

An illustration featuring two hands, one light pink and one light purple, holding a large heart. The heart has a red outer border and a warm orange-to-red gradient center. Inside the heart, the text "Take hold of the life that really is life." is written in a white, cursive script. The hands are stylized with thick black outlines and are positioned as if gently cradling the heart. The background is a solid light gray.

*"Take hold of the life
that really
is life."*

2026 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
305 E Main St
DURHAM, NC 27701

www.firstpres-durham.org



Dear friends,

We are living in a world filled with uncertainty. Every day we encounter another story of tragedy, evil, or selfishness. The strength of our own hands is not enough to change it. We may not feel like we have any control, but God is still in control. How do we continue to do the good works of God in our community in times of chaos?

1 Timothy 6:17-19 encourages us to not set our hopes on the things of this world, but rather on God. We are called to take hold of the life that really is life!

But what is “real life” and what makes for a good, meaningful, or deeper life? How do we grasp it? It starts with intention. We center ourselves on God.

We consider God’s unconditional love for us and then we strive to emulate it. Pouring out love unconditionally on our church family, our neighbors, ourselves, and yes, even our enemies, we will find goodness in ourselves and the world around us.

We grasp life with our literal and figurative hands by serving communion, by holding the hands of the sick and bedridden, by preparing and bagging nourishment for a food pantry, by laying hands in prayer, and by restoring homes in communities ravaged by natural disaster. The goodness of God’s Kingdom is available to us all, through us, and it is not fleeting. Our church serves as God’s light in a darkening world. Our hands carry that light into the shadows.

The stewardship of our time, talents, and treasure is critical to supporting the work of FPC and its mission. Through generous giving by you and others, the annual stewardship campaign provides 91% of the money needed to support our annual operating budget. This budget employs the staff, maintains the facilities, funds our worship, educational programming, and fellowship, and supports over 20 ministries and organizations in our community.

Our 2026 Needs Budget is \$1.32 million (+ 7.5%) which represents the growth in our church and increasing costs. For those who have pledged in the past we ask you to consider a 5% increase in your 2026 pledge. For those who have not pledged before, we ask you to consider making a pledge this year as an act of discipleship and in support of the mission and ministries of our church.

Let us be a people unafraid to take hold of the life that really is life!

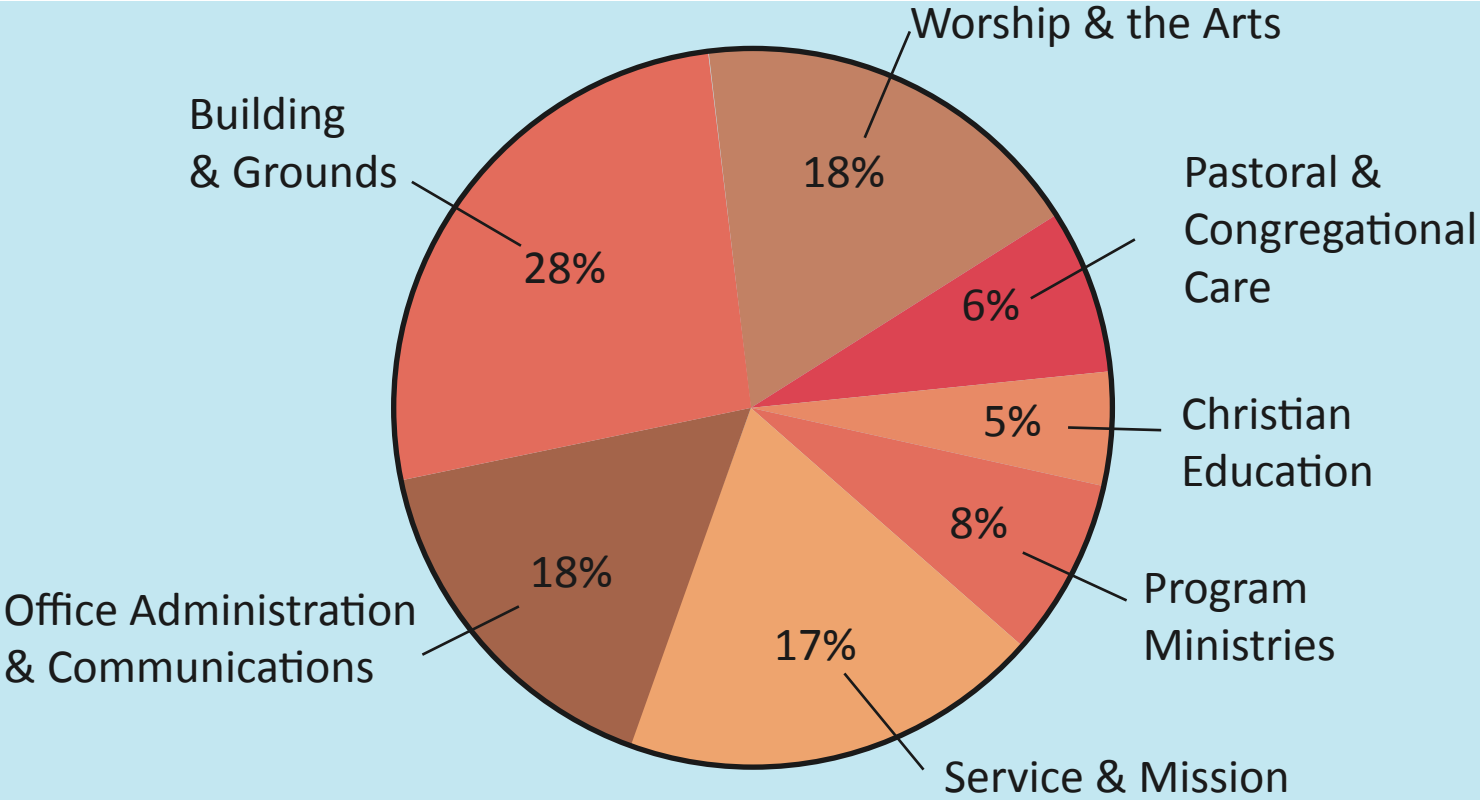


Peace be with you,
~ Mindy Douglas, Pastor/Head of Staff
~ Josh Walters, Stewardship Committee Chair

“Set their hopes
...on God, who
richly provides us
with everything for our
enjoyment. They are to do
good, to be rich in good works,
generous, and ready to share,
thus storing up for themselves the
treasure of a good foundation for the
future, so that they may take hold of
the life that really is life.”

1 Timothy 6:17-19

2026 Global Budget by Function



Your generous gifts enable our church to serve and share in myriad ways and according to our core values in God’s beloved community.



Number of households who pledged in 2025		
Amount	# of pledges	
\$1 to \$999	29	\$5,600
\$1,000 to \$1,999	36	average annual pledge
\$2,000 to \$2,999	24	\$3,200
\$3,000 to \$3,999	25	median annual pledge
\$4,000 to \$5,999	34	
\$6,000 to \$9,999	22	
\$10,000 to \$19,999	19	230
\$20,000 and above	8	families donated in 2025

197 pledging households and 33 non-pledging households have contributed in 2025, so far.



Community

I've been a member of ten different Presbyterian congregations throughout my life, and I've been called to ordained ministry four times—twice as a Deacon and twice as an Elder. Each congregation has shaped my faith in meaningful ways, but none has embraced me quite like First Presbyterian Church of Durham. As a gay man, the Presbyterian Church has not always been a welcoming place. But from the moment I first walked through the doors here, I felt something different: a deep, authentic welcome that reflected God's love in action.

This church doesn't just speak of inclusion—it practices it. The Journeys class has been one of the most enriching parts of my experience. The conversations are thoughtful, challenging, and full of grace. They reflect the diversity of thought, faith, and life experience that make this congregation so vibrant. It's a space where questions are welcomed, stories are honored, and faith is deepened.

Outside of worship and study, the First Friends potlucks and beach weekends have been joyous celebrations of community. These gatherings have helped me form friendships that feel like home. They are reminders that stewardship is not just about giving money, it's about giving ourselves to one another in love and support.

Even my husband Paul, who is not Presbyterian and not a member of First Presbyterian, has found a place here. He's felt the warmth of this community and was recently invited to display his pottery at the church's Arts Festival. That event, like so many others, was a celebration of creativity, connection, and shared joy. It's one more way this church lives out its values.

First Presbyterian embodies the truth of James 2:17: 'Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.' Here, faith is alive. It's visible in ministries of justice and compassion, in radical welcome, and in everyday acts of kindness. This is a church where love leads, where every person is valued, and where the Spirit moves through every ministry, every meal, and every moment of grace.

That's why we give. We give because Paul and I believe in what FPC is building together. We give because we want others—members and visitors alike—to experience the same welcome, the same joy, and the same sense of belonging that Paul and I have found here. As the hymn says, 'They'll know we are Christians by our love'—and here, that love is unmistakable. We hope you will join us in making a pledge to this year's campaign.

~ *Mason Essif*

Service & Mission

We choose to focus on what makes for good by actively engaging in service and mission opportunities at First Presbyterian Church. These include volunteering at Urban Ministries, assembling hygiene kits for our neighbors and exploring faith formation with our youth.

Service and mission is a significant part of the church's operating budget and depends on the active engagement of church members. Miguel has enjoyed volunteering with church members and has been humbled by his interactions with the homeless at Urban Ministries. We are fortunate to be members of a church that offers intergenerational opportunities for service and shows our boys that serving the Lord is a life-long journey.

Our pledge/tithe to First Presbyterian Church is given in gratitude to God and to support the mission and ministries of this church. We encourage you to join us in this support which allows for the creation of a meaningful life that impacts the present and lays the foundation for future missions.



~ Miguel, Amy, Alex & Carlos Sanchez

Emanuel Food Pantry



750

families served
weekly

18+

FPC weekly
volunteers

2000

FPC volunteer
hours annually

Emanuel Learning Center



40+

students tutored
annually

8

FPC tutors

35

Other tutors



Inclusion & Welcome

It's been nearly a year since we attended our first service at First Presbyterian. We were at the start of our journey to find a spiritual home, and we were nervous that we wouldn't find the right fit, that we wouldn't know anyone, and that we'd have a hard time finding somewhere that aligned with our values. One by one, Pastor Mindy addressed each and

every one of our concerns from the pulpit. It felt like she was speaking directly to us. The community was incredibly welcoming and so many members went above and beyond to make us feel that we belonged. On the drive home we knew that we'd found our place. A few months later we were proud to be welcomed as members.

Since joining, we've found fellowship and friendship through The Somethings and the Men of Faith Breakfast. It is one of the great joys of our life to be able to support the mission and ministries of our church.

We live in uncertain times, to put it mildly. It is now more important than ever to live our values, which include welcoming and including all who come to our community. Giving people a sense of belonging is what the ministers and members of First Presbyterian know how to do very well. And in doing so, they engage people in the truest sense.

Everything we give to First Presbyterian, whether it's time or tithe, we get back tenfold. We are fortunate that we can increase our stewardship pledge in the coming year. If you are able, we ask you to consider doing the same. Whatever you can contribute, time or tithe, always helps.

~ Zack Czajkowski & Sarah Cunningham

Meetings



33 community organizations & groups used FPC meeting spaces in 2025

Worship & Faith Formation

When I moved to Durham seven years ago, I knew that finding the right church worship-wise was going to be a challenge. I had taught preaching and worship in seminaries for years, and my standards were high. I wanted a church where the preaching was rooted in the Biblical text, prophetically challenging, and was well prepared and delivered. I wanted a church where the prayers, hymns and other worship elements were selected in relation to the central worship themes, giving worship a cohesive unity. I wanted a church where the instrumental and choral music were inspiring and the organist knew how to lead us in congregational song. I wanted a church where the language was inclusive in relation to God and to humans, and where my feminist daughter and her feminist mother could worship without cringing. And I wanted a church where my African American grandchildren would know, beyond a doubt, they are beloved children of God.



Is it any wonder that all it took was a couple of visits to FPC, and I knew I had found my new church home?

These days as I sit in the pew with my Episcopal priest husband (who struggles with illness and deeply values our worship); our two young grandboys--who lustily sing the Alleluias, love Communion Sundays, and head out after worship to give their pastors big hugs; and my daughter, Leonora; I often think of my mother, Leonora Cousar Tubbs, for whom she is named. Absolutely nothing made Mom happier than to look down the pew on Sunday morning and see her own children and grandchildren being traditioned in the faith she loved so dearly. I am definitely channeling my mother these days!

And so, as Mom and Dad first taught me to do when I was a child, I will make my tithes and offerings to my church this year out of a heart filled with gratitude for the incredible worship that sustains, uplifts, and guides our family. I hope you will join me in doing the same!

~ *Nora Tubbs Tisdale, Alfred Tisdale, Leonora Tisdale, Robeson & Langston Tisdale Jennings*





SCAN ME

To pledge online,
scan this QR code

www.firstpres-durham.org

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