11. Why not simply use reserves or endowment funds from our Foundation?

Church leadership reviewed several possible funding approaches, including the use of reserves, Foundation resources, and a capital campaign model. Guidance from the Foundation Board, Finance Committee, and other leadership groups supported a campaign approach in order to preserve long-term financial stability, maintain healthy reserves, provide needed project cash flow over time, and invite broad congregational participation in the stewardship of these projects. Foundation participation and other funding sources may still play a role as plans are finalized.

Our different funds serve different purposes:

- **The Foundation** uses income generated by its endowed funds, while protecting principal, to support church ministries and organizations serving our community. This year it is providing nearly $500,000 in grants and distributions, including $400,000 toward our annual ministry budget. That $400,000 is already included in the approximately $2 million budget. Other support includes local FUMC ministries, our medical and dental mission in Guatemala, and community grants, such as our$36,000 for Good Samaritan Clinic in 2026. The funds are held by the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas and invested by WesPath.
- **The Trustee Fund** is designed to resource projects larger than our usual maintenance budget. It historically received Foundation income, after the twin impacts of COVID and denominational disaffiliation, we have needed those dollars in the annual ministry budget, reducing our ability to accumulate resources for larger property Trustee projects. The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas holds these funds separately from endowed FSFUMC Foundation accounts.
- **Our Merrill Lynch CDs** serve as reserves and operating "float," providing a cushion between income and expenses if needed.
- **Our church bank account** includes memorial funds and other restricted gifts that must be used for their designated purposes. The total bank balance therefore does not represent unrestricted money available for capital projects.

Participation and Next Steps

12. How does a capital campaign work?

Each household in the church is invited to pray about making a special "second mile" commitment, beyond regular giving, to support these long-term improvements and generational maintenance needs. These commitments are made for a defined period, typically three years, allowing families to give intentionally and in manageable ways over time. Many of the facility projects have been sitting on our to-do list for a few years. When we come together in this shared commitment, we are able to move forward on needs that would otherwise take many years to address.

The giving schedule can be adapted to a household's circumstances. Please coordinate a different schedule or a stock gift with the church finance office.

13. What is the campaign timeline, and how will leadership participate?

The campaign will include preparation, leadership giving, and congregational phases. Church leadership will participate early through an Advance Gifts Phase, helping to set the pace, demonstrate commitment, and build momentum for the campaign.

We are using a rolling approach: initial lead gifts, an advance gifts gathering to help set the tone and trajectory, and then leadership participation through our Sunday school classes throughout October and November. We will invite the whole congregation to participate in January and February 2027. Early commitments will help clarify what is possible and provide a stronger basis for planning the work.

The standard commitment period is three years beginning July 1, 2027. We recognize that individual circumstances differ. Some households may desire a five year schedule, while others may prefer to make a single gift, such as a gift of stock timed in consultation with their financial or tax adviser. The commitment card is designed to provide flexibility. Contact the church finance office if you have any questions.

14. How do I decide what I should give in this capital campaign?

Begin with prayer, asking how God is calling you to participate. For most of us, a commitment like this involves intentional choices. It often means giving in a way that reflects priority and purpose, not just what is left over. We invite you to consider what it would look like to make a meaningful commitment over time, one that reflects both gratitude for what God has done and a desire to invest in what God will do next through this church. This is how this congregation has moved forward across generations, and now we have the opportunity to do the same.

15. How much, on average, are we expecting each family to commit?

Every gift matters. We do not approach the campaign by calculating an average gift because our congregation reflects a wide range of financial circumstances. Our goal is not equal giving, but equal sacrifice. Those with greater financial capacity are able to give more, while others give at levels appropriate to their situation. When each person prayerfully responds according to their ability, the collective impact is significant.

16. My family is in financial distress right now. How can I help in the campaign?

This campaign invites a "second-mile" gift, above and beyond regular giving that sustains the church's ongoing ministry. We recognize that financial circumstances vary, and we do not want a campaign commitment to come at the expense of a household's essential needs or its regular support of the church.

We invite each household to prayerfully discern whether and how to participate. Some may feel called to make a financial commitment; others may be unable to give or may discern that this campaign is not where they are called to direct their resources. We respect that discernment. A campaign gift is not a measure of anyone's faithfulness or belonging in this church. Whether or not you make a financial commitment, we welcome your prayers for the church, the campaign, and the ministry we share.

Leadership Phase Edition
October 2026

DOWNTOWN
FOR GOOD

Capital Campaign Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose and Ministry

1. What is this campaign about, and how does it connect to our mission?

This campaign, "Downtown for Good," is a capital campaign focused on generational maintenance, accessibility, and strategic facility improvements at the Downtown Campus of Fort Smith First United Methodist Church. Our goal is to care well for the facilities entrusted to us so they can continue to support worship, ministry, and mission for generations to come.

The name "Downtown for Good" carries a double meaning: our enduring commitment to downtown Fort Smith and our calling to serve the good of our neighbors and our city. Caring for our campus helps us continue living out that commitment through worship, ministry, hospitality, and service.

These projects are about being careful stewards of the sacred spaces we have received and preparing them for those who will come after us. No new buildings or outside debt are planned as part of this campaign.

This campaign supports our mission to be a grace-filled community that serves neighbors with compassion, welcomes all with open hearts and minds, and grows disciples of Jesus Christ. Our facilities are tools for that mission, and this effort helps ensure they remain strong and ready for the future.

2. Why are we doing this now?

Addressing these needs now allows the church to act proactively rather than waiting for more costly emergency repairs in the future. Many of our facilities are decades old, with some over 100 years old, and require intentional investment to remain safe, functional, and welcoming. In June 2026, upon recommendation of the Trustees, Finance Committee, and the FSFUMC Foundation, the Administrative Board voted to move forward with a capital campaign to address these generational maintenance needs that the Trustees have identified. This campaign is about stewardship of our existing facilities and generational maintenance of the sacred spaces we have inherited: maintaining what previous generations built, addressing long-term needs responsibly, ensuring accessibility for all, and preparing our campus for future ministry.

2. Why invest in the Downtown Campus when sanctuary attendance is smaller than in past generations?

This campaign is not about preserving a building simply because it is old, nor is it an attempt to recreate a previous era of church life. The ministry of a church campus is measured by far more than attendance at a single worship service. Throughout the year, the Downtown Campus serves as a place of worship, community concerts, outreach, discipleship, and gathering space for both the church and the wider Fort Smith community. While the patterns of ministry and attendance have changed across generations, these spaces continue to support vibrant ministry every week and remain an important part of our shared mission and identity as a congregation. This effort is about stewarding those spaces responsibly, addressing long-term needs before they become more costly, improving accessibility, and preparing the campus to serve future generations faithfully.

4. How does this campaign relate to our East Campus?

Fort Smith First United Methodist Church is now one church with two campuses, and both are actively used for worship, ministry, fellowship, and community outreach. Over the last year, we have made a significant investment in adopting the former Faith United Methodist Church, remodeling that campus for ministry today, and relaunching it as our East Campus. That work has expanded our reach and created new opportunities for ministry in the River Valley.

However, this campaign is focused on the Downtown Campus, where many of our buildings are decades old, with some now over 100 years old, and require intentional generational maintenance and accessibility improvements. This is not about choosing one campus over another. It is about stewarding each campus well in its season.

Downtown
Fort Smith First
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

www.fsfumc.org/capitalcampaign

Fort Smith First
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Serving Neighbors
Welcoming All
Growing Disciples

Projects and Decisions

5. What projects are included?

Projects currently under consideration fall into five categories:

- **Preserve Our Church Home:** Repair and repaint the sanctuary ceiling, including the extensive scaffolding required, and address masonry, roofing, window casings, and other needs that protect our historic buildings.
- **Preserve Our Organ:** Complete the major maintenance and restoration needed approximately every half century to preserve this treasured instrument for generations to come.
- **Welcome Our Neighbors:** Improve accessibility at our 15th Street entrances, renew the parking lot, and add exterior signage and interior wayfinding.
- **Upgrade Technology for Worship and Ministry:** Modernize sound and technology in the Sanctuary and audiovisual systems in the Great Hall, equipping our spaces for worship, community concerts, events, and ministry.
- **Strengthen the Trustee Fund:** Prepare for future repairs and keep our facilities safe, welcoming, and ready for ministry.

Final project scope will be determined based on pledged commitments. Some projects may be completed in full and others in part.

6. What is the total financial goal?

The preliminary campaign goal during this Advance Gifts and Leadership Phase is $1,875,000, reflecting the estimated cost of prioritized projects. This goal provides a starting point for our shared effort. The $1,875,000 goal is a planning benchmark, not necessarily a ceiling.

If advance commitments are stronger than projected, the church may be able to engage more fully (and possibly complete more) of the work identified across the five project categories. Strong early participation could position the campaign to move beyond $2 million.

The commitments received during the leadership phase and then the public phase beginning in January 2027 will help determine how much work can be fully accomplished across the five project categories.

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Pledge Card

7. Will all projects be completed if we fall short of the goal?

We will follow a priority-based approach. The Trustees will determine the final list, scope, and timing based on pledged commitments, prioritizing the most critical and time-bound needs (Sanctuary Ceiling and Organ). Final decisions will be made after commitments are received.

This is not a new building with an architect's plan and a single bid. It includes multiple baskets of projects. Trustees will determine the full extent of improvements, maintenance, and restoration based on the commitments received. Some projects may be completed in full and others in part. If commitments fall below the goal, projects will be prioritized, and some may be delayed or scaled back. Likewise, strong early participation could position the campaign to move beyond $2 million.

8. How will decisions be made about the prioritization of projects and final spending?

Final decisions will be guided by total commitments received, project priorities, and guidance from Trustees, Finance, and leadership teams. All decisions will reflect good stewardship and transparency.

Within that process, trustees will determine the full extent of improvements, maintenance, and restoration based on the commitments received, with some projects completed in full and others in part.

9. What happens if we exceed the goal?

If commitments exceed our goals, the additional gifts will go to the Trustee Fund for future facility needs.

Financial Resources

10. How is this campaign fund different from the annual budget?

This campaign is separate from the church's annual operating budget, and all funds raised for the capital campaign are exempt from the conference apportionments.Annual Fund giving supports ministry, staffing, and day-to-day operations, while capital campaign giving supports long-term facility needs and improvements. Both are essential to the church's life and ministry.

Our annual ministry budget is approximately **$2 million**, including **$575,000 for maintenance, utilities, and property care**. In addition, trustee resources support repairs and property projects. Some projects have been delayed because they are generational needs, such as major organ restoration, or are larger than one year's regular budget can reasonably accommodate. These are the kinds of needs for which we must accumulate resources over time or undertake a special giving effort.