

FPC Family,

It has been two years since we kicked off our *Here to Serve* campaign and guiding vision. So much has changed in our communities, city, and world, but thanks to your faithfulness and generosity, FPC has remained well-positioned to adjust to the changing needs of our church community. As we move from summer to fall and begin the last four months of our giving campaign, I want to provide a status on our *Here to Serve* initiatives, share details on our ministry activities, and encourage you to continue in partnership with us as we work to Finish Strong.

Before I dive in, I want to provide a quick update on Marta and me. As many of you have heard, my summer was going along spectacularly until I tore my Achilles' tendon playing pickleball. The surgery that ensued was successful, but I'm still in the "limited mobility" phase of my recovery, and therefore accessorized with either a pair of crutches or knee scooter everywhere I go. God's gift of yet another opportunity to learn patience and to be content resting in Him! If you don't have "compassion fatigue" after 18 months of Birchfield health calamities, I would appreciate your prayers for a complete recovery and for my amazing life partner and caregiver, Marta, who has tirelessly cared for me through this season. Despite my latest challenge, I am pleased to share that the Birchfield clan was able to meet last month for a long-anticipated gathering of our family in New England and all are doing well and in good health.

HERE TO SERVE INITIATIVES

As we shared in the summer update, our staff and committees have been working steadily to complete projects identified as critical to our vision of continuing the legacy of FPC as a church here for the future, for our neighborhood, and for our city. Below is a quick progress report on the projects currently underway:

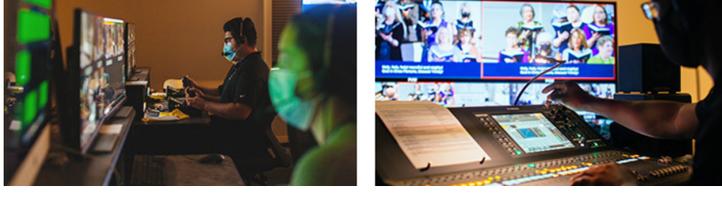
Children's Spaces



Remodel of the first and basement floors of the CE wing (nearest the Oakdale entrance) to create new worship and ministry spaces for our Elementary and Pre-teen students is well underway. These areas are slated to open in late November.

Technology Upgrades

Control Room A: Sanctuary



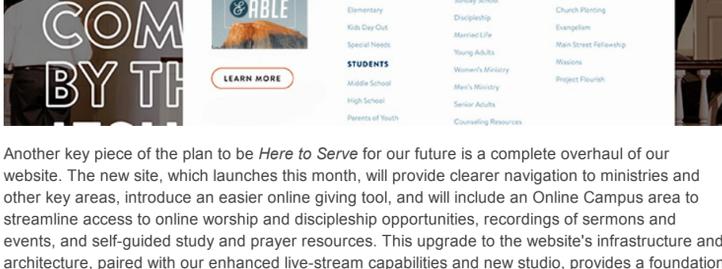
Our *Here to Serve* technology project list included a total upgrade and expansion of the Sanctuary control room, new Sanctuary cameras, and the addition of an audio and video studio. The original control room is located on the second floor of the CE wing across from the Worship ministry's music library, and the upgrade involves expanding to an adjacent classroom. To avoid interruption of live stream capabilities, this upgrade was scoped as a three-phase project:

- **Phase One:** Buildout of a temporary control room (shown in photos) and installation of new Sanctuary cameras and control room equipment to provide for an upgraded live stream experience as quickly as possible. Use of the interim space also allows for the demo and remodel of the existing Control Room space to occur without impact to the weekly worship service and the option for families to stream weddings and memorial services. Phase one was completed in early August and has been in use for the last four Sundays.
- **Phase Two:** Construction of the new control room space and installation of the upgraded equipment currently in the temporary control room. Target Completion: January 2022
- **Phase Three:** Construction of an audio and video studio to allow for the recording of digital content such as podcasts, discipleship content, devotional materials, and pastoral messages. The studio will be located in the space currently in use as the temporary control room. Target Completion: Spring 2022

Control Room B: Grand Hall

In our previous communication, we also shared photos of a smaller-scale control room built early this year to provide live-streaming capabilities from our Grand Hall. This new control room, located in a repurposed room in Palm Court, has been fully operational since April and used weekly to stream our Contemporary Worship Service and other events and activities that occur in that room.

Investment in Digital Experience & Content



Another key piece of the plan to be *Here to Serve* for our future is a complete overhaul of our website. The new site, which launches this month, will provide clearer navigation to ministries and other key areas, introduce an easier online giving tool, and will include an Online Campus area to streamline access to online worship and discipleship opportunities, recordings of sermons and events, and self-guided study and prayer resources. This upgrade to the website's infrastructure and architecture, paired with our enhanced live-stream capabilities and new studio, provides a foundation to support the evolving requirement for FPC ministries to provide content that can be utilized in-person, online, or a mix of both. A more detailed communication about the site redesign will be sent when the site launches.

Welcoming Spaces

When the *Here to Serve* committee articulated the initial vision and plan, they identified the need to connect the community within FPC with the neighborhood that surrounds it. In the initial proposal, we shared a number of projects designed to encourage those passing by our campus to stay and explore and help those entering as guests to feel welcome and easily connect into the flow of our community. The financial impact of COVID-19 meant that we had to scale back some of these plans. However, we have still managed to prioritize many of these projects to help build upon the goal of cultivating a "before the door" culture, which means that our love of Christ and our desire to make both members and guests feel welcomed into our community begins from the first point of entry to our campus, whether this occurs in the parking lot or walking from one of the many adjacent locations in the neighborhood. Some of the updates you will notice over the next few months include:

Outdoor Spaces That Invite You In



- Repaved North Lot and improved safety lighting
- Updated wayfinding signage surrounding the building
- A new green space outside the North Entrance of the Sanctuary
- Refresh of the south parking area and the interface between the two adjacent MFAH buildings

Indoor Spaces That Create Low-Barrier Opportunities to Connect With Our Community



- Palm Court: Refresh of space, expanded seating, and more accessible Welcome Desk
- Oak Court: Expanded Narthex and fellowship spaces near the Sanctuary
- Campus-wide: Painting and updates to interior wayfinding signage

Investments in People and Key Audiences

Across all our *Here to Serve* priorities, we identified the need to invest in people (both staff and lay leaders) and key community groups. In addition to the physical investments detailed above, we have also advanced our goal of investing in the individuals and key audiences that will either influence or be touched by our vision to be a church *Here to Serve*:

- Reorganization of ministry departments to create a Next Gen Discipleship team comprised of Youth, College, and Young Adult Ministries and approval for additional staff resources to support these community groups
- A continued emphasis on church planting and evangelism ministries like Alpha and other seeker-friendly programming through increased staff resources
- A reallocation of the operating budget to provide additional resources to these ministry teams who serve community groups that will soon lead, support, and serve the global church.

We are excited to see these projects progressing and hope you are both pleased and encouraged by the results of your commitment to the *Here to Serve* vision campaign. The "one fund" approach we adopted for this two-year period, which allowed us to use a single fund for both campaign projects and two years of operating expenses, proved to be beneficial, particularly over the last eighteen months when COVID forced us to revisit priorities and the allocation of resources mid-course. We are grateful for your continued commitment.

FALL AT FPC

Looking ahead to the fall, you have likely seen the announcements that our annual "Fall Kick-Off Ministry Fair & Fellowship" has moved to October 3 to coincide with our Annual Meeting. The current rise in Covid cases is expected to peak in mid-September, so we have moved the Fair and Fellowship to coincide with another Sunday that typically features an all-church format. Though the Fair and Fellowship will be delayed, our fall ministry activities will begin soon, including a new Discipleship series entitled, *Called & Able*, a study designed to help us discover not only how we can make disciples but also how in Christ we have all that we need to follow Jesus and lead others on their journey to do the same. To learn more about this study, our fall sermon series, *An Invitation to a Journey*, and upcoming events and activities, please take a moment to visit our [Fall at FPC](#) page. There you will also find the latest information on our Sunday morning schedule and our campus hours.

COMMITTED TO A STRONG FINISH

Finally, friends, I want to share my deepest gratitude for your commitment to our *Here to Serve* vision and giving campaign. There are so many exciting things happening on campus right now, and they all tie directly to your partnership and investment in this vision. Your commitment to being a church *Here to Serve* this neighborhood, this city, and future generations is clearly evident.

Giving Update

With that in mind, as we enter the last four months of our giving campaign, I ask that we all prayerfully commit to a strong finish. Currently, we are at 79% percent of our campaign goal*, with roughly \$5.1M needed to reach our target of \$24.3M (reduced from \$28M to adjust for the financial impacts resulting from COVID). It will take all of us to reach the pledged goal and we need your help.

Ways You Can Help FPC Finish Strong

- **Stay the Course:** If you have been able to remain faithful to your pledge, despite the challenges of COVID, please stay the course. If possible, we'd love to have you continue at your increased giving level through the end of 2022.
- **Join Us:** If you joined the FPC community after the start of the *Here to Serve* vision campaign and were unaware that you could participate, join us. It's not too late to participate in the journey. [Make a new pledge](#) and help us finish strong!
- **Recommit:** Has your financial landscape changed since your original pledge? Do you need to adjust it up or down? We understand. Take a moment to update your commitment and join us as we build on the plan to be a church committed to this neighborhood, our city, and the future generations we have been placed here to serve. [Click here](#) to update your pledge.
- **Complete Your Sacrificial Gift:** Did your pledge to the campaign include a one-time Sacrificial Gift that you have not yet completed? Have you been blessed in an unexpected way and now wish to add a one-time gift? We'd love to have you complete that gift before the end of December, or pledge to complete it in 2022. [Click here](#) to request info about your commitment or to update your original pledge.

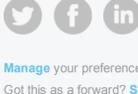
Again, it is truly a blessing to be a part of a community so faithful to God's call to serve those around them. I have truly missed being with all of you this summer and look forward to seeing you soon as we continue this journey together. To see more photos from our HTS projects, visit [Life @ FPC](#).

Yours in Christ,

Jim Birchfield, Senior Pastor



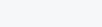
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