

## **A Brief History of the Presbyterian Student Center**

by John Knox and Andy Cooke

In a very real sense, Presbyterian campus ministry started at UGA in 1819 when Moses Waddel came to save the fledgling university from collapse (it had one faculty member and seven students). Not only did Waddel rescue UGA from closure, he simultaneously founded and was the first pastor of First Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian influence at UGA continues to this day, with numerous faculty and staff members belonging to the PC(USA).

More specifically, however, campus ministry at UGA has its roots in the work of the Women's Auxiliary of the Synod of Georgia in the 1920s and 1930s. The first full-time student worker at UGA was funded by the Women's Auxiliary's efforts in 1940. In 1946 the Council of Westminster Fellowship was organized by the Synod of Georgia to establish campus ministries at UGA, Georgia Tech, Georgia State College for Women, and Valdosta State College.

The campus ministry took up residence in its current home, the Presbyterian Student Center, in 1959. At that time, it was known as Westminster House. This 9300-square-foot facility was built with funds contributed from a Synod-wide capital campaign led by Columbia Theological Seminary professor Wade Huie, and the Presbyterian Women's Least Coin Offering.

The campus ministry was active during the civil rights and war struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s, and in the late 1990s revived its outreach on social issues. Its history over this period is not well documented, but appears to include closure for several years because of the ministry's social activism. A ca. 2001 covenant penned by students reads:

“The community which gathers at the Presbyterian Student Center covenants to welcome all in an environment where honesty, openness, and unity are valued. We will honor God and each other by embracing our God-given differences.”

Campus ministers associated with the PSC include

- Corky King ca. 1962
- Roland Perdue from 1962-1966
- Milner Ball from 1966 to ca. 1968
- Alex Williams from 1972-1995
- Bob Googe from 1996-2004
- Anna McArthur from 2004-2007
- Andy Cooke from 2008 to present