

Vision Poem

for Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church

In 1831, Presbyterian missionaries became farmers of men.
Called to spread the Gospel, they planted a seed in rural Sampson County.
Rooted in faith a devoted, grateful, and united church sprang forth.

The church soon burned, and their faith was nearly extinguished.
Yet embers of faith, kept hot by the Holy Spirit encouraged members, like the missionaries before,
To farm a new Promised Land in the heart of Town.

Pitchforks and plowshares now rested aside stethoscopes, fountain pens, and chalkboards-
The new tools of a growing congregation.

When fire consumed the church once again, the grace of God abounded.
The answer to a woman's prayer for twenty-five cents
Miraculously multiplied like the loaves and fish of old
Into a new home to be cared for and used in service of God.
One family's generous gift thus established a strong tradition:
To give sacrificially as Christ has given to us.

Agriculture has become agribusiness,
And our community still struggles to diversify its means for making a living.
Sand, surf, and sod compete with the sanctuary for the center of common life.
New faces and new cultures now call Sampson home,
Prepared to share their gifts with us if we would only ask.

We bear the fruits of the Spirit
Sharing our gifts in the church and in the community:
Making a joyful noise with instruments old and new
Warming hearts through fellowship and food
Holding hands of members within and neighbors beyond
Planting seeds of faith in children
And enriching minds through study of His written word.
Knowing that everything belongs to God,
We practice stewardship, not ownership, both among creation and in our ministry.

Fires burn buildings as well as the bonds of brotherhood.
Yet out of the ashes of discontent and disappointment we commit to reconcile ourselves to one another
Just as our Maker achieved reconciliation with the world
Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Forgiving one another, we grow stronger, we harvest hope, and we persevere.

Assured that Christ never fails to walk beside us through paradise and through the wilderness,
We discover new gifts refined by the fire of the Holy Spirit.
With focused leadership and sharing one mind, one heart, and many hands,
We weave a tapestry of Love –
Hammering hope
Sewing hearts together
Baking bread for the table, and
Reshaping the landscape to bridge divides.

We remain Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church –
Reformed, always being reformed,
According to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit,
Re-making our community into a living sanctuary
In which all can know, experience, and Give thanks for God's love.