

The First Presbyterian Church

1324 Marion Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

November 12, 2020

Dear Church Family,

It is almost Thanksgiving already; what a year it has been! 2020 will be remembered as one of the strangest years of our lives. There have been some considerable challenges, and I could not be prouder of our ministry staff. Everyone has gone the second mile to reach out to you, our dear church family. As we slowly and carefully attempt to return to normalcy again, we are thankful that the Lord has, thus far, largely spared our church from COVID-19. We will continue to pray that the words of the Psalmist will be our refrain: “for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy” (Psalm 63:7).

I write to you in order to provide you with some important information on our giving, both for this year and our projected budget for 2021.

We project to end this year with a surplus, as we typically do. However, the projected income for this year will fall short of the budgeted income. How will we have a surplus, you ask? Because, due to COVID-19, most of our ministries spent far less than they had anticipated. Some of our ministries have spent around 30% or less of their budget this year. In other areas, such as our audio/visual department, we used non-budgeted funds to purchase much-needed equipment to create all the online videos and podcasts we produce. We are so grateful that we have had the resources to minister to and encourage our congregation during this year. In other words, even with a projected surplus for this year, our overall giving is down.

The Bridge was a wonderful gift of the Lord for First Presbyterian Church. Anyone who walks into the building immediately appreciates the warm, welcoming atmosphere of the Coffee Shop. We are so looking forward to seeing it filled with college students again! The building has been such a blessing to our staff and to the many ministries who use it on a regular basis. In my forty-two years of ministry, this building has been, by far, the most attractive to work in. As I write, we still need just over \$400,000 to pay off the loan for The Bridge. It would be a considerable blessing for 2021 if this were to be paid off sooner rather than later.

Let's look ahead to 2021. As we continue to carefully bring back ministry programs and events that were suspended due to COVID-19, we are also hopeful for new ministry opportunities in the upcoming year. What expansions of ministry would we like to see? Among others, the following:

- Our Local Missions Committee would love to provide more support for our local Columbia ministries, all of whom are dependent on giving from churches like ours.
- We have a considerable desire to improve our giving to World Missions.

- This year of producing videos and podcasts has shown us that we need some expertise in audio/visual matters and, for that, we need to hire a technical specialist to ensure quality productions for our church body and others who have tuned into First Presbyterian Church.
- COVID-19 has seriously disrupted our rhythms, and I anticipate that extra attention will need to be given to one-on-one discipleship to bring everyone back to church again.

These new opportunities represent a desire to continue growing the ministry of First Presbyterian Church. What does this mean financially? Without going into technicalities, our preliminary budget for 2021 is impacted by what we project the giving to be for 2020. Since we anticipate the income for 2020 to be less than expected, it affects our budget planning for 2021.

In order to meet our current ministry needs and allow for increases in specific areas, we need to raise just over \$600,000 to meet our projected 2021 budget. That is not small change.

I am, therefore, asking you to pray about these two specific matters:

- Paying off The Bridge loan (approximately \$400,000).
- Raising the shortfall in the anticipated giving for next year (approximately \$600,000).

Our Budget Reconciliation Committee plans to meet on November 30, and there is, therefore, some urgency in my request.

If you have yet to pledge for 2021, may I urge you to do so? You may pledge online (www.firstprescolumbia.org/pledgecard). You may also send your pledge by mail or bring it to the church.

Thank you for your partnership with us in the gospel. Without generous givers like you, our church cannot have the impact on ministry in our community and beyond in the manner that we desire.

How can I ask you to pray for something that seems a considerable challenge? Because the Lord "...is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think..." (Ephesians 3:20).

Thank you for the privilege of serving you as your Senior Minister.

Yours in the bonds of the gospel,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek W.H. Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Derek W.H. Thomas