CHURCH PROFILE
SEPTEMBER 2018

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Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32548
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www.fbcfwb.org
WHO WE ARE

First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach (FBC FWB), Florida, is composed of a body of believers dedicated to and serving Jesus Christ, the resurrected Son of God. This Southern Baptist Church was founded in 1946 and has maintained its witness to the community, spreading the gospel through various ministries open to the community, to include Sunday and Wednesday service, VBS, children’s sports activities, a Christian Life Center, and many others. With its long and continuing history of serving the community it is focused on both sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as bringing new believers into the body of Christ. FBC FWB is a praying, faithful fellowship with great preaching that brings the truth of God’s Word to the world.

From the Senior Pastor to the youngest member, FBC FWB is dedicated to developing a dynamic Southern Baptist body of believers through effective preaching, Bible-centered study, membership training, and effective fellowship. The church aim is to win others to Christ, develop strong families, develop Godly lifestyles, welcome Spirit-filled worship, both in and outside of the church walls, regularly study the Word of God, discover and use one’s spiritual gifts, grow into spiritual maturity, and build a family of Christ-centered worship-filled people.

Our church is loyal to the effective preaching and sharing the truth and love of Jesus, taking his gospel to the world to make disciples of men, women, and children. We provide the best service we can to support the family of God and the local community. As Southern Baptists we believe that salvation is open to all; thus the church doors are open to the community. We are fully devoted to the Lord Jesus and share the truth of His love to all.

The FBC FWB celebrates the life of Jesus Christ and His love for all people, doing this through worship and praise, to include a dynamic music ministry and family-oriented ministries focused on youth, children, young and senior adults; all who join us in fellowship, whether a born-again believer in the body of Christ or one searching to discover Him. Our purpose is to equip everyone to effectively share the gospel of Jesus. The FBC FWB works to improve the lives of its members through worship, praise, and missions, with each of these impacting both locally and beyond our FWB community.
WHAT WE BELIEVE

As a Southern Baptist church, we adhere to The Baptist Faith and Message. Our church emphasizes the following distinctives of our Baptist belief.

1. **As a Baptist church, we believe in the authority of Scripture.**

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. [Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.]

2. **As a Baptist church, we believe in baptism of believers by immersion.**

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership. [Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.]

3. **As a Baptist church, we believe in the autonomy of the local church.**

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. [Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; 1 Peter 5:1-4]

4. **As a Baptist church, we utilize a congregational form of church government.**

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. [Philippians 1:1; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; 4:14]
5. As a Baptist church, we stand for a free church and a free state, neither one controlling the affairs of the other.

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.


6. As a Baptist church, we believe in regenerate church membership. This means, to be a member of our church a person must confess faith in Christ and follow Him in believers baptism.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

*Hebrews 11:39-40; Revelation 2-3; 7:9; 21:2-3.*

**MISSION AND VISION**

**Mission:**
The mission of First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach is to share the gospel and win people to Christ as we develop believers to become disciples and spiritually mature Christians. We rely on prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit, as we provide worship, education, fellowship, support and service opportunities for everyone.

**Vision:**
To be an authentic and loving church that exhibits passion and praise for Christ and continuously draws new people to actively participate in worship and ministries of the church.
CHURCH HISTORY AND HERITAGE

In May, 1946, Reverend Glen Bridges, Regional Missionary of the Florida Baptist Convention, met in the old Star Theater on Main Street with several interested people to discuss the possibilities of starting a Southern Baptist Church in Fort Walton Beach. The eventual result of these meetings was the organization of the First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach on June 6, 1946. Reverend Bridges served as “acting pastor” until August 1947, when Reverend Y. L. Anthony was called as pastor.

Under Reverend Anthony’s leadership the original sanctuary was built on First Street and dedicated on Easter Sunday, 1949. Also, during his pastorate, a preaching station was begun in Destin Elementary School, which in 1954 became the First Baptist Church of Destin. He resigned as pastor in September 1953.

In March, 1954, the church called Reverend Hugh Walters as pastor. Several of the highlights of his pastorate were: the sponsoring of the Cinco Bayou Mission (it was constituted as Cinco Bayou Baptist Church in February 1957): and the dedication of the first educational building (“B” Building). In June 1958, Reverend Walters resigned as pastor. On October 28, 1958, Choctaw Baptist Association was officially organized.

Reverend Wade S. Hopkin was called as pastor in February 1959. Within the year a committee began laying the groundwork for a new auditorium and educational building. A new sanctuary was completed and dedicated on January 7, 1962. During his pastorate, the WMU began an English speaking ministry to International wives of servicemen living in the Eglin Air Force Base area. This ministry has since grown into the International School that is currently teaching English and Citizenship classes. In 1967, it sponsored a Vacation Bible School in the Seashore Village Community. Out of the Vacation Bible School, a Sunday School was formed and from this, the mission of Florosa Baptist Chapel was formed. Reverend Hopkin resigned as pastor in 1967.
Dr. James L. Monroe was called in August 1968 as pastor. Many significant events occurred during his pastorate. Some of the more notable were: The completion of three building programs-The Administration Building (1972), “M” Building (1975), and the Youth Building (1984-currently the Fellowship Hall). In 1973, the church began a ministry at the Eglin Federal Prison in form of a Christian Counseling program. Many more ministries were developed and strengthened under Dr. Monroe’s leadership. Dr. Monroe served as Chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. He was sent to several areas out of the country on mission trips through the Southern Baptist Organization, Mission Board. A number of members also became missionaries during Dr. Monroe’s tenure. In June 1986, Dr. Monroe retired and was elevated by the church as Pastor Emeritus. The original chapel was named The Monroe Chapel in his honor.

In April 1987, the church called Dr. Howard L. Gates as pastor. Dr. Gates began his ministry on June 1, 1987. Under his leadership, a new 1000 seat sanctuary was constructed and completed in March 2000. The former sanctuary was renovated into a three-story education building, completed in June 2001. It was named the Children and Students Building. The original Sanctuary which was being used for storage was torn down. In 2008, First Baptist completed a two-story, 22,000 square foot Christian Life Center, made possible by the goodness of God and the generosity of the Freddie and Sharon Schinz Family. The CLC is now the home to Upward Sports and other recreation ministries. Most recently, the church has renovated the former chapel into the Monroe Children’s chapel, which houses Children’s Worship and other ministries to preschoolers and children. Dr. Gates retired January 31, 2018.

The church called Dr. Wade Humphries as senior pastor in August 2018, and he began his ministry on September 9, 2018. We anticipate the future with confidence, as First Baptist Church continues to reach people for Christ, disciple believers, and minister to the spiritual needs of individuals and families.
KEY AREAS OF MINISTRY

We are a body of believers committed to worshipping and serving Jesus Christ. As a Southern Baptist Church, we join with likeminded Christians in spreading the gospel around the world. As Christ reached out to people of all ages and backgrounds we desire to do the same. That is why we offer activities and ministries geared to various life stages and needs. We have a place for everyone to study the Scriptures, fellowship together, and minister to others through numerous service opportunities. We want you to be a part of the blessings of God in the life of our church and will bring you updates often on how Christ is making a difference in the lives of people. Please see our section on Ministry Areas and Committees below for more detail.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Worship Style
First Baptist Church worship music is blended, in that, it incorporates traditional hymns of our faith, contemporary and gospel songs. The sermons are usually expository, in that, scripture is defined historically, yet applicable to modern day living and culture.

Music Ministry
The music ministry of First Baptist Church is an exciting ministry growing both spiritually and numerically involving people of all ages. The music ministry strives for musical excellence appealing to both the church and community through weekly ministry opportunities along with special seasonal and non-seasonal concerts. Everyone is invited to be a part of the Music Ministry, which primarily includes an adult Celebration Choir (18 and older) which is often accompanied by an orchestra or instrumental group; our Youth Choir (6th-12th grade) which sings at selected services; and our Children and Pre-school choirs (4 yrs – 5th grade) which typically sing at seasonal concerts.
Bible Study

The Bible is the authority for our faith and practice, and the central focus of our Bible Study School Ministry. Each Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. groups of preschoolers, children, students and adults (including an Internationals class) meet to study the Scriptures, experience Christian fellowship, and explore paths of Christian service and ministry. Our Sunday morning Bible Study is complemented by our more informal and minister-led Bible Study on Wednesday evenings at 6:20 (following our church family supper); our church-wide First Essentials discipleship studies at 5:00pm on Sundays during the Spring and Fall; and several weekly small group studies (e.g. “Through the Bible” and international study groups on Thursdays and our Men’s Group on Friday mornings at 6:00am).

Recreation Ministry

The Recreation Ministry of First Baptist Church exists for the purpose of evangelism, discipleship and fellowship. We desire to reach out to our church and community in a casual setting and to testify to the gospel of God’s grace through the Christian Life Center. Our goal is to encourage each person to participate in recreation, leisure and sports activities that strengthen their families as well as their spiritual, emotional and physical well-being.

At the First Baptist Church Christian Life Center there is an activity or exercise class just for you...whether a young adult or Senior...we have something for everyone! We offer a full athletic facility with resistance equipment, weight machines, treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes, and a basketball court. Our membership rates are definitely some of the best you will find in the area! Our sports programs include church league teams and individual event opportunities for recreation, witnessing, and Christian fellowship. Our seasonal Youth Sports programs include Upward basketball, cheerleading and soccer.
Youth Ministry

The Youth Ministry of First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach is for all students in 6th through 12th grade. We have an incredible group of teenagers who are regularly involved in weekly Bible Studies, retreats, trips, and mission projects, and we have an incredible group of adults who lead the way. Our desire is to reach teenagers along the Emerald Coast and prepare them for a journey through life that is built on a love relationship with Jesus Christ. Our strategy for discipleship is to provide relevant environments for purposeful ministry. Students serve others and use the talents and gifts they’ve been given.

(RE)SOUND Student Ministries of First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach meets every Wednesday starting with dinner in the Fellowship Hall, followed by worship music and teaching until 7:15 or 7:30pm. Our families are an integral part of our Student Ministry at FBC FWB. Parents help teach our Bible Study, they attend our events, and they have a voice in the direction of the ministry. We believe students are stronger when their parents are primarily responsible and equipped to disciple their teenagers in the Christian faith. Some recurring events include: Weekend Retreats, summer activities/work projects, Christian concerts, pizza cook-off, local sports events, and helping with VBS and church sports camps.

Children’s Ministry

We offer many opportunities for your children to learn about God.

*Luke 2:52 -- And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.* During Sunday Morning Worship, First Kids is just for your children in grades Kindergarten through 4th. This is an interactive worship experience geared toward their age group. First Kids is a ministry that shows kids the purpose God has designed for their lives. Children are engaged in age-appropriate learning activities that point them to the Savior. We exist to give kids a foundation for FAITH, teaching them to IMITATE Christ, RESPOND to God, and SERVE others as a part of God's TEAM.

Mission Friends is age-appropriate missions education customized to fit the needs of your preschoolers. We provide kids 2 years old through Kindergarten with a fun, hands-on learning experience that develops the whole child through play, helping others projects, taste-touch-smell, and the care of their leaders.

Royal Ambassadors (RAs) is a boys-only group that teaches about missions around the world. Boys learn about missionaries in far off places and how they can serve others in their own town. Boys also participate in camp-outs, track meets and other activities that are just for boys.
Girls in Action (GAs) offers a time for girls to be girls. No boys allowed as girls explore foreign lands and learn about people that teach others about Jesus in those places. Girls participate in local and foreign mission projects as well as go to camp and share in other activities and experiences.

**Senior Adult Ministry**

The Senior Adult Ministry of our church exists for the purpose of honoring God through programs, trips, ministry opportunities and providing an atmosphere of fellowship, growth and caring for the needs of its members, unchurched and other senior adults in our area. Life is satisfying as you enjoy your retirement, spend time with your children and grandchildren, and develop your interests. But it can be frustrating as you stop working, lose friends, and search for ways to continue making a difference in the world. Our PrimeTimers senior adult ministry is here to help by providing opportunities for service, a community of friends, and a place for worship and fellowship. You'll discover that your time and talents are needed, your wisdom and willingness are valued, and your experience is important to us.

Worship, Fellowship, Service, Friendship, and Family are the things we work to build in our Senior Adult Ministry. We do feel that these can be the best years of your life—the "Prime of Life," and we want to assist you in being all that God wants you to be. Whether it's learning a new angle on a favorite Bible verse or being on-the-go with our traveling group, you'll easily understand what all the excitement is about.

**Missions**

The goal of our church Missions effort is to win individuals to the Lord, equip them in their faith and assist in establishing churches that have the same aim wherever the occasion presents itself. Our church
endeavors to support local, regional, national, and international missions programs. We have a two-fold approach including mobilization and global evangelization.

Mobilization includes our local efforts to help our people become more missions-active. Priorities for this mission focus include ministries sponsored by our church (please see the complete list of ministry teams and opportunities below including Farm Day, Live Nativity, Backpack Meal support, Prison Ministry support, and a wide range of Woman’s Missionary Union [WMU] activities including prayer groups, children’s mission training, and Prayer and Parenting). This focus area also includes cross-cultural ministries we participate in such as the Emerald Coast Fellowship of Baptist Churches.

Our Global evangelization includes efforts to help complete the Great Commission through wide-ranging opportunities and relationship-based mission areas offering national and international application. This focus area includes our Florida Baptist Disaster Relief involvement, Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program support, direct North American Mission Board missionary support, and sponsored/supported Missions Travel opportunities.

**CHURCH STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION**

**CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Church Officers include the Pastor, Minister of Music, Associate Pastor, Minister of Youth and Adult Ministries, Deacons, Clerk, Treasurer, Bible Study Director, Director of Discipleship Training, and Women’s Missionary Union Director. The Board of Directors consists of nine members including a President, Vice-President, a Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, and a Treasurer.

**DEACONS**

There are currently 24 active Deacons of the church. They are elected by the church membership for 3 year terms, with approximately one-third of the total elected each year.
COMMITTEES, COUNCILS, AND MINISTRY TEAMS

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<tr>
<th>STANDING</th>
<th>SUPPORT COUNCIL</th>
<th>MINISTRY TEAMS</th>
<th>SPECIAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Missions</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Church Ordinance</td>
<td>Minister/Director Search</td>
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<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Publicity/External Comm</td>
<td>Evangelism &amp; Outreach</td>
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<td>Finance</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Flowers/Decorating</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
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<td>Long Range Planning</td>
<td>Recreation/CLC</td>
<td>Library/Media</td>
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<td>Ushers</td>
<td>Deacon Screening</td>
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<td>Preschool/Children</td>
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MINISTRY TEAMS

**Church Ordinance Ministry Team:** makes all preparations for baptisms and observance of the Lord's Supper.

**Evangelism and Outreach Ministry Team:** develop and nurture opportunities and an evangelistic spirit within our church that will encourage our members to have a passion for lost people, present the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a church-wide visitation program.

**Flowers and Decoration Ministry Team:** provide leadership in planning and decoration of the Church, including flowers, art, loan of church-owned items, etc.

**Library/Media Center Ministry Team:** provides media resources and services supporting individual, pastor and staff research; corporate worship; Bible Study, Discipleship Training and other ministry teams.

**Usher Ministry Team:** be of service to congregational members and guests before, during and after services; greets and welcomes members and guests, and assists in maintaining a worshipful atmosphere in the church.

**Benevolence Ministry Team:** leads the church in assisting needy families both within the Church Family and outside the Church Family according to church and local area coordination/guidelines.
**Hospitality Ministry Team:** assist the membership for preparation of church fellowship events, receptions, and family funeral gatherings. Serves as the contact team for use of church-owned food service items unless otherwise designated.

**Kitchen Ministry Team:** determine and assist with the food service needs of the church based on staff and church leadership requests, monitor and manage kitchen use and use of all church-owned kitchen items; manages Wednesday night church dinners.

**Transportation Ministry Team:** develop and participate in plans related to the transportation equipment and capabilities needs of the church.

**Sound and Lighting Ministry Team:** support and enhance worship events conducted at the church facility and as called for at other outside church activities.

**Guest Greeters Ministry Team:** communicate God's love for church visitors by greeting them with joy and sincerity as they enter our facilities/events, provide directions or escort to Bible Study classes, serve as first contact point to collect visitor information.

**Counting Ministry Team:** counts monies collected by the church, especially and primarily monies collected on Sunday, and works directly with the Church finance representatives.

**Prayer Ministry Team:** To actively encourage and promote prayer within the church by organizing church, local area, and national-level prayer events; manages Sunday morning Prayer Room volunteers.

**Wedding Ministry Team:** oversees coordination, planning, and directions for use of church facilities supporting wedding requests.

**Family Life Ministry Team:** provide leadership in planning, preparation for and execution of programs, seminars, retreats, conferences, films, etc. designed to strengthen and enrich the lives of church members.

**Monday Morning Ministry Team:** consists of volunteers who meet at the church on Monday mornings and perform sanctuary “straightening up” or light maintenance tasks needed at the church or for other church members (i.e. shut-in, widow, widower).

**Live Nativity Ministry Team:** annual December church outreach event involving a live manger scene, animals, and other costumed volunteers to share the true meaning of Christmas. This activity is held on the church property the week prior to Christmas with preparation during the weeks prior.

**International English School Ministry Team:** learn or teach English as a second language. Teaching certification is not necessary to volunteer, and it is sponsored by the Church and Community Department of the Florida Baptist Convention. Classes are conducted each Thursday morning from 9:30 AM until 11:30 AM with text books available at church cost, free instruction, free child care,
and van transportation as arranged. For teachers, an optional state conference is held each year which is typically cost-shared by the church.

**Farm Day Ministry Team:** primary sponsorship and planning for the annual November church outreach event involving food, petting zoo, farm-related activities and demonstrations.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**Prayer and Parenting:** meets the first and third Wednesday of each month. This is a time for parents to share things they are dealing with and pray for each other. Childcare is provided.

**Women on Mission Prayer Groups:** ladies group meeting to pray for various missionaries and missions groups.

**Upward Sports:** Christian Life Center programs for children emphasizing basic sports skills, sportsmanship, and Christian fellowship.

**Vacation Bible School:** Annual summertime church-wide program for school-age children; week-long daytime program centered on a bible-based theme, songs, activities, and more. Lots of opportunity for volunteers and always open registration for this event.
Note:
When the church does not have a Senior Pastor, the Senior Minister and the President of the Board of Directors shall jointly serve as interim church leaders.
2018 CHURCH BUDGET

FBC FWB’s primary sources of income are undesignated giving, revenue from the CLC ministry, and rental income from church-owned apartments.

The 2018 budget was approved for $1,561,000. This amount is divided into Worship, Education, Inreach, Missions, and Facilities with the amounts shown below. Each category is a distinct avenue of ministry at FBC FWB.

### REVENUE SOURCES

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>CLC Income</td>
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<td>Rental Income</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### EXPENDITURE AREAS

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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Facilities</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,561,000</strong></td>
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**WORSHIP**

$350,410.16

We worship God on Sunday mornings through the ministries of Proclamation and Music. We hear the Word of God preached, and we rejoice in song to our Lord.

**EDUCATION**

$44,386.58

Bible Study is the heart of congregational life at FBC FWB. We also have First Essentials discipleship studies, and other opportunities.

**INREACH**

$365,991.54

Ministries for Senior Adults, Youth, Preschool, Women, Men, and the CLC give members of every age a vital way to connect to life at FBC FWB.

**MISSIONS**

$114,595.65

Cooperative, Association, Community, and Worldwide giving is part of the heartbeat at FBC FWB as we go, send, and give to missions.

**FACILITIES**

$685,616.08

The investment in our campus is to create a safe, inviting, and inspirational environment for worship, fellowship, and service.
GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

FORT WALTON BEACH

The Greater Fort Walton area is made up of Fort Walton Beach and five adjacent communities: Mary Esther, Shalimar, Ocean City, Wright, and Cinco Bayou. Our military neighbors are: Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field, with additional military units at the US Coast Guard Station, Destin, the 919th Special Operations Wing at Duke Field, and the 7th Special Forces Group at Eglin. It’s a warm and friendly community-with a strong sense of family, tradition, and patriotism, combined with a generous nature.

Fort Walton Beach is a city in southern Okaloosa County, Florida, United States. The County Seat is in Crestview in the north part of the County.

Fort Walton Beach is a year-round fishing and beach resort community. Its busiest time of the year is the summer, causing a boost to the local economy because of seasonal human migration. However, in the spring, Spring Breakers travel here and in the winter Snow Birds find a home away from the cold weather which offsets the loss of the summer activities.

HISTORY

The first Europeans to set foot in what is now Okaloosa County and the Fort Walton Beach area were members of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca’s party, who traveled by boat from what is now Panama City Beach, Florida in 1528 to Texas.

In 1953, a water skiing festival was turned into an annual pirate, Billy Bowlegs, festival which is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. It is held the first full week-end in June. A man is selected to represent Billy Bowlegs and a full court is selected. A parade and other activities take place. Visitors from many areas come to join in the fun.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no documentary evidence of pirates using the area as a base of operations.

The United States Post Office changed the official name on their cancellation from Camp Walton to Fort Walton on March 1, 1932. Fort Walton was incorporated by a State Senate bill effective June 16, 1941. The community’s name was officially changed from Fort Walton to Fort Walton Beach June 15, 1953.

A 875-acre parcel of Santa Rosa Island with three miles of Gulf frontage was conveyed to Okaloosa Count on July 8m, 1950 in an informal ceremony to the county courthouse in Crestview, Florida.

CLIMATE

Fort Walton Beach experiences hot and humid summers, generally from Late May to mid-September. Autumns, from mid-September to early December, are generally warm. Winters are very short and mild, from mid-December to late February. Springs are warm, from late February to late May.

Fort Walton Beach, part of the western Choctawhatchee Bay region of which Destin and Niceville are also part, is very wet averaging 69 inches of rain each year, more than any other city in Florida.
AIRPORTS
Nearby Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (airport code VPS) serves Fort Walton Beach, as well as Valparaiso, Florida. Airlines currently serving Northwest Florida Regional Airport are: Allegiant Airlines, American Airlines, American Eagle, Delta Air Lines, Delta Connection, United Airlines, and US Airways. They provide non-stop service to Atlanta, Cincinnati, Charlotte, Dallas, Fort Lauderdale, Houston, Las Vegas, Knoxville, Memphis, Oklahoma City and St. Louis.

MAJOR HIGHWAYS
State Road 189 is a north-south highway from State Road 85 to US 98 in downtown Fort Walton Beach. State Road 85 is a north-south highway from Alabama State Route 55 in Florala, Alabama, through I-10 in Crestview and ends at US 98 in downtown Fort Walton Beach. US 98 is an east-west highway, which runs through downtown Fort Walton Beach. The Brooks Bridge over the Santa Rosa Sound connects Fort Walton Beach with Okaloosa Island. It is the mail route to Destin and Pensacola.

DEMOGRAPHICS
Historical Population
2016 21,971 est.
In the 2013 census, there were 20,597 people, 8460 households and 5,419 families residing in the city. The racial makeup was 77.7% white, 12.3 % African American, 0.7% Native American, 3.2% Asian, 0.03% Pacific Islander, 1.22% from other races, and 3.7% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 7.9% of the population.
In the city, the population was spread out with 22.4% under the age of 18, 8.9% from 18 to 24, 29.3% from 25 to 44, 23.1% from 45 to 64 and 16.3% were 65 or older.
The median income for a household was $40,153, and the median income for a family was $45,791. The per capita income for the city was $21,085. About 7.3% of families and 9.9% of the population were below the poverty line.

CHURCH AFFILIATION
First Baptist Church of Fort Walton is located in the West Florida Region of the Florida Baptist Convention which is located in Jacksonville, Florida, and is a member of the Emerald Coast Church Network.

OKALOOSA COUNTY
HISTORY
Okaloosa County was created by an act passed on September 7, 1915. Okaloosa is a Choctaw word meaning “black water” “Oka” means water, and “lusa” is black in the Choctaw language.
GEOGRAPHY
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 1,082 square miles of which 930 square miles is land and 152 square miles is water. Additional cities in Okaloosa County include: Crestview, Destin, Niceville, and Valparaiso.

Demographics—Population
1990 143,776

HOSPITAL SERVICES
North Okaloosa Medical Center-Crestview
Twin Cities Hospital-Niceville
Fort Walton Beach Medical Center-Fort Walton Beach
Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast - Destin

EDUCATION
North West Florida State College-Main Campus-Niceville
North West Florida State College/West Florida University Campus-Fort Walton Beach
Troy University Campus-Fort Walton Beach
Vocational School Campus-Fort Walton Beach

RECREATION
Sugar White Sands, Emerald Green Waters, Swimming, Boating, Fishing, Water Skiing, Snorkeling, Golfing, Festivals, Parades, Cruises, Restaurants, Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

RETIREMENT FACILITIES
Belvedere Commons, Wellington Place, The Meridian at Westwood and Bob Hope Village for veterans