



Our 250<sup>th</sup> year at Philadelphia has certainly been one for the History books. Who would have imagined that a virus would halt worship services and all activities for four months and counting! We have been advised by the governor of our state to stay at home in an effort to control the spread of the coronavirus. We were told by many experts in April that the disease would slow down as the weather got warmer. Now, as temperatures soar to 90 plus degrees for weeks, those predictions have been shattered and the disease continues to control our world.

In January we kicked off a year-long celebration (or so we thought). After years of planning we lined the walls of the church with historic pictures many of which were found in the church archives. We circled the rotunda with a detailed timeline commemorating important events and people in the 250 years of worship and service at Clear Creek and then Philadelphia. Weekly Kerr Kronicles were prepared and published weekly quoting excerpts from *THE PRESBYTERIAN GATHERING on CLEAR CREEK*. Precious interviews were filmed. Mayor Brad Simmons issued a town proclamation from the Town of Mint Hill, proclaiming 2020 a year of remembrance and celebration.

Now, as the actual HOMECOMING DATE approaches in September, we come to the realization that gathering for the planned festivities of September 20 will not be possible. It will not be possible to experience carriage rides to the historic cemeteries on Saturday and hear the “voices” of our former Sunday School teachers, minister, or choir members as they speak from the grave. We will not be making brick by mixing mud, creek sand and stone together and putting them in molds in the sunshine to dry. We will not be sipping tea and lemonade from galvanized tubs or churning ice cream under the large oak trees. We will not be singing our favorite hymns together as a community choir. We will not be hearing sons and daughters of the church speak from the pulpit sharing messages to challenge and inspire us for another 250 years.

A huge thank you is extended to the Women of the Church Bazaar Committee who generously provided funding for the reproduction of the pictures on the walls and timeline. A generous former member provided funding for the “voices from the grave” costuming and production and the horse drawn carriage rides. Your 250 Celebration Committee, created and approved by the Session, spent countless hours over a three-year period researching and planning to make this event meaningful and purposeful always seeking to show God at work in the life of Philadelphia. Two hundred and fifty years of telling others the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and action!

Sadly, the big two-day celebration in September cannot happen in 2020. Our hope and dream is that with God's guidance, the world will become Covid19 free and we will have our planned Homecoming Celebration September, 2021! The 250 Celebration Committee will continue to pray for guidance. God has a plan for us. We will listen for his voice. **OUR HOPE IS THAT A VACCINE WILL BE FOUND THAT WILL HALT THE SERIOUS VIRUS AND MAKE OUR LIVES SAFE AND NORMAL AGAIN.**

We must remember and tell others about the beginning years – of traveling by wagon from faraway places to settle and build a home in the backcountry of North Carolina, of worshiping in a brush arbor, then a log structure without glass windows. A second simple house of worship is built after the first is destroyed by fire, and then a third is built of handmade brick in a third and final location. Our history of love and service to God and the community is long and rich. We have continued for 250 consecutive years to praise God, always striving to grow in the likeness and fullness of our LORD AND SAVIOR, Jesus Christ.

And so, we will continue constantly bearing in mind the work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.