

First Presbyterian Church of Beaufort
Servant of the Heart -- May 2013
Lolita T. Huckaby Watson



Interviewed 4/10/2013 by Roxanne Cheney

While Lolita was born in Dillon, SC, she is originally a Tarheel – it just so happens that Dillon was the location of the closest hospital to her parents' home in Rowland, NC. Lolita was the eldest of three (two girls, one boy). She attended Meredith College and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where she graduated with a degree in Journalism. In 1974 she married her college sweetheart and moved to Lumberton, NC. In 1978 an editor suggested that she gain some experience working for a small newspaper, so she moved to Beaufort; she intended to return to NC after 'checking the block', but it wasn't long before that legendary pluff mud got between her toes and Lolita decided to stay.

Lolita was raised in the Presbyterian Church, but didn't attend First Presbyterian until her only child was born in 1987. She wanted a church family to be part of the "village" to help raise her son, Charlie. One of Lolita's favorite memories is when Charlie was four or five years old and unenthusiastic about going forward for the children's sermon. Lolita walked forward with him, then returned to her seat in the balcony (AKA the "children's corral") where she watched in dismay as Charlie, completely ignoring Reverend Jones, crawled on all fours (despite his age) all the way back up the aisle to return to the balcony.

The thing Lolita loves most about our church is the people; the thing she likes least is missing the people who are no longer among us, either by choice or circumstance. She has served as a Deacon and on several committees including Communications, Mission, and Worship. She has also participated in the West Virginia mission trip; is a moving force behind Stop Hunger Now; and is intent on exploring other opportunities for mission work such as Family Promise. She has been generous with her journalism skills, contributing to the Lenten Guide, newsletter, and other forums to educate, inform, and inspire. And, Lolita has been an enthusiastic Sunday school student, crediting many of the teachers with enriching her faith.

In addition to devoting significant energy to church tasks, Lolita works for the County Alliance on Human Services (a position from which she once retired) when she's home in Beaufort. This partnership of nonprofit, public, and private agencies, organizations and community members promotes activities to create a comprehensive system of human services.

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Asked who inspires her, Lolita cited Hillary Clinton and local political figures Harriet Keyserling and Dot Gnann; she may not always have agreed with their positions, but she admires their perseverance. Above all, though, is Lolita's mother, Rusty Townsend, whose faith has carried her through many hard times. Because Rusty is in declining health, Lolita is spending a fair amount of time back in Rowland, sleeping in the same twin bed she occupied as a child. Lolita appreciates the opportunity to spend time with her mother, whether they're watching "The Young and The Restless"; reminiscing about the past; discussing current events; or planning for the future. Lolita's son, Charlie, is currently in New Orleans (but may soon move closer to Beaufort!); her brother, David, resides in Asheboro, NC; and her sister, Margaret T, makes her home in Georgetown, SC.

Lolita enjoys reading, kayaking, movie-watching, and spending time near or on the water (even when that involves a lot of time on I-95 en route to/from Murrells Inlet). Every Tuesday (from May til August) she joins a team at Hunting Island at 5 a.m. to look for baby turtles. Over the past six years she has seen many nests and babies, but no mother turtles -- yet. Still, Lolita continues this weekly vigil at an inconvenient hour that carries her entirely out of her comfort zone.

Lolita, your dedication to service – through your work with the Alliance, outreach within the church, or early morning turtle-watching at Hunting Island – is motivating. Thank you for making a real difference in the lives of those you serve and those you inspire to serve!