



First Presbyterian Church

# **BUILDING ON A FIRM FOUNDATION**

Capital Campaign

*To reach Chattanooga and the world for Christ*

*A Campaign Case Statement*



FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH of  
CHATTANOOGA

## OUR IDENTITY

### WHO ARE WE AS FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH?

We are a church of believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ who affirm the truth of God's word revealed in the Bible. God is in the process of transforming us into the image of His son to display His character and His gospel in the city of Chattanooga and the world. We live out our faith through an intentional pursuit of discipleship within our church membership, seeking to invite others into a saving relationship with Christ and strengthening peer churches in the same work.

## OUR VISION

### WHY ARE WE HERE?

At First Presbyterian we seek to be a healthy church exhibiting all the fullness of Christ as we disciple believers who develop spiritually, connect relationally, and engage missionally to reach Chattanooga and the world with the gospel.

## OUR FAITH

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

As a member congregation of the [Presbyterian Church in America \(PCA\)](#), First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga is a confessional church, fully committed to living out the rich theology, piety, and practice of the historic Christian faith recovered at the Protestant Reformation and best summarized in the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#) in today's context.

Our distinctives: We are *confessional*. We are *Reformed*. We are *evangelistic*, and we are *Kingdom-centered*. We believe in the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of the one, true God. We believe in the fall of mankind through original sin and the redemption and salvation offered through Jesus' work on the cross. We believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.

Further explanation of these core beliefs and doctrines is outlined on our website.

## **A HUMBLING HISTORY**

### *WHAT HAS THE LORD DONE IN 187 YEARS?*

In 1817, a group of missionaries from New England, desiring to evangelize the Cherokee Indians in the region now known as Chattanooga, founded the Brainerd Mission, adjacent to Chickamauga Creek. The mission served for over 20 years, and with the removal of Indians to Oklahoma during the infamous Trail of Tears in 1838, some Presbyterian missionaries stayed to found Chattanooga's first church - the Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga.

The little flock met in the community meeting house, a crude cabin at what is today Fifth and Lookout Streets until 1845, when the church was given property by the young town at Third and Walnut Streets on which to erect the community's first building meant specifically for worship. Outgrowing that building by 1854, the congregation built a new church at the northeastern corner of Market and Seventh Streets. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1863 many soldiers worshiped there. A special service was interrupted that August when cannon fire hit the church. The building was subsequently used as a hospital.

Six clergymen served short terms during the first 20 years. City native Thomas Hooke McCallie became pastor during the Civil War and through much of Reconstruction, stepping down after 11 years in 1873 with broken health.

In 1871 a number of former Northern residents who stayed in Chattanooga following the war decided to start their own church. Being the city's second Presbyterian congregation, they took the name Second Presbyterian. Only at that time did the Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga take the name First Presbyterian Church.

The city's first pipe organ was installed in the Market Street building after the worship center had been restored post-war. As the congregation grew and with Market and Seventh becoming a busy and noisy intersection, the church moved in 1884 to Seventh and Georgia in front of the county courthouse. The organ moved with it. That building was the first local church to employ upscale architectural appointments, leaving behind structures of simply four walls, a roof and a belfry. Several other church denominations followed in building structures on nearby streets.

Rev. Jonathan W. Bachman was named pastor in 1873. He served the church for over a half century and was pastor in three of the church's structures including the one still used in 2024 which is 114 years old. Dr. Bachman served the entire city in its ups and downs, through the Yellow Fever Epidemic and through the Spanish-American War and World War I. He was a leading influence in reuniting Northern and Southern soldiers. He was conferred the title City Chaplain for his valiant and lengthy pastorate.

In May of 1889 Dr. Joseph R. Wilson, father of future President Woodrow Wilson, served as stated clerk of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, which was hosted at First Presbyterian Church. Dr. Joseph Venable succeeded Dr. Bachman and within days officiated Dr. Bachman's funeral at the new Memorial Auditorium, the only place of assembly large enough to hold the adoring crowd. Dr.

Venable passed within four years, but in those four years he oversaw the razing of the Sunday school department and the building of two new classroom wings. In 1926 he also became the city's first radio minister. That live program continued for more than 90 years and is still available on a delayed basis.

Dr. James L. Fowle took the pulpit in 1929 and served more than 38 years. He was the founding president of the Chattanooga Bible Institute, and like Dr. Bachman, spearheaded the planting of a number of area Presbyterian churches. He was a noted fundraiser for many worthy civic, educational and Christian fund drives. He also was named City Chaplain.

A dynamic World Missions emphasis began in 1952. Hundreds of missionaries have been sponsored through the years. Lay people giving and going has been emphasized. A missions conference has been held annually for three quarters of a century.

Ben Haden was pastor for more than 31 years of amazing ministry locally and across the globe on his radio, television and internet ministry – Changed Lives. Under Ben's leadership FPC grew steadily from 1967 to 1999. The neighboring Medical Arts Building was purchased and connected to the original building between 1979 and 1981. The Student Center across McCallie Avenue was built in 1995. Dr. Michael Milton served as pastor for six years beginning in 2002. He was followed by Rev. Tim Tinsley's nine years, which began in 2010 when the 100th anniversary of the sanctuary was celebrated and a time capsule was buried near the original cornerstone at the corner of McCallie and Douglas Streets.

Dr. Gabriel Fluhrer was called as pastor in 2021. His ministry has been very well-received and productive. The church is growing strong and fast.

At 187 years old, First Presbyterian continues to be blessed by the Lord as the church honors His word, sends faithful missionaries, preaches Christ in spirit and in truth, prays, and loves people. It is a leading catalyst for Christ in Chattanooga.

## KINGDOM IMPACT

### WHAT HAS GOD ACCOMPLISHED?

God's blessing of ministry efforts over decades of service has yielded a humbling array of Gospel-focused impact on our church, the community, and the world. As this blessing continues, we aim to pursue the following three core objectives in ministry:

**Develop Spiritually/Discipleship/Worship – Matthew 22:37-38** *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.”* Worship and teaching at First Presbyterian reflect a deep regard for Scripture, consistent with our Creed – The Westminster Confession of Faith. We uphold “the Five Solas of the Reformation;” Sola Scriptura (According to Scripture alone), Solus Christus (In Christ alone), Sola Fide (Through Faith alone), Sola Gratia (By Grace alone), and Soli Deo Gloria (For God's glory alone). This consistent commitment to Reformed/Covenantal theology is more than a theological, academic exercise; it informs our approach to relational connection and missional engagement.

**Connect Relationally/Fellowship - John 13:34-35** *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* Our approach to Congregational Care is driven by this scripture; that we love one another the way that Jesus loved us, and that we love one another sacrificially. Are we perfect at this? No, far from it. Is this aspirational? Yes, it represents our goal, our hope, and our standard.

**Engage Missionally Matthew 28:19-20** *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”* We see the great commission as geographically universal. Our call to “go and make disciples” speaks to our neighbor across the street or across the world. World Missions provides opportunities to work for Kingdom impact internationally, and Local Missions provides opportunities closer to home. This approach leverages our different and unique giftings to be used more effectively for the Kingdom.

As our church has pursued these objectives, we have seen God work in the following ways.

#### Gospel Proclamation and Growth

At the core of First Presbyterian Church is our unwavering commitment to preaching the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Through expository preaching, the congregation consistently hears God's Word and is disciplined in its meaning and application in our families, careers, relationships, and city. As the Word has been preached for nearly 200 years, First Pres has grown from a small group to more than 700 worshipers on a Sunday morning across two services. By God's grace, our growing body of believers has consistently shared the message of Christ in our surrounding community and beyond.

## Vibrant Ministry

In addition to Sunday worship, First Pres faithfully serves its members and community through the following ministry avenues:

- *Adult Sunday School: Approximately 300 attend various Sunday School classes on a weekly basis*
- *Midweek Ministry: More than 115 regular attenders*
- *Women's Ministry: More than 200 women involved in various activities*
- *Men's Ministry: More than 100 men involved in various activities ranging from weekly Bible Studies to our monthly Men's Breakfast meeting, First Cup*
- *Youth and Children's Ministry: Our care for the youth and children of the church extends from the nursery through Senior High youth group and Sunday School classes. Additionally our summer vacation Bible School reaches our own children and those in the community around us, plus youth groups for Middle School & Senior High students, Bible studies, mission trips and retreats. On a combined basis we are ministering to more than 300 children and youth.*
- *College Ministry: Our college ministry seeks to minister to students of Chattanooga through the unique challenges of college, working in conjunction with RUF and other campus ministries.*
- *Rapha Fellowship: Rapha is a ministry that seeks to build relationships with our neighbors in need. With a dedicated team of classroom facilitators, prayer warriors, and lay mentors, Rapha is equipping the congregation to grow as a welcoming church home for our neighbors in need.*
- *Camp Vesper Point: Camp Vesper Point is a beautiful summer camp and retreat which serves as a summer home for campers and staff who love the outdoors and seek an authentic relationship with Christ.*

## Service

Serving the *local* community is a critical part of the mission of First Pres, and the following is a sampling of current partnerships that we facilitate to bring the love of Christ to those immediately around us:

- *Orchard Knob Elementary Outreach: First Pres volunteers staff the Good News Club and Kids Hope USA ministries serving as mentors and models for elementary age students.*
- *Prison Ministry at Walker State Prison: First Pres has been the catalyst in our community to raise and train several hundred mentors for prisoners incarcerated at Walker State Prison, the first and only "Faith and Character Based" prison in the state of Georgia.*
- *Salvation Army ministry: First Pres volunteers meet each Friday with approximately 30 individuals at the Salvation Army building on McCallie Avenue to share music, a devotion, and breakfast fellowship.*
- *Vision of Mercy: First Pres volunteers serve individuals who are displaced from their families, homes, and society while assisting them with everyday essential needs such as food, tents, blankets, raincoats, shelter, and medication.*
- *Isaiah House: Working in partnership with Chambliss Center for Children this ministry seeks to provide care and comfort for children who have been removed from a dangerous home environment and are awaiting foster care placement.*

Beyond our city, serving the *global* community for Christ through missions and mercy is vital to our identity as well, through:

- The World Missions Committee: *First Pres supports more than 50 International Missions Partners ranging from career missionaries to church planters to Bible translation projects. The Committee works to meet the spiritual and physical needs of these partners.*
- First Friends: *First Pres volunteers build relationships with international students on the campuses of UTC and Covenant College, bringing the gospel to many who've never heard the name of Jesus in their home countries.*
- International Relief and Development: *This sub-committee of World Missions focuses on immediate needs, often in crisis situations, of our mission partners, their congregations and communities worldwide.*
- Prayer: *God answers prayer, and this sub-committee, which meets weekly, prays for our mission partners and their communities.*

Finally, within our own church, we are called to serve our congregation faithfully and with the love of Christ. We do so through the following avenues:

- Diverse music ministry: *As a ministry of music, our goal is God: to delight in Him and help others do the same through the great hymns of the faith and the fresh doctrinally rich songs of our day.*
- Congregational Care team and programs: *From our visitation ministry to our Flower Ministry to the "It's a Wonderful Life" ministry we seek to meet people where they are and serve and love them well.*
- Beatitude Living: *A confidential Christian women's 12 step program. Needs addressed include perfectionism, codependency, addiction, and eating disorders.*
- Card-E-ology ministry: *This ministry develops free cards for members and friends to use to encourage others, with an emphasis on God's Word.*
- It's a Wonderful Life: *Serving senior adult members and friends of the church, meeting monthly for fellowship, a devotion, guest speakers, and lunch.*
- Stephen Ministry: *Stephen Ministers are vetted and trained members of the congregation who provide one-on-one confidential Christian care.*
- Widows/Widowers ministry: *First Pres volunteers plan and provide times of fellowship for our widowed members.*
- Dedicated infrastructure of small groups: *These discipleship groups meet in congregants' homes and other venues across the Chattanooga community. Focused first on relationships these groups determine how they will use the group to grow in biblical wisdom, application, and service.*

## OUR CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

### *WHAT ARE THE PAIN POINTS OF OUR FACILITIES AND MINISTRIES?*

In a time when many churches are declining, God has chosen to grow His church in Chattanooga. This growth has created capacity challenges and a painful awareness that the operating costs and maintenance of our aging facilities are taking funds that should be used for ministries.

The following represent particular points of challenge with regard to our church property.

#### **Aging Facilities**

Our sanctuary was built in 1910, the original education wing was razed and reconstructed in the early 1920s, the ten story Tower Building, constructed in 1928, was acquired in 1979, and “the connector” was built and integrated into the Tower between then and 1981. Our facilities are old and are complicated by age and design. The maintenance requirements and operating costs of older facilities (from HVAC, to windows, to roofing materials) are a multiple of newer buildings. The increased level of complexity has delayed many decisions around HVAC, electrical, plumbing and drainage which have now reached critical levels. Significant action and expense is required to address the many campus facility issues confronting the leadership of the church. These decisions can no longer be postponed but must be addressed. These decisions require wisdom, discernment, and patience from the leadership (Diaconate and Session) and the congregation. The core fact pattern of the decision involves both the upfront restoration costs and the ongoing maintenance and capital expense requirements (anticipated replacement costs, such as equipment, roofs, windows, etc.) as components begin to age, after their initial replacement. A goal of the leadership and the Capital Campaign has been to plan for the next 50 years, not just for the best answer for the short term.

#### **Ministry Impacts**

Current facility shortcomings are obstacles to achieving the full potential of the congregation’s ministries efforts. Due to the full backlog of deferred maintenance we spend far more on operating costs related to building support than should be expected for a campus of our size. Assuming we can rectify the maintenance shortcomings, the anticipated savings from artificially high operating expenses (water, heat, light, cooling, etc.) could be redirected toward ministry.

New facilities such as an expanded Fellowship Hall and kitchen would allow First Pres to host larger gatherings; those we sponsor or those with which we partner organizations such as Covenant College, CRU, YoungLife, RUF, etc. for expanded gospel teaching and ministry.



A more accessible and approachable sanctuary (better egress and ingress as well as a lower platform) would provide a more welcoming physical environment, encouraging greater attendance and engagement in worship.

Increasing the accessibility of the spaces fronting McCallie Avenue in an effort to encourage greater college student engagement could include a Coffee Shop/Cafe. This could be an important tool for student outreach for our college staff and volunteers. According to UTC administrators, the walkway in front of the church building is the most heavily trafficked walkway on the UTC campus. Thousands of students pass by the church every day with no interest in coming inside. A cafe, operated by gospel minded, professional cafe owners, could be a first step to making these students comfortable within the church. Some may find this controversial, but according to organizations such as Barna Group, the Pew Research Center, and Gallup “the church” is not automatically assumed to be a “safe space” amongst Millennials and members of Generation Z (born between mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s). However, a coffee shop is generally perceived to be a safe public space. We have a strategic location that can be used to connect, build relationships and trust, earning us the opportunity to share the life changing news of the gospel.

### **Accommodating Growth**

After years of stagnant growth, both in absolute numbers and levels of engagement, First Pres is growing again. Our sanctuary can no longer accommodate a single worship service of the entire congregation. Our two services are filling up and will soon outgrow our sanctuary space. Our Sunday School classes are growing as is Midweek attendance. This is not a “build it and they will come” strategy - they are already coming! Our proposal is focused on responsibly accommodating the growth we already have, while strategically encouraging more. Barna Group, a respected Christian research and polling group has done extensive studies on church growth. More than 40 years ago they concluded that when a church reaches attendance levels of 80% of capacity growth stagnates or ceases altogether. Updated research by Barna, other researchers, and church growth consultants has supported this conclusion. Our sanctuary worship services are regularly approaching or are at 80% of capacity and many events in the Fellowship Hall exceed this level.

We have not optimized all the space available to us throughout the campus, and even with the full utilization of existing space we must consider our primary meeting spaces to accommodate current growth and encourage more growth in an effort to expand the reach of the gospel.

## OUR PRIORITIES

### *HOW DO WE PLAN TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?*

In response to what God is doing, we desire to participate in His ongoing work by welcoming and caring for others and humbly growing together. Consequently, we recognize the need to invest sacrificially in a facility used as a tool to meet our growing needs and for the flourishing of future generations. We humbly invite our brothers and sisters in Christ to join us in this opportunity, all for God's glory and for our good.

In order to address the current serious needs that our facilities have, we plan to pursue renovation, enhancement, and construction work in several areas. The leadership of First Pres firmly understands the need to be methodical and fiscally responsible in this project. The following plan represents a holistic picture of work that will be pursued as funds are committed, and as it is feasible to do so with full confidence.

It is important to note that there will be a substantial amount of work done in this project on facilities components that are "behind the scenes." There is structural work, electrical work, and other such baseline maintenance and renovation that is required in order to ensure that we are building on a firm foundation for further work. Some of these fixes are quick, and some of them are more involved and more expensive. Currently, the operating and maintenance costs for our facility are extremely high, and addressing these issues now will save the church tens of thousands of dollars, if not hundreds of thousands, each year moving forward.

The particular projects within this initiative can be broken down into three categories:

1. Expansion to replace the tower building;
2. Remodeling and innovation of existing facilities; and
3. Property development

The projects within each of these categories are detailed on the following pages.



*New Connector*

## *1. EXPANSION THAT REPLACES THE TOWER BUILDING*

The construction costs are significant for any option that we might pursue. However, the ongoing operating costs over the next 25 years are such that the demolition of the Tower, along with the adjacent “Connector” which is partially supported by the Tower Building, was the obvious choice, both logistically and fiscally. Planned is a new two-story building that will be exponentially more efficient to operate and is designed around the ministries of the church. Within the addition will be a larger fellowship hall, a café, adult Sunday school rooms and other ministry support spaces.

### **Fellowship Hall**

The foundational goal to expand the size and functionality of the existing fellowship hall is based on the church’s mission to glorify the Triune God in spirit and truth, edify the church family and testify in love about the transforming power of the gospel. As we have grown out of the current fellowship hall, the new fellowship hall is expected to have a significant impact on growing the congregation and our ministries’ effectiveness by providing a venue for larger gatherings. The renovation will transform the lower level into a welcoming, flexible multi-purpose space to accommodate large worship services and smaller fellowship events while having adequate space for special seminars and receptions. The seating capacity will be 336 sitting around tables, and 530 in chairs for larger gatherings. The addition will also have a new kitchen with modern cooking facilities, an expanded storage room, a fixed platform, an audio-visual booth, large restrooms and direct handicap access from the rear parking deck.

### **Café**

Building relationships between our church family and our community is an important part of outreach ministry goals. The driving force behind creating a café is to foster lasting relationships with UTC students and others in the downtown community as we share the hope we have in Christ - all focused around a cup of coffee. Yes, our church members, young and old, would also be served by having this venue as an additional fellowship and teaching space while drawing in visitors to our church. The café would serve as a meeting place to enjoy food, coffee and fellowship while providing a venue to share Jesus with the lost. The Café is planned to have front door access to the McCallie foot traffic as well as an entrance facing the church’s rear parking lot. It would have the ability to be self-contained, but also able to open up to the church fellowship during normal church functions on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Light pastries, fruit, cookies, coffee and other beverages are imagined to be offered in a comfortable, informal setting.

## The Commons

The commons will be a large space that will become the new front entrance to the church, offering a welcoming statement to the community. It will foster fellowship between services in a relaxing atmosphere, serving as the “common” direct passage to the sanctuary, restrooms, and the café along with other areas of the church, all being handicap accessible.

For the young families, there will be a space with a “home-like” seating for mothers to comfort their crying children while watching the service. There will also be a “greeters’ station” to help visitors feel welcomed. The upstairs and the existing chapel will contain staff offices, classrooms/meeting rooms and a choir practice room, all having direct access from the Commons via stairs and elevator.



*New Chapel*



*New Café*

## 2. REMODELING AND INNOVATIONS TO THE EXISTING BUILDING

### **Sanctuary**

It has been over 30 years since we remodeled the current sanctuary to make limited cosmetic and restorative fixes to maintain and highlight the beautiful features of our historic sanctuary. Updating the sanctuary once again will improve the “worshipful environment” for our members, and will help make a positive impression with our first-time guests looking for a church home.

Some of the features of the renovation will include repairing and painting of walls, replacing the existing acoustical wall panels with an updated wall finish to enhance the acoustics, new flooring, and updating of the lighting and sound system, just to name a few of the planned improvements. New pews will also be installed creating a center-aisle to accommodate weddings. The maximum seating capacity of the sanctuary, including the balcony, will remain at 675.

### **Children’s Sunday school building**

Three levels of the children’s building will be completely remodeled incorporating secure access control points and larger room layouts. The nursery will be located near the sanctuary for ease of access for young families. All levels of the children’s classrooms will now have elevator access. The existing basement level will be designated for a new Parent’s Day Out program that will have direct access to a new exterior playground designed for children ages 2-4.

The existing Douglas Street entrance will be enhanced by expanding the width of the entry, incorporating a new protective roof element to aid with the drop-off of children in inclement weather.



*Douglas Street Entrance*

### 3. PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

#### Removal of the Tower Building

To make way for the new addition, the tower building and adjacent “connector” are required to be removed and the land prepared for other work on the property.

#### 2-way Entrance Drive

A new wide driveway connecting McCallie Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street to the back parking area will create an inviting parking entrance and exit for the property while allowing access for emergency vehicles. Included with this drive will be a sidewalk encouraging foot traffic of UTC students to our church campus.

#### 2-Level Parking Deck

A new parking deck is planned for 80 spaces, doubling the capacity of the current back parking lot. The new parking deck will allow for deliveries to the kitchen and offer direct access to the new fellowship hall and the current sanctuary levels.

#### Outdoor Patio

Along McCallie Avenue, a new patio area is envisioned for the front lawn encouraging fellowship in front of the café in pleasant weather. Adjacent to the patio will be entry steps and a handicap ramp allowing easy access to the café and Sanctuary.

The total estimated cost for the full initiative is \$34,500,000.



From Rear Parking Lot

## A PROACTIVE INITIATIVE

### HOW ARE WE GOING TO ACCOMPLISH THESE RENOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS?

In order to fund this initiative, First Presbyterian Church is moving forward with a special building campaign, entitled *Building on a Firm Foundation: To reach Chattanooga and the World for Christ*, with a goal of securing the funds necessary to complete the project.

These funds will be sought in the form of one-time commitments and multi-year pledges, and represent commitments over and above existing tithes and offerings.

The primary campaign will be carried out during the coming months and throughout 2025. During the current initial phase of the initiative, the Capital Campaign Committee, together with the lay leadership of the church, will be making personal commitments, and inviting others to join in inspirational giving.

Following this initial phase, a town hall and campaign launch will be held to announce the initiative more formally to the full congregation, after which all church members will be personally asked prayerfully to consider making campaign commitments during a church-wide phase.

## Join Us

### HOW MIGHT THE LORD USE YOU?

Paul teaches us much about partnership. From his letter to the Philippians:

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Paul understood that there was no support without partnership. He understood that any support was not a *donation* to a cause, but rather an *investment* in a mission, with the anticipation of a Kingdom return on that investment.

With this biblical concept of partnership in mind, we ask you to join us in this exciting church initiative in the following ways:

1. **Pray** for the life and work of First Presbyterian Church. Pray for our leaders, members, and those in our community, that they would engage with us and turn to Christ for hope and salvation.
2. Consider a **sacrificial investment** in the *Building on a Firm Foundation* campaign to help us achieve this goal, for the sake of the Gospel in our community and world.
3. As opportunities arise, help us **advocate** to others the importance of this mission and the capital campaign.