

Membership Endowment Presentation
Jean Garrett – New Hope Region

Epitaph: words carved on a tombstone or spoken about a person after one's death; what was accomplished in life.

As a high school English teacher, I have assigned students to write epitaphs—for Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius, for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, for Hamlet and his father, and for themselves. Some of these are interesting, to say the least, and hopefully maturity will prevent some of them ever being seen again. A few are insightful and some get to the crux of human life. The point is that we all want to earn a printable epitaph.

As a child, I was told a story of an old maid school teacher who had never married, never had children, and never strayed from the very rigid disciplines of the late 1950's standards of behavior. She was always "MISS Warren," but her tombstone was inscribed, at her direction, long before she died, with the dates of her birth and death and the inscription: "She MISSED nothing." There was shock, laughter, and more than a few raised eyebrows, and I got one of my early lessons in appearance and perspective.

As we grow older, and we all do, those thoughts on what we want to be remembered for become more frequent. According to another story, it is not your date of birth or death that is important, but how you lived the dash. What is in your dash? Discounting the fact that for over thirty years I have been Hunter and/or Sally's mother and am now known in Clarksville's three-year-old circles, as "Bella's Gran" and in McKenzie as Hayden's grandmother, perhaps my most long lasting achievement is as a Cumberland Presbyterian Woman.

As a Cumberland Presbyterian Woman, we can perpetuate ourselves, and others, by following the lead of Mrs. Eva Hughes, who, in 1924, proposed that \$30.00 (a princely sum in the day) be paid to the Board of Foreign Missions to become a Perpetual member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Missionary Society. By investing this payment, her "dues" were paid from the interest and she set a precedent for generations to come. The endowment program has grown dramatically since its inception. Today there is a category for every woman in your church to be recognized for her work as a Cumberland Presbyterian woman. All women, or men, may become Perpetual members with a thirty dollar contribution. Gaye Wood made my granddaughter a Perpetual member when she was a week old; that is an idea that should start all little girls on the right path. Women who have served 10 years, or more, in the Cumberland Presbyterian church may be honored with a Diamond Perpetual membership; a fifty dollar donation to the Board of Missions will add her name to the list of honorees. Anyone, male or female, may be honored with a Patron membership for a \$100.00 donation. In the 1990's, there were many active Cumberland Presbyterian women who had transferred from other denominations and who would probably not reach forty or fifty years of service, so the Silver Patron membership was established to honor women who have contributed to the cause of women's work in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church for 25 years. For \$125.00, this honorarium can be presented. And the final jewel in the endowment

crown is the Golden Patron membership bestowed upon a woman who has served for 50 years in her church's women's work. This 150 dollar contribution enables the work to continue long after all of us are gone. Through this combination of honoraria, the Cumberland Presbyterian Women's Endowment fund is currently at nearly one and a half million dollars. The significant interest from that corpus is used to fund many mission projects.

I am going to ask that if you have an endowment membership you stand when I call that name:

Golden Patron members

Silver Patron Members

Patron Members

Diamond Perpetual Members

Perpetual Members

Look around you. Many of us stood for multiple memberships; proving the female adage that "one is NEVER enough." These women have a portion of their epitaphs written. They are, and always will be, Cumberland Presbyterian Women. But there are many in our churches and even in our families who are not standing. Does your mother, sister, daughter, best friend, have an endowment membership? Does she have one for each category for which she is eligible? You might be surprised at what it would mean to her; and it is much longer lasting than a robe or a gift card. Last spring our Women's Ministry bestowed Perpetual memberships on three ladies in our church. One was a young mother who had come to this denomination from the Roman Catholic Church when she married several years ago. She is as active in her circle as she can be with three young children, a husband, a job, and several health issues. When I gave her the certificate, she literally beamed and exclaimed to her husband, "Look, I'm a REAL Cumberland Presbyterian Woman!" Thirty dollars was a small price to pay for that response.

Let us use this coming year to recognize the achievements of our sisters in faith who serve their churches well. The money you contribute is never spent; only the interest is used for projects. This is a gift that truly keeps on giving and ensures that future generations will also know that we were Cumberland Presbyterian Women.