A Welcoming Place for All

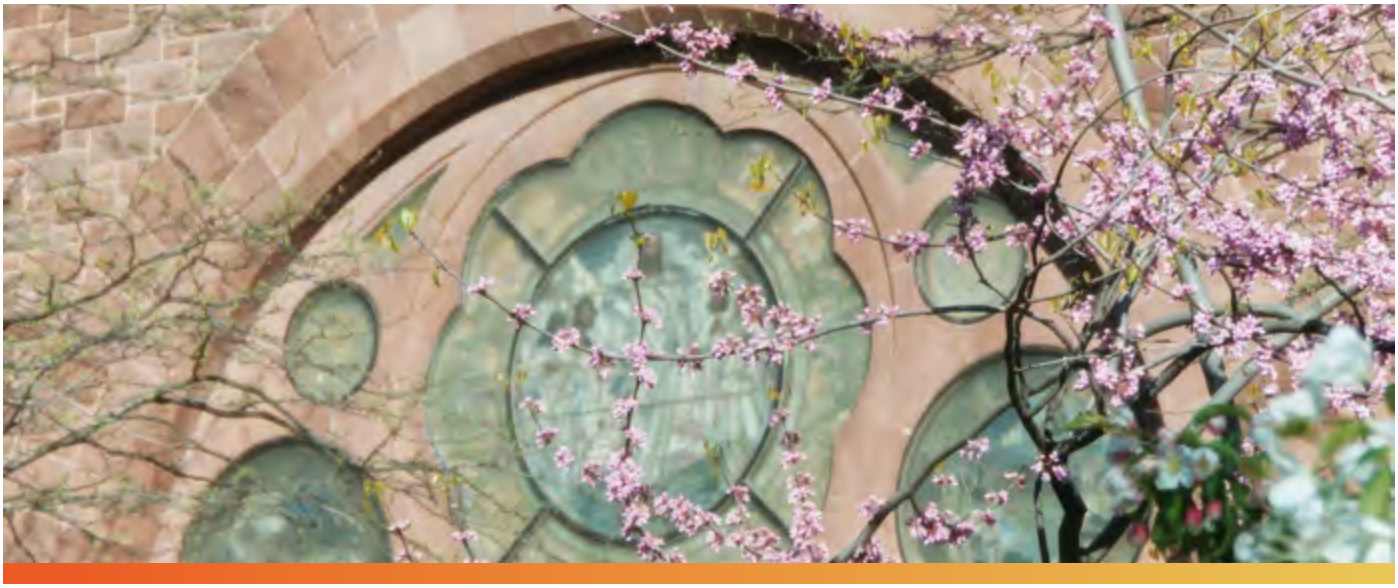
A Community-Wide Campaign for
First Presbyterian Church of Albany

A Welcoming Place for All

First Presbyterian Church of Albany has long been more than a church building. It is a place of welcome, justice, beauty, and care -- serving the wider community every day through recovery programs, counseling services, arts events, and gatherings that bring people together.

A Welcoming Place for All is a capital campaign to ensure that this historic, heavily used building continues to serve that mission fully. By addressing accessibility, climate control, and essential infrastructure needs, the campaign protects the building's ability to meet real human needs, now and into the future.

This is an invitation to invest in a place that belongs to the whole community.



A Place with History

For more than 260 years, light has shone from First Presbyterian Church of Albany—sometimes through Tiffany glass, sometimes through the everyday acts of welcome, compassion, and justice that define our congregation. Founded in 1763 by Scots-Irish immigrants seeking a place to worship in their own tradition, First Pres has grown from a modest wooden meeting house near Fort Albany into the landmark that now stands along Washington Park: a Romanesque Revival sanctuary designed in 1883 by J. Cleveland Cady, with its soaring bell tower, arched stonework, and original Meneely bell that still calls our community together.

Across generations, the congregation has cared for this sacred space, expanding and preserving it so it can continue to serve Albany with beauty, resilience, and purpose. Yet the heart of First Pres has never been its architecture alone. Our church has long stood as a guiding presence in Albany's civic and spiritual life: hosting community gatherings, welcoming seekers, and speaking out for justice. Today, this historic place remains a cornerstone of faith, belonging, and service, worthy of care and investment for generations to come.

A Place for Community

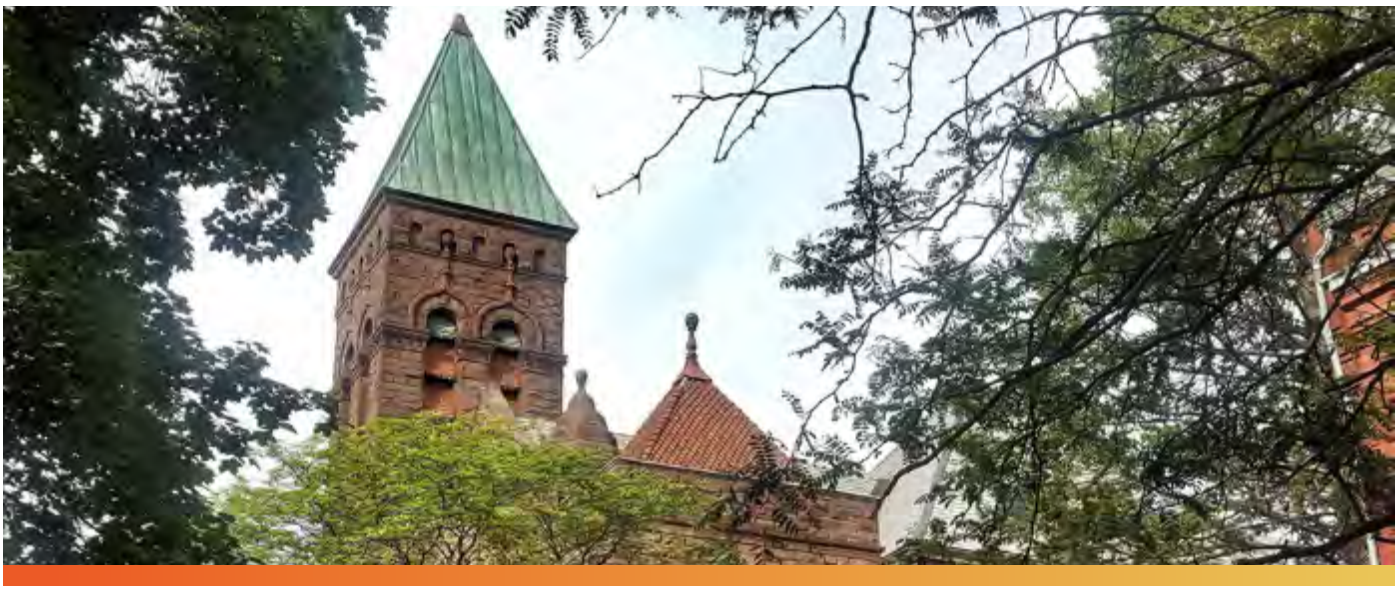
At First Pres, our building is not simply a place we use—it is a resource we share. On any given week, the church is filled with life: rehearsals, meetings, neighborhood gatherings, civic discussions, arts events, and moments of quiet refuge. We believe thriving communities need welcoming, accessible places to come together, and we open our doors so that others can flourish within them.

Over the decades, First Pres has helped launch and sustain organizations serving some of Albany's most vulnerable neighbors, including the Wildwood School, the FOCUS Breakfast Program and Food Pantry, and the Wizard's Wardrobe tutoring program for children in the South End. These partnerships embody our commitment to making our space—and our congregation—a catalyst for community good.

A Place of Worship

We are a vibrant and diverse faith community grounded in tradition yet guided by a progressive spirit. At First Pres, all are welcome on their spiritual journey, no matter where they find themselves along the way. We joyfully embrace people of all genders, gender identities, races, family structures, sexual orientations, immigration statuses, and abilities.

Our worship sustains us; our outreach expresses our faith. Congregants regularly volunteer with local partners, putting compassion into action and extending the church's welcome far beyond our sanctuary walls.



A Place of Illumination & Architectural Beauty

Among the treasures of First Pres is its extraordinary architecture and stained glass—masterworks that reflect sacred craftsmanship and illuminate the sanctuary with shifting color and light. Many windows were designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany, including the renowned Sea of Galilee window, whose favrile glass captures every glimmer.

J. Cleveland Cady's early Romanesque Revival design remains one of his most exceptional works. Together, the structure, stonework, and glass speak to the church's historic prominence in Albany and its enduring role as a beacon of art, faith, and community.

A Place of Healing & Recovery

Every week, more than 400 people in recovery rely on First Pres as a safe, consistent, and welcoming place to gather. Our building hosts eleven (11) weekly meetings for:

Alcoholics Anonymous Narcotic Anonymous Heroin Anonymous

Every week, First Pres welcomes hundreds of people in recovery, offering a safe, consistent and inclusive space where healing can take root. These gatherings bring together individuals from all walks of life and reflect the church's commitment to hospitality and hope for every member of the community.

A Place for Social Justice

Guided by Jesus' call to stand with the marginalized, First Pres is committed to building a community marked by welcome, equity, and compassion. Our social justice ministry works alongside partners like FOCUS Ministry to advocate for systemic change and to support those most affected by social and economic disparities.

Our congregation engages in efforts such as:

- ✓ **Confronting racial injustice and violence**
- ✓ **Raising the minimum wage**
- ✓ **Advocating for marriage equality**
- ✓ **Supporting voting rights**
- ✓ **Expanding the hunger relief programs**

Whether through public rallies or quiet acts of service, we seek to live out a faith that moves beyond words into meaningful action. Even the building speaks these values: rainbow flags across our campus signal an open welcome and a commitment to inclusion. Here, all are invited to join in the ongoing work of justice and hope for our community and beyond.

A Place with Economic Impact

First Pres is not only a spiritual and community anchor—it is also a significant economic contributor to downtown Albany. An Economic Halo Study conducted by Partners for Sacred Places and Dr. Ram Cnaan of the University of Pennsylvania found that First Pres annually contributes more than **$1.4 million** to the local economy. This includes direct building operations, visitor spending driven by events, and the far-reaching value of social services offered within our walls.

Our Annual Impact

$761,000
in direct spending for building maintenance and operations.

$270,000
generated through event activity and visitor spending.

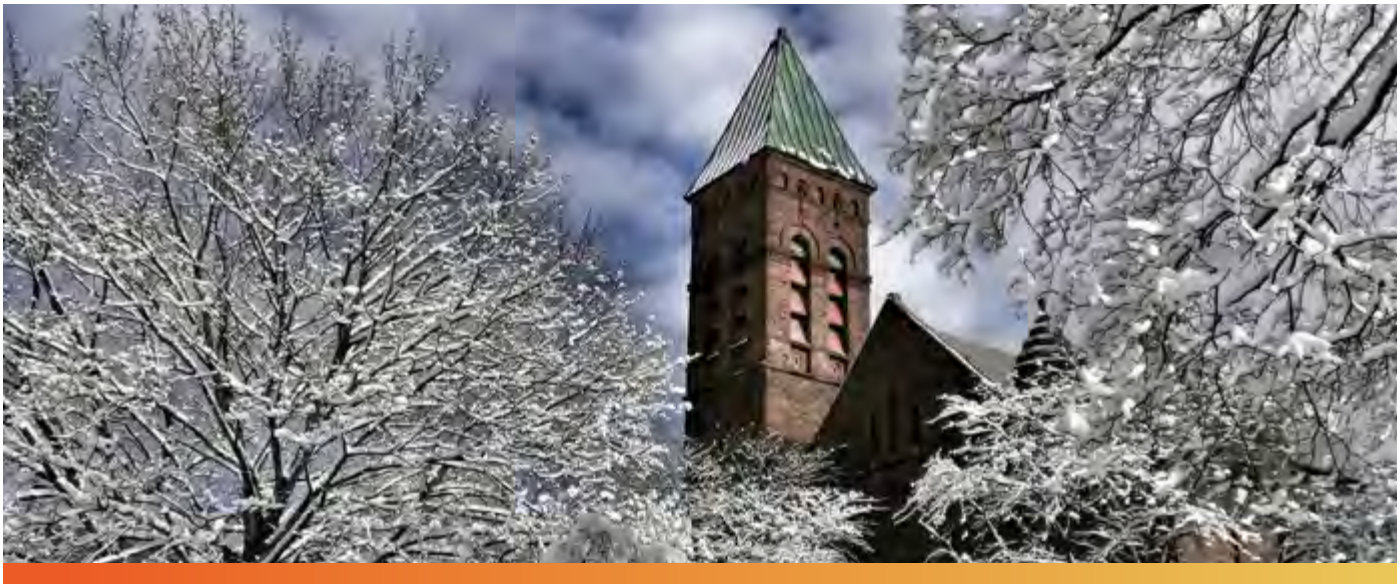
$207,000
in individual impact through programs that help people remain employed and reduce public-sector costs.

$163,000
in community-oriented programs that supplement local government and social service agencies.

What This Means

Our activities generate income for local businesses, employ area residents, attract visitors, and provide vital support services that strengthen Albany's social fabric.

As we expand accessibility, comfort, and programming through this campaign, that economic benefit will only grow—supporting local restaurants, small businesses, partner organizations, and the downtown community.



Our Goals

By supporting the A Welcoming Place for All campaign, you help ensure that First Pres continues to serve as a place of hospitality, healing, and spiritual growth—one that welcomes thousands of visitors, neighbors, and seekers every year. Your investment will support projects that make our historic campus more usable, more accessible, and more comfortable for everyone who enters.

Air Conditioning

Add air conditioning to the Assembly Hall, first floor of the Education Building, the Recovery Group Meeting Area, and the third-floor Community Partner Office Space—expanding year-round usability for community groups and congregational life.

ADA-Accessible Restrooms

Build two ADA-accessible restrooms in the Assembly Hall, easily accessible from the sanctuary and available to attendees at community meetings and civic events.

ADA-accessible, Weather-Protected Entrance

Construct a new ADA-accessible, weather-protected entrance to the Recovery Group Meeting Area—providing safe access for people with mobility concerns and addressing persistent drainage issues. The meeting space will also be renovated and include an ADA-accessible restroom.

Exterior and structural repairs

Make essential exterior and structural repairs to ensure long-term building stability.

New Office Space

Create new office space for a mission-aligned nonprofit partner, supporting community-focused work within our walls. The renovation will include two new all-gender restrooms, one of which will be ADA-accessible.

Campaign Scope

Through the A Welcoming Place for All campaign, we seek to raise **$3.9 million over three years** to ensure that our 141-year-old building remains an accessible, comfortable, and community-centered space for worship, connection, and support.

These improvements extend beyond the scope of our annual operating budget. We are reaching out to our congregation, our neighbors, philanthropic partners, and government leaders to help restore and enhance the building that so many rely on.

Your support will create climate-controlled spaces that are usable year-round, restrooms that meet community needs, and accessible pathways that welcome all who seek comfort, recovery, or connection within our walls.

COOLING SYSTEM

$1,423,000

ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCE (BASEMENT)

$1,210,000

COMMUNITY PARTNER OFFICE

$442,500

RECOVERY GROUP MEETING AREA

$311,750

RESTROOM UPGRADES (ASSEMBLY HALL)

$312,000

EXTERIOR & STRUCTURAL

$177,000

How You Can Help

To date, First Pres has secured **$2.3 million** of the anticipated project cost, including a major anonymous grant and generous gifts from congregants and friends. In October, First Pres received a **$210,000 grant** from the National Fund for Sacred Places—one of just 30 historic congregations nationwide selected for this prestigious award in 2025. As a condition of the grant, the church will raise a dollar-for-dollar match of $210,000, bringing the total investment to at least **$420,000.** We have also received a **$15,000 Sacred Sites grant** from the New York Land Conservancy to support architectural design fees.

To complete the remaining fundraising, we will depend on:

- ✓ **Individual donors from both the congregation and the wider community**
- ✓ **Government funding sources**
- ✓ **Private foundations**

Individual contributions will be the heart of this effort. Every gift—large or small—brings us closer to creating a fully welcoming, fully accessible campus that reflects our deepest values.

To discuss a gift supporting the A Welcoming Place for All campaign, please contact Co-Pastors Miriam & Glenn Leupold at **518.449.7332.**

"Places like this, and this church in particular, save lives. You need a community to make it when you are in recovery. First Pres has a beautiful community here, and we are grateful for it."

-A member of the Center Square Promises Group of AA

Contribute Today

Your investment in A Welcoming Place For All ensures that First Pres continues to be the vital community resource it has been since its founding—a place of welcome, justice, beauty, and care for all.

Learn more at **firstpresalbany.org.**

First Presbyterian
Church of Albany
BRINGING THE LIGHT OF FAITH TO ALL

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