



FROM *Striving* to THRIVING

Congregational Life of First Pres

July 2020–June 2021

Transforming the

H E A R T
of the City



Rising to the Challenge

Congregational Life During 2020-2021

As we enter the fall season and a busy period of activities for First Pres, we also look back and give thanks to God for His faithfulness to us amidst an unprecedented 18 months.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant loss of life, adverse impacts on the economy, a national state of emergency, the disruption of our children's education, uncertainty for small businesses, mounting pressure on our healthcare system, and an untold sense of grief for families who lost loved ones or were unable to visit the most vulnerable. It was a difficult year. Yet despite the overwhelming challenges for our congregation, not only have we survived, but at times we have thrived.

Your persistent prayers, remarkable support, and patient encouragement have enabled our staff, Session, and Diaconate to face a multiplicity of challenges. When we canceled Sunday morning in-person worship in March 2020, our Session demonstrated thoughtful and prayerful leadership, which was insightful and deeply appreciated as we wrestled with major decisions that impacted all aspects of our congregational life. Last spring and in the months since then, our deacons and staff have displayed consistent care and concern for the most vulnerable among us.

In reopening the church for in-person worship in May of 2020, our staff consulted with other local congregations and medical professionals before putting in place a number of mechanisms to help safeguard the congregation in the midst of the pandemic. We were deeply grateful to you for your cooperation during that period and since.



REV. DR. RICHARD GIBBONS
Senior Pastor
rgibbons@firstpresgreenville.org



Comments from Facebook/YouTube:

"Thankful for all the wonderful sermons during this time."

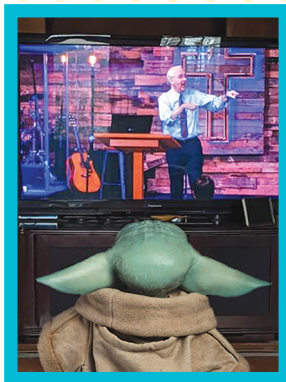
"Thank you for providing these beautiful services!"

"Love watching from Nassau in the Bahamas! You are a blessing."

"I love the streaming services because it allows me to listen over and over again!"

Despite the challenges, one of the surprising outcomes of COVID was the high number of individuals joining us locally, nationally, and internationally through our Sunday morning livestreamed services. During the height of the pandemic, online statistics revealed that people were joining us on Facebook from not only our neighboring states of North Carolina and Georgia, but also from the United Kingdom, Brazil, Pakistan, the Dominican Republic, Germany, India, Canada, Nigeria, Zambia, and Switzerland. On our YouTube channel, viewers joined us from South Africa, Thailand, Russia, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Korea for a total watch time of **12,824** hours. The only downside to having an international digital presence is that viewers in these countries are now convinced that pastors in South Carolina speak with a Scottish brogue. It certainly has been an interesting experience.

As you explore the pages ahead, you will find an enormous variety of ministry activities that could not have happened without your prayerful support. We are indebted to you for all that you have contributed in the last 18 months, and we look forward to an exciting year ahead as we continue to prayerfully transform the spiritual heart of our city.



So many unique "pets" watching our livestream last year.



25% Viewers from Outside U.S.



8,450 Volunteer Hours



Hearing From You

Dear FPC,

Though my mom and I are in North Carolina, God used your [online ministry] to bless us, that we could worship together remotely. I saw the joy and inspiration you gave my mom over the past "covid" year, and so thank you and praise the Lord!

I pray your family of believers be so blest, renewed, and strengthened that your burdens be light, and your gospel message shine bright.

May your message continue to reach the farthest shores and touch the hearts of the lost and lonely.

*Sincerely,
-MC*

Dear Church,

We praise God for FPC's powerful ministry through last year's lockdown.

Thank you for your "firm stand" on God's Word and inspiring message each Sabbath.

*Prayers and Blessings,
-PF and MF*



"Thank you so very much for your words for today and every Sunday through this time of isolation! Hope to be able to watch after I'm able to return to my own church."

"Hi America, from Coatbridge!"

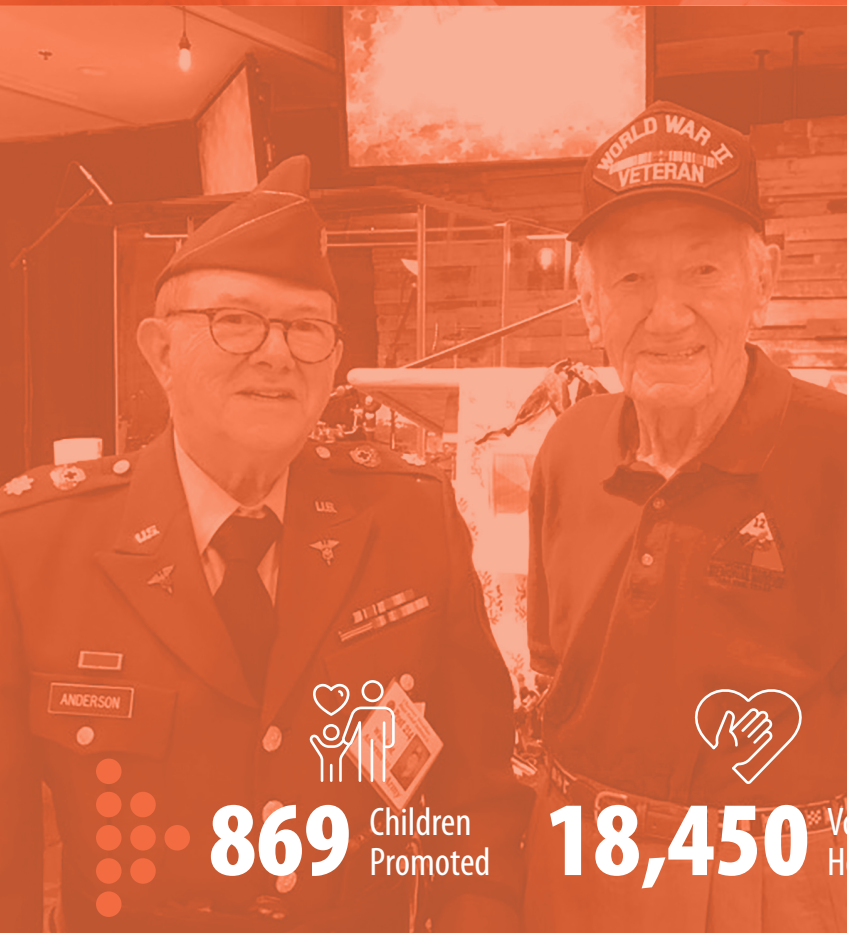
"We were honoured to join today's service from Scotland!"

"My family and I live in Indiana and found your services during our stay-at-home orders. We now watch it every Sunday!"



HOME

*Creating a secure spiritual home for
God's people where they can grow and be
nourished, supported, and encouraged.*



869 Children
Promoted



18,450 Volunteer
Hours



\$1,760.98 VBS
Collection



Children's Ministry

June 2020–July 2021



Video Lessons

When the pandemic hit, we did not know how long the church would be shut down. Realizing parents needed support and children needed consistency, our team and volunteers created weekly Sunday morning and Wednesday video lessons and emailed them to our families. Even after many people began attending in person, we have continued to send out a Sunday morning video teaching for those who are not yet able or comfortable returning. We made **54** videos to stay connected to the children and help them grow in their faith. While some videos are straight Bible teaching, others are simply silly. Check them out on FPC's Vimeo channel!



Virtual VBS 2020

In June of 2020, we held our first virtual Vacation Bible School. As families drove through the parking lot, Children's Ministry team and volunteers handed out VBS activity supplies, sprayed water, and aimed bubble machines at the children in their cars.

Parking Lot Popsicle Party

While the church was still closed down during the pandemic, everyone enjoyed a drive-through Popsicle Party. This simple activity allowed us to say hello to the children and their parents as they passed through the parking lot and picked out their favorite frozen treats.



Pen Pals for the Homebound

During the quarantine, over **100** cards were sent by children and adults to encourage FPC homebound members. Recipients responded with thank you cards, which then sparked a Pen Pal ministry that continues today.



Family on Mission 2020

Since Day Missions could not occur in 2020, we offered Family on Mission opportunities for the month of July. Families worked together to serve an FPC homebound member or person from our community. This was so popular that it extended into August. Many people received help with yardwork, repairs, errands, transportation to doctor appointments, and more. Three of our members rebuilt an old piece of playground equipment for a local ministry. An added bonus was that those providing the services had a chance to bond with those they were serving.



Promotion Sunday

Since we could not gather to celebrate Promotion Sunday in August of 2020, each First Pres child received a package in the mail. The gift boxes contained a congratulations card, candy, and confetti!



Care Packages

After a week of purchasing supplies and assembling bags, over **100** care packages were delivered to FPC homebound members. While they loved receiving the gifts, they especially appreciated the outdoor visit and being remembered during the isolation of the pandemic.



VBS 2021

In June of 2021, Vacation Bible School was again a traditional on-campus event, even in the midst of construction. In keeping with our Concrete & Cranes theme, over **170** children sang and learned how Jesus is our solid foundation—while wearing construction worker vests and hats!

Our VBS offering of **\$1,760.98** was donated to Joni and Friends' "Wheels for the World" program, which provides wheelchairs for disabled children and people around the world. The children were inspired to be extremely generous with their offering. We were hoping to raise enough money to buy **1** wheelchair; instead we were able to buy **7**!



Day Missions 2021

Day Missions also returned to full swing this year with **75** students and **25** volunteers heading out into the community each day to serve, love, pray with, assist, and encourage everyone they met. Groups delivered over **330** "Hero Blessing" gifts to First Responders and over **160** "necessity bags" to residents



in low-income housing. Students also did yardwork for the homebound and for some single parents, picked up trash in downtown Greenville, distributed bottles of cold water to passersby in local parks while offering prayers, and much more. God revealed Himself in a beautiful way through all who served, donated, and prayed.

Throughout year, the elementary children bring in dimes (and various other monies) to drop in a 2-liter bottle for the Compassion Connection ministry. This organization connects us with local ministries where our folks can serve each summer during Day Missions. We were able to give them an offering of **\$125** of mostly dimes to use as they serve Greenville year-round!

Operation Christmas Child

When the church held its annual Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child shoebox collection in November, over **200** boxes were collected and sent to impoverished areas around the globe. Through this ministry, recipients are also taught about the Greatest Gift of all: *Jesus!*

"We Love You" Signs

Just before Valentine's Day, we delivered yard signs and Valentine treats to all First Pres families with children and to those serving as Children's Ministry volunteers. Many families had not been to church in months. This event allowed us to visit with folks from "across the porch," and it was so good to see the children face-to-face.

Easter Angels

Normally, our Easter Angels event involves delivering homemade cookies and cards to the lobby of the Summit Apartments, across Washington Street from our church, and visiting with the **15** or so residents who come down to the lobby. Because of COVID restrictions, we were not allowed to visit this year. Instead, we provided wrapped treats and Easter cards for Summit staff to deliver to the door of every resident—over **100**!



First Pres Nursery School

Last year First Pres renamed its 30-year *Mother's Morning Out* program to *First Pres Nursery School*. When COVID hit in early 2020, FPNS closed from March through May, then opened for 4 weeks of 2020 summer camp to help meet families' needs. The 2020-2021 school year proceeded on schedule under COVID protocols, serving 65-70 families, followed by a 2021 summer camp that was packed out, serving over 150 families. God has truly blessed this ministry of loving and caring for kids and families!

Foster & Adoption Ministry

Orphan Sunday

Our annual Orphan Sunday event in November of 2020 featured a Moment for Missions report in all three worship services. We highlighted ways that every believer can "do something" to help take care of the orphans in today's world, and in doing so, shine the light of Christ. If you would like to get involved, contact Tina Jones at tjones@firstpresgreenville.org.

Thanksgiving Grace

FPC hosted a Thanksgiving meal for families working toward reunification with their children who had previously been placed in foster care. This meal is known as "Thanksgiving Grace," and that's exactly what was extended to these families: grace and respect. Their delicious meal was served on china and presented with friendly smiles. The children enjoyed the special time visiting with their families, too. We plan to make this an annual event.

Suitcases and Duffle Bags

Another part of our Foster & Adoption Ministry is the collection of new and gently used suitcases and duffle bags for children in foster care. These donations enable children to place their belongings in a suitcase rather than in a plastic bag as they are being removed from their homes and relocated to foster homes. This simple item can give a sense of dignity and worth to a child who is going through a traumatic experience and feeling as if they have no worth.

Sadly, this is an on-going need. Since we began this ministry, FPC has donated over 30 suitcases for Upstate children.

Sweet Treats

In October of 2020, we delivered Krispy Kreme doughnuts to 18 First Pres families who were fostering children or who had recently adopted. This was a "sweet" way to touch these families' lives.

Blood Drives

Our church partnered with The Blood Connection to host 3 blood drives over the last year during the critical shortage in The Blood Connection's blood supply. Many people gave back their donor gift cards for us to use in the Foster Ministry! Talk about a double blessing!



I have been fortunate to be a part of the Children's Ministry for over 27 years, starting with the nursery when my daughter was a baby. As she grew older, I began teaching first and second grade and have been there ever since. I love the children's curiosity

and enthusiasm as they ask questions to understand the stories in the Bible. It is a privilege to talk with them about how God has a plan for their lives and just how special they are because of God's love for them.

I am so grateful for the chance to be a part of something this important. Tina, Evelyn, and Karen make teaching a pleasure because of the work they put into planning the Sunday lessons' content. And as I study the lessons to teach, I realize how much I learn and reinforce my own understanding of God's word and plan.

This year I was also able to be a part of Vacation Bible School and lead the Bible Study for grades 2, 3, and 4. What a great experience that was, and I look forward to next year.

I would urge others to get involved with the Children's Ministry. Give yourself the chance to see firsthand how much you have to offer and how much you will gain!

—Beverly Bell

Caring for Covenant Partners and the Greenville Community

COVID-19 coming onto the scene did not mean that cancer went away, people didn't grieve deaths, divorce didn't affect families, people no longer served in the military, elderly didn't need visits, or people didn't have financial needs. In fact, COVID-19 made all of the critical needs even more critical. Congregational Care was there to share the hope of Jesus Christ, minister with love to those in need, and bring a little joy back into their lives.

A smiling man with short brown hair, wearing a blue vest over a light-colored shirt, is holding a large white lily flower. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting with greenery.



Our **29** Deacons served in the **Hospital Ministry**, making contacts each weekend to our Covenant Partners who were in the hospital. Over the course of the year they made **306** phone calls to get updates and pray with those who were hospitalized.

We have **49** PVMs in our **Pastoral Visitation Ministry**. This past year the PVMs teamed up with the FPC Deacons and the Congregational Care staff to deliver **114** goody bags to our homebound for Christmas and then again for a summer surprise!

Our **Healing Prayer Ministry** team of **20** hosted the Tuesday Night Healing and Prayer Services. Over **800** attended over the course of the past year, even with more than half of the services canceled due to COVID-19. The Healing Prayer Team also hosted the Service of Remembrance in December 2020 for those who had lost a loved one over the last two years; **125** attended. They sponsored the National Day of Prayer in May of 2021, with **200** attending in person and **700** livestreaming. The Healing Prayer Team held **32** private prayer appointments throughout the year.

Prayer Card Ministry

The **Prayer Card Ministry** had **48** Prayer Warriors who prayed for each Covenant Partner for a week, progressing through the church directory alphabetically. **3,456** Prayer Cards were mailed this past year.



Prayer Room Ministry

The **Prayer Room Ministry** had **16** Prayer Warriors who prayed for all the requests that came in to First Pres via prayer cards, emails, and the website. This past year they prayed for **1,367** prayer requests, as well as for our FPC staff, missions, and ministries.



Prayer Shawl Ministry

Our **Prayer Shawl Ministry**, made up of **27** volunteers, knitted and crocheted **126** beautiful prayer shawls that were given to homebound, cancer patients, and other hospital patients. They made **150** brightly colored prayer cloths for those attending the prayer services. They also made **100** washcloths and gifted them to a women's shelter.



Touchpoint Ministry

The FPC Deacons developed a new ministry this year called **Touchpoint Ministry**. Each quarter, Deacons made phone calls to those 75 years and older to form relationships, stay up-to-date with needs, and share information about events at First Presbyterian. They made **235** calls each quarter and formed many new relationships.



Support Groups Ministry

Our **Divorce Care Support Group** facilitated a group of **6** and our **Grief Share Support Group** facilitated **2** groups of **6**. These support groups offer support and encouragement to those grieving the death of a loved one and to those going through separation or divorce.

Light & Life Ministry

Our **Light & Life Ministry** sponsored **13** showings of the one-act-play, *Viable*, across the United States, with over **970** people attending. They also sponsored the Benjamin Watson film, *Divided Hearts*, here at First Pres and invited multiple pro-life groups to share their materials with the **80** attendees.



Countless Blessings Received

Music Ministry

The primary goal of the Music Ministry is to glorify God and to enjoy His presence. We want to serve Christ and His body, the church, by presenting and making available music for His praise in the most excellent way possible. We want to give musicians a place to offer their musical gifts and a place for congregants to encounter the living God. Through music, we want you to encounter God (UP), through experiences to serve and get to know the body of Christ here at FPC (IN), and through taking Christ into our community (OUT).

UP—Encountering God

Throughout the past year, as the pandemic has presented many challenges for worshipers to meet and to raise up voices and play instruments for God's glory, we have maintained high-quality worship. Our Music Ministry membership has grown by at least **10%** as livestream worshipers have joined us in person to sing in the choir. In fact, we have **2** choir members who drive from other



states to join us in the choir loft as often as possible. We glorify the living God and His Son by providing worship music in Christ-centered traditional and modern worship settings. Encountering the living God—the UP—serves as our source of energy to want to share Christ with other church members and the world. Over **1150** verses in the Bible reference a word related to music. Through all styles of music presented in the most excellent way possible for God's glory, you can have an encounter with the living God, glorifying Him through music that is your “heart language,” the music of your worship culture.

IN—Our church family

Music groups, both vocal and instrumental, provide you a way to “plug into” the church family. Modern worship has vocal groups and praise bands, and traditional worship has choir and orchestra for church members in every age group—from four years old to senior adults. Our regular rehearsals began in mid-September. Please check the website, as well as information around the church, for specific groups and rehearsal times. Everyone is welcome to be an active part of a music group here at First Pres!

OUT—Our community

Empowered by encounters with the living God (UP) and joining with your brothers and sisters in Christ (IN), we want to “live” music in our community. The Greenville Symphony has been using our facilities, and we have been partnering with local universities. With the opening of our new Worship & Arts Center, a state-of-the-art performance venue will be available for local schools and other organizations. A celebration of the



 **4-10** Rehearsal hours per week

 **15-16** Events needing music per month

 **155** Music members

Hearing From You

You provide the best church music I have ever heard during my 78 years. The choir and instrumentalists are a gift and a blessing to me every Sunday. I watch on YouTube, and I listen to your music several times throughout the week. I especially enjoyed the patriotic music on June 27 and July 4! Your church has very gifted, talented, and dedicated musicians. Even during the pandemic when you had only a few musicians, the music was always great. Thank you for your dedication and hard work and the wonderful music I look forward to every Sunday.
—EWS

Upon moving here from Florida, we attended worship at First Pres one Sunday. We were totally blown away spiritually. The seamless integration of the music with the prayers and message left us completely enraptured.

In our experience, at most churches with great music programs, it seems that the music is a performance to be enjoyed by the congregation. At First Pres, however, as was stated to me by the Director, "The Congregation, Choir, and Orchestra are together performing for the audience of God!" Truly, the music at First Pres is an important part of the worship of the Lord.

—JB

Comments from Facebook and YouTube:

"The sermon was wonderful. Also, please thank the pianists. I could have listened to them all day. Beautiful!"

"Music was wonderful today, as always. I especially enjoyed the postlude."

"Your music program is magnificent!"

"Wonderful and moving music! Thank you so much, choir and musicians!"

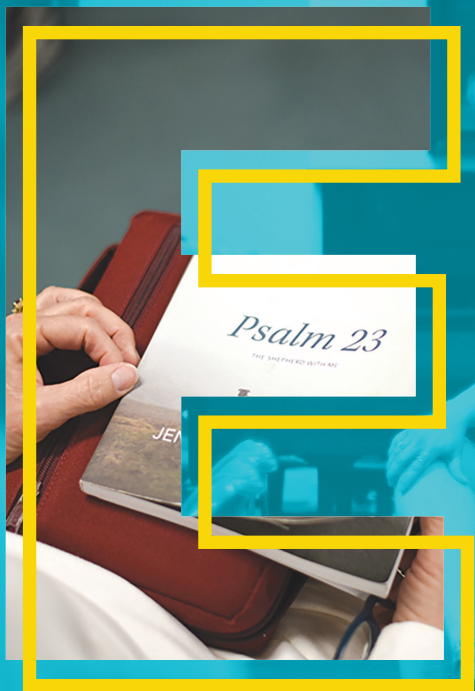


400th Anniversary of Thanksgiving (November 21), Christmas@First (December 10-11), The Greenville Community Sings *Messiah* (March 27, 2022), and other events will be available to our community. Also, our Director of Instrumental Music is looking forward to establishing an instrumental school to "grow" our orchestra members, as well as opportunities for pianists to learn to accompany hymns.

Although Christmas@First 2020 was canceled due to COVID concerns, we presented a Christmas gift to the community with an online video featuring three Christmas selections by a piano quartet, two Christmas solos, and other featured singers.



 **\$143,000** Donated for piano in new worship center



EQUIP

Discipleship Ministry

- FPC launched a new marriage enrichment small group Bible study called *Relengage*. To date, **93** couples have participated.
- Our Young Adults Sunday Life Group has grown significantly.
- FPC's Men's Ministry partnered with the Greenville Rescue Mission's *Jobs for Life Ministry*.
- FPC hosted graduation desserts for *Renewal* and *Overcomers* addiction recovery programs at Miracle Hill Ministries.



16 Baptisms in 2021



104 New members of all ages



93 Couples in marriage enrichment study

Hearing From New Members

I am so glad to share some of our thoughts surrounding First Pres and why we're so thankful to call it our church home. We recently moved back to the Upstate from Lexington, SC, in an effort to be closer to family as we have our first little one on the way, due to arrive mid-September.

When we decided that a move back to Greenville was our next step, we were both thrilled that our little girl would get to grow up in the church where we were married and that we had always felt was our "church home," even from two hours away.

It's hard to describe to others, but First Pres does such a wonderful job of making a very sizable congregation feel intimate and personal. Andrew and I both felt it from the first time we visited in 2015. We love the church's investment in our local community and that our pastoral staff are so knowledgeable and well-versed in God's Word, yet down-to-earth and approachable. We both feel so thankful that God placed this church along our path and that even while living halfway across the state, relationships like ours with Claire have continued to grow. We cannot wait to raise our family in the church and to watch as God continues to use First Pres and its members to positively impact Greenville.

*Sincerely,
Storey*



Equipping our members to serve, engage, reach, and influence our community, our nation, and the world with the life-transforming gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, the COVID restrictions have placed limits upon our activities and ability to participate fully in the activities at First Pres, especially in view of Susan's compromised autoimmune system. However, we have enjoyed and felt welcomed into the life and worship at First Pres. The streaming of the worship and Zooming have allowed us to keep in touch. The Wednesday Luncheon/Bible Study and our Sunday Life Group, The Flock, have all made us feel welcomed and a part of First Pres.

We hold in awe the wonderful congregation at First Pres as they work to advance the Church's Mission throughout the community.

*Yours in Christ,
Jim Black*

My husband Taylor and I love being a part of the First Presbyterian of Greenville church family. Taylor mentioned to me a few weeks ago that it feels so good to be connected in the church and not just another body in the pew. There is nothing quite like being in community and being a part of the body of Christ—the Church. It's very special.

Taylor has loved being a part of Journeymen, led by Lee Powell and Terry Bruner. I have loved being a part of Radiance groups led by Holly Thomason, Laurie Thomas, and now Paula Angermeier and Barbara Knight.

We are so grateful for Mrs. Claire, Shelton Sanford, Mrs. Margaret and Mr. Lee Dixon, and countless others for loving us and making us feel at home at First Pres. We are so blessed to call First Pres family.

Molly and Taylor Goodwin

As you may remember, my husband and I are new members at the church. I cannot tell you what a true blessing it has been to be a part of a Bible-believing church with pastors, teachers, and a congregation that truly seek the Lord.

*In Christ,
Sandy Gravlee*

The Lord has carried me through my health challenges this past year. He has blessed me with a loving and faithful spouse. First Pres has welcomed us, from Claire and her New Member Weekend to the wonderfully supportive Flock class. They have held me in their prayers, and for this I'm forever grateful.

Susan Black



Missional Discipleship Ministry

Summer Student-led Missional Ministry

For the last several years, our Senior High students have traveled to the bateyes and barrios around the city of La Romana in the Dominican Republic to engage in cross-cultural missions work with our various partners there, including the Good Samaritan Hospital and Eastern Dominican Christian Ministries. This year, because of COVID, our students had to find a domestic ministry partner that might offer them a similar opportunity for significant impact and learning. But where could they go and what would they do?

On July 24, after a few phone calls and training sessions, **14** of our students who had just graduated from high school a few weeks earlier, set off with our Student Ministries staff to Richmond, VA, to partner with the Christian Arabic Church (CAC)—a sister ECO congregation made up of Arabic-speaking followers of Jesus led by Rev. Fakhri Yacoub, a pastor originally ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Egypt. Over the last few years, CAC has helped over **500** immigrant families with practical needs like food, clothing, and job placement. Our students went there to help lead a week-long sports, music, and visual arts camp for immigrant children from the Middle East. What they found was a vibrant group of energetic believers who are singularly dedicated to reaching those who need their help the most.

Meagan Holmes, one of our recent high school graduates, was astounded to experience the worship of Jesus in such a different language: “Other than words like ‘amen,’ and ‘hallelujah,’” she said, “Arabic is a difficult language to understand. It was incredible to know that these Christians were praising the same God that I know. I learned firsthand that God is above all languages and cultures.”

Maria Jones noted, “Most of the kids at CAC had been in the States for several years, so their English was very good, but even the children who did not know English well still wanted to connect with us.” She added how

delicious the Middle Eastern food was, prepared by ladies of the church for lunch and dinner each day.

Many of our young leaders from FPC remarked how much the Egyptian kids liked to learn about basketball, but they *loved* to play dodge ball and soccer. Mateo Jones commented that he knew he would be walking into a unique culture, but he was surprised at how much fun he had. He made another discovery as well: “I didn’t think I was very good at working with kids, but I found out I’m not too bad at it after all once I put my mind to it.”

Others mentioned the Egyptian prayer room in the church where they held their nightly worship time. Instead of sitting on chairs, they reclined on the floor. Worship music is very faced-paced and expressive, with clapping and movement throughout most songs. Eliza Anderson said, “I felt like I was a part of the global Church while I was there. We were from all over the world, but we were all there to worship the same God.”

It is vitally important for all of our young people to experience the dynamism and vibrancy of the Church from around the world. It is brimming with different cultures and ways to view the world that are quite diverse from our own. But God designed the gospel in such a way that it can be “contextualized” into all the cultures of the world. From the birth of the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2) until now, the Good News about Jesus has continued to be translated beautifully into all the different languages around our planet.

Surely it must please God to hear His praise in such varied and dynamic ways. Indeed, the Book of Revelation gives us this exact picture:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10).

As our world eventually begins to move beyond the COVID pandemic, please begin to consider again how you and our young people can be a part of some of the cross-cultural mission experiences we are starting to plan for the future. We have good friends and trusted partners among Iranians in Liverpool, Egyptians in Cairo, and Dominicans in La Romana who are eager for us to hear their stories and to share fellowship with them. Come travel with us and experience a taste of heaven now!



Ministry at Hollis Academy

Number of students served at Hollis: approximately **600**

Number of weekend food backpacks packed for Hollis during the last year: 111 x 34 weeks = **3,774** bags of food

Number of gifts received for the Hollis Christmas store: more than **800** toys, **150** toy-filled stockings from Radiance women, and a devotional book for each of the **75** families represented

Number of gifts for back-to-school drive: over **400** items for the recess bags (footballs, basketballs, kick balls, soccer balls, chalk, jump ropes, and board games)



Yellow Bag Project

4,672 = the number of pounds of clothing and accessories donated during our Miracle Hill Ministries Yellow Bag donation event! Your generosity bears witness as a tangible step in "Transforming the Heart of the City", as all proceeds

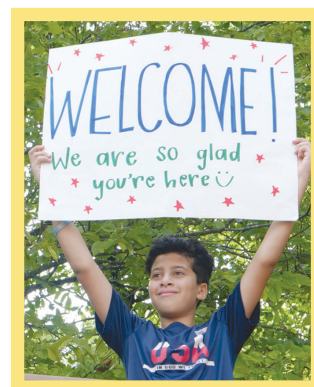
from the sale of these items will directly minister to the homeless and addicted in the Greenville area, as well as children in foster care and their families and foster parents.



Missions Committee

During the past year, our Missions Committee

- Provided for emergency food distribution during COVID to the barrios and bateys of the Dominican Republic
- Prefunded the FPC Youth construction of batey homes around La Romana, DR
- Supported student scholarships during COVID at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt
- Gave a special gift for the Ain Shams Presbyterian Church Planting Project in El Zohor, Cairo
- Gave a special gift to support the Ain Shams pastor for Ph.D. research on Christian Marriage in Egypt
- Donated a special gift for the Christian Arabic Church (ECO), Richmond, VA, for Youth worship space construction
- Provided support for Pars Theological Centre in London
- Funded a special gift for student scholarships at Pars Theological Centre
- Gave a special gift for Campus Crusade Translation into Farsi of Women's Leadership Curriculum
- Started support for the Mill River Community Church ECO Church Plant in Fort Mill, SC
- Provided a special gift for ECO Leadership Development



600 Students supported in the Hollis ministry



3,774 Weekend food bags packed for children at Hollis



4,672 Pounds of clothing donated during Yellow Bag Project

Youth & Young Adult Ministries

Student Ministry

James 1:2-4 says this: *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* As we have recently studied this passage, God has shed light on how much He has grown Roots through the midst of trials over the last 12 months. There have been many highlights, but two particular ones came about as a result of COVID that we'd love to share with you.

In May, we hosted our first ever in-house retreat called *Summit*. We rearranged Fellowship Hall and had a weekend full of teaching, worship, and fun. It had been over a year since we had a large event, so it was a welcome change back to "normal."

In July, we took a group of 14 recently graduated seniors to Richmond, VA, to partner with the Christian Arabic Church (an ECO sister church). This group helped put on a sports, music, and arts camp for 40 Christian Arabic Church youth. God worked in incredible ways, and relationships were formed that will hopefully last for years to come! Their pastor, Fakhri Yacoub, preached at First Pres at the end of August.

This summer we also had the awesome opportunity to serve alongside Greater Mount Calvary Church and North Hills Baptist Church in a literacy program for children in the surrounding area. Each morning, 9:00–11:00am, volunteers led the students through Bible studies and helped them grow their reading skills. For three special weeks, the First Pres Youth and Children's staff and interns organized favorite field day games to let the kids run wild from 11:00 to noon. We had a blast helping out and getting to know the students, most of whom go to Hollis Academy. Our prayer is that the dream of "Transforming the Heart of the City" would be fulfilled through getting outside the four walls of the church and into the community that surrounds us.

All in all, through ups and downs, God has shown His faithfulness to His people. Although things have not looked the same this year, God has used this time to take us to places we would have never gone before. We cherish your prayers as we continue to seek Him in transforming the heart of our middle and high schools!



Junior & Senior
High

30

Junior High
students
each week

40-50

Senior High
students
each week

93

Students
attended Summit
Weekend

Hearing From You

I got COVID in December, then developed post-COVID syndrome. I basically did not go to school for the whole second semester. I had decided to not be angry with the situation and instead look towards God to see what he was trying to teach me. Through this I learned to give control to God instead of trying to fix things on my own. I have also learned that God's peace can give you a sense of calm and joy even when you're going through a tough situation and how amazing, powerful, and comforting God's love is.

—GT



Young Adult Ministry



25

Average attending Sunday morning life group



12

College students attending The Table



68

Signed up for Re|engage Marriage Bible study



5

Meal trains set up for families who have given birth



APPRECIATION

Thanking God for blessing the lives of others through the mission of First Pres

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Thank you for your help with my Duke Power bill. This was a huge help after being out of work due to heart surgery.

*God Bless You,
—BW*

I wanted to let you know that through the Safe Harbor Rapid Rehousing, I have found Housing! I move in to my place on Tuesday or Wednesday. Thank you also for the Miracle Hill Furniture Vouchers, as I am in need of everything. I hope you are doing well. Thank you for everything you are trying to do for us!

—JR

GRACE BEREAVEMENT MINISTRY

Thank you so much for the ham biscuits and cookies the day of our services for Phil. My family and friends enjoyed every morsel. Also thank you for your love and prayers!

*Sincerely,
—TC*

Thank you for working with me to plan the memorial service for my mother. It was so hard to say good-bye to her from a distance last spring. Not being able to gather with family and friends made that time more difficult. So this time together in the church Mama loved so much will be healing for all of us. Thank you!

*Sincerely,
—SK*

MILITARY MINISTRY

Robert Browning sent me a Bible, a dog tag, a devotional, and some materials on the history of our country through your Military Ministry. I just wanted to let you all know how grateful I am for the ministry, what they have done for me, and what they are doing for others. It meant so much to me, and I love carrying my new Bible to church with me on Sundays. Again, thank you so much.

*Respectfully,
—GB*

PASTORAL VISITATION MINISTRY

Thank you so much for the delivery of the casserole during my stay as a result of my fall. I do appreciate your love and concern, as well as the prompt work and delivery by Phyllis. May you continue to work in so many special ways at First Pres. I love my church!

*Fondly,
—RM*

From Care Receivers

"It's like a ray of sunshine when Steve and Laura come in."

"My PVM visits really lift my spirits and it's a tremendous improvement in your life when you can have a connection to your church!"

From a Care Giver

"Reaching out to other people is a way to give back what Jesus has put into our hearts. My mother was visited by a PVM, and it was such a blessing to her. It made me want to get involved and give back. I just love it and want others to experience the beauty in it and the blessings they can have from it!"

TION



HEALING PRAYER

Dear Members of the Prayer Ministry,

Thank you for praying for me and for your service to the church.

*With Christian love,
—DR*

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Many thanks to ALL who were involved in the National Day of Prayer Service, which you held on Thursday, May 6, 2021! Your service was extremely powerful, and the songs gave me chills and tears. Just beautiful and outstanding! I appreciate the gifts you gave me—your time, yourself, your willingness, etc. These gifts money can't buy! Many thanks for making my National Day of Prayer extra special. May God bless each of you in abundance with Himself as you continue to minister to His kids of all ages!

*In Christ,
—LW*

PRAYER CARDS

Thank you for praying for us this week! Ruthie and I are praying for our Prayer Ministry. Thanks be to God for each of you.

*In His name, and love,
—B & RC*

Thank you so, so much for this ministry. I love getting these cards and knowing that it is our week for prayer. It is such a blessed week!

—MG

FLOWER MINISTRY

How thoughtful you were to deliver the beautiful Easter lily to me in memory of my sister Eleanor. We miss her every day, but rejoice that she is in the presence of our Lord and Savior, whom she loved. We will plant the lily in our garden and think of your kindness as we enjoy its blooms. The meaning of the Easter lily will give comfort to us. Thank you for your gift and this special ministry.

*Warmly,
—AA*

TOUCHPOINT MINISTRY

Your committee is so supportive of the older members, and we really appreciate all you do! All the gifts are useful, and I especially love the Word Find!

*I love you,
—JB*

I am continuing to use and enjoy the generous items you sent to me via Jane Sykes when our FPC members here at Foothills met for our monthly meeting. How exciting it was to discover the current issue of Our Daily Bread devotions, delicious snacks, activity book, needed personal items, book mark, knitted pocket prayer square, etc. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

*You're truly a blessing,
—DL*

Thank you so much for remembering me with the goody bag with so many useful gifts. I enjoy reading Our Daily Bread, and working puzzles is my favorite pastime. I really do miss attending church, and having our church on TV is a blessing to us who can't attend. Please keep me in your prayers. I will keep you in mine. Thanks again!

*Love,
—JB*



RESOURCES

Supporting our vision with the necessary resources by giving, building, leading, and communicating in order to accomplish the mission God has given us.



First Presbyterian Academy



Welcome

We welcomed Jessica Brooks as the new Director of our Downtown campus.



Over the years, she has taught several preschool and elementary grades at both Academy campuses. At First Presbyterian Church, where she and her family are members, she has helped direct Day Missions, taught preschool Sunday School, and served as Children's Ministry Team Leader during Sunday School and Wednesday evenings—evidence that her heart is in service for the Lord at First Pres and the Academy.

The Downtown Campus is eagerly looking forward to relocating to the church's new children's wing in October.

Please Pray with Us

As an exciting new year progresses, please join us in on-going prayer for the following:

- Health and safety of our faculty, staff, administration, students, and their families
- Faculty, Staff, and Administration
- Wisdom for all as we navigate another year in the midst of the pandemic



530

Students served at our Downtown and Garlington Road Campuses



68th

Year of operation at Downtown campus



Budget

Fiscal year 07/01/20–6/30/21

The FPC Pastors, Staff, and Officers thank you for your investment in God's Kingdom through your gifts to the Operating Budget and the Capital Campaign this past year. It is so encouraging that you continue to invest in God's Kingdom. Your tithes and offerings allow us to provide our many ministry activities and support numerous local, national, and international missions.

Operating Budget Results

Tithes & Offerings	\$6,025,698
Expenses	\$5,658,504
Tithes & Offerings excess over Expenses	\$367,194

Capital Campaign Results

Campaign Gifts received to-date	\$14,280,953
Pledges + Unpledged Gifts	\$18,582,519
Gifts received for the 2020-2021 fiscal year	\$4,722,266

Total 2020-2021 Gifts

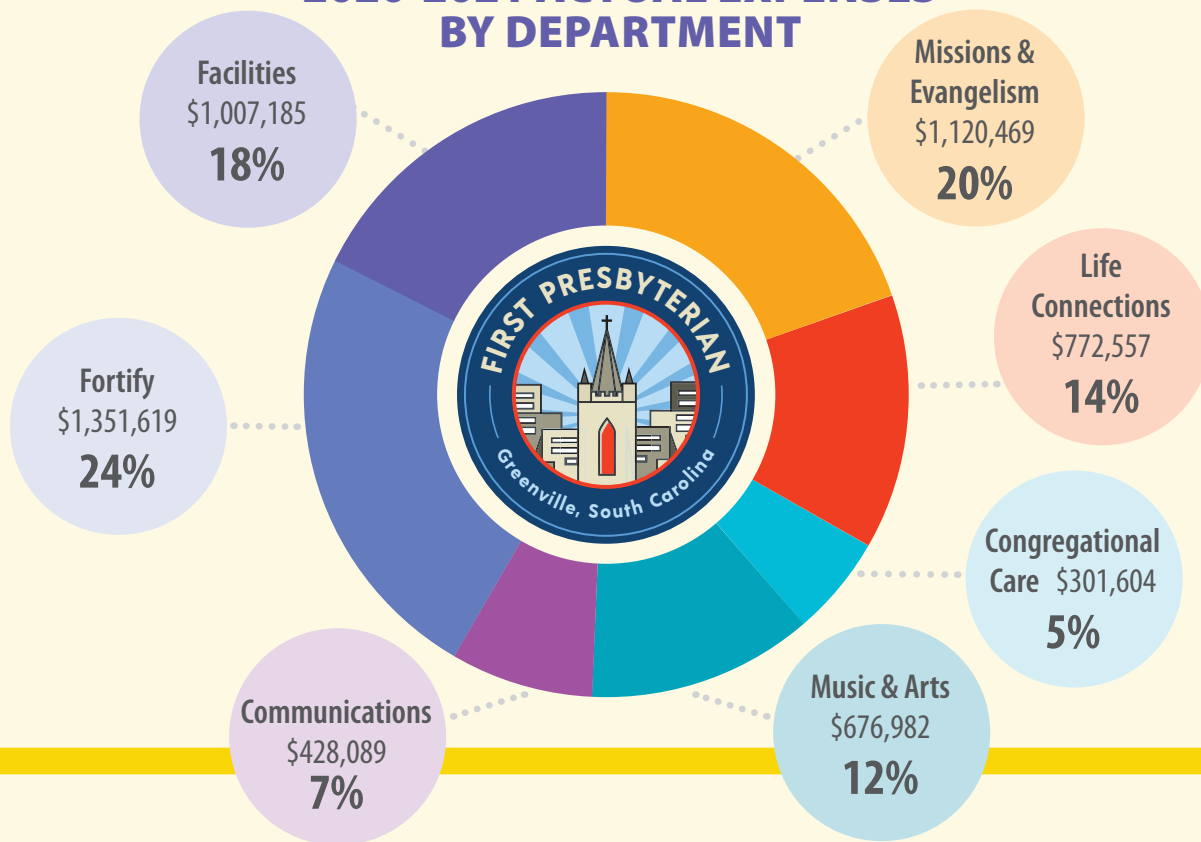
Operating Budget + Capital Campaign	\$10,747,964
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With our Tithes & Offerings and Expenses both under budget, we are pleased with the results of 2020-2021, especially as we were dealing with the impact of COVID on worship and church activities.

Because we currently have about **\$4,000,000** in cash in the Capital Campaign account, we have not yet made a draw on our construction loan. Although it was projected that we would begin drawing on the loan by September of 2020, your faithful giving has enabled us fund the construction progress well beyond the anticipated timeframe, thus saving significant interest expense. Thank you!



2020-2021 ACTUAL EXPENSES BY DEPARTMENT



Fiscal year 07/01/21–6/30/22

COVID remains a concern in our lives and in our world, but more and more church activities are resuming, which necessarily impacts the expense side of our budget. In view of this, we encourage you to remain faithful in your giving to the Operating Budget. Your tithes and offerings are critical to maintaining our ministry activities and mission support.

Regarding the Capital Campaign, your pledges and giving have far exceeded what our consultants told us to expect. Now that we are in the last year of the first campaign phase, it is critical to keep the momentum rolling. Deepest thanks to those who have given—what you have done is amazing!

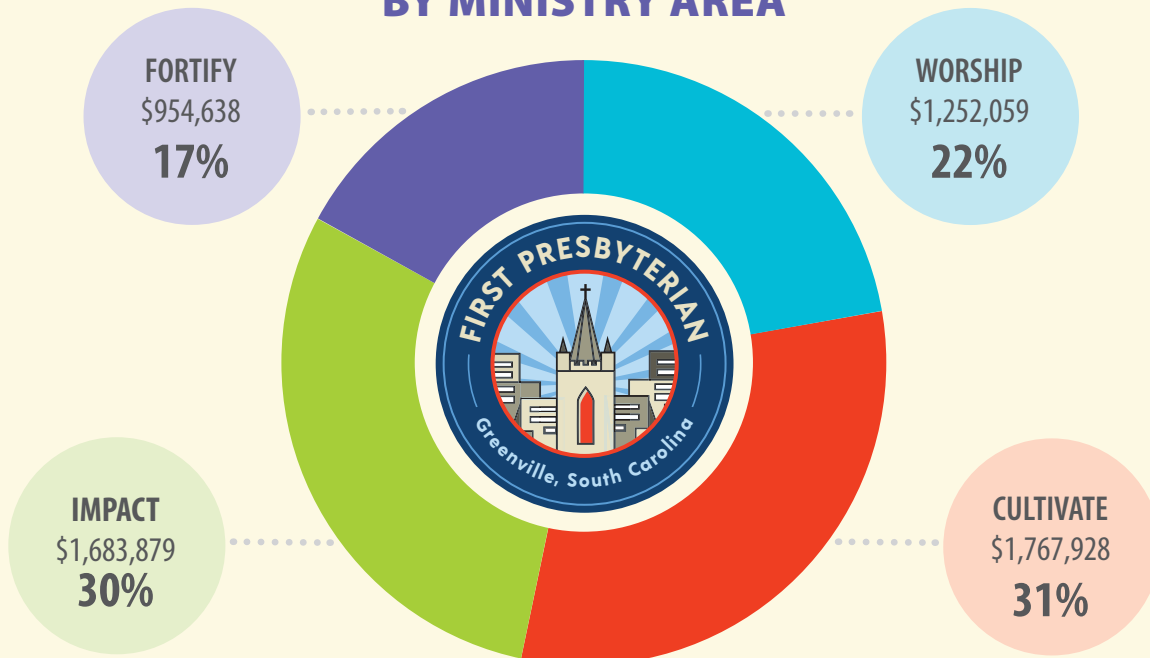
You can see that progress has been made, but also that much remains to be done. If you have not yet given, please prayerfully consider making a pledge or a gift to this campaign. Any amount you give will be a blessing.



Note that current values in the stock and real estate markets make this an excellent time to give appreciated stock or other assets. And if you are over 70 years old, all or a portion of the Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA can be given to the Capital Campaign and/or Operating Budget. If you have questions about making a gift to the church, please contact Executive Director Mike Templeton (mtempleton@firstpresgreenville.org).

On behalf of the Pastors, Staff, and Officers, thank you for your faithful giving to FPC!

2020-2021 ACTUAL EXPENSES BY MINISTRY AREA



First Presbyterian Church Foundation

The FPC Foundation is the centralized hub that connects financial gifts of FPC Covenant Partners to ministries that are the hands and feet of Jesus in Greenville and beyond—both now and across generations.

Last year a total of approximately **\$339,000** was granted by the Foundation to various organizations. Of this amount, **\$41,500** was given in scholarships for **21** students across **10** colleges and **1** seminary. The remaining grant recipients for this time period include the following **17** organizations:

- Christian Learning Center
- Cross Cultural Network
- Eastern Dominican Christian Mission
- FPC
- FPC Capital Campaign
- Greater Mt. Calvary Baptist Church
- Greenville Multicultural Church
- Meals on Wheels
- Miracle Hill
- Mission to the World
- Neighborhood Focus
- Outreach Foundation
- Salvation Army
- Samaritan's Purse
- Search Ministries
- Send International
- Student Ministry Team

Welcome to Marilyn Morrison

In June, the FPC Foundation board was delighted to welcome Marilyn Morrison as our Foundation Administrator. In her role she assists the board with grant administration, fund accounting, and donor communication.

The board is deeply grateful for the generosity of donors whose support has so richly blessed our Christian community. If you are interested in contributing to the Foundation or learning more about how we work, our mission, and how you can consider a gift that has long-lasting and eternal benefits to others, please contact Marilyn at 565.0992 or mmorrisonfdn@firstpresgreenville.org.

Hearing From You

GALLIVAN-MILLS SCHOLARSHIP

Dear Mrs. Swofford,

I wanted to thank you, First Pres, and everyone involved with the Gullivan-Mills Scholarship for all your help the past few years as I've attended college. Your generosity and grace have afforded me the chance to make many memories, meet incredible people, and learn valuable life lessons that I will always cherish from Belmont University. As I enter my final year at Belmont, I wanted to thank you, as your scholarship has allowed my family to keep me in school. I pray the Lord watches over you. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Landon Best

FPC STUDENT MINISTRY

The Student Ministry Team wanted to thank you for your generosity regarding the recent Foundation Grant... The grant will be used to purchase NIV Study Bibles for each student, equip them with a course that teaches in-depth biblical study, allow us to create a student library, and replenish our scholarship fund that enables students with financial difficulties to attend retreats. This aid will allow our students to truly follow in the vision of First Presbyterian Church as they "transform the heart of the city."

*The Student Ministry continues to reach students from **7** local high schools and **12** middle schools to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each week students bring friends, non-believers, and people who need the support of a godly community. The Student Ministry has become a beacon of light to students in a difficult time where evil, sin, and temptation are only a click away, and we want to thank you for allowing us to become such a place. Students feel safe, loved, and equipped to share the gospel due to your generosity and continued prayers. We are eternally grateful for your service to Christ and His Kingdom. Thank you again!*

In Christ,
The Student Ministry Team



JOSHUA'S WAY

Thank you so much for this generous donation! We are so humbled and grateful for the ongoing support of the Foundation and First Pres. How great is our God! There's absolutely nothing his power cannot accomplish, and he has infinite understanding of everything. (Psalm 147:5).

May the Lord bless you and keep you!
—Florin and Amy Palaghia

SEND INTERNATIONAL

Thank you for your donation to SEND International. Your support is truly appreciated and is making an eternal impact! Your gift makes it possible to carry out the work that we do—making disciples among the unreached. This year marks SEND's 75th anniversary of carrying out this global mission! With eternity in mind, there is nothing more important than giving hope through the life-changing message of the gospel. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "the gifts you sent are a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:18-19).

May God continue to richly supply your every need,
—Michelle Atwell, U.S. Director

CHRISTIAN LEARNING CENTERS OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

Christian Learning Centers expresses our sincere appreciation to the First Presbyterian Church Foundation for the incredibly kind and generous grant given to us this year. Your partnership in our ministry at Travelers Rest High School will help us to continue our classes. We are so excited to be working on enrolling students at several additional high schools—including Hillcrest, J. L. Mann, and Woodmont—for the coming school year!

Thank you for your generous pledge toward securing a new bus for our ministry. Transportation is so essential to our ministry, and as we look forward to our middle school programs returning to in-person instruction this fall, we are excited to be able to transport them in a new vehicle.

We are so thankful for each student who attends one of these classes, and for the opportunity it affords us to share God's Word with them! We take the stewardship of your investment in our ministry most seriously, and we know that your support will bear spiritual fruit as we minister to the youth in our community. May God bless you for your participation in this work. We are so thankful for what you do!

In Christian love,
—Janice Butler, Executive Director

MIRACLE HILL MINISTRIES

Thank you so much for your gift to the ministry of Miracle Hill. God is using this gift for His glory across the ministry. As you know, when people walk through the doors of a Miracle Hill Shelter, they are often wounded and desperate. Each day, we provide for their physical needs of food, shelter, counseling, and employment, while sharing the Good News and hope of Jesus Christ.

This past month, we cared for 439 individuals with love and care in our rescue missions, and an additional 90 guests were served in the recovery centers. We had 34 men and women living in our transitional housing programs, and 172 children were served in Miracle Hill foster homes and our Boys' shelter. In our foster homes, 4 children were adopted, and 9 children were reunited with their families.

For over 80 years, Miracle Hill has served the lost and hurting in the Upstate of South Carolina. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). Thank you for helping us shine the light of Christ into the lives of many who are hurting. May God bless each of you richly.

In Christ,
—Ryan Duerk, President/CEO

CRU—ED AND AMY USZYNSKI

Thank you for your gift that helps reach people for Christ! "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayer for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5).

MISSION TO THE WORLD

Thank you to the Foundation for approving our grant request for the Taipei, Taiwan, Asia Mission Center at Christ's College. We are grateful for your partnership and generosity in this project, and join with you in looking forward to seeing the impact God will bring for His glory through our efforts together. Thanks again. His many blessings on you and the work of the Foundation.

Grace and Peace,
—R. Cartee Bales, Senior Director,
Field Operations, Mission to the World

TRANSFORMING

*Transforming the spiritual heart
of the city Capital Campaign*



Capital Campaign

Each morning as the sun rises above the construction site, tangible changes are evident to those of us who call First Pres our church home, as well as to those who regularly pass by our corner of downtown Greenville. It is a testament to your faithful financial gifts and prayers as we seek to Transform the Heart of the City.

This year brought many challenges to the building industry, including shortages in building supplies and staffing issues. One incredible thing that has happened with our construction process is that despite these challenges, nothing has dramatically impacted the building schedule. We plan to open the Children's Ministry area of the building in October, with the rest of the building opening in March or April of next year. Preparations for grand opening celebrations are beginning to take shape and will mark an exciting new chapter in our congregation's future.

These new spaces will not only be a home for our church family, but also a place for the Greenville community to share in all that is happening here at First



Pres. From concerts and special events in the Worship & Arts Center to the art gallery and café that will be permanent fixtures in the building, we want our neighbors to know that they are always welcome. Our hope is that when we look back in next year's report to the congregation, we will see numerous ways our beautiful new campus has impacted the lives of others.



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Transforming the Heart of the City and Beyond



4,672 Pounds of clothing donated
during Yellow Bag Project



104 New members
of all ages



\$143,000 Donated for piano in
new worship center



530 Academy students served
at our two campuses



\$14,280,953 Collected for
Capital Campaign

*"Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.
Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:7*

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and
not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*