

First Baptist Church

OF COMMERCE

Est. 1874



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Overview

First Baptist Church of Commerce is a congregation of approximately 225 members located in the beautiful town of Commerce, Georgia. Commerce is located in Piedmont region of Northeast Georgia on Interstate 85. It is in Jackson County, one of Georgia's fastest growing counties. The city has a population of 7500 and is growing at a rapid pace due to ongoing economic growth. It is one hour from Atlanta and the mountains. The University of Georgia is located just 20 miles away. It is midway between two high performing medical centers, Piedmont Athens Regional and

NE GA Medical Center. The area is served by Commerce City Schools and Jackson County Schools. There are abundant opportunities for competitive sports



in both systems and in active recreation departments as well.

At FBC, there is a true sense of family among our members and we treat each other as such. Our congregation is welcoming to new individuals and families. Not only do we cater to the members of our own church, we strive to live out our motto of, "We are rooted in Christ and reaching our community." Local community missions



consistently show the love of Jesus Christ to members of our community through acts of service and gifts.

FBC is dedicated to our music ministry. Specialty music is incorporated into Sunday morning worship as well as through special musical events. The inclusion of outside guests along with local high school talent allows for unique musical experiences.

A music camp for children and youth is held each year introducing them to various instruments and making music fun for all.



History

On November 21, 1874 Harmony Grove Baptist Church was founded with 88 charter members. The original church was built on land given by Mr. CW Hood. The building cost was estimated to be \$800.00. Upon completion of the church, Pleasant Owen Pittman (a charter member) brought in trees from his farm in Banks County to plant in front of the church. The large trees provided shade and beauty for many years and were incorporated into the motto of the church and its desire to be rooted in Christ while reaching the community. The church recently voted to replace the old trees with new healthy trees, to forward this connection to our past for future generations.

In 1895, the original wooden building was donated and moved to another local church. The new building cost \$9250.00. On September 18, 1904 the name of the church was changed to Commerce First Baptist Church to reflect the change in the name of the community. Additions were added in 1918, 1936, and 1960.



First Baptist Church

PICTURED IN 1907

In 1960, when the ground was broken for the Educational building, the picture showed the congregation using a plow, with everybody symbolically holding on to the reins. The old school lunchroom (now the Family Fellowship Building) and ball field were purchased in 1996. FBC has historically been faithful to their pledges and fund-raising activities, whether for renovations, purchase of property or building.

Music is an important part of our worship. At the first church conference, they elected a chorister. There is mention of cornets and a bass violin in earlier church histories. In early days, the church had a pump organ. The first pipe organ was installed in 1927. There is special music at Christmas with FBC joining with the Methodist and Presbyterian churches for December cantatas. At other times during the year, a variety of special music programs are provided.

The women of the church were among the first of the state to organize a Woman’s Missionary Society. This group of women worked to support missionaries. FBC has continued to be supportive of and involved in missionary activities. Both adults and youth have participated in local, national, and international mission trips. The church yearly has a “One Day of Giving” to raise money for foreign missions and exceeds their goal of \$10,000. Members choose which mission agency their donation will go to. A group of dedicated ladies are involved in a ministry that provides quilts to those who need the literal and figurative support of being wrapped up in and surrounded by love. During the recent Covid-19 crisis,



members of the church focused on local missions with supporting essential workers in our community and by caring for our shut-ins with frequently bringing treats and visiting with those who couldn't get out. As time passes, activities have changed but FBC continues to be a church that supports those in need, whether within our congregation, in the community (the local Food Bank and those who need assistance with paying bills), or areas affected by disasters.

Commerce First Baptist Church is looking forward to embracing our future. We celebrated 150 years of ministry in 2024. On October 20 we dedicated a bronze historic marker and had dinner on the grounds.



Mission and Beliefs

Our mission is to grow in our relationship with God through Christ, so that we may more effectively share God’s message of love and grace with others. We achieve that goal through worship, fellowship, and our dedication to mission work both in our community and more broadly in the region and world.

FBC Commerce affirms the “Four Fragile Freedoms” identified with Baptist belief: Bible freedom, soul freedom, church freedom, and religious freedom. It is affiliated with both the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as well as the Southern Baptist Convention.

Mission work is critical to the identity of FBC Commerce. At present, these are:

Youth

FBC Commerce has been committed to investing resources in its youth program, and youth participate in their own missions, travelling at least annually to conduct mission work in other communities through both March Mission Madness and Passport camp.



Visitation

Visitation of sick or shut-in members of our church and community is also a crucial ministry for FBC Commerce. Whether through supporting Meals on Wheels, or putting together holiday gift bags for those isolated by age or infirmity, or simply making hospital and home visits, our members strongly support remembering those who have a hard time joining us physically.

Quilting Ministry

Our quilting ministry is comprised of a dedicated group of quilters who donate quilts to those in our community who are ill. To date, this ministry has provided over 145 quilts to people in need. They have provided quilts to local law enforcement for distressed children in the community. They also provide patriotic quilts each year honoring veterans.



Bulgaria Missions

For approximately a decade, FBC had a mission supporting an orphanage and group home in Lom, Bulgaria. We formed relationships with the administration and children there that continues in many forms today, though changing (and improving) conditions in Bulgaria made the annual trip to the orphanage not feasible. The Church is not currently focused on a similar, long-term mission, but is ready to do so.

Worship, Mission, and Fellowship Opportunities

At First Baptist we offer a variety of ways to be involved through our worship services:

- Sunday School
- Youth and Childrens Ministries
- Wednesday night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting
- Sunday morning worship
- Adult and Youth Choir

Our church prides itself on being a **Mission-Minded** Church. We currently have many activities, have had others in the past, and are always open to new opportunities. Our current Mission and Ministry Team Activities include:

- Meals on Wheels
- Bereavement Meals
- Quilt Ministry
- Flower Ministry
- Christmas Child Ministry
- Women on Missions
- Variety of children and adult missions in our community
- Thanksgiving for needy in conjunction with Methodists
- Local Missions
- Food Bank Support
- Fall Festival
- Bulgarian Missions
- Foreign Mission Support
- Support of Shoebox Ministry



Fellowship is an important part of our church. We use fellowship to create a sense of community within our congregation, as an opportunity to present ourselves to others through outreach, and opportunities to fundraise for our youth.

- Lenten Lunches in cooperation with First Methodist and Commerce Presbyterian Churches
- FBC Christmas Cantata as well other musical presentations
- Men’s Brotherhood Breakfast in conjunction with First Methodist, Commerce Presbyterian, and Mt Calvary Baptist
- Youth sponsored Valentine Dinner and Cake auction
- Back to school Fall Kickoff
- Youth Concert on the Lawn

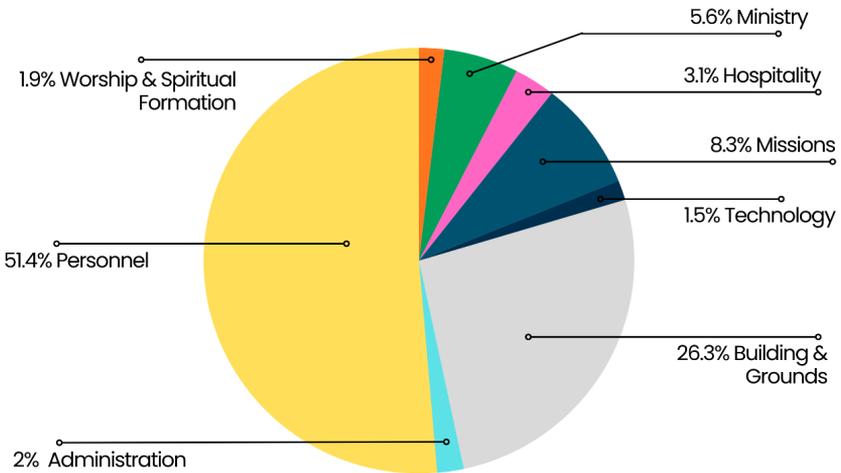


Finances

First Baptist Commerce has a long history of faithful and generous giving. It has been said by many members that we have never needed funds that the congregation hasn't stepped up to the plate and met the need. FBC is in a financially strong position with healthy reserves and no debt. Our members recently donated over \$4,000 to our youth program in a cake fundraiser. In 2024, our church completed a stained glass window restoration project giving over \$100,000 to complete it.

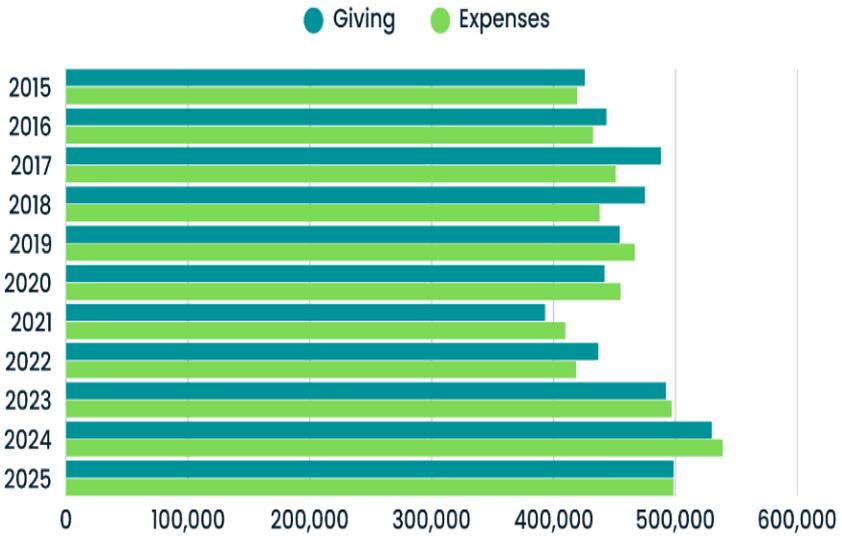
Our annual budget reflects a strong commitment to personnel, facilities, stewardship, and mission support. A copy of the 2025-2026 budget is available upon request.

Annual Church Budget – Expense Distribution



Finances

REVENUE AND EXPENSES 2015 - 2025



First Baptist Staff

Dr. Todd Chandler

Director of Music Ministries for over 20 years

Interim Youth Director

Bachelors of Music Education from Shorter University

Masters of Music from Piedmont College

Doctorate of Music Education from UGA

East Jackson High School Choral Director

Mandy Byers

Children's Ministry Director since 2025

Mandy works part time leading our children in Sunday School and Wednesday Nights. She leads our annual Vacation Bible School.

Jennifer Renzetti

Church Administrator/ Financial Secretary since 2023

Mary Purvis

Administrative Assistant since 2026

Judy Eubanks

Pianist since 1985

Kathy Pruett

Organist since 2004

Pastor Search Committee

Committee Chair: Dylan Wilbanks

Dylan is a local attorney and lifelong member of FBC Commerce. He has in the past served on the board of deacons and as the Chairman of the Personnel Committee. He has also served on the Youth Committee.

Donna Allen

A member of FBC Commerce since 2004, Donna came to the church as the wife of Dr. Carlton Allen who served as pastor until his retirement in 2021. She is a registered nurse and has worked as Director of Nursing in skilled facilities and hospice agencies. She is the mother of three adult children and has four grandchildren. Donna has served in many areas at FBC including teaching Sunday School and helping with the youth and children's ministries. She is a member of the Local Missions Committee.

Todd Chandler

Dr. Todd Chandler has served as Minister of Music at FBC for the past 23 years. He is in his 30th year of music education in Georgia, currently serving as Chorus Director at East Jackson High School. He and his wife, Renee, have three young adult children. Todd is a member of the deacon board and serves as our Interim Youth Minister.

Wesley Henson

Wesley Henson has attended First Baptist Church of Commerce since 2007, faithfully serving in the choir for many years before officially becoming a member in February 2022. He currently serves on the church's Music Committee and Technology Committee and is passionate about worship, excellence in ministry, and fostering a spirit of unity within the church body.

Kathy Pruett

A lifelong member of FBC Commerce, Kathy has served as the organist since 2004. She is retired from InterContinental hotels Group where she was Senior Director of Global Sales. Kathy and her husband, Ernie, have three children and eight grandchildren. Kathy has served on the deacon board as well as several committees including Personnel, Audit, Music, Local Missions and Bylaws.

Jennifer Sanders

A member of FBC for 45 years, Jennifer and her husband, David, are owners of Sanders Furniture Company in downtown Commerce. They have four adult children and six grandchildren. Jennifer has served as a deacon and a member of the Personnel Committee and chair of the Local Missions Committee.

Karen Wardlaw

Karen has been a member of FBC for 18 years. She and her husband, Randall, have four adult children. Karen is a retired RN with administrative experience in the healthcare field. She has served on the Personnel and Outreach committees. Karen is an active member of the FBC Quilt Ministry.

Pastor Profile

A successful candidate for this position must:

- Have a strategy for growing a congregation. FBC Commerce has some strong attributes, and we're seeking a pastor who can identify what is missing and lead us in our next steps in attracting a more balanced congregation including younger families and children. A successful candidate should be able to speak from experience in having implemented such steps, whether in the context of a leadership or supporting role.
- Be committed to visitation of our ailing or infirm members and their loved ones. While our congregation is aging, we are also a church of families who prides itself in the strength of its intergenerational relationships and feel strongly that part of our mission is attending to the spiritual needs of those who have difficulty being with us in person.
- Be educated, possessing a Masters of Divinity or some reasonable equivalent in terms of education and experience. While the church's strong preference is for a pastor with at least an M.Div., the committee recognizes that the combination of experience and education in some complementary field may address the congregation's need for a pastor conversant with relevant and current religious scholarship and commentary.

A successful candidate for this position should:

- Be prepared to be involved in the community. FBC Commerce is proud of its tradition of community involvement, and supports and encourages the same in its staff, irrespective of the form it takes: membership in civic organizations (such as Kiwanis) and involvement with community service entities (such as the Northeast Georgia Food Bank) are two examples.
- Have comfort with a traditional-style worship service. While the congregation is not averse to changes to worship based on the guidance of a new pastor, our services bear the hallmarks of tradition that we value: our sanctuary has a pipe organ, we have a member choir, and we have hymnals in the pews. We wish to continue our traditions without a wholesale departure from this style.

Pastor Profile

Core Traits and Qualities:

- Passionate follower of Christ devoted to leading the church
- Preaches the Bible with depth, clarity, and relevance
- Provides visionary leadership for church growth
- Encourages committees and leadership to flourish
- Inspires others to serve and use their gifts
- Leads by serving with humility and collaboration
- Loves and supports members of the congregation of all ages

Ministry Priorities:

- Implement a strategy for the future
- Commitment to visitation each week
- Provide support and leadership to staff and lay leaders
- Steward resources wisely and transparently
- Represent Christ and the church in the community with grace and integrity
- Be a visible, active participant in church and community activities
- Emphasize discipleship through church programs
- Work with the congregation to reach and retain young families

Personal Traits:

- Humble, kind and spiritually mature
- Good listener with strong communication skills
- Sense of humor, warm, approachable, and genuinely interested in people
- Creative, energetic, and caring

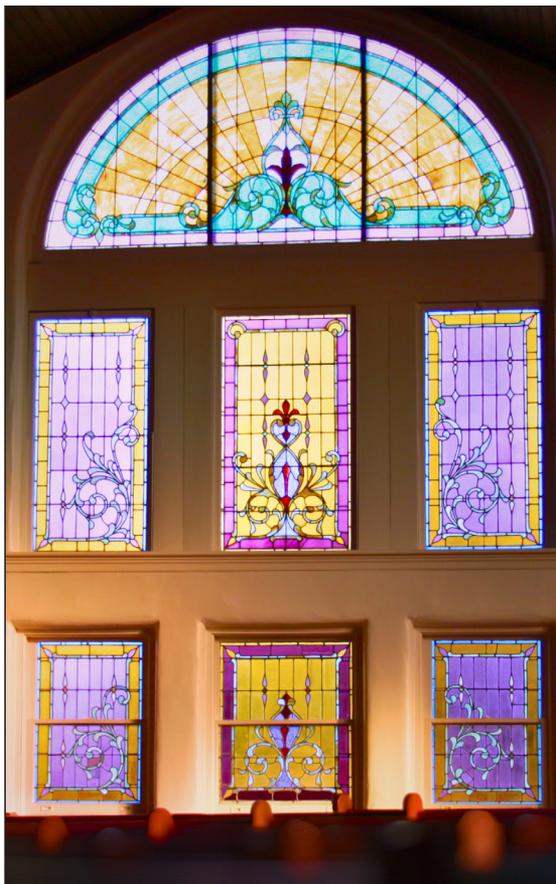
Professional Background:

- Leadership experience in church ministry
- Masters of Divinity (MDiv) degree or greater
- Strong biblical and theological foundation
- Supportive of both men and women in ministry
- Embraces strong traditional worship style









MISSION STATEMENT

FBC Commerce is a family of faith who believes in experiencing and extending Christian community through authentic worship, spiritual formation, impactful ministries, global missions and relational fellowship.

www.fbc-commerce.org



First Baptist Church

COMMERCE, GA