

What Our Church Is Feeling Inside Our Walls

FUMC Bentonville is healthy, growing, and young. We have outgrown some of our spaces, leaned on a small group of generous givers to close a budget gap, and are living through the same national giving shift every church is navigating. *Naming the pressures is not pessimism; it is how we steward what we have been given.*

Our Church by the Numbers

+21%	+82%	~27	7 days
In-person worship growth (276 → 333 weekly)	Online worship growth (534 → 970 weekly)	Average congregant age · ~200 youth & children	Per week our building is in active use

Growth Is Pressing Against Our Walls

- **Worship at capacity.** The 9:00 a.m. service hit 100% capacity in January 2025. We launched the third Unplugged service on Pentecost Sunday in response.
- **Children & youth at the edges.** Nursery needs a second classroom; no single child-safe space holds all our elementary-age kids for a large event; VBS has hit capacity two years in a row; security systems need an upgrade.
- **Mid-week ministries stretched.** Wednesday-night nursery cannot run for lack of staff. Programs share calendars more than they share rooms.
- **Infrastructure needs loom.** Current structural, electrical, and plumbing assets are aging; careful planning and financing is required to continue growth and service.

Financial Pressures We Want to Name Honestly

- **Stable, but tight.** 2024-25 ended +\$9K. Projected giving for 2025-26 is \$1.294M — with staff at ~59%, facility/admin ~23%, mission/outreach ~18%, leaving little margin for surprises.
- **The 200 × \$500 campaign.** Last spring’s budget shortfall, caused by families moving and long-time members passing, was closed by 200 members each giving \$500 more. A true sign of generosity, and of how dependent we are on a small group of high-capacity donors. The 2026 budget year is blessedly balanced. Our approved budget for 2026-2027 is \$1,376,834, which is a 6.7% growth. **The greatest growth is in Worship and Programming** (primarily Family Ministries), whose budget grew 26.6%, but this is only catching up to the program demand that we have experienced.
- **A national giving shift.** Religion’s share of US giving has fallen from 50% (1994) to 23% (2024). Methodists have the lowest tithing rate among major Protestants (12%). Millennials give generously, but the giving is distributed across many causes, not exclusively to church.

A question to carry with you this week

We are a growing, young congregation in a moment when church giving is changing fastest. What does it look like for us to plan for the church our grandchildren will inherit — not just the church we are today?

How can you take part?

Come to a Land Learning Lunch to learn about the work the church has done to date, to hear about the pressures facing our church and our community, and to reflect on our centering values. Join a small-group conversation to share your perspectives and hear the perspectives of others. Submit an online question, concern, or prayer.

Share what you hope, what you fear, and what you sense God is doing among us. Every voice helps shape what comes next.