



2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Our Vision and Mission

Joining together on a journey of Christian Faith, we seek to be disciples of Christ and to share God's love in our community and around the world.

We do this as we:

Glorify God, Grow Disciples, Meet Human Need

Introduction & Purpose

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church has, since its Covid-19 shutdown and reopening, enjoyed a remarkable rejuvenation and return to “new normal” ways of pursuing its internal and external ministries. Grounded in its enduring *Cornerstones* – joyful worship, deep faith, generous hospitality, and strong community – Fort Hill continues to nurture the faithful inside our four walls and takes mission and witness outside our four walls to Clemson University, the town, and surrounding area. These ministries reflect Fort Hill’s long-standing mission to ***Glorify God, Grow Disciples, and Meet Human Need***.

During this same period, the broader community has experienced significant growth in population and employment, along with the enrollment growth of Clemson University and nearby Tri-County Technical College. These trends are expected to continue, expanding the opportunities and responsibilities for Fort Hill to serve faithfully and effectively.

Recognizing these developments, the Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Session, during its March 2025 planning retreat, began to look “through the windshield” towards the challenges and opportunities accompanying these trends. Among the priorities adopted by Session was the initiation of a five-year Strategic Planning process, carried out through an advisory team commissioned by Session to discern the *Stepping Stones* (faithful, intentional steps) that will guide how the church moves forward in a changing landscape.

Jesus teaches that those who hear his words and put them into practice are like wise builders who build on rock—a foundation able to withstand wind, rain, and flood (Matthew 7:24–25). Fort Hill, a church built of stone, approaches this strategic plan with that same conviction: that faithful ministry is built not on shifting trends, but on a strong foundation rooted in Christ and expressed through worship, discipleship, community, and service. This report seeks to build intentionally on those enduring strengths as Fort Hill looks towards the future and the faithful work God calls us to do in a changing world.

The Strategic Planning Advisory Team and Discernment Process

The Fort Hill Session named the Strategic Planning advisory team comprising the following congregation members and church officers:

- Brian Baker – Chair and Planning Ministry Team member
- Rev. Laura Conrad
- Kim Jordan
- Jim London
- Sally Martin
- Gregg Morton
- Ben Trammell
- Josh Young

Members of the advisory team were nominated with the goal of forming a committee that reflects a range of perspectives, gifts, and experiences within the congregation, including diversity in age, circumstance, ministry involvement, leadership service, and connection to the wider community.

Once convened, the committee formulated a step-by-step planning process to evaluate the likely conditions in the Clemson community circa 2030 and to identify and recommend the opportunities for Fort Hill and its congregants to serve.

Part One, the **Executive Summary** (pages 4–6), offers a concise view of the key themes, Strategic Directions (*Stepping Stones*), and goals, and is intended to stand alone as a clear expression of Fort Hill's direction and priorities.

Part Two (pages 7–26) then provides additional depth by expanding on these directions and goals through theological grounding, contextual reflection, and measurable indicators.

Part Three (pages 27–32) focuses on implementation and accountability by identifying which ministry teams have taken ownership of each initiative and detailing plans for congregational engagement. The planning process and other supporting data can be found in the **Appendix** to this report.

Together, these materials are intended to guide shared discernment, planning, and accountability as Fort Hill moves from vision to action.

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church

Strategic Plan 2026–2030

Part One

Executive Summary

Our Vision and Mission

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Executive Summary

Through research and discernment, the strategic planning team developed the following strategic imperative to guide Fort Hill as it looks forward to 2030:

As Clemson and the surrounding community continue to grow through 2030 and beyond, Fort Hill is called to respond faithfully and intentionally. Building on our strengths, we will respond by deepening and extending our ministries and hospitality so that more people may grow as disciples and share God's love.

Key Assumptions

The following assumptions informed the strategic planning process and provided important context for the team's analysis. While not predictive or exhaustive, they reflect a shared understanding of Fort Hill's identity and the broader community conditions anticipated through 2030.

- **Identity & Character** - Fort Hill Church will continue to be known for its distinctive character – open, friendly, welcoming to all, with great liturgy, preaching, and traditional worship.
- **Denominational Context** - Fort Hill Church will continue to thrive as a healthy PC(USA) remnant, even in the face of cultural shifts and religious preferences moving away from mainline traditional denominations and towards non-denominational church.
- **Demographics & Engagement** - Fort Hill's congregation will continue to skew towards older average age congregants, while striving to appeal to and grow its cohort of young families with children.
- **Financial Stability** - Fort Hill will remain financially stable with respect to annual stewardship receipts and operating expenses, while being willing to serve major capital needs via the funding of the capital reserve fund.
- **Local & Regional Growth Dynamics** - Population and employment growth in the greater Clemson area and surrounding upstate communities are expected to remain strong, supported by the region's affordability, quality-of-life advantages, major institutional anchors, and its strategic location within the Atlanta–Greenville–Charlotte growth corridor.
- **Institutional Anchors** - Clemson University and Tri-County Technical College will remain strong educational and economic anchors for the community, even as smaller private institutions face financial pressure.

- **Ministry Outlook** - Fort Hill will approach the coming decade with the understanding that continued growth in mission, engagement, and discipleship is essential to sustaining a vibrant and faithful church community.

Strategic Directions

Upon completing its research and discernment, the strategic planning team presents the following Strategic Directions, referred to as *Stepping Stones*, for Fort Hill through 2030 and the years that follow.

Together, these *Stepping Stones* describe where Fort Hill is called to focus its energy and attention. To move from vision to action, each direction is supported by specific goals that clarify how this work can take shape in the life of the congregation.

- **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 – Cultivate small congregational groups for spiritual formation and relational growth.

Goal 1.2 – Strengthen digital communication for connection, outreach, and witness.

Goal 1.3 – Invite disciples to deeper commitment to community.

Goal 1.4 - Provide meaningful engagement and pastoral care for aging adults.

- **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 – Facilitate faith formation that nurtures disciples across the full span of life.

Goal 2.2 – Provide worship that inspires and transforms through Word, Sacrament, Music, and the Arts.

Goal 2.3 - Engage students and University community in faith formation, witness, and pastoral care.

- **Community Engagement and Partnerships** – Live as a light on a hill by meeting human need 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 - Support mental health within our community and congregation.

Goal 3.2 - Support access to affordable and stable housing for all.

Goal 3.3 – Respond to food insecurity through generosity and service.

Goal 3.4 - Encourage hands-on service as a regular expression of discipleship.

Goal 3.5 - Foster racial reconciliation, inclusion, and faithful dialogue.

Goal 3.6 - Deepen engagement in international mission and global partnerships.

- **Building on 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 – Promote financial sustainability through faithful stewardship.

Goal 4.2 – Care for the facilities entrusted to us.

Goal 4.3 – Ensure welcome, access, and hospitality for all.

Goal 4.4 – Develop leaders for shared ministry and service.

*Additional details regarding the Strategic Directions, goals, metrics, required resources, and discernment process are included in **Part Two** of this report.*

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church

Strategic Plan 2026–2030

Part Two

Theological Grounding, Contextual Reflection,
and Measurable Indicators

Our Vision and Mission

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in our community and around the world.

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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.

The Discernment Process

A set of guiding questions framed the planning conversation, inviting careful attention to Fort Hill's present life, its future context, its strengths and challenges, its sense of calling, and its capacity for ministry. What follows offers insight into how the Strategic Directions and goals emerged through listening, reflection, and discernment.

Who is Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Today?

Fort Hill's Enduring Distinctive Character

The advisory team reflected on Fort Hill's existing Mission Statement—to *Glorify God, Grow Disciples, and Meet Human Need*—and affirmed that it continues to serve as a faithful and guiding beacon as the church moves towards 2030. In this reflection, the team also recognized Fort Hill's distinctive character, or personality, as described by members, seekers, and visitors alike:

- Friendly, welcoming, open-hearted, open-minded church staff and congregation
- Great biblically based preaching, great pastoral staff; strong liturgy & theology
- Friendliness of the congregation – unpretentious, hopeful atmosphere, welcoming ambience, safe space for a variety of opinions, small church atmosphere in bigger church setting, “Chill Vibe”
- University & Youth Ministries
- Community Missions & Benevolences
- Faith formation opportunities for all ages

We affirm the *Cornerstone* values that ground Fort Hill's identity and guide every Strategic Direction.

Fort Hill's Cornerstone Values

Any opportunity to serve a community must start with the foundational values that an organization holds, for no service can be sincere, effective or sustainable without those values. That is especially true of any church with a servant's heart – which is at Fort Hill's core being. Our discernment process begins by articulating what our foundational – “*cornerstone*” – values are at Fort Hill, and here is what we believe to be our values:

Cornerstones

So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone; in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

“Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

Joy

We glorify God when we express the joy of God. God delights in all God made, including us. Made in God’s image, we reflect that goodness and love to our community and world as a witness to this God of grace. We celebrate that grace in worship and music.

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:11-12)

Generosity

God’s generosity towards us calls us to be generous people sharing abundantly of the gifts that God has entrusted to us. So, we live that calling by giving time, talents, treasure.

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts 2:46-47)

Thinking-Faith

Our community welcomes questions and exploration. We seek God’s guidance in study and preaching. We welcome challenges so we can grow disciples. We are a Reformed church which is always being reformed by Word and Spirit.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1:27)

Hospitality

The God who welcomes us in Christ Jesus, calls us to welcome one another, showing honor to one another. The richness of diversity is woven into God’s creation, and we seek to celebrate that at Fort Hill in community.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 15:7)

Community

We meet human needs as Jesus sought to serve others, body, mind, and spirit. Out of gratitude for God, we care for one another, serve the needs of neighbors, and enjoy the good gifts of community seeking the welfare of our community and world.

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28b-31)

What Will Fort Hill, Clemson, and the Surrounding Communities Look Like in 2030?

Fort Hill

As Fort Hill looks towards the years ahead, we do so with gratitude for the generations whose faith, service, and generosity have shaped this church. We also acknowledge the realities of an aging congregation and community — the need for accessibility to our spaces and worship, meaningful care and connection as health and mobility change, and wise stewardship amid the financial transitions that accompany retirement and the end of earthly life. These realities call for compassion, wisdom, and faithful stewardship.

At the same time, our mission calls us forward. To Glorify God, Grow Disciples, and Meet Human Needs, we must be ready to receive those God is bringing to our community — children, students, young adults, and families seeking belonging, purpose, and faith — while also strengthening our capacity to serve alongside our mission partners through generosity and volunteer engagement. Honoring those who have built this church while opening our life together to new generations is not a tension to avoid but a sacred responsibility. Fort Hill seeks to be a church where every generation is cherished and every season of life is embraced in the journey of faith. Fort Hill's membership currently stands at 633, reflecting recent growth that includes both young families and retirees relocating to the area. While often perceived as mid-size, Fort Hill is larger than most PC(USA) congregations, only 11% of which exceed 300 members.

The congregation skews older, consistent with many mainline churches and with Clemson's appeal as a retirement community, yet signs of renewal are evident in the presence of 114 children and youth and an increase in young families. This dual reality underscores the importance of both attentive pastoral care and sustained investment in ministry with children, youth, and families. Taken together, these trends point to a community that is both aging and growing, established and changing. They present Fort Hill with meaningful opportunities to extend its witness, hospitality, and service. With thoughtful planning and faithful discernment, Fort Hill is well positioned to serve a growing and evolving community while remaining grounded in its enduring identity and mission.

Driving Forces – Region, City, University

The outlook for any church is influenced by that of its host community and service area. The city of Clemson is situated along the I-85 Corridor between Charlotte and Atlanta that is experiencing

rapid growth shaped by a favorable economic climate, in-migration, and a high quality-of-life appeal. Pickens, Anderson, and Oconee Counties have all experienced steady growth, and nearby towns and lake communities continue to attract families and retirees. The population of the city of Clemson has grown by 50 percent since 2000, driven by the collective influence of growth of Clemson University and the surrounding region.

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church was founded in 1895 to serve cadets, faculty, and staff at Clemson College and like the city, has grown alongside the institution it was created to support. Enrollment surges after World War II, the transition to Clemson University, the admission of women, and the coming of age of the baby boomers each contributed to the university's expansion, but the most dramatic growth has occurred in recent decades, with enrollment nearly tripling since 1980 and reaching almost 30,000 by 2025.

As Clemson's academic and research profile expanded, campus construction prioritized academic and research space over housing, shifting much of the student housing demand off campus. This shift has significantly shaped local development, with the vast majority of Clemson's multi-family housing stock approved since 1990 — especially since 2010 —reflecting the ongoing influence of university growth on the city's housing landscape.

Conclusions

The Strategic Advisory Team believes that Clemson and the surrounding area, and by extension Fort Hill Presbyterian Church, will benefit from these forecasted growth trends, while also facing meaningful opportunities and challenges as the church seeks to serve a growing and changing upstate community. We offer the following conclusions based on these forecasts:

- Population and employment in the region are expected to continue growing through 2030 and likely beyond, contributing to a larger and more dynamic community context for ministry.
- Continued growth will place pressure on housing, transportation, and community resources, especially in areas near Clemson University and surrounding towns.
- Fort Hill's downtown location places the church in the midst of significant student-oriented and multi-family housing growth. While this increases proximity to students, it also creates added pressure on parking, traffic, and facility access, underscoring the need for thoughtful planning to ensure accessibility and hospitality for worship, programs, and community use.
- Fort Hill's University Ministry (PSA) is well-positioned to offer spiritual community, care, and belonging to students seeking connection and faith formation during their college years. Continued investment in this ministry will remain important.
- Regional growth is likely to bring new residents to communities such as Clemson, Pendleton, Central, Seneca, Six Mile, and surrounding areas. Clear communication, a welcoming presence, and accessible information about Fort Hill's ministries will help newcomers connect with the life of the church.
- Growth among families with children is anticipated in the region, reinforcing the importance of strong ministry with children, youth, and parents.
- The area continues to attract retirees and alumni, drawn by the region's quality of life, natural beauty, and university connections. Many seek meaningful community, service opportunities, and spiritual engagement — all areas where Fort Hill has longstanding strengths.
- Population growth, increased housing demand, and rising living costs in a university-centered community are likely to intensify needs related to housing stability, food access, and mental health support. These trends reinforce the importance of Fort Hill's Christian Action Ministry (CAM) and its partnerships that serve vulnerable neighbors in practical and compassionate ways.

These trends invite Fort Hill to be intentional in its welcome, clear in its communication, and faithful in its witness, building on its longstanding character as a congregation known for warmth, depth, and service.

*Additional research and information supporting forward-looking conclusions can be found in **Appendix B** of this report.*

What are Fort Hill’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats?

SWOT Analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis – often referred to by its acronym SWOT - is a classic business analysis technique used to objectively define especially what an organization does well – i.e. foundational strengths to build on – and opportunities to use those strengths to grow – whether in business competition or in this case service to our community.

In other words, this technique was used to highlight what Fort Hill church uniquely has to offer the Clemson community in religious practice and service. The results of our SWOT analysis are set out in the following table and informed how we discerned the Strategic Directions and Goals that could be realistically and effectively achieved by Fort Hill between today and 2030.

SWOT Analysis	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Congregational Character: Welcoming, caring, and open-minded membership; servant leaders fostering reconciliation and inclusion; sanctuary for exiled; agility to respond to crisis.	Parking: Inadequate parking for Sunday worship and weekday infringement from public.
Leadership & Staff: Strong, servant-minded leadership from pulpit, staff and congregation; unified and capable team; clear mission and vision; polity.	Finances: Limited financial reserves, financial threat of major repairs, congregational participation rate in pledging/giving.
Faith & Theology: Rooted in Scripture, reforming theology, traditional liturgy, strong preaching, good news shared joyfully.	Demographics: Aging congregation with challenges in attracting and engaging young families
Financial Health: Stable membership and sound financial footing.	Communication & Coordination: Silos across ministries; limited external communication and digital presence.
Community & Reputation: Long-standing legacy and positive reputation within the community; ecumenical cooperation.	Volunteer Dependence: Reliance on too few volunteers, risk of burnout, uneven engagement in children/youth ministries.
Youth & University Ministry: Active youth programs and rebuilding university ministry.	Staffing & Turnover: Understaffed for breadth of reach, pastoral/staff transitions.
Music & Worship: Blend of traditional and new music.	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Community Engagement: Expand local and global mission work; increase hands-on service and partnerships; seek out ecumenical opportunities; establish, stabilize and grow Healing Bridges Counseling Center.	Cultural & Demographic Shifts: Declining engagement with mainstream denominations; competing non-denominational growth; general “de-churching” and other societal shifts.
Digital Presence & Branding: Enhance online visibility; expand reach; digital platforms as outreach tools.	Community Changes: Rapid development, high-density housing, and limited parking and providing greater obstacles to access to church facilities.
College Ministry: Strengthen engagement with student population.	Time & Attention Pressures: Competing demands on members’ schedules amid societal stress and polarization; continued digitalization of life presents further challenges for community and relationship nourishment.
Growth Potential: Strong regional population growth.	Economic Risks: Economic contraction or recession; Reduced funding or enrollment impacting Clemson University financial stability.
Alternative Worship & Study: Offer flexible formats to meet people where they are.	Demographic Transition: Aging base and fewer younger families nearby as cost of housing increases.
	Programming: Difficulty in providing adequate resources to sustain programming for smaller segments within the congregation.

Conclusions

The following conclusions arise from the SWOT analysis, the assessment of future Clemson, and related discussions:

- Fort Hill occupies a distinctive place in the religious life of the Clemson community, offering thoughtful worship, genuine welcome, and meaningful service that meets real human needs.
- Fort Hill has a clear and confident sense of its identity and calling, and future growth should build intentionally on its existing strengths by doing more of what the church already does well rather than becoming something it is not.
- The Clemson area is expected to continue growing through 2030 and beyond, creating expanding opportunities for ministry, engagement, and partnership.
- Fort Hill faces both blessings and challenges related to an aging congregation, including the need for greater accessibility, pastoral care, and connection, as well as the financial impacts that come with retirement, illness, and the completion of earthly life.
- Faithful stewardship will be essential in the years ahead, as Fort Hill seeks to sustain ministry, care for its people, and respond wisely to changes in giving patterns and long-term financial capacity.
- Fort Hill's facilities and campus will experience increasing pressure from aging infrastructure and surrounding development, requiring thoughtful planning to ensure accessibility, hospitality, and effective use of space.
- Clear, modern communication and creative engagement, both digital and in-person, will be increasingly important to connect with members, reach new people, and invite deeper participation in worship, growth, and service.

What should Fort Hill aspire to be in 2030?

Building on Fort Hill's Strengths & Passions Inside the Four Walls

Worship

Fort Hill Church is known for its distinctive character – open, friendly, welcoming to all, with great liturgy, preaching, and traditional worship rooted in Scripture. The outstanding character of Fort Hill supports the church's mission to Glorify God, Grow Disciples and Meet Human Needs.

Worship at Fort Hill will continue to celebrate the joy of God's grace through music, prayer, and proclamation; encourage spiritual growth through thoughtful engagement with Scripture and reformed theology; and extend genuine hospitality that welcomes participation across generations and life stages. Through Word and Sacrament, worship will continue to form disciples, strengthen community, and bear faithful witness in a changing world.

Discipleship

Fort Hill seeks to grow disciples who are formed in faith, grounded in Scripture, and connected in community. One of the most effective ways to nurture this growth is through the intentional development of small groups. Small groups provide a setting where members can build relationships, ask questions, study Scripture, and practice their faith together in meaningful ways.

Looking ahead, Fort Hill will strive to promote and expand small group ministry as a pathway for deepening discipleship. Small groups foster a profound sense of belonging, strengthen the bonds of community, create opportunities for deeper fellowship, and offer more personal and intimate engagement than is possible in larger settings. They provide space for prayer, care, accountability, spiritual growth, and shared mission—helping disciples move from attending worship to fully participating in the life and ministry of the church.

Fellowship

Fellowship at Fort Hill flows naturally from a shared life of worship and discipleship, strengthening the relationships that bind the congregation together. Through joyful gatherings, shared

experiences, and intentional connection, fellowship nurtures a sense of welcome and belonging for longtime members, newcomers, families, students, and visitors alike.

Looking ahead, Fort Hill will continue to prioritize opportunities for fellowship that build meaningful relationships across generations and life stages. These connections deepen mutual care, foster trust, and reinforce the church's culture of hospitality and openness. By cultivating authentic community, marked by joy, care, and shared purpose, fellowship strengthens Fort Hill's ability to support one another in faith and to extend Christ's welcome beyond the church walls.

Building on Fort Hill's Strengths & Passions Outside the Four Walls

Our strengths within the life of the congregation naturally extend outward into service and partnership beyond the church walls. Fort Hill has a long-standing commitment to serving the broader community and supporting organizations that address critical human needs. Building on these strengths, Fort Hill will continue to focus community engagement efforts in three primary areas: food insecurity, housing insecurity, and mental health – areas where Fort Hill already has strong partnerships, passion, and impact. This focus is intended to guide energy and resources while continuing to value and support other mission partnerships consistent with Fort Hill's mission and Presbyterian commitments. Opportunities to deepen congregational participation through hands-on service and awareness efforts should be explored.

Food Insecurity

Fort Hill should continue to expand financial and volunteer support to Meals on Wheels, Our Daily Bread, Water Mission International and Clemson Community Care.

Housing Insecurity

Fort Hill should continue to expand financial and volunteer support to Habitat for Humanity, Helping Hands Shelter, Family Promise, Shaw Center, Ripple of One, Safe Harbor and Thornwell, which all provide safety, temporary or sustainable housing.

Mental Health

Fort Hill should continue to support the Healing Bridges Counseling Center by providing volunteer leadership, financial support, and advocacy to ensure its long-term viability.

Additionally, Fort Hill should continue Deacon-led mental health awareness and training initiatives such as support groups and the Blue Christmas, helping to reduce stigma and extend compassionate care.

What Resources will Fort Hill Need to Make this Vision a Reality by 2030?

Fort Hill's Resources

Fort Hill has a stable membership and enjoys solid financial footing. At the same time, the church has staffing, facilities, and parking challenges that the current annual budget does not have the capacity to fully support. Careful planning and stewardship will be required to align available resources with ministry priorities.

Staffing

There is currently a vacancy for an associate pastor and movement towards adding a new Director of Communications position. Continued discernment around staffing priorities, recognizing the importance of pastoral care, communication, and outreach to future ministry effectiveness should remain a priority.

Facilities

Fort Hill has an aging infrastructure that will need to be updated and/or replaced in the next few years. HVAC and roofing issues have been identified as the most pressing concerns. Finance Ministry is currently conducting a church-wide facility analysis to guide the creation of a reserve fund to address facility needs. The reserve fund will allow for scheduled maintenance to take place on an annual basis funded from the general budget while reducing reliance on emergency funding.

Parking

Parking continues to be a major challenge that will only be exacerbated as Fort Hill and the surrounding area continue to grow. A parking utilization and expansion plan should be completed, exploring both near-term and long-term solutions to improve accessibility for worship, programs, and special events.

Stewardship

Currently, it is estimated that 39% of Fort Hill members make a pledge each year. Another 38% don't pledge but do give. The remaining 23% neither pledge nor give. This highlights both strength and opportunity.

Fort Hill should adopt a year-round stewardship approach that emphasizes both generosity and participation with the following priorities:

- Increase the number of members who pledge and those who give, while encouraging generosity at all levels.
- Deepen engagement through service, helping members connect stewardship of time and talent with financial giving.
- Communicate regularly and transparently about the church's financial position, staffing assumptions, and future needs so the congregation maintains a clear and shared understanding of financial realities.

Fort Hill has enjoyed budget surpluses over the last few years. The chief reason for those surpluses is that the church has had staffing vacancies rather than excess operating capacity. These personnel underruns can cause a false sense of financial security. Ongoing stewardship education should include regular updates on the status of the budget to provide better interpretation, foster trust, alignment, and shared responsibility, strengthening Fort Hill's long-term sustainability and stewardship culture.

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church

Strategic Plan 2026–2030

Part Three

Implementation and Inspired Stewardship

Our Vision and Mission

Joining together on a journey of Christian faith, we seek to be disciples of Christ and to share God's love in our community and around the world.

We do this as we: Glorify God, Grow Disciples, Meet Human Need

Congregational Engagement & Implementation Timeline

A Season of Listening, Discernment, and Faithful Action

Throughout this process, Fort Hill moves forward trusting that the Holy Spirit is shaping not only our plans, but our life together as Christ's church. We undertake this work with prayer, humility, and hope, seeking to listen for God's guidance, to steward well the gifts entrusted to us, and to follow where Christ leads as we strive to better serve our congregation and community.

We also recognize that faithful planning requires ongoing discernment, and this plan should be revisited and refined as circumstances change and new opportunities emerge, trusting that "the human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

The development and reception of this plan is more than a sequence of meetings; it is a season of prayerful discernment and shared direction. As Fort Hill looks towards the future, we trust that God guides the church through the wisdom, experience, and voices of the whole congregation. The timeline below is intended to provide both structure and space for listening, reflection, and faithful action.

February 28 – Session & Deacon Retreat

Purpose: Initial Presentation and Discernment

The strategic plan draft executive summary will be shared with Session and Deacons for thoughtful conversation, prayerful reflection, and constructive feedback.

Key Outcomes:

- Gather documented feedback and questions
- Identify areas for clarification or refinement
- Confirm readiness for broader leadership engagement

March – Planning Team Review and Integration

Purpose: Reflection and Refinement

The planning team will meet to reflect on retreat findings, refine the plan where needed, and prepare to invite broader leadership into the conversation.

Key Outcomes:

- Incorporate key feedback
- Refine priorities and language as needed
- Confirm leadership engagement approach

Late March–April – Leadership Conversations

Purpose: Shared Ownership and Alignment

Key ministry leaders and staff will be invited into dialogue about how the plan connects with their areas of ministry, where they see opportunities, and how they feel called to participate in the work ahead.

Key Outcomes:

- Identify natural areas of ministry ownership
- Confirm feasibility and alignment
- Strengthen leadership buy-in
- Session adoption of plan

Late April–May – Congregational Engagement

Purpose: Listening, Clarity, and Commitment

The congregation will be invited to learn about the plan through gatherings and shared communications. This season emphasizes listening, clarity, and shared ownership as the congregation moves forward together. Feedback will be incorporated as appropriate, and the final plan will be presented for Session affirmation.

Key Outcomes:

- Provide accessible summaries of the plan
- Invite reflection and feedback
- Build congregational awareness and support
- Session adoption of plan revision
- Congregational communication of affirmed direction

June – Ministry Action Planning

Purpose: Commitment and Activation

Ministry teams will prayerfully discern how the strategic directions take shape within their areas of leadership and develop corresponding plans.

Key Outcomes:

- Ministry teams submit plan steps aligned with strategic goals
- Identify timelines, priorities, and resource needs
- Clarify areas for collaboration across teams

Ongoing – Faithful Implementation and Communication

Purpose: Stewardship and Celebration

Implementation will be accompanied by regular updates that celebrate progress, share stories of impact, and invite continued participation.

Key Outcomes:

- Quarterly Progress Updates
- Celebration of Milestones
- Adjustments as needed through prayerful discernment

Path Forward: Implementation and Accountability

Goal		Responsible Ministry Team	Timeline		
			Game Plan	Midpoint Progress Report	Completion Target
Strategic Direction #1 - Belonging and Connections					
1.1	Cultivate small congregational groups for spiritual formation and relational growth	Fellowship			
1.2	Strengthen digital communication for connection, outreach, and witness	P&PS			
1.3	Invite disciples to deeper commitment to community	Membership			
1.4	Provide meaningful engagement and pastoral care for aging adults	Deacons			
Strategic Direction #2 - Bridging Generations for Faith Formation					
2.1	Facilitate faith formation that nurtures disciples across the full span of life	Discipleship			
2.2	Provide worship that inspires and transforms through Word, Sacrament, Music, and the Arts	Worship			
2.3	Engage students and University community in faith formation, witness, and pastoral care	University Ministry			
Strategic Direction #3 - Community Engagement and Partnerships					
3.1	Support mental health within our community and congregation	CAM			
3.2	Support access to affordable and stable housing for all	CAM			
3.3	Respond to food insecurity through generosity and service	CAM			
3.4	Encourage hands-on service as a regular expression of discipleship	CAM			
3.5	Foster racial reconciliation, inclusion, and faithful dialogue	Planning			
3.6	Deepen engagement in international mission and global partnerships	CAM			
Strategic Direction #4 - Building on the Foundation					
4.1	Promote financial sustainability through faithful stewardship	Finance			
4.2	Care for the facilities entrusted to us	B&G			
4.3	Ensure welcome, access, and hospitality for all	B&G			
4.4	Develop leaders for shared ministry and service	Planning			

Appendix A

The Strategic Planning Process for 2026-2030

Session 1 – Introductions, Objectives & Rules of Engagement

- Team member introductions – what point of view am I representing on the team.
- Objectives for the strategic planning process – directional, realistically achievable, congregational engagement.
- Timetable, meeting schedule, homework between sessions, writing assignments.

Session 2 – Who is Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Today?

- Review & confirm Vision and Mission statements (any changes required?)
- Review & confirm and/or revise Fort Hill’s distinctives and profile (attachment 1 below).
- What is our place in the religious life of our home community?
- What is our place in the service of our home community?

Session 3 – What will the Clemson community be like in 2030?

- What is our reach in and around Clemson – attendance, digital reach, participation in Monday- Saturday programming.
- Population growth, demographic shifts.
- Clemson University – enrollment, research, impacts on City of Clemson.
- Religious preferences & peer churches in and around Clemson.

Session 4 – What are Fort Hill’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) by 2030?

- Strengths & Weaknesses.
- Opportunities (i.e. - unchurched, unserved, etc.) & Threats (aging membership, financial, religious apathy, etc.)

Session 5 – What should Fort Hill aspire to be in 2030?

- What will our membership and benevolences look like by 2030?
- What are our successes today that can/should be continued?
- What new services to our congregation and community shall we provide?

Session 6 – What resources will Fort Hill need to make this vision a reality by 2030?

- Can our current physical plant serve our plan in 2030?

- Do we need to add or change uses to our physical plant?
- What will our staffing need to be?
- What will be our financial requirement by 2030?

Session 7 – What should be the timetable to achieve this vision?

- What are the sensible steps and schedule required to realize our vision?
- Which ministry teams must shoulder responsibility for progress according to timetable?

Session 8 – Draft Strategic Plan Report to Session and the congregation

- Compile draft report (various reporters/authors, distribute to team)
- Bring comments and edits, discuss and decide team recommendations to Session and Church
- Determine how to obtain Session feedback on recommendations.

Session 9 – Final Edits and communication plan

- Team reviews and approves final report.
- Determine how and when to communicate conclusions and recommendations to congregation.

Appendix B

Supporting Research

Demographic Trends

The Strategic Advisory Team reviewed a wide range of forecasting materials, consulted local resources and experts, and drew on internal planning data to develop a composite picture of what Clemson and the surrounding area may be like around 2030. We intentionally considered the broader context of Pickens, Oconee, and Anderson Counties, along with the City of Clemson and Clemson University, because this region reflects the wider community Fort Hill serves and hopes to reach — including current members, newcomers, neighbors, and those seeking a church home.

The summary that follows reflects our best understanding of how the community is likely to change in the coming years and how those changes may shape Fort Hill's opportunities for ministry. Demographic trends both within the congregation and in the surrounding region will significantly influence the church's membership and operations.

Regional and Community Demographics

The city of Clemson is located along the I-85 Corridor that runs between Charlotte and Atlanta. This corridor as well as the state of South Carolina, as a whole, is experiencing significant growth. For the second year in a row, South Carolina has had the highest rate of population growth among all 50 states at 1.5 percent (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). The bulk of that rate increase is domestic migration as immigration rates from outside the U.S. are down by half this past year. This year's rate followed a growth rate of 1.8 percent the previous year, also the highest in the country. While the most rapid growth is occurring along the South Carolina Coast, the I-85 Corridor has also grown rapidly with a projected growth rate of 46.8 percent from 2000-2030 compared to 42.6 percent statewide. In the immediate area, while the highest growth rates in the Upstate are in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties, all of the counties in the region are showing significant growth. Pickens County is projected to grow by 36.3 percent between 2000 and 2030 from 110,757 to 150,983 residents.

County Population Trends and Projections for the I-85 Corridor, 2000-2030

County	2000	2010	2020	2030	Change 2010-20	Change 2020-30	Change 2000-30
Pickens	110,757	119,344	130,581	150,983	9.42%	15.62%	36.32%
Oconee	66,215	74,349	78,987	84,224	6.24%	6.63%	27.20%
Anderson	173,791	187,095	204,437	228,790	9.27%	11.91%	31.65%
Greenville	379,616	451,225	525,535	607,475	16.47%	15.59%	60.02%
Spartanburg	253,791	284,307	327,997	373,465	15.37%	13.86%	47.15%
I-85 Corridor South Carolina	984,170 4,012,012	1,116,320 4,635,846	1,267,537 5,150,782	1,444,937 5,719,377	13.55% 11.11%	14.00% 11.04%	46.82% 42.56%

Source: US Census of Population for Selected Years with Estimates for 2030.

Among cities and towns in the immediate area, the city of Clemson has the highest rate of projected population increase between 2000- 2024 at 51.1 percent followed closely by Central (49.8 percent) and Easley (49.1 percent). While the highest concentration among church membership is made up of Clemson residents, members and visitors come from several adjacent communities increasingly including those along nearby lakes that are attracting a large number of retirees. Collectively, Clemson and these adjacent areas comprise the core service area, all of which is projected to grow in the coming years.

Municipal Population Trends and Projections, 2000-2024

City/Town	2000	2010	2020	2024	Change 2010-20	Change 2010-24	Change 2000-24
Anderson	25,765	26,686	29,441	30,957	10.32%	16.00%	20.15%
Central	3,565	5,159	5,260	5,339	1.96%	3.49%	49.76%
Clemson	12,313	13,905	17,683	18,610	27.17%	33.84%	51.14%
Easley	18,115	19,993	22,981	27,001	14.95%	35.05%	49.05%
Greenville	56,391	58,409	71,110	74,371	21.74%	27.33%	31.88%
Pendleton	2,942	2,964	3,490	3,697	17.75%	24.73%	25.66%
Seneca	7,622	8,102	8,848	9,202	9.21%	13.58%	20.73%
Six Mile	557	675	757	761	12.15%	12.74%	36.62%

Source: US Census of Population for Selected Years with Estimates for 2024.

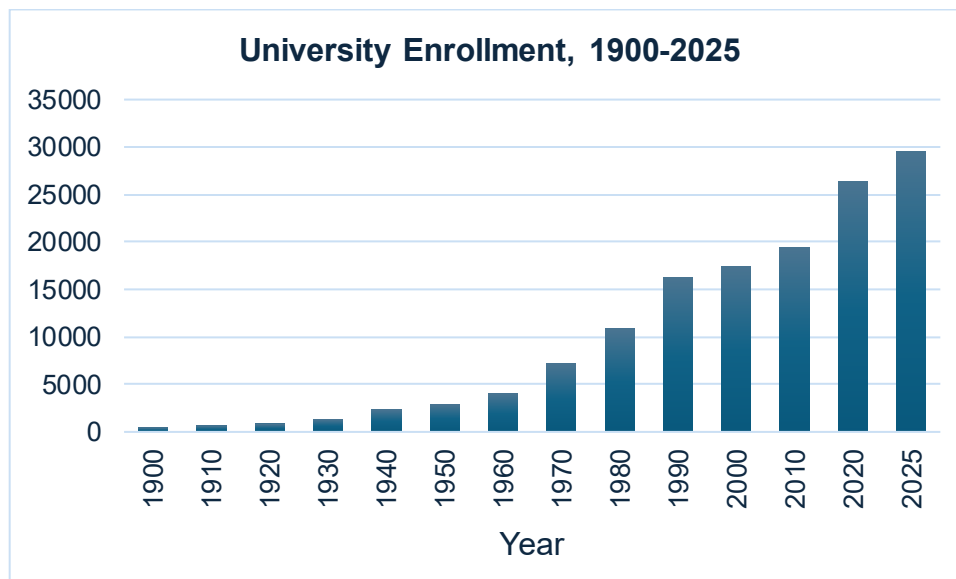
Pickens, Oconee, and Anderson Counties are seeing economic growth characterized by job creation, rising incomes, and a more diversified employment base. Growth is especially evident in

health care, advanced manufacturing, logistics, university-related services, and tourism. Local planning efforts emphasize expansion of existing industries, retail development, and strengthening each county’s economic base.

Across the broader Upstate region, labor market projections point to continued employment growth, with strong demand in health care and social assistance, as well as opportunities in construction, manufacturing, logistics, and hospitality-related services. These patterns reflect a regional economy that continues to broaden beyond traditional sectors.

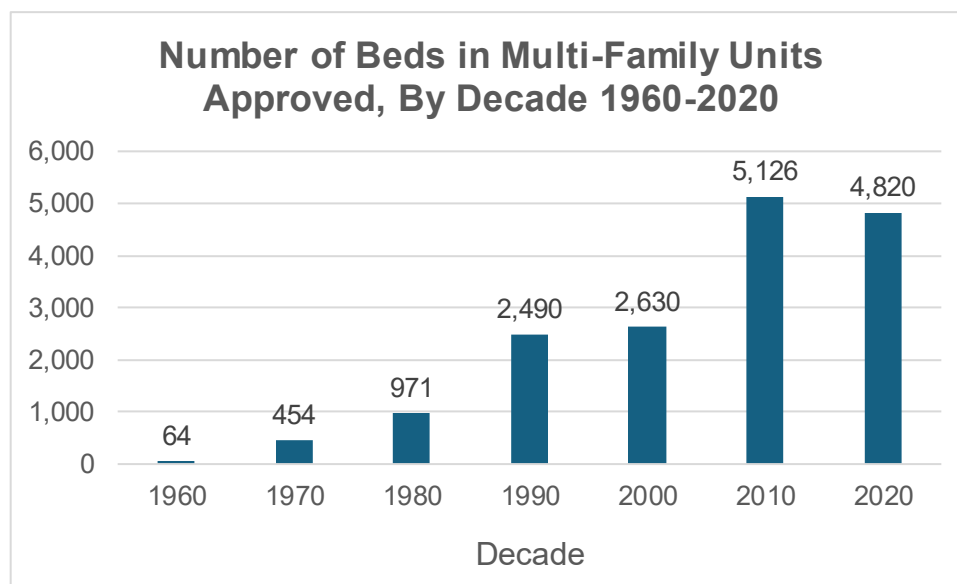
Clemson University and Local Development

Founded in 1895, Fort Hill Presbyterian Church was the first church in what is now the city of Clemson established to specifically serve cadets at the newly established Clemson College. As the college grew so did the church. An uptick in enrollment occurred when the troops came home from World War II, many of them taking advantage of the GI bill. With the designation of the institution as Clemson University, the coming of age of the baby boomers, and the admission of women, a still larger increase in enrollment occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By far the period of most rapid growth has occurred in recent decades as enrollment nearly tripled from 10,891 in 1980 to 29,545 in 2025 reflecting the university’s growing national stature.



Source: Clemson University, Office of Admissions.

While the university experienced rapid growth in enrollment and research activity, fiscal constraints caused Clemson, like other universities around the country, to reassess their priorities. As a result, the focus for campus building activity was on classrooms, offices and research facilities. On-campus housing became a lower priority shifting the housing burden to off-campus apartments. The impact was more pronounced in small towns with growing major universities like Clemson. Since the 1960s, multi-family units built or approved in the city of Clemson can accommodate 16,555 beds. Of that total, 91 percent of them have been built or approved since 1990 with 60 percent of the total since 2010. Those totals do not include units not currently approved or built outside the city of Clemson.



Source: Department of Planning and Development, City of Clemson, Approved Multi-Family Units by Year.

The city's economic development strategy assumes continued partnership with the university and surrounding counties to sustain a diverse economy built on education, research, services, and tourism. By 2030, Clemson is expected to be more densely built-out, with higher off-campus rents and persistent housing affordability challenges for both students and local workers.

In addition, current and announced student driven developments along Keowee Trail and College Avenue are expected to grow the downtown student population by greater than 2,000 with parking capacity below a one-to-one ratio. At the same time, recent city parking policies — including expanded metering and restrictions on overnight parking — are reshaping how limited parking resources are used in the downtown area surrounding Fort Hill. Furthermore, a planned

streetscape project along College Avenue is also expected to eliminate some of currently available parking spaces in proximity to the church.

Religious Landscape

According to a Religious Landscape Study by the Pew Research Center, among adults in South Carolina, 77% identify as Christian and only 17% identify as religiously unaffiliated. Furthermore, PRRI data shows that the upstate has some of the highest concentrations of white evangelical Protestants in the state.

Pickens, Oconee, and Anderson Counties account for 3 of the top 4 counties statewide for white Christians and white evangelicals, with evangelical Protestants around 47% of the population, shaping the religious culture of the three county area around Clemson. Some informative data on trends in religious preferences in our area, including Greenville County here as the dominant “growth magnet” in Upstate South Carolina, are summarized in the table below.

Area	White Christians (all)	White evangelicals (subset)	Religious “nones” trend
South Carolina (overall)	About half of adults are white Christians.	Around 4 in 10 South Carolinians are evangelical Protestants (all races).	Growing but still below national average.
Oconee Co.	70% white Christian.	44% white evangelical (2nd highest in SC).	Lower than state average (not a top “none” county).
Pickens Co.	68% white Christian.	47% white evangelical (highest in SC).	Lower than state average (not a top “none” county).
Greenville Co.	Majority Christian, more racially and denominationally mixed than Pickens/Oconee.	Strong evangelical presence, but not in the very top tier statewide.	Higher unaffiliated share than Pickens/Oconee, but not among the highest “none” counties (e.g., Charleston, Richland).

Within Clemson itself, local snapshots describe a range of Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopal congregations serving the community. On campus, Clemson University has dozens of faith-based student groups, with Christianity dominant but a growing variety of Muslim, Bahá’í, and other organizations, and large evangelical ministries such as FCA drawing hundreds of students.

By 2030, Clemson will remain strongly Christian in its overall culture, perhaps with a slowly growing share of religiously unaffiliated students and residents, plus a somewhat more visible mix of non-Christian faiths compared to today. A healthy religious community of evangelical and mainline Christian ministries and churches, alongside modest but present interfaith and secular communities, will continue.

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Demographics

The church membership rolls fluctuate from time to time as new members come in and some members leave for various reasons. After a recent updating of church rolls, the membership now stands at 633 including 34 additions in the past year. Recent membership growth, particularly coming out of Covid-19, is positive with an uptick in young families as well as retirees relocating to the area. While the perception among membership is that Fort Hill is a mid-size church, according to PC(USA) statistics, only 11 percent of PC(USA) churches have more than 300 members (Presbyterian News Service, 05/29/2025).

Membership (as of 12/31/25)	
Previous Level	599
Additions	34
Total	633

The age distribution at Fort Hill is skewed with 38.2 percent of the membership over 70. That figure is triple the national average share for that age group at 11.3 percent. Yet, relative to PC(USA) churches as a whole where the over 70 age group accounts for 34 percent of membership, the age mix among Fort Hill seniors is only slightly above the average denomination wide. The high concentration of senior citizens is common among mainline Protestant churches who tend to be tradition oriented despite the changing pattern of church going in recent decades. That trend has been reinforced as the baby boomer cohort reached retirement age with longer life expectancy likely to keep them around a little longer than would have been the case in the past. The remaining disparity between the Fort Hill mix and the national average can be explained largely in two ways. First, college towns are particularly attractive retirement destinations for graduates of that college wanting to return to good memories, especially if there are cultural activities and a good football team. Non-graduates may come as well drawn to college towns with a high quality of life. The second factor is the Sunbelt effect, drawing retirees to good year-round weather, lakes and mountains.

Age Distribution

17 & Under	19
18 - 25	48
26 - 40	79
40 - 55	94
56 - 70	151
Over 70	242
Total	633

There has been a recent increase in young families with children coming into the church replacing the core of youth going off to college or moving elsewhere, the current total of youth in the congregation stands at 114 with counts running at 22 for preschool, 60 for elementary and middle school and 32 for high school. Efforts to recruit young families and provide quality programming for youth of the church must be a priority.

Youth in Congregation

Age 4 and Under	22
Elementary School (K-5th Grade)	40
Middle School (6th-8th Grade)	20
High School (9th-12th Grade)	32
Total Youth	114

Together, these patterns reflect a congregation that is both deeply rooted and gradually renewing. Fort Hill benefits from the wisdom, faith, and commitment of long-standing members while also experiencing growth among younger households. Understanding this balance is important as the church plans for ministry, care, and discipleship across generations.

Outlook and Implications

Generally speaking, our area is expected to continue the recent pronounced growth trends and expand the broader community we already serve. By 2030, the City of Clemson, Pickens County, Oconee County, and Anderson County are projected to be more populous, more developed, and more tightly tied to Clemson University’s continued growth, with corresponding pressure on housing, transportation, and shared resources.