



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

OUR FAMILY IS GROWING



God has given us another great year in the life of our church. As we look back on 2025, my heart is full of gratitude - for your faithfulness in worship, generosity in giving, willingness to serve, and shared commitment to the gospel. Through steady prayer and daily obedience, we have seen God at work among us this year.

Our church family continues to grow. We welcomed new members and families who are finding this congregation to be a place where faith is formed and community takes root. Participation in worship, classes, and discipleship opportunities has increased, as children, youth, and adults alike engage more deeply in the life of the church and in love for one another.

This year also marked a significant step forward as we launched - and are now well into - a \$2 million capital campaign. This project is not about expansion for its own sake, but about faithful stewardship and shared mission: creating space where worship, formation, and fellowship can flourish for generations. Your generosity reflects a deep sense of ownership in what God is doing here and our calling to steward these resources wisely.

At the same time, growth brings real challenges. As new people join us, we must continue asking important questions: How do we help every person feel known and connected? How do we sustain deep, authentic community as the church grows larger? How do we develop and support our staff so that we lead with unity and clarity? These are not signs of trouble, but of a living church continually being reformed by God's grace.

Looking ahead, our calling remains clear: to glorify God in every area of life, to form disciples who make disciples, and to extend Christ's love to our members, to Lakeland, and to the world. We will continue to invest in spiritual formation and leadership development, trusting that God - who has been faithful in the past - will guide us in the years ahead.

Thank you for the many ways you pray, give, serve, and encourage one another. As we enter a new year, may we continue to trust Christ together and welcome new friends into this growing family of faith.

With gratitude and hope,

Rev. Dr. John Fullerton
Senior Pastor

FAMILY OUTREACH

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus... 1 Corinthians 1:4

It has been a joy to serve as one of your pastors for more than 12 years, and 2025 was one of the most exciting. As you will read in our Children's, Youth, and Special Needs Ministry reports, we have had another great year of growth. Each Sunday morning and Wednesday evening is bustling with the energy of families hungry for the gospel motivated by community, and there are more volunteers blessing the next generation with their God-given talents and gifts.

In our Children's area, we have added a more robust 4th and 5th grade because of the phenomenal service of a few of our volunteers led by Sarah Senn. In Youth, we have onboarded a wonderful new intern in Caroline Johnson, continuing a long line of Florida Southern students who have helped the vibrancy of that ministry. To better meet the needs of our growing number of families with special needs, our Director, Libby Chappell, expanded to full-time, and she added two part-time assistants focusing on different areas. Our ministry to parents now sees more than 40 regularly in groups on Wednesday nights.

This is why it has been encouraging to see people contribute to the expansion of our physical spaces with our Growing for Our Future campaign. With nearly \$2 million raised to date, we are well on our way to those dreams becoming a reality. I look forward to the dedication of those spaces to the Lord and celebrating what God has done.

Of course being a pastor is not only about the highlights of growth, but it is also about the small moments of care. It has also been a year of delights at baptisms, heartache of funerals, and the sacredness of pastoral counseling. This is the core of making and maturing disciples for Jesus Christ.

My prayer for this year is that we would continue to ask God how we can be more connected. More connected to the Lord through regular worship, prayer, and study of his Word, with one another through groups and service, and with our community through outreach efforts and acts of compassion. God has been so good to us, and we know that carries with it a responsibility and a calling.

Blessings,

■ Rev. Dr. Zac McGowen
Outreach Pastor



CARE MINISTRY

“I cannot tell you how much all the prayers and the visits meant to me!”

We hear that often in the Care Ministry of FPC. It may be from members who have been in the hospital or a rehab center. It may be from those who are homebound or living in a long-term care facility. Or it may be from those who are struggling with grief.

We hear that because volunteers and staff are reaching out to our members when they have special needs. About 20 volunteers stay in regular touch with our older members who can no longer attend church, to make sure they know they are not forgotten, and are still very much an important part of our church. Four volunteers and three ministers do the same with hospital visitation, bringing a word of comfort and hope in a time of distress, with follow-up contacts after a hospital stay.

In addition, the grief ministry serves in both short-term and long-term ways. Reaching out to families when they lose a loved one. Following up with them during the first year with a series of letters from

the ministers and helpful Stephen Ministry booklets, and on the anniversary of the death. The Widow’s Journey group meets monthly for mutual support and encouragement, and is open to the community, as well as church members.

FPC’s care ministries are coordinated by the Care Committee, chaired in 2025 by Darlene Jones. The group meets monthly to hear updates on church members in the visitation and grief ministries. Members of the committee are also involved in preparing meals for members, sending birthday cards, keeping Care Notes racks filled, visitation, and other areas.

The Care Committee also sponsors the Faithful Fifties annual luncheon honoring those who have been church members for 50 years or more, and those who have been married 50 years or more. The event was expanded to a churchwide event in 2025, called Generations Sunday, in an effort to involve all age groups.

People sometimes say the church should not be so interested in numbers. That would apply to our Care Ministry. It is not our goal to have more people in the hospital! It is not an objective to have more members homebound or in care facilities! Still, the numbers show something of the scope of our ministries. For example, we had more than 100 members in the hospital in 2025, some more than once, resulting in 2-3 times that many visits. We averaged 40+ members who are homebound or living in facilities, all of them contacted on a regular basis. Some 140+ grief letters and booklets were sent, and the Widow’s Journey group had 15 women involved.

As we move into 2026, we pray that we may faithfully continue to serve those in need in our congregation. We pray they will not need visits from the Care Ministry, but we thank God we are able to be with them when needed. Another prayer is for more volunteers to serve these special people. The opening of a new hospital and the continuing aging of our membership will require more time and attention.

■ Rev. Richard Phillips
Care Ministry Coordinator



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Overheard

One of the little boys in our ministry went to see “The King of Kings” with his family and when leaving the movie, he looked at his mom and said, “I knew all of that from going to church.”

■ Anna Butler
Director of Children's Ministry

Other Staff Members

Marion McDowell,
Children's Ministry Assistant

Nursery Workers:
Kimberly Hillman Sadie Campbell
Isabelle Hathaway Carla Spina
Brianna Bushong Gia Montanez
Frances Acevedo

We had an outstanding 2025 with growth in all of our programs. We had as many as 65 children involved on any given First Kids Sunday morning and 77 children in Wednesday evening Kids Club. Our annual Vacation Bible School was attended by 223 children and was a success because of the 101 volunteers.

We started a new version of our First Kids 45 program, moving it to a weekly Sunday morning program that better prepares our fourth and fifth graders for the youth program and engages them in Sunday morning worship.

Praises

- We are starting a new curriculum on Sunday mornings that is a three-year cycle rooted in the gospel, going through the four core truths: God knows me, Jesus loves me, the Holy Spirit guides me, and I am a child of God.
- Our wonderful volunteers! We have approximately 50 volunteers each month who pour into the children of FPC. Our ministry would not be possible without them.

2026 Anticipations

We will be moving into a new space for children’s ministry, and we look forward to growing in that space for years to come.

We love welcoming new families into our ministry and supporting the families who are already involved.

Prayer

Our prayer is that we would continue to be a ministry in which children and parents feel supported and loved while hearing the gospel truth.

“Children’s Ministry at FPC is exciting. There are new families and lots of kids who on Wednesday nights enjoy Bible study, crafts, music, games, and pizza. I love kids, and the kids love FPC, which is a fun and safe place to learn about Jesus and faith.”

Mike Loudon, FPC Pastor Emeritus



CLASSIC WORSHIP ARTS

It finally happened! After 10 years, we finally saw the completion of the long-awaited organ restoration project. This included replacing the organ console as well as adding the following sounds to the organ chamber: Celesta, Mallet-harp, Chimes, Orchestral flute, En chamade trumpets, and revoiced oboe, bassoon, and festival trumpets.

We hope everyone is enjoying the additional tones Tom is playing in worship.

Praises

- Our Chancel Choir remains strong with 42 registered members, and our handbell choir saw the addition of one new member.
- During the summer, we had 10 students who attended the Montreat Worship and Music Conference, and we saw the youth choir grow to 14 singers. The children's choir continues to see growth with more than 24 students on Wednesday evenings.

Prayer

If you have a love of music, we ask you to prayerfully consider joining the classic worship arts family. No auditions are necessary.

■ Sam Carlton
Classic Worship Arts Director

Other Staff Members

Tom Ingui, *Organist*
Emily Hammell, *Children's Choir Coordinator*

Fun Fact:

Tom Ingui, FPC organist, competed in the International Organ Competition of St. Maurice held at the Abbey of Saint-Maurice in Switzerland. Tom finished third in the competition.

MODERN WORSHIP ARTS



It was a wonderful year for our Modern Worship Arts team. One of the highlights was the Christmas Eve choir in Vine. It was the first time for us to have a choir at the Family Christmas Eve services, and they were such a blessing.

Praises

- We had the largest number of students involved in our worship ministry, with a total of 12 rotating students in our Surrender Worship Band. We praise God for moving more of our youth to get involved in Sunday morning worship and stay involved even transitioning into college.

Anticipations

Our Vine Worship Team hopes to begin recording songs we have written for our congregation and writing more songs that reflect our needs and the unique culture we have here at FPC.

Prayer

During 2026, our ministry prays for wisdom and a tangible presence of the Holy Spirit as we continue to find new ways to reflect our church's traditions, support each pastor's teaching, and remind our FPC family of God's love every week.

■ Jennifer Voigt
Modern Worship Arts Director

Other Staff Members

Ariel Schwartz, *Modern Worship Assistant*
Esther Reyes, *Modern Worship Intern*



SURRENDER YOUTH MINISTRY

We have had an amazing year together with our youth. Our attendance has continued to grow in ways we couldn't have imagined this year! For example, last year our Back-to-School Pool Party had 25 students, and this year, we had 40! Our Wednesday night attendance has increased to an average of 50 students per week.

Similarly, in 2024, we took 15 students to Realife Camp, and in 2025, we took 25 students! It was awesome getting to see the students praise God surrounded by hundreds of other people their age doing the same! For every student who attended, camp has been something that they have brought up in conversation almost every week since.

Praises

- We have had students step up into leadership positions this year, which has been so cool to see! Two of our high schoolers led the message together one Wednesday night (with the help, guidance, and coaching of one of our small group leaders, Kim Bowers).
- Speaking of small group leaders, we had five new small group leaders join us in 2025. It's been so cool to see the bonds they've built with the students this past year.
- We also had 13 students who were being disciplined by leaders throughout the week. Seeing students chase after Jesus throughout the week has been amazing. We're so excited to see the leaders they become.

Anticipations

We're looking forward to seeing even more students be disciplined in 2026. Ideally, we'd love for every student in the youth group to be disciplined outside of Wednesday nights.

We are also looking forward to seeing more students take on leadership roles, both on Wednesday nights and in serving in our community.

Prayers

We're so thankful for everything God has done this past year and are excited to see what He will do in 2026. We're praying that students would regularly confess their sins to their parents and that every parent would read the Bible and pray with their students.

- Seth Lail
Director of Student Life Ministries

Other Staff Members

Caroline Johnson, *Intern*

"One night, we had a student bring a friend who was experiencing and grieving loss. That night, the friend stood up in front of a room of 60 strangers and was completely transparent about personal struggles, feeling distant from God, and wanting to build a relationship with Him. It had such a profound impact on me, as well as our leaders. I remember being there and thinking, 'this is what faith looks like, this is what God does.' Truly, it is a moment I will never forget."

Seth Lail, Director of Student Life Ministries

REIGNITE COLLEGE & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

We are thrilled to have shattered our attendance record several times last year. We had a total of 109 different young adults attend our Sunday group and five small groups. We had a total of 120 new visitors. Our young adults integrated into the life of the church, serving in a wide array of areas.

Praises

- We saw more genuine spiritual fruit produced in 2025 than any year prior. We saw young adults hungry to grow and learn. They are seeking out accountability, growth plans, and using resources to help develop their faith. And they are bringing their friends on the journey!
- We had several 'share nights' that were meaningful and motivating. Young adults sharing their story, testimony, or giving a short devotional about something that hit them in scripture had such an impact within our group.

Anticipations

I am looking forward to empowering even more of our young adults to lead. That may be a Bible study on campus or at work, showing kindness to the overlooked, or getting out of their comfort zones to serve. I can't wait to see more of the Word translate into real life actions.

In 2025, I saw God show up in ways I can't even put into words. I've seen the hardest hearts softened and saw love truly cover a multitude of sins. I am looking forward to seeking and surrendering to God

in anticipation of what He will do with this incredible group of young adults.

Prayers

Please pray that our young adults will continue to come to Jesus and see that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Pray that they will fully surrender every corner of their hearts, minds, and wills to a savior who brings a life more fulfilling than any other.

Highlight Reel

Guest speakers brought insight and depth to our studies. Dr. Paul Suich led a three week series on Managing Your Mental Health. Brian Morgan and Josh Schweitzer made strong contributions to our six week series on Spiritual Warfare.

Our group partnered with Lakeland Worship Nights to bring together multiple churches on our front lawn several times throughout the year for praise and worship.

Staff

Last year, Monica Schweitzer helped mentor our gals in addition to leading a small group on Sunday nights. She always did a fantastic job and loved our group with a passion.

- Tim Timmes
Director of College & Young Adult Ministries



SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY

Thanks be to God for the amazing support of our congregation and community, sharing their gifts of time, talent, and treasures. The Special Needs Ministry is growing in all directions, and there is a place for families and individuals of all ages and abilities in our church. What a blessing!

Praises

Thanks to the generosity of others, we have been able to increase our staff from one part-time coordinator to a full-time director and two part-time assistants. Accessible doors for the restrooms in the Welcome Center have been installed. Plans for the Special Needs Ministry Suite are in the works which includes two ADA accessible bathrooms (one child size and one adult size) and a changing table.

Mini Miracles/Big Miracles/Youth

With the wonderful support of other ministries and volunteers, we continue to welcome families with “many” miracles everywhere, from preschool to the Classic and Contemporary worship services. New families keep coming.

Shine On

Our Shine On group of older teens and adults has continued to grow, serve, and be a blessing to our church. Wednesday night Bible study is full of fun, food, fellowship, music, and learning more about our Lord and Savior. Our friends loved singing and signing in worship on Inclusion Sunday and serving as greeters again this year for Glory of Christmas. We also participated in the Resurrection Story and helped with the VBS food drive.

Buddy Break

We did it again! One hundred percent of the families requesting our monthly Saturday respite opportunity were

served thanks to having enough volunteers for the one-on-one coverage required by Nathaniel's Hope.

Our church again distributed slightly more than 100 large red and green bags full of Christmas toys and several bikes for Nathaniel's Hope. FPC was one of just nine satellite locations in the state. As you can imagine, families were grateful to not have to drive to Orlando to pick up gifts, especially during the busy Christmas season.

Night to Shine

Our community was blessed with another fabulous prom centered on God's love for all people with all abilities at Night to Shine 2025. We are grateful for the tremendous support of our church and our entire community. Elizabeth Patton was our 2025 chair and agreed to chair again in 2026. Registration for the 2026 Night to Shine opened in October. Within 23 hours of going live, the honored guest registration of 220 was full!

Prayer

We thank God for everyone and everything happening in our Special Needs Ministry – for our families, for our volunteers, for growing partnerships, for the support of our church family and our community family, and for the gifts given to ensure that this ministry continues. We provide a welcoming and accommodating environment for people of all abilities. We are blessed. Amen.

■ Libby Chappell
Special Needs Coordinator

Other Staff Members

Ava Barfield, *SNM Assistant*
Kristan Cooper, *SNM Assistant*

LITTLE SHEPHERDS



This school year, approximately 25% of our parents attended chapel time with their child each month. This is more than we have had attend in the past years, and we are delighted to have these children and parents worshipping together.

Three of our teachers completed their training classes in order to obtain their early childhood credentials.

Praises

- The remodel of our classrooms and office area was completed, and new drainage was added to the playground.
- Enrollment continues to be at capacity with waiting lists for all ages.

Anticipations

We have the need to hire new teachers to replace those that will be retiring after many years of teaching at Little Shepherds.

Prayer

We continue to pray for the health and safety of our children and staff. We pray, too, that God sends us the right person to fill our Assistant Director position upon the retirement of Tami Trent.

Memorable Moment

We have a four-year-old child who was very hesitant to come to school. He cried every

morning for many weeks when his mom first brought him to school. Now, he runs each morning and is happy to be at school.

■ Carrie Joyner
Director of Little Shepherds Preschool

Other Staff Members

Tami Trent, *Assistant Director*
23 teachers and six substitute teachers

“Little Shepherds has been such a gift to our family,” says Christin Masters, whose son is in the LS three-year-old group. “The administration and staff are incredibly kind, thoughtful, and intentional. They’ve created a safe, nurturing environment where education, creativity, fun, and learning about Jesus are beautifully woven together. My son truly looks forward to going to school each day, and I am so deeply thankful for the love and care poured into this community.”



OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

We are blessed to have a vibrant group of older adults who pray, study, and have fun together. We had another wonderful year of growing in the Lord together.

Praises

- We started the year with a great trip to Savannah and continued to have day trips throughout the year. The group went to such places as Hollerbach German Restaurant in Sanford, the Space Coast River Tour, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, and the Manatee Village Historical Park.
- The group enjoyed monthly Game Days, Spirit of Service luncheons, and Bone Builders classes. Dr. Paul Suich leads the weekly “Get You Home Before Dark” Wednesday afternoon Bible Study.
- Through the year, we had an array of special programming, including “A Matter of Balance” and “Build Your Bones” nutrition classes, our

annual Community Senior Adult Health and Resource Fair (with approximately 150 attendees and 70 exhibitors), the annual Swing into Spring dinner and dance, as well as our caroling to homebound members during Advent.

Anticipations

We look forward to another wonderful year of SOS meetings, game days, Bible studies, and trips. We invite everyone to participate.

Prayers

We offer prayers for continued opportunities of fellowship, making new friends, and growth in the Lord together - no one is ever too old. We also pray for safety on all of the OAM trips.

- Sandie McRory
Older Adult Ministry Coordinator



ST. ANDREW MINISTRY



The St. Andrew Ministry provides individual and family counseling, teaching, and supportive groups. Counseling includes individual, family, and premarital counseling as well as referral services.

In 2025, we had a three part seminar for young adults on developing a healthy and Biblical relationship with anxiety.

Praises

In 2025, we offered 850 hours of counseling sessions and groups. Preventative care uses teaching and skill development to prepare people for life's challenges before the crisis arrives.

Anticipations

In 2026, we will continue to work on the prevalence of anxiety in our culture. Our counseling, teaching, and group ministries use both in-person meetings as well as Zoom meetings and telephone contact.

Prayer

Please be in prayer for those who are facing profound challenges and difficult choices.

- Dr. Paul Suich
Parish Counselor

DISCIPLESHIP

Our mission at First Presbyterian Church is to make and mature disciples for Jesus Christ. As such, we endeavor to have a robust discipleship program in place.

This year, our College and Young Adult Ministry, led by Tim Timmes, began to burst open. People are showing up, getting involved in groups, and joining the church. Throughout the church, conversations began and deep work has now begun to help every ministry of our church understand specifically how they fit into the working of our mission.

Praises

- Men's and women's leadership teams have been formed and are doing more and more to draw groups of people together for fellowship and spiritual formation.
- We praise God for the work that Josh Schweitzer did to develop leaders and start new groups. His work was important and fruitful.

Anticipations

Currently, a Master Plan of Discipleship is in the works. It is a comprehensive, gospel-centered framework that articulates how our church understands, practices, leads, and evaluates discipleship across the entire life of the congregation.

We are continuing to develop more groups of people coming together for growth, fellowship, serving, and leadership.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, bless the disciple-making ministry of our church. Guide our leaders, shape your people in Christ's likeness, and use us to bear lasting fruit for your glory. Amen.

Staff Members

We said goodbye to Josh at the end of the year and now have a vacancy in that position.

"I loved opening up social media and seeing the women of the church gather at Abby Rodda's house. It was more than the fact that it was a crowd. They were having a great time in fellowship."

Pastor John

MISSIONS



Our missions ministry remains dedicated to serving God's people locally and globally.

We participated in our 30th journey to Merida, Mexico where we helped construct a new church in Motul while also strengthening long-standing partnerships.

We celebrated our 10th year of Thanksgiving in a Bag, allowing us to generously provide holiday food to Jessie Keen and Phillip O'Brien Elementary Schools, Anchor House, Salvation Army, VISTE, and Wilson House.

Praises

- We continued our strong farmworker outreach program by volunteering at Bethel in Wimauma and RCMA in Mulberry, building trust and offering encouragement.
- We completed our sixth year working with kidsPACK, helping ensure more than 400 Polk County children receive nutritious meals each weekend.

- Celebrate Recovery, now in its third year at FPC, serves approximately 120 individuals weekly as they overcome hurts, hang-ups, and habits with love and accountability.
- We supported five missionaries who are faithfully serving across Zambia, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, and Iraq.

Anticipations

We are already preparing to return to Mexico in 2026 and to work alongside our mission partners, Lisa Alfonsi and Clever Sobrino in Lima, Peru in 2027.

Prayers

We give thanks for every blessing as we continue serving the disadvantaged and the lost with humility and a servant's heart.

■ Nancy Bertram
Missions Ministry Coordinator



FACILITIES



We had several big events in 2025, including Honoring Heroes, Options for Women, LS Thanksgiving Celebration, Cotillion, Glory of Christmas, Generations Pot Luck, and the Camellia Show. The facilities team is responsible for all set ups and tear downs for each special event as well as for regular weekly FPC events. As a team, we can do anything. We are always improving and growing.

Praises

We have an amazing team that is a blessing to work alongside. We are the united backbone of FPC.

Anticipations

We are anticipating even more events, classes, and support groups as the church continues to grow, and we look forward to meeting the needs around us.

Prayer

Dear God, bless my team with wisdom and patience. Help us to work together with respect, encouragement, and kindness, building each other up and glorifying you in all we do. Help them to see their value, both for what they do and for who they are.

■ Lori Lewis
Head Custodian

Other Staff Members

Mark Blanchard, Custodian
Scott Causey, Custodian
Eric Hathaway, Custodian
Hampton McKee, Custodian

FROM MAINTENANCE TO MINISTRY

Maintenance is about helping people at its core. It's not just changing light bulbs or fixing toilets (though those are vital actions). It is about being an ambassador of the church. With this in mind, I have worked with Nancy Bertram to begin a Veterans Ministry within Celebrate Recovery. I have worked with Pastor John to begin a Jailhouse Ministry for those at Polk County Jail.

Praises

- After seeing veterans in our community struggling for resources, it has been a joy to see this group coming together and to be able to provide resources. We have already assisted with finding housing, employment, and health insurance for several in the group.
- It is exciting to see the new Jailhouse Ministry gaining traction. We have several signed up as volunteers and welcome anyone who would like to participate. Trainings begin in April.

Anticipations

I am looking forward to participating in the growth of the Veterans group and the Prison Ministry. I plan to sharpen my skills by beginning Electrical and Plumbing Certification at a local college.

Memorable Moment

I had a deep conversation with a stranger early one morning in the sanctuary. As we parted ways, she told me, "You don't know what our conversation did for me. I might have done something I regretted." Kindred spirits can need repair as much as the facility. A smile and a conversation can make a difference.

Prayer

Our Father, grant us the courage to face challenges with unwavering faith. May your strength be our rock in times of adversity, guiding us through every trial with grace and resilience. Amen

■ Shawn Clark
Maintenance Technician

"Anytime we see Mr. Shawn, it makes Miles' day," says Ms. Evans. "Our experience at Little Shepherds has truly been enhanced by Mr. Shawn's kindness."



TECH TEAM



At FPC, almost every gathering or event uses some sort of AV (audio visual) solution to enhance their presentations and make them more memorable. The use of AV equipment is widely used and, in most cases, expected. In addition to Sunday, Wednesday, and Thursday church services, the Technology Team provides weekly support to individual group meetings as well as outside events.

Praises

- The online streaming of both the Classic and Vine Modern services attracts approximately 1,200 views per week.
- One of the highlights of 2025 was livestreaming the Glory of Christmas concert. This event was new to online streaming and attracted approximately 2,800 online views. One view could be one or many people watching from one device, such as a television.

Anticipations

The Tech Team consists of five part-time tech professionals and four tech volunteers. Balancing the human tech resources available with the demands of the equipment as well as the users will be a challenge we

look forward to navigating. There are currently discussions about adding live streaming to the sanctuary. Due to the simultaneous 10:30 am services, our tech staff would need to double to approximately 12-14 paid and volunteer techs.

Prayers

Please pray for the wisdom and talent required to maintain a high level of reliability for our guests and church members.

- David Bailey
Technical Director

Other Staff Members

Jim Kunkle, *Audio Visual Production Specialist*
 John Lowery, *Audio Visual Production Specialist*
 Brian Primm, *Audio Visual Production Specialist*
 Tanner Hamer, *Audio Visual Production Specialist*

Volunteers

Javier Viera
 Chandler Blake
 Carl Hoover
 Robin Jenkins

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication Coordination

Michele Trice, Communications Coordinator, is responsible for managing the written and verbal requests from staff and members for assistance in promoting events, classes, and groups. She also wrote blog posts, created and wrote stewardship materials, emails, and special handouts explaining stewardship at age-appropriate levels for our children and youth.

She wrote crisis communication plans, procedure and policy guidelines, and wrote copy for the church's first Advent landing page where information about FPC's Advent journey was available to the community.

Michele is responsible for our weekly First News email, along with special stewardship and memorial emails. Nearly 100,000 individual emails were sent to our congregation in 2025. She also maintains and organizes the church's YouTube channel.

Praises

We presented a photography class for anyone within the church. We taught basic photography principles along with social media tips. It is our hope that members will feel comfortable taking their own photos and sharing them with the church social media accounts.

Prayer

We pray we may continue to use our skills and talents to the glory of God as we share the story of FPC with our community. We pray that people inside and outside the congregation would see God's work through FPC and be compelled to take part.

FPC's Communications Team works behind the scenes to support and strengthen the work of the other ministries within the church. The team, comprised of three part-time employees, is responsible for telling the story of the church, of sharing how God is at work in our congregation and community.

Social Media

This year, we welcomed Stephanie Cunningham as our Social Media Specialist, and her impact has been significant. Engagement across our social media platforms has increased, and more people in the wider community are seeing and connecting with the meaningful work happening at FPC.

On average, our social media posts get approximately 30,000 views a month, with almost 40% of those viewers being people who don't follow us or go to our church yet. In adding this position, we have seen nearly 20% growth in followers on our social platforms in less than five months.

Graphic Design

In 2025, the Communications Team responded to more than 130 written requests for communications support. Julie Ward, our Graphic Designer, created countless images, flyers, and rotator slides to support church programs and events.

Julie also maintains the FPC website and ensures all information is current and accurate. She created the beautiful sermon graphics you see on your worship guides each week, created images for tee shirts, signs, a new backdrop for the Vine modern service, and designed the annual report. One of the larger projects was helping design the multi-page Wedding Policies packet.

Staff Members

Michele Trice,
Communication Coordinator

Julie Ward,
Graphic Designer

Stephanie Cunningham,
Social Media Specialist



AT A GLANCE



ELDERS

CLASS OF 2026

John Attaway
Kerrie Hall
Katie Hamer
Hunt Ozmer
Andy Stone
Tyson Voigt
Howard Wiggs
Kim Williams

CLASS OF 2027

Jim Chastain
Ken Loar
Callie Neslund
Tracey Ritter
Jason Rodda
Brenda Sawyer
Kelsey Elmhurst Wesche
Mike Wynn

CLASS OF 2028

Nicole Aulisio
Mike Block
Jennifer Campbell
Craig Cunningham
Bruce Hitt
Ann Marshall
Laura Rodriguez
Matt Ruthven

Baptisms

In 2025, we had 16 baptisms, with eight children and eight adults being baptized.

Children:

Luca Daniel Ospina
Evan Jacob Ospina
Emma Kate Labozzetta
Brecken David Yrastorza
Livvy Brynn Yrastorza
Emma James Vaughn
Reyna Rose Quackenbush
Evelyn Callaham DiCesare

Adults:

Nick Bergmann
Jessica Bergmann
Adam Maratta
Alexandra Meier
Lyric Church
Alex Peacock
Joseph Bullara
Jerry Bond

Membership

In January of 2025, we had 1,055 members. We added 44 new members through the year and we lost several through death and moves. In January of 2026, we had a total membership of 1,082 with a year to year change of +27 members.

We have shown a steady increase in members in recent years. In 2023, we had 963 members while in 2024, we had 1,043. We are blessed to witness God's moving through our community and church.

Under Care

These individuals are under the care of the FPC Session for ordination.

Emily Russell Maggie Ruthven Josh Schweitzer

New Hires

- Ava Barfield,
Special Needs Ministry
- Inajara Tenjo,
Preschool Teacher
- William Causey,
Custodian
- Esther Reyes,
Music Intern
- Caroline Johnson,
Student Life Intern
- Tanner Hamer,
Audio Visual Production
- Stephanie Cunningham,
Social Media Specialist
- Jo Ahearn
Executive Assistant
- Jacquelyn Strickland,
Preschool Teacher
- Kelly Rankin,
Preschool Teacher
- Victoria Pena,
Preschool Teacher
- Ariel Schwartz,
Modern Worship Leader
- Kristan Cooper,
Special Needs Ministry
- Giovanna Montanez,
Nursery Worker
- Carla Spina,
Nursery Worker

LIVING GENEROUSLY

Prayers

We pray that our entire church family will feel gratitude for all that God has given us and will see the benefits of joyfully and generously giving back to God.

In 2025, we approached stewardship differently than in the past. Our Stewardship Committee chair, Brenda Sawyer, took a new approach to stewardship, moving it from a once-a-year endeavor to something we think about and work toward throughout the year.

“Imagine what FPC might look like if we created a culture of generosity, if we all tithed, simply increased our gifts, or just gave something,” says Sawyer. “Imagine the ministries and missions expanded, the lives transformed, the overall spiritual health of our church and its families. God wants FPC to have all the resources we need to do the work he calls us to do.”

Stewardship is about giving our time, talents, and treasures to God, and that isn't supposed to happen once a year. It is an ever-evolving part of our worship and dedication to God. We welcome each of you to this journey of giving to God what is his.

Growing for Our Future

Several years ago, we made a commitment to spend time focusing on our Next Generation ministries - children, youth, special needs, and families. God has richly blessed us as all of our next gen ministries are flourishing, to the point where we are running out of space.

To address that problem (and what an amazing problem to have!), we launched our Growing for our Future capital campaign. These funds will allow us to expand our current space and allow room for continued growth. As of our publication date, you have committed \$1,906,077 toward our goal of \$2 million. Approximately 30% of our members have made commitments to this campaign.

Rooted in Faith

We presented our annual stewardship commitment opportunity in October, and we shared information with members via weekly emails about giving. Our children and youth were given special stewardship information prepared by our Communications team. As we continue to encourage the congregation to see stewardship as a part of worship and spiritual growth, it is important that we instill these concepts into our children and youth as well.

As of our publication date, you have committed \$1,925,364.73 toward our 2026 budget of \$2 million.



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

What a year for FPC! The growth of this church has been exciting and such a blessing in a time when some of our fellow churches are facing a decline in membership and some even closing. God is certainly on the move at FPC. Our membership numbers continue to grow, as well as attendance in our Children's, Youth, Special Needs, and Young Adult ministries.

After facing the challenges of being out of room, we launched a Capital Campaign in September. You all responded to this call with gusto! We are proud to say we are very close to meeting our goal of \$2 million, a goal which could only be met through your giving hearts.

This year, we noticed a shift from General Giving to Committed Giving, resulting in a swing of \$100,000 in that direction. We value these commitments, as they allow us to more accurately budget for the upcoming year.

How We Give

We were blessed to receive an incredibly generous gift last year, which allowed us to open an endowment fund which will support our Special Needs Ministry. This fund has

already grown to \$3.5 million and will be available for an annual draw beginning in 2027 to fund salaries and expenses related to our Special Needs Ministry.

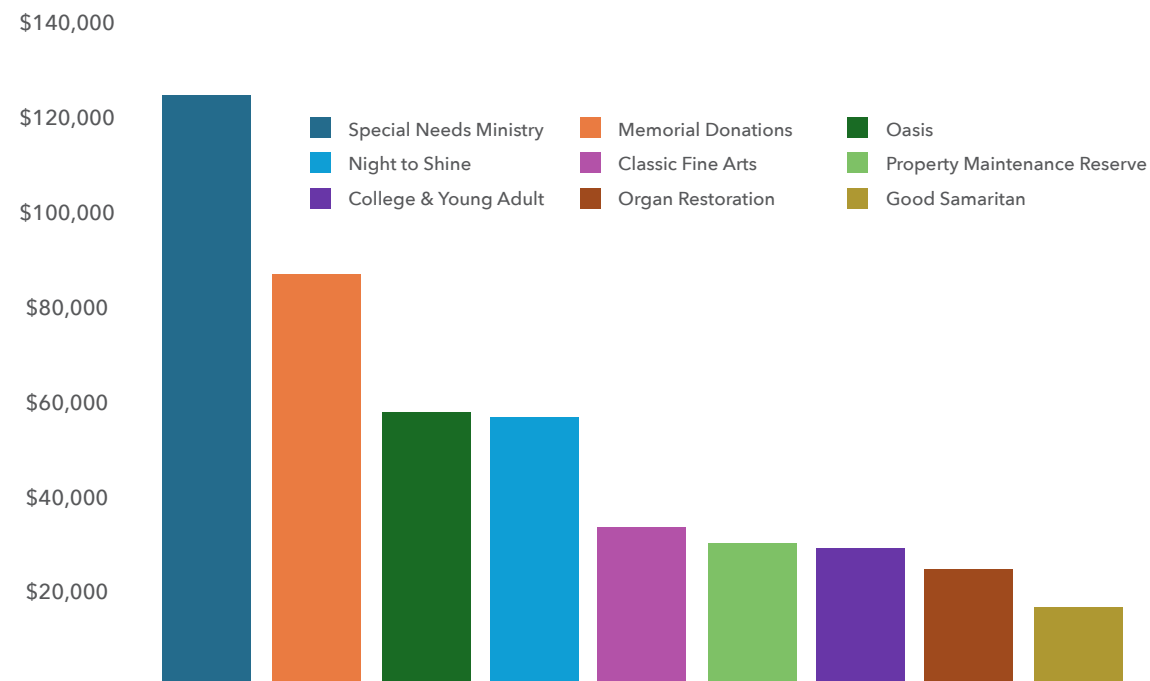
Additionally, the church has received funds to begin an endowment which will help to support the College and Young Adult Ministry.

Did You Know?

FPC holds eight endowments (soon to be nine) which fund various ministries and efforts within the church. These endowments allow us to function at the level we are, offering resources and activities we otherwise would not be able to offer. We are blessed to have such generosity within the FPC family.

In addition to donations to our Operating Budget (we refer to this as Annual Commitments and General Giving), many of you like to support specific ministries by donating to our restricted funds. These funds are not reflected in the operating budget and are able to hold a balance from year to year. Here is how you gave to these funds in 2025:

2025 GIVING TO RESTRICTED FUNDS



Demographics of Givers

Overall Age Statistics of Givers

- (for those with age listed)
- Average age: 65.7 years
 - Median age: 71 years
 - Youngest: 3
 - Oldest: 99

Age Distribution of Givers

- (of those with known age)
- 0-17: 1.6%
 - 18-29: 4.2%
 - 30-39: 4.7%
 - 40-49: 10.2%
 - 50-59: 10%
 - 60-69: 16.9%
 - 70-79: 29.4%
 - 80+: 23%

Gender Breakdown of Givers

- Female: 532 (60.5%)
- Male: 348 (39.5%)

Expenses

Ministry leaders, staff, elders, and volunteers understand FPC is a donor-supported church. As such, each expenditure is carefully considered as we strive to be the best stewards of the financial gifts we receive.

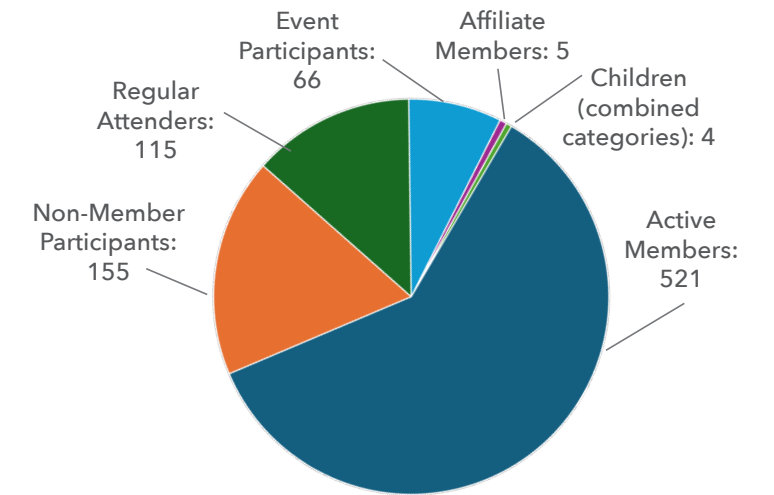
Fun Facts

The FPC family loves coffee and donuts! Even though we buy in bulk for a great price, we spent \$3,186 last year in coffee, \$500 for creamer, and more than \$9,100 for donuts! You helped offset this by donating \$2,231.

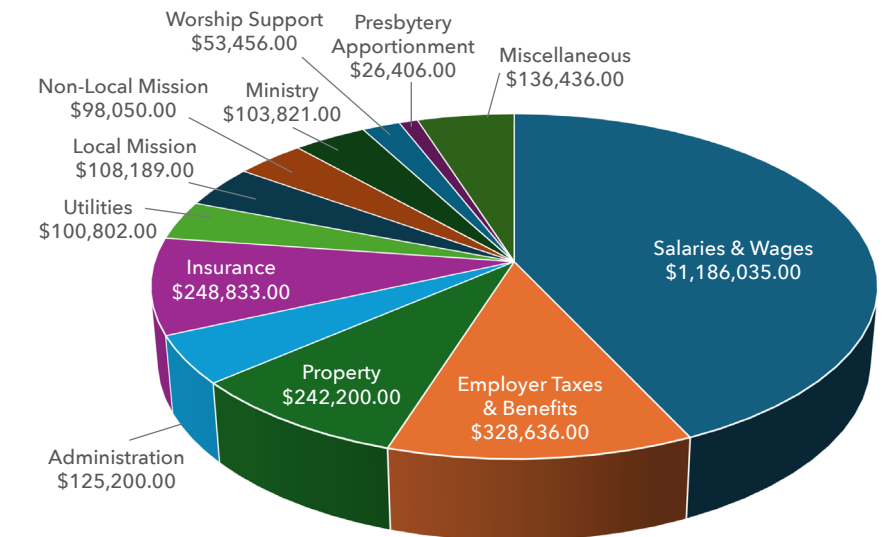
We have 25 bathrooms on property (do you know where they all are?). That means 42 toilets and urinals to clean on a daily basis. Thank a custodian the next time you see one of our facilities staff.

Our air conditioning units (all 35 of them!) have quarterly filter changes. This process typically takes two days.

GIVING BY MEMBERSHIP



TOTAL EXPENSES



■ Andrea Merritt
Director of Finance and Administration

Other Staff Members

Jackie Hansen, *Administrative Coordinator*
Susan DeLoach, *Financial Assistant*



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

175 Lake Hollingsworth Dr.
Lakeland, FL 33801
fpclakeland.org
863.686.7187