



STEPPING STONES; Strategic Directions for 2030

Long-Range Planning Task Force

Strategic Direction #1 of 4 Belonging and Connections

Strengthen a culture of belonging by intentionally building relationships through a community of welcome and care. Foster deeper engagement, meaningful connections, and shared faith development so that all who participate in the life of Fort Hill may experience authentic Christian community.

Goal 1.1 – Fellowship Ministry

Cultivate Small Congregational Groups

Cultivate a variety of small congregational groups focused on spiritual formation, service, and relational growth that foster connection, care, and discipleship.

1.1 Action Steps

- Establish clear inventory of active small congregational groups.
- Increase the total number of small congregational groups.
- Increase the observable number of Fort Hill disciples who report finding connection and support through participation in small congregational groups.

Goal 1.2 – Personnel & Program Support Ministry

Strengthen Digital Communication

Better share meaningful faith stories that reflect how we glorify God, grow disciples, and meet human needs through strengthened engagement online, in worship, and in person while increasing awareness of opportunities to grow, worship, and serve.

1.2 Action Steps

- Develop new website and update it regularly.
- Establish a branding and communications protocol and curate Fort Hill's digital presence.
- Establish baseline website and social media metrics and achieve consistent annual growth in engagement through 2030.
- Expand digital communication efforts to include podcasts, short-form video, and any other emerging platforms that may support connection, formation, and outreach.
- Create a Communications and Media Director position.

Goal 1.3 – Membership Ministry

Invite Deeper Commitment to Community

Be intentional in outreach to new disciples who desire to worship, serve, and grow in faith and continue to engage those already here as we “share the good news joyfully.”

1.3 Action Steps

- Grow active membership by 40 new members annually.
- Membership ministry makes personal contacts weekly.
- Deacons self-report and celebrate contact with membership frequency.

Goal 1.4 – Board of Deacons

Provide Meaningful Engagement and Pastoral Care for Aging Adults

Provide intentional engagement, care, and opportunities for spiritual growth among older adults and retirees, a growing part of our community.

1.4 Action Steps

- Strengthen Circles of Care by intentionally deepening relationships and communal support.
- Increase active retirees involved in classes, small groups, service, and activities to 50% of disciples over 60 years of age.
- Provide programs which support care for aging members (i.e. Aging Gracefully Series).
- Extend worship connection to those unable to attend, including engagement through residential community Bible studies, home-based communion, and other off-site gatherings.
- Develop intentional practices that connect homebound members to the ongoing life of the church at least monthly through regular communication, shared elements of worship, and acts of care and encouragement (i.e. random acts of kindness, bulletins, and/or service highlights).
- Continue to host a celebration for members age 90+ to honor their faith, legacy, and contributions to the church.

Strategic Direction #2 of 4

Bridging Generations for Faith Formation

Support vibrant Christian faith formation that nurtures disciples of all ages and deepens relationships with Christ and one another. Encourage intergenerational learning, worship, and service in ways that strengthen the bonds of community and help each generation grow together on the journey of faith.

Goal 2.1 – Discipleship Ministry

Strengthen Lifelong Faith Formation

“Making disciples” which inspires transformation to live the faith in word and action with focus on adults and families with children and youth.

2.1 Action Steps

- Complete outdoor recreation space in backyard that is accessible and safe for children and those with mobility concerns.
- Expand the number of adult volunteers prepared to serve children and youth on their journey of faith and discipleship.
- Develop faith formation initiatives for parents of young children like preparation for baptism and milestones like worship education, bible presentation, and more.
- Increase the percentage of 6 through 12th grade youth participation to 75%.
- Increase the proportion of the congregation participating in faith formation offerings.
- Increase engagement with Montreat Conference Center and Camp Fellowship as vital extensions of Fort Hill’s discipleship ministry, offering opportunities for spiritual formation, leadership development, and renewal for all ages.
- Assess weekly facilities utilization and determine what space is required to expand faith formation activities.
- Explore engagement opportunities with preschool families.

Goal 2.2 – Worship Ministry

Provide Worship that Inspires and Transforms

Provide worship which inspires and transforms through Word, Sacrament, Music, and the Arts.

2.2 Action Steps

- Expand worship related digital ministry to further engage online worshipers and extend worship beyond Sunday to throughout the week for all congregants.
- Increase worship participation with our three Sunday services (online, early and late worship).
- Increase efforts to encourage disciples to “pray daily” and “worship weekly”
- Explore the thoughtful use of drama, music, and creative arts to enrich worship.

Goal 2.3 – University Ministry

Engage Students and the University Community

Strengthen Fort Hill’s engagement with students and university community through faith formation, witness, pastoral care, and opportunities for leadership and service.

2.3 Action Steps

- Increase number of adults engaged with students whether as mentors or connector families.
 - Cultivate an active community of at least 100 undergraduate and graduate students who are regularly engaged in the life of University Ministry through programs, worship, music, or ongoing relationships.
 - Develop student leadership and outreach.
 - Offer faith-based lecture series that engage students, faculty, and congregants in theological reflection and meaningful conversation.
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Strategic Direction #3 of 4

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Live as a light on a hill by meeting human needs and promoting human flourishing within our community and beyond. Strengthen and expand partnerships with local and global organizations, offering compassion, service, and social healing as expressions of God's love in the world.

Goal 3.1 – Christian Action Ministry

Address Mental Health Needs

Support mental health and emotional well-being within the congregation and the wider community through partnerships, education, and passionate care.

3.1 Action Steps

- Support the opening of Healing Bridges Counseling Center.
- Expand participation in Deacon-led mental health awareness and training initiatives, including services such as Blue Christmas and ongoing support groups.
- Increase support to Clemson Free Clinic by 25%.
- Add \$3,000 Healing Bridges Counseling Center to our CAM/Benevolences.

Goal 3.2 – Christian Action Ministry

Support Housing Stability

Partner with local organizations working to ensure access to safe, stable, and affordable housing for individuals and families in need.

3.2 Action Steps

- Increase financial support by 25% for partner organizations that provide safety, nourishment, and stable housing for children, families, and individuals, including Habitat for Humanity, Helping Hands Shelter, Our Daily Rest, Clemson Community Care, Family Promise, the Shaw Center, Ripple of One, Safe Harbor, and Thornwell.
- Identify Fort Hill disciples currently serving with these mission partners and increase participation to 25% of membership.

Goal 3.3 – Christian Action Ministry

Respond to Food Insecurity

Demonstrate compassion through service and generosity toward neighbors who do not have access to sufficient food.

3.3 Action Steps

- Increase financial support by 25% for partner organizations that provide emergency food for those who lack access to sufficient food such as Meals on Wheels, Our Daily Bread, and Clemson Community Care.
- Identify Fort Hill disciples already serving with these mission partners and grow participation to 25% of membership.

Goal 3.4 – Christian Action Ministry

Encourage Hands-On Mission

Encourage disciples to participate actively in service and mission as a regular expression of discipleship.

3.4 Action Steps

- Create and promote hands-on mission opportunities for youth and adults locally and internationally.
- Develop our disaster response team with co-leaders.
- Make mission trips financially affordable to families and college students through scholarships provided in budgets of Youth and CAM.

Goal 3.5 – Planning Ministry

Foster Racial Reconciliation and Dialogue

Promote understanding, reconciliation, and faithful dialogue in accordance with Fort Hill's antiracism policy.

3.5 Action Steps

- Host an annual learning event for youth and adults.
- Integrate awareness and education into all our age groups.
- Develop a partnership with local African American congregations to build relationships.
- Host a collaborative choir concert with a predominantly African American church, followed by a shared meal and opportunity for fellowship.

Goal 3.6 – Christian Action Ministry

Deepen International Mission Partnerships

Strengthen Fort Hill's global witness through sustained relationships with international mission partners.

3.6 Action Steps

- Strengthen and maintain relationships with existing international mission partners and global ministries.
 - Support periodic international mission engagement opportunities.
 - Increase financial support for international partners by 25% through CAM/Benevolences.
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Strategic Direction #4 of 4

Building the Foundation

Develop and sustain the structures, systems, facilities, and financial resources necessary to support Fort Hill's ministry and mission. Strengthen the church's capacity for long-term impact and ensure that its foundation remains resilient, adaptable, and responsive to a growing and changing community.

Goal 4.1 – Finance Ministry

Strengthen Faithful Stewardship

Promote financial sustainability through faithful stewardship, transparent communication, and long-term planning.

4.1 Action Steps

- Clarify that stewardship is critical to financial ministry's mission and rename the ministry of Session to Finance and Stewardship Ministry.
- Account for year-round stewardship through member participation in giving, worship, and engagement.
- Educate the congregation quarterly on Fort Hill's financial position.
- Increase pledging/giving participation to exceed 90% of households regardless of amount.
- Increase giving participation among those who engage primarily through online worship.
- Maintain an operating cash reserve fund of at least three months operating expenses.
- Build the capital reserve fund to an amount adequate to fund anticipated capital maintenance and replacement requirements.
- Create a legacy society whose membership exceeds 10% of households who remember Fort Hill in their end-of-life estate planning.

Goal 4.2 – Building & Grounds Ministry

Care for the Facilities Entrusted to Us

Care for Fort Hill's buildings and grounds responsibly to support ministry now and into the future.

4.2 Action Steps

- Review and interpret completed facilities reserve study to inform long-term planning and priorities.
- Establish a comprehensive maintenance schedule and fund phased improvement through the annual budget.

Goal 4.3 – Building & Grounds Ministry

Ensure Welcome, Access, and Hospitality

Provide accessible, welcoming facilities that support worship, ministry, and community engagement regardless of your age, ability, circumstance, or background.

4.3 Action Steps

- Survey daily/weekly utilization of existing parking lots over time.
- Devise a parking expansion plan, including designs and budgetary cost estimates to accommodate a 20% demand increase over current usage.
- Establish enforcement procedure, including towing when needed.
- Survey and map access to all main facility areas for mobility challenged members and visitors; determine necessary changes and improvements.

Goal 4.4 – Planning Ministry

Develop Leaders for Shared Ministry

Equip and encourage disciples to grow into leadership and service within the life of the church.

4.4 Action Steps

- Reinvigorate ministry intern program.
- Identify young adults called into ministry and seminary. Support them financially through the Pansy Duke Scholarship proceeds.
- Pair a mature disciple with younger disciple in all parts of ministry.
- Train officers/moderators with skills for spiritual leadership and effective administration and service.
- Offer education opportunity annually on Spiritual Gifts and talents to identify those who might serve.