

Our Founders

Leon Gabriel was born April 17, 1927, on a farm in Mooresville, NC. His family was Presbyterian and were regular churchgoers. Leon apparently led a fairly quiet life until he turned 16 years old. At that point World War II had been going on for a couple of years, and Leon wanted in. With his mother's consent he joined the US Army, and according to his daughter Dee, spent much of his time "chasing Nazi's all over Europe." Following the war, he enrolled in the University of North Carolina but had to withdraw without a degree after a couple of years to help his mother on the farm following the death of his father. He subsequently studied accounting at a small college and then began a career in business as a comptroller. Leon and his wife, Joye, moved from Mooresville to Cary in 1975, where they had been members of Fieldstone Presbyterian Church.

Fred Manley was born in 1937 on his grandfather's farm in southeastern Rockingham County, NC. He attended Sunday School with his older sister at a rural Methodist Church until Hillview Presbyterian Church was established within walking distance of his home. He excelled at Reidsville High School, and upon graduation he entered NC State College (now University). He was the first person in his extended family to attend college, where he earned a B.S. in Agricultural Education later a Master of Education degree. Fred's first professional position was as an agricultural education teacher/FFA advisor at Fuquay Springs (now Fuquay-Varina) High School. He lived in the school teacherage and became active in the Fuquay-Varina Presbyterian Church, where he was baptized and became an elder. After teaching for four years, he served for two years in the NC Department of Public Instruction and then 35 years with the NC Department of Community Colleges. Upon his retirement in 2000, he was awarded The Order of the Long Leaf Pine by Gov. Jim Hunt. Upon moving to Raleigh, he became an elder at St. Giles Presbyterian Church where their two children were baptized. Fred was active in all levels of Presbyterian church government, including serving as a commissioner of Orange Presbytery to the 1983 General Assembly in Atlanta, GA that reunited the now Presbyterian Church (USA). Fred and his wife Celeste remain active members of the Kirk.