



A History Of Faith Promise at FCC Fairfield

The key to world evangelism is the church...

The success or failure of the missionary enterprise ultimately comes back to the church...

Over 50 years ago., Bob Reeves spoke those words and they are still true today.

Evangelizing the world hinges on the church doing her part. There was and is no plan B. That, for the past 50 plus years has never been up for debate here at First Christian Church in Fairfield.

In 1962, something changed that made an incredible difference in that mission. It was a step of faith that still affects us and congregations around the country and around the world today.

In the fall of 1962, Murray D. Hill and the then minister Robert Reeves stepped out in faith and decided to try this new method of raising support for missions and out of those conversations came the idea of Faith Promise. The mission team here at First Christian Church launched a plan that has become the cornerstone of FCC's mission program ever since.

Rosella Reeves noted the night they were going to present the faith promise program to the board for approval, Bob was extraordinarily nervous. She commented she had never seen him that nervous about anything he had ever done before.

It's worth noting that Faith Promise was not, at this point, a tried and true method of raising Mission support in the Churches of Christ / Christian Church. As a matter of fact, this was the first time in any records that can be found, a Christian Church had used Faith Promise as a way of raising mission support. This was, by all accounts, a huge step in faith. It was largely due to God blessing the program here and the work of Bob Reeves in spreading the word,

that hundreds, if not thousands of other Churches of Christ / Christian churches began to use the program.

That evening, it was decided this church would pursue Faith Promise as **THE** method of obtaining funding for missions. And that's when the real work began.

We take for granted that everyone understands what Faith Promise is all about. We've heard it so many times in the past, we assume everyone knows what we're talking about. But that wasn't the case in 1962. No one really knew how this program was going to work, or for that matter, if it was going to work.

So plans were set in motion. Dr. Dennis Pruett was chosen to be the speaker at the very first Faith Promise conference in April of 1963. To most of the congregation, it seemed almost foolish to go to the extent of planning and preparing that they did. But soon, the vision for what could be caught on, and the excitement began to spread. This just might work...

The goal for that first conference, which ran from Sunday to Sunday, every night of that week, was \$12,200.00. In 1962, the church had given only \$7,000.00 to a couple of missionaries and some special needs that had come to the attention of the congregation. So again, the congregation stepped out in faith.

By the end of the Conference, that first year, the congregation promised over \$13,000.00 to be used for missions. Just for comparison, the average salary in 1963 was only \$4,600.00.

Not content to sit back and take it easy, the next conference was planned for 1964. This time, Woodrow Phillips was chosen to speak for the week long conference. A goal, unthinkable by some, was set at \$17,010.00. (Evidently Bob Reeves didn't like round numbers.) Actually, the Mission team set the budget for the next year before the Faith Promise rally. That's why the numbers don't come out nice and neat. And, once again, God blessed the efforts and the promises for 1964 totaled \$17,500.00.

In 1965, they took a break from the conference, but giving continued and the mission program here at First Christian in Fairfield, grew and influenced thousands around the globe for the cause of Christ.

In 1966, they tried a new idea. They had different speakers in each night of the rally. That meeting closed with promises of \$29,722.64. In four short years the congregation had learned to trust God and he had multiplied their mission giving by more than four times. They took a break once again in 1967, but the giving to missions actually grew that year, even without a conference.

For the years of 1968, 69, 70, and 71, they again tried something new. The church partnered with nine other area churches and held their Faith Promise rallies at the same time. This allowed them to share the resources of speakers and so each night, the missionary would be at a different church, speaking about not only their work, but the importance of being

involved in the evangelization of the world. The total for all nine churches was \$116, 141.60. Charles Selby was the closing day speaker at Fairfield, and that year the church raised promises of \$31,574.00. Over the next three years, the congregation continued to meet and surpass the rising goals that were set. The culmination came in 1971, with an astonishing \$46,000 in promises when the goal for that year had been only \$38,000.00. Just for comparison again, the average wage in 1971 was only \$7500.00

1972 marked the 10th anniversary of the Faith Promise Conference here at Fairfield. For that year, planning was taken on in earnest. They wanted to make sure that on this anniversary what had been accomplished by God through this congregation was not only celebrated but that the increase God had given was continued. It was decided the goal for that 10th year would be \$50,000.00. When the then chairman of the mission team, Melvin Spencer asked the mission team if anyone felt the goal could not be reached, the room was silent. The 10th year celebration featured displays from the missions that were supported at the time. Not only did they fill what would become known as Timothy Hall, but also the hall by the nursery and offices, and even the room at the end of the hall that was then used as a conference room.

That year, there were about 185 Faith Promises made representing 120 different families. More than 45 promises were made by youth of High School age or less. There were 14 commitments made by Sunday School classes. When all of the promises were counted, they not only met the goal of \$50,000.00, but surpassed it, ending with total promises of over \$56,000.00.

Fast forward 50 plus years, and in 2020, our Faith promise giving is near \$320,000.00.

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Our methods we use to evangelize the world and to promote our Faith Promise may have changed, but our goal is the same. We want to see people come to know Jesus. We want them to meet Him and know Him as their way back to the God who created them. And we still have to trust Him to work through us to make that happen.

Many times we ask and wonder what Faith Promise is really all about. Why not just figure out how much we can afford and give that. What is the big deal about Faith Promise. You see, this is not primarily a financial venture. It's primary purpose is to connect us to the chief function of the church, missions.. The emphasis is on faith. It's not really about what we **CAN** do. It's really much more about what God **WILL** do through us. It's really about what God can do and how much we're willing to trust Him.