



STATEMENT FROM HEATH LAMBERT ON THE FUTURE OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

First Baptist Church has been ministering the grace of Jesus Christ in Jacksonville for over 181 years. Almost since our city was incorporated, the people of First Baptist have been sharing the love of God for our city by sharing the salvation that comes through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On September 8, 2019 First Baptist rededicated ourselves to bold ministry in this city in several different ways.

First, we agreed to invest \$30 Million in one block of our downtown property, and to consolidate all of our ministry downtown on this single block. This block, located on Church Street across from City Hall, will become a beautiful facility, that we will use to welcome our city to worship, and out of which we will serve our city in the name of Jesus Christ. This will include the renovation of our oldest sanctuary and one of the oldest buildings in downtown Jacksonville—the historic Hobson Auditorium.

Second, we announced that we will begin to pursue options for the sale of our remaining property downtown. This property includes six full blocks, which are contiguous, and portions of three other blocks. As a church, we want to communicate an interest in making financial investments in ministry in Jesus' name, rather than in the maintenance of a sprawling downtown campus. We also want to be a partner with the city of Jacksonville in the exciting development that is happening downtown. We are excited about cooperating with various interests in Jacksonville for a renewed city.

Finally, we are making a commitment to carry satellite campuses of our church throughout greater Jacksonville. Our newly-constructed Nocatee Campus has experienced exciting growth in the few months since opening a new facility. We want to replicate this model throughout the various regions of Jacksonville. Instead of asking Jacksonville to come to one, large campus of First Baptist in downtown Jacksonville, we will take our church to them in smaller facilities throughout the region.

When I became senior pastor of First Baptist I expressed a dual desire to stop our church's years-long decline in membership, and to be a better neighbor to our city. The initiatives I announced and our church approved on Sunday, September 8 helps to accomplish both of these desires. I am thrilled for what God has in store for the future of First Baptist Church, and for the city of Jacksonville.

Dr. Heath Lambert has served First Baptist church since 2016, and was elected to the position of Senior Pastor in 2017. To reach him for further comment, you may contact his office at (904) 356-6077.