worship Center, we could house families that desire to worship in a contemporary worship environment.”<sup>8</sup>

In the 1980s, the annual Christmas concert had grown to the point that the Sanctuary of First Pres could no longer hold all the people who wanted to attend, nor could the stage hold all the musicians. The church made the bold decision to rent out the Pikes Peak Center for the Christmas concert, and that became an annual community event. Over the years, DeJarnette formed creative partnerships with local musicians and artists, including the Colorado Springs Children’s Chorale, The Pikes Peak Ringers, Ballet Emmanuel, Celtic Steps, the Celtic Mountain Band, and members of the Colorado Springs Philharmonic. “One of the principal values of First Pres is being light and life for the city, and trying to reach out in very meaningful ways into the life of our city,”<sup>9</sup> DeJarnette remarked.



*TOP: Pastor Matt Holtzman, second from left playing keyboards, leads contemporary worship in 2016. (First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM: Jim DeJarnette leads the 2004 “Of Thee I Sing” concert. (First Pres Archives)*

## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES



*TOP: Jim and Barb DeJarnette enjoy the “Evening Under the Stars” celebration that honored their longtime service to First Pres and Jim’s retirement in 2021. (First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM: Sanctuary Worship Leader Jamal Sarikoki and Big Blue guide worship on a Sunday morning. (First Pres Archives)*

DeJarnette served the church with creativity and excellence for 39 years before retiring in November 2021. On Sunday, November 28, 2021 he passed his baton to Jamal Sarikoki, a talented music minister, conductor, vocalist, and organist who became Sanctuary Worship Lead. Sarikoki, 30, was serving as Minister of Music at Venice Presbyterian Church when his voice teacher in Florida put his name in the hat for the First Pres job. It seemed to be a good fit for Sarikoki and his wife, Genna, who anticipated their first child’s birth and were looking for a younger Christian community. Shortly after Jeremiah Knox was born, they moved to Colorado Springs. Sarikoki said,

“My goal here at First Pres, both in the community and church, is always first and foremost to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. But one of the things that’s important to me as a classical artist, and (also) as an African American classical artist, is to showcase the fact that there are so many different cultures represented in classical music.”<sup>10</sup>

## Q&A WITH DEJARNETTE, SARIKOKI AND CULLINS

*How did Big Blue, the Sanctuary choir, get its nickname?*

**DeJarnette:** “The Headwaters Sunday School class met downstairs, not far from where the Sanctuary choir rehearses. On Sunday mornings, Headwaters began to encourage the Sanctuary choir as they would go upstairs into the Sanctuary. The class would line the hallway with pom-poms, cheering for us for like a football team coming out. And they would yell out, ‘Go Big Blue! Go Big Blue!’ They saw us as a big choir in blue robes. And that’s how we got the name Big Blue.”

*What are some of your funniest moments in the music program?*

**DeJarnette:** “One year, we had a competition between the sopranos, altos, tenors and basses for who could do the most extreme thing in a choir robe. Among the things



## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES



*LEFT: Inspired by the rousing chants and high-fives of the Headwaters Sunday school class, several of the men from choir wear cheerleading costumes and perform cheers and comedy skits during choir events. Their first appearance is in 2002 where this photo was taken at a football-themed choir banquet and their finale is at Jim DeJarnette's retirement. Here they are pictured with DeJarnette, center. (Photo courtesy of Christine Sebby)*

*RIGHT: "Coach" Jim DeJarnette wears shoulder pads under his robe in a 2002 skit that doubles down on the choir's football team analogy. Later in this skit, titled "Invesco Sanctuary," an announcer from the balcony provides play-by-play commentary and a referee shouts "Holding!" when one of the tenors doesn't cut off their note on time. (Photo courtesy of Christine Sebby)*

that were done were wakeboarding in a choir robe, and someone else jumped off the 10-meter platform at the Air Force Academy swimming pool. Someone made a special choir robe and dove out of an airplane at 10,000 feet, doing maneuvers that you would recognize as choir warmups. The winner of the competition that year involved John Stevens. A horse came galloping down Bijou Street with a giant choir stole. And one of the sopranos who was riding that horse pulled John Stevens up onto the back of it, and they went riding off.”

**Sarikoki:** “We love to laugh, and always find plenty of opportunities to laugh together.”

**Cullins:** “Technology can cause funny moments. First, in the back of the Worship Center, we have a television screen that we call our confidence monitor—from the front we can see what the audience sees. There are times when that monitor has gone on its own little journey. Sometimes that screen will revert to a promo for a television show in the middle of worship. Second, we wear in-ear monitors that allow us to hear the other musicians and instructions from our musical director. But, we can hear other communications too. Sometimes, just as I am

getting ready to pray during the service, I can hear the pastors chatting with people as they walk from the Sanctuary into the Worship Center. The congregation can't hear that, but I can, and that has made for some funny moments.”

*What did it mean for you to be a worship leader in addition to a music leader?*

**DeJarnette:** “One of the things that I was allowed at First Pres was a beautiful involvement in the lives of all those with whom I shared ministry. From a pastoral standpoint, I had the privilege of entering into each of their lives, to be part of the great high mountaintop moments, and to be a part of the very difficult valleys that everyone goes through. And we lived those things together.”

## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

**Sarikoki:** “As any sort of leader in a local church, there is first and foremost the calling of being a shepherd to the congregants and being a shepherd to those in your area of ministry. In our rehearsals, I get to break open Scripture with them and teach God’s Word. In the music ministry, people crave more than having a good rehearsal and singing some great music. They are craving a leader to pray with in the tough times of life and to be with them in the joys of life. They need someone to show them the unmerited love of God. That’s what I’m first and foremost called to do with those in the scope of my ministry; to break the bread of life with them.”

**Cullins:** “The difference between being a song leader and a worship pastor for me is being able to worship God in relationship with others around you.”

*What does worship mean to you?*

**DeJarnette:** “I believe that worship is a way of life...when we recognize that all of life, and our privilege of living is in His hands, the only way that we can come before Him is in profound gratitude and worship, to understand who He is, and to be mercifully in His presence, to be broken before Him. To be softened in heart and open in mind to the actuality of our Creator God and our Savior is to be in a posture of worship. So the greatest expression of worship is to acknowledge who He is and to desire to walk with Him in the totality of our lives. The greatest expression on a corporate level is to come together as His people and encourage one another toward heights of praise toward Him, who is the Creator of us all, the Savior of us all.”

**Sarikoki:** “Corporate worship is a mandate all throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The Lord has called us to worship Him in songs, and through preaching and teaching. We’re called by God to worship as a body, and in gathering we are demonstrating to each other what the practices of our lives should be: confession of sin, adoration of God, and thanksgiving for the mercy God showed to us through Jesus Christ. Ultimately, worship is a way of life. In all we do and all we say, each day should be done to worship and to glorify the Lord.”



*ABOVE: Chris Cullins leads worship.  
(First Pres Archives)*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: To kick off First Pres’  
150<sup>th</sup> year of ministry, the church reserves  
the band shell in Acacia Park leads a  
Citywide Worship Gathering for Colorado  
Springs. (First Pres Archives)*



## MUSIC AT FIRST PRES

**Cullins:** “Worship is giving praise to what you value the most. In the context of the Christian walk, that means worship of our God is valuing Him more than anything, and to be able to do that, giving praise to what He’s doing and has done in our life.”

*What are your hopes for the future of First Pres?*

**DeJarnette:** “First Pres has a passion for mission and for expanding the gospel into all the world and our local community. I have loved how you can be part of First Pres, regardless of age, and be part of the growth in the Word and in the Lord. My hope, as First Pres goes into the future, is that these tremendous attributes of the church will just grow stronger, that it will continue to be a church for all of life. That it can be for all generations, from those newborn babies and moms right on through to the last days of one’s life. To be able to find comfort within the fellowship of believers and within the pastoral presence of the church, to have that for the

totality of one’s life. At the heart of all of that is an unswerving passion for reaching all for Christ. That we have our identity, founded in our mission in Christ and the leadership of the Spirit through every moment of our life.”

**Sarikoki:** “In my role, I hope to continue the strong legacy of traditional reformed worship. Personally, I would love to see continued growth in the Sanctuary worship to see young families increase in number in the Sanctuary. Overall, though, my hope is that First Pres will continue its legacy of great preaching and worship, strong biblical discipleship, and evangelism.”

**Cullins:** “First Pres has an incredible opportunity to be a warm rock for people to climb up on in a cold world, as Tim (McConnell) says. Through our Creative Suite, I hope we continue to write songs together and make videos to speak truth into each other’s lives. I hope and dream that First Pres is a unique downtown space with so much growth happening here. I see young families, professionals and retirees pouring back into central locations around downtown. My hope is that First Pres can willingly take a step into a new generation built upon our foundation of 150 years.”



*(now skipping to the end of the book...)*



## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT 150



In 2022, First Pres celebrates 150 years of ministry in Colorado Springs. From the 1870s to today, generations of worshipers have gathered in the heart of downtown to bring glory to God and to love like Jesus. According to Lead Pastor Dr. Tim McConnell, “In 1872, God began a work in the city of Colorado Springs through the life of this congregation... The legacy of First Pres is one that reflects God’s heart for His people. A church that aims to be Light and Life for the City that it loves.”<sup>1</sup>

First Pres hosted a gala on March 12, 2022, to honor a legacy of ministry spanning from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The congregation gathered at The Antlers hotel in downtown Colorado Springs for a morning of worship and to hear remarks from Rev. Dr. Tim McConnell, Rev. Dr. Jim Edwards, Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers, and a greeting from U.S. Representative Doug Lamborn. Generations of First Pres families gathered to catch up with old friends, say hello to a few former pastors in attendance, and pray the church into the future.

Following are some thoughts from our pastoral staff and community leaders about First Pres at 150, and the role the church has played in Colorado Springs.

*Lead Pastor Tim McConnell speaks at First Pres’ 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala at The Antlers on March 12, 2022. (Photo by Ryan Walters)*



TIM McCONNELL

**Lead Pastor**

It's humbling to be the pastor here to mark a significant historical moment like the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the church. The mission that Christ had for First Pres, and has sustained through so many different generations, continues in our time. It's the same mission to reach Colorado Springs for Christ; to meet the searching hearts of Colorado Springs with the good news of what Christ is providing. God calls us to celebrate key moments and to celebrate His mighty acts. It's a moment to say that God has been faithful, and that should give us encouragement that He's going to be faithful as we continue to step forward in the mission that He's given us.



JENNIFER HOLZ

**Senior Associate Pastor**

There are a lot of churches in Colorado Springs, and only eight of us that can claim the 150-year-old mark. Our church is gospel-centered, still unwavering on the centrality of the gospel and the foundation that Sheldon Jackson wanted to instill from the beginning. The ministry of First Pres has remained true to a biblical gospel and the necessity of bearing witness to the gospel... We have stayed true to our roots but at the same time, allowed some of the methods to change in order to reach people differently. God's faithfulness and the fruitfulness of the church at 150 years are evident. I'm grateful to be part of the lineage and the history of a church that remains faithful to her first call of Jesus.





## JIM DEJARNETTE

**Former Minister of Worship and Music (1982-2021)**

It's an incredible thing to know that the Lord desired that this mission come into being those 150 years ago. It was the Lord's will, I believe, that First Pres would be at the heart of Colorado Springs right from the beginning. When downtown churches were struggling and trying to survive, First Pres was finding its way forward and thriving within the context of ministering to the city and being at the heart of the city. That's our mission. That's our calling. I'm thrilled that we're 150 years old! And I'm praying for 300, following where the Lord is leading and what His Spirit is doing; seeing ourselves being unequivocally at the heart of our city, and what it means to bring that hope and that joy of Christ's presence into the heart of the city. We have so many other things that are about the community in the city, but we need to have Christ at the center of the community, and that's what First Pres is all about.



## JOHN GOODALE

**Pastor of Caring Ministries**

If the next 150 years are anything like the first 150, First Pres will continue to be a tremendous blessing for the Kingdom and for our community.



## ISAAC NORTON

**Former Program Coordinator of Development (2021-2022)**

I'm extremely grateful that I was able to help celebrate the rich legacy of a church that has poured so much into me. One hundred and fifty years is more days than I will ever see; it accounts for generations of God doing amazing things similar to what He's done in my life. In the two years that I've been a part of First Pres, I have seen the Lord do miraculous things through this church. Thinking about multiplying that level of impact across this congregation's history blows my mind and makes me grateful to play a small role.

**We have so many other things that are about the community in the city, but we need to have Christ at the center of the community...**



**CHRIS CULLINS**  
Creative Director/Worship Leader

One hundred and fifty years means God's been faithful to partner with the people of Colorado Springs and First Pres to see God's goodness reach

thousands of lives for the name of Jesus. We have a place and partnership with this community that I don't think truly can be measured. It's helpful to look back at our history and see the creative work that has been done. As a creative worship leader, that stability is a strong rock to stand on.

**One hundred and fifty years of faithful ministry doesn't simply happen by coming to church; it also involves deep faith in God...**



**JAMAL SARIKOKI**  
Sanctuary Worship Lead

It's a joy and weighty privilege to be in a church that has 150 years of preaching the gospel and reaching the nations. It is an extreme privilege to serve in

the legacy of not only some of the finest church musicians, but also in the legacy of some of the finest preachers and theologians. It's humbling to be in the new generation of spiritual leaders in this church. My overall prayer is that First Pres will continue a legacy of great preaching, great worship, strong biblical discipleship, and evangelism.



**ALISON MURRAY**  
Former Executive Director (2008-2022)

First Pres is known for its innovation in ministry, deep care for the community, its ability to take risks, and its support for mission and ministry in the city.

One hundred and fifty years of faithful ministry doesn't simply happen by coming to church; it also involves deep faith in God, and being faithful about the mission field that's right outside your door.



**MICHAEL THORNTON**  
Pastor of Discipleship

When we lift our heads and see that the Holy Spirit has been doing the same thing, in the same place, for generations, to me that affirms the gospel message; it affirms the grace and faithfulness of God.





### Our churches bring out the heart of our city.

#### JOHN SUTHERS

**41<sup>st</sup> Mayor of Colorado Springs**

*Remarks at First Presbyterian Church 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala,  
March 12, 2022*

This congregation has a long and proud history, and it is ingrained in the long and proud history of Colorado Springs. Colorado Springs is one of the few large cities in America that wasn't founded by accident but was founded by design. Palmer didn't want a bawdy frontier town. He wanted a genteel town, and he wanted to attract religious people. First Presbyterian Church is identified as one of the eight historic downtown churches called out in general Palmer's city plan. You were founded shortly after General Palmer's designee General Cameron drove the first stake at the corner of what is now Cascade and Pikes Peak Avenue.

The city and First Pres have been working together for the good of our residents for 150 years. That's pretty impressive. One of the many areas where First Pres continues to make a difference is in service to our youth. A while back, I was approached by

COSILoveYou, an organization of churches from all denominations which came together for the betterment of the city. Leaders from COSILoveYou asked me to identify issues that all the churches could address from my perspective as mayor. I asked that local churches come together to support organizations and ministries that support our young people. I'm happy to say that First Pres took that call very seriously and continued its efforts to surround each young person in our city with adults who care. Our churches bring out the heart of our city. They reach people on a personal level, and they make up a big part of the character of our city. I am so pleased to recognize First Pres—at the heart of Colorado Springs—for its spirit, its contributions, and for its commitment to helping us continue to build a great city that matches our scenery, a shining city at the foot of a great mountain.



**First Pres has helped to shape the life and soul of Colorado Springs from a frontier town into the nationally acclaimed city on the hill that it is today.**

### CONGRESSMAN DOUG LAMBORN

**U.S. Representative for Colorado's 5<sup>th</sup> District**

*Congressional Record, February 18, 2022*

Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the legacy and ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs. 2022 marks First Pres' 150<sup>th</sup> year of ministry to Colorado Springs.

This congregation has distinguished itself as a church after God's own heart in that time. To quote one of its former pastors, First Presbyterian is "a church rich in fellowship, broad in outreach, evangelical in spirit, and generous in attitude." Founded in 1872, this church has been a pillar to our community since its inception. It has faithfully ministered to over six generations of Coloradans with one straightforward mission: to reflect the love of Jesus Christ into their community. Their congregation has demonstrated this time and time again through their generous philanthropic efforts and numerous community partnerships. They donate millions of dollars annually to local engagement, proudly partnering with over 18

local missions and nonprofits. Together, they help fight against the prevalent problems facing our community, such as homelessness, food insecurity, and the absence of affordable healthcare and housing. This church truly embodies the principle found in Acts 20:35, "it is more blessed to give than receive." The members of this church live out what it means to love their neighbor as themselves for the sake of the gospel.

It is undeniable that First Pres has helped to shape the life and soul of Colorado Springs from a frontier town into the nationally acclaimed city on the hill that it is today. As we look forward to many more generations of life-changing ministry, I'm honored to gratefully reflect on the last 150 years of impactful work that God has done through First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs. I ask that my colleagues in Congress join me in honoring this institution of faith and grace.<sup>2</sup>



# SENIOR MINISTERS

*Of First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs*



REV. HENRY B. GAGE  
1872-1873, 1876-1879



DR. JAMES S. BLACK  
1884-1890



REV. JAMES G. LOWRIE  
1873-1876



DR. LIVINGSTON L. TAYLOR  
1891-1894



DR. THOMAS C. KIRKWOOD  
1879-1884



REV. W. H. WRAY BOYLE  
1894-1902



DR. EDGAR W. WORK  
1904-1907



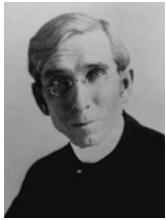
DR. JOHN H. STEVENS  
1971-2005



DR. HOWARD A. JOHNSTON  
1908-1910



DR. JAMES M. SINGLETON  
2005-2012



DR. SAMUEL E. GARVIN  
1911-1929



REV. GRAHAM J. BAIRD  
2012-2014



DR. WALLACE H. CARVER  
1930-1937



DR. TIMOTHY P. McCONNELL  
2016-present



DR. HOWARD E. HANSEN  
1938-1970





*First Pres staff as of April 27, 2022:*

*(Alphabetically) Michelle Adams-Fooshee, Associate of Ministry Giving; Elizabeth Aikens, Family Ministries Program Coordinator; Scott Barbier, Director of Worship Administration; Claire Berger, Pastor of Equipping Ministries; Linda Boyles, Assisting Minister of Care; Ben Bubeck, Worship and Tech Arts Associate; Chris Cullins, Creative Director/Worship Leader; Cameron Dailey, Director of Communications; Jon Dyck, Building Services Tech; Matt Fox, Director of Operations; Niko Giaimo, Worship Program Coordinator; Spencer Gillard, Digital Specialist; John Goodale, Pastor of Caring Ministries; Jim Hansen, Manager of Print Production; Greg Hartnett, Pastor of Evangelism and Young Adults; Pat Hartsock, Assisting Minister of Care; Josh Hays, Network and Audio Visual Support Specialist; Marcos Henry, Director of Student Ministries; Dianne Holloway, Associate of Children's Ministry; Matt Holtzman, Pastor for Care and Engagement; Jennifer Holz, Executive Pastor; Derrick Jeffers, Director of Finance and Administration; Tony Jefferson, Building Services Lead; Sallie Kidman, Graphic Designer; Colin Magnusson, Student Ministries Resident; Tim McConnell, Lead Pastor; Junior McGarrahan, Pastor for Adult Education; Ina Meyer, Program Manager for Discipleship; Alison Murray, Executive Director; Garrett Prather, Director of Human Resources; Elizabeth Roth, Executive Assistant to the Lead Pastor; Sammi Satchell, Associate for Community Engagement; Floyd Sebald, Director of First Pres Fellows; Bob Stephens, Program Coordinator for Communication; Brandin Stroy, Director of Worship Arts and Technology; Abi Tovar, Director of Children's Ministry; Marian Tuck, Program Coordinator for Events Ministry; Ryan Walters, Video Program Director*

*Not pictured: Brandon Deal, Building Services Tech; Christy Frederick, Preschool Director; Sue Hayward, Caring Ministries Associate; Devona Martin, Building Services Tech; Andy Morrison, College Ministries Associate; Isaac Norton, Program Coordinator of Development; Jamal Sarikoki, Sanctuary Worship Lead; Michael Thornton, Pastor of Discipleship*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Susan A. Fletcher*



Susan A. Fletcher is an award-winning author, historian and proud Colorado Springs native. Fletcher helps individuals, churches and nonprofits leverage their past to make their stories accessible and relevant to a contemporary audience. Fletcher earned her MA in Public History from Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis and has worked in museums and archives for over 20 years.

Fletcher's book *Exploring the History of Childhood and Play Through 50 Historic Treasures* was one of the "Top 10 Sports Books of the Year" for Booklist and received first place in the history category in the Colorado Authors League Awards in 2021. She is the co-author of *The Glen Eyrie Story* and *Dawson Trotman in His Own Words*. Her writings have also appeared in

*Christianity Today*, *Springs Magazine* and *The Colorado Collective*.

Fletcher is passionate about bringing life to the city of Colorado Springs by serving our history, arts and cultural communities. She is the past Chair of the Colorado Springs Historic Preservation Board and was the Treasurer of The Pikes Peak Children's Museum Board. She is also a painter with a special place in her heart for the downtown art crowd.

Fletcher has been a member of First Pres since 2016 and serves as a Life Group leader and deacon.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*From Susan A. Fletcher*

As a native of Colorado Springs, the mission of First Pres to reflect the love of Jesus to be Light and Life for the City is particularly meaningful to me. My heart has been with this city my whole life, even during the years I spent apart from it as a college student and young adult. I am blessed to live in the ongoing dream that General William J. Palmer had for this beautiful place and thankful to be part of the congregation at First Pres that has served the Lord faithfully here for 150 years.

My personal history with First Pres began as a student at Palmer High School in the 1990s when we took our International Baccalaureate

exams in the church basement and had our I.B. graduation in the Fellowship Hall and Plaza. I have a photo of my classmates standing on the sunlit steps under the glass ceiling, looking exhausted but hopeful about the future. Eighteen years later, I joined the church in 2016. Today, it's an honor to write about the other hopeful people who have been part of the First Presbyterian Church family for the last 150 years.

Bringing a book to life requires a skilled and supportive team, and I am grateful to the many people who worked hard to bring this project to fruition. Thank you to Rev. Dr. Tim McConnell, Rev. Dr.

Jennifer Holz, and Alison Murray for entrusting the history of First Pres to me. Thank you to the First Pres Communications team for being my partners on this project. I wish to thank Bob Stephens for his superb work editing the manuscript and diligently writing and editing the many captions throughout this historical piece. Sallie Kidman imagined the book into being through her fantastic graphic design skills and deserves special thanks for creating a design that honors our past while being fresh for a contemporary audience. Thank you to Spencer Gillard for his help with digital content and photography of the modern First Pres campus. Thanks to Jim

Hansen for his important role in managing the print production of the book. Isaac Norton has been a kind and encouraging soul during this project, and I am thankful for his help with coordinating meetings and interviews. I am grateful to Ashley Beaty for asking me to write this book.

First Pres has a rich and deep archival collection, which is a fantastic source of information for a historian. I am grateful to the faithful archivists and volunteers who have overseen this collection, including Dale McClure, Sue Hayward, Trish Bibler and Pam Steele. I also wish to thank Bibler and Steele for their

deep knowledge of First Pres and assistance in fact-checking. I am indebted to Hayward for giving me access to the archives, sending me research material, and for her vast historical knowledge of First Pres. Hayward was also an invaluable asset in helping Stephens identify people, dates and circumstances for many of the photo captions.

Thank you to the First Pres staff and members of the congregation who shared their stories with me. I am particularly grateful to Mrs. Belle Brown for sharing the story of her amazing 74 years at First Pres and for letting us scan archival material from her many scrapbooks.

I am thankful for the fellowship and support of my Life Group, including my co-leader Melissa Owen, Mark and Heather Baumann, Bill and Helen Buetel, Joel Stauffer, and Jenny Vogan. Thank you also to Paul for helping me with the book index. I am also very thankful for the prayers and support of my mother, Ruth Fletcher, and Paul Lilley.

Finally, thanks to the First Pres staff and volunteers, our mission partners, and our church plants who have faithfully served the Lord from 1872 to the present. I am grateful for you, and I think our founders, Sheldon Jackson and Henry Gage, would be too.



Martinez '49 - Be Ye Doers of His Word - Words & Music by C.A. Meekler  
 Retreat Song Moderato F C7 F C7

Be ye do-ers, do-ers of His Word In the home, a-long the way;  
 (We are)

Be ye do-ers, do-ers of His Word On the job day by day!  
 (We are)

Wit-ness for Christ in all you do; Put your faith in action let His light shine thru you

Be ye do-ers, do-ers of His Word In the Church; in work & play  
 (We are)

Be ye do-ers, do-ers of His Word, Don't de-lay, let's start to-day!  
 (We are) Sept. 6, 1959



LEFT: A music sheet from September 6, 1959. (Image courtesy of longtime member Belle Brown)

TOP RIGHT: Get Set students sit on the curb to watch a parade go by in downtown Colorado Springs. (First Pres Archives)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Left to right, Dr. Howard Hansen with Mary Frances Redding, Jean Strang and Elder Leonard Koets in 1942. (First Pres Archives)

OPPOSITE PAGE: First Pres Creative Director Chris Cullins leads a service in the Worship Center in 2022. (First Pres Digital Collection)



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- 94 Nate Stratman, *2021 First Presbyterian Church Annual Report*, 14. First Pres Archives, 15.
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- 100 DeJarnette.
- 101 McConnell.

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT 150

- 1 McConnell.
- 2 “CELEBRATING THE LEGACY AND MINISTRY OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF COLORADO SPRINGS; Congressional Record Vol. 168, No. 33 (Extensions of Remarks - February 18, 2022)” February 18, 2022 - Issue: Vol. 168, No. 33 — Daily Edition 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021 - 2022) - 2<sup>nd</sup> Session.







*TOP LEFT: Food and fun is shared at the Life Quest camping outing in 2005 in the Pike National Forest. (First Pres Digital Collection)*

*TOP RIGHT: The Pathfinders class, an adult Sunday community, always attracts a large gathering and has for many years. In 2022, approximately 160 members gather weekly to hear a lesson from Pathfinders leader Dr. John Goodale. (First Pres Archives)*

*BOTTOM: Lead Pastor Tim McConnell, on November 28, 2021, ceremoniously hands off the baton of Jim DeJarnette, at left in black robe, to Jamal Sarikoki, who was succeeding DeJarnette as worship leader and choir director. DeJarnette was retiring that day after 39 years with First Presbyterian Church. (First Pres Digital Collection)*



*OPPOSITE PAGE: First Presbyterian Church's large congregation streams from Palmer High School toward the new Sanctuary for "Dedication Sunday" in 1959. First Presbyterian Church worship services were being conducted at the Palmer High Auditorium while the new Sanctuary was being constructed. (First Pres Archives)*



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**“The mission that Christ had for First Presbyterian Church, and has sustained through so many different generations, continues in our time. It’s the same mission to reach Colorado Springs for Christ; to meet searching hearts with the good news of what Christ is providing.”**

TIM McCONNELL  
Lead Pastor



219 East Bijou Street  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
firstprescos.org

In 1870, missionaries Rev. Sheldon Jackson and Henry Gage prayed over Colorado maps as they strategized about locations to plant churches in the American West. Jackson asked Gage to travel to the Pikes Peak Region “to be ready for a town that is sure to come...located somewhere near the Garden of the Gods, the [mineral] springs, and Monument Park.” Two years later, in 1872, Jackson and Gage established the First Presbyterian Church in the brand new community of Colorado Springs.

*Light and Life: First Presbyterian Church at 150* explores the church’s rich history in the context of its enduring bond with Colorado Springs. Featuring archival photographs, manuscripts and drawings, *Light and Life* tells the story of God’s faithfulness and the impact of our ministry in the city and worldwide. Explore the early days on the western frontier. Discover a rich legacy of preaching and worship. Walk with the congregation as it grows into the 1888 and 1959 sanctuaries. Get excited about the impact of our local and global ministry partnerships. Learn about how First Pres builds on a historical foundation to advance the gospel into its next chapter.

As the church celebrates 150 years of ministry, the mission of First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs is to reflect the love of Jesus to be Light and Life for the City. The church is a community of believers following Jesus, devoted to God, and looking to help others know and worship Him for eternal life. Loved by Jesus, we want to love our city. We are still excited to be a gift to our city in Jesus’ name. We know Jesus can change lives and the truth of the gospel changes everything.

