

The Wilkesboro Chapel, one of the oldest in northwestern North Carolina, is the historic mother church of North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, and is celebrating the 175th anniversary of its charter. It provides an intimate and historic worship setting, warm fellowship, challenging study and preaching, and a valued Presbyterian presence on Wilkesboro's Main Street. Together, NWPC and the Wilkesboro Chapel contribute to the Reformed ministry opportunities available to the citizens of Wilkes County.

Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church was established in Wilkesboro on June 17, 1837. It was the first Presbyterian Church in Wilkes County and among the first in the western frontier counties. As was the custom with small churches at the time, the congregation met in private homes until a lot on which to erect a sanctuary was purchased from Joshua Pennell in 1849. The Greek Revival temple-form church building was constructed in the same year of red common-bond brick with four white stucco columns. The work was contracted to "old Dameron" for \$1,040. Dameron also built Wilkes County's St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which was constructed between 1848 and 1849. The church's bell is inscribed, "Molded in Philadelphia in 1849," but architectural historians date the belfry as being from the late 1800s. A large pulpit Bible was donated to the church by Ellen Tate Finley in 1851, and it is preserved by the congregation today.

The Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church originally maintained a separate sitting area for its African American members and attendees. The balcony gallery was supported by columns, similar to those gracing the front of the church building. There was a separate entrance to the balcony. The interior of the church, simply styled, includes plastered walls and a flush-board ceiling.

References: Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina (1999) Mrs. W. O. Absher, ed., The Heritage of Wilkes County (1982) Johnson J. Hayes, The Land of Wilkes (1962)