



The Clothing Church at 15th and Jupiter in east Plano...Clothing Body and Soul

First Presbyterian Church Plano (FPC Plano) has been a cornerstone in the City of Plano for more than 150 years, serving as a vibrant worship community. The church has been situated at its current location since 1967, providing a stable gathering place for members of the congregation across generations. Over the past several decades, FPC Plano has experienced a shift that mirrors the trends seen in many mainstream churches; the congregation has gradually become smaller and older. Today, a significant portion of our members are over the age of 50, with the majority falling within the 65 to 85-plus age range. This demographic change has shaped both the character and the focus of our church community.

Among our congregation, one member stands out for her remarkable commitment and service. At 89 years old, she has faithfully managed our family clothes closet for many years. Her involvement began shortly after we moved from our original downtown Plano location to our current home at the corner of 15th and Jupiter streets.

Through this steady leadership, she has played a vital role in supporting this important ministry.

When the COVID pandemic emerged, First Presbyterian Church Plano was in the midst of conducting a formal mission study. This process began during a period of transition, as we welcomed an interim minister and sought to discern our purpose within the east Plano community. Historically, like many churches, FPC Plano had supported our local area through a variety of ministries. At that time, we operated around 15 small ministries, most of which—aside from our family clothes closet—were short-term and involved relatively modest financial commitments.

These ministries often took the form of one-day events, such as distributing selected items annually, with costs to the congregation typically around \$1,500 per event. Other efforts consisted of simply donating funds—perhaps \$1,000 to a worthy cause—without further engagement beyond writing a check. While these efforts were valuable in their own way, we recognized the need to assess their overall impact.

During our mission study, we asked ourselves two key questions: If FPC Plano were to close its doors tomorrow, would our community notice our absence? Were we making a significant enough impact locally? After careful consideration, our honest answer was “no.” This realization prompted us to reevaluate and refocus our mission, striving to create a more lasting and meaningful presence in our community.

Faced with the realities of being a smaller church with an older congregation, we recognized the importance of finding a way to serve our local community that matched our strengths and resources. With experience and existing inventory from our family clothes closet, we made the decision to concentrate our efforts on clothing outreach. This strategic choice allowed us to maximize our impact based on the success of our clothes closet.

In the process of refocusing, we received guidance from the City of Plano, which directed us toward Streetside Showers—a mobile shower program that provides homeless individuals access to essential hygiene services. By partnering with Streetside Showers, we were able to further extend the reach of our clothing ministry, offering tangible support to those most in need within our community.

Over the past five and a half years, our commitment to serving the community through clothing outreach has grown substantially. We have established a partnership with Streetside Showers, continuing our support of their mobile shower program for individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition to this ongoing collaboration, we have taken on the role of clothing supplier for The Plano Overnight Warming Station (POWS) during the colder months, ensuring that those seeking shelter have access to warm clothing when they need it most. Our outreach also includes working alongside other local ministries, providing periodic assistance with clothing for their clients as needs arise. These partnerships have enabled us to extend our

ministry and provide critical support to a broader segment of the community.

Despite remaining a smaller and older congregation, we have embraced our unique strengths and chosen to focus our limited resources—money, time, and energy—on a single, impactful ministry: providing clothing to those in need. By concentrating our efforts in this way, we have rebranded ourselves as “The Clothing Church,” reflecting our commitment and identity within the community.

With the majority of our church’s resources now directed toward this cornerstone ministry, we have seen a remarkable increase in support. More financial contributions are being made specifically for our clothing outreach, allowing us to expand our efforts and help even more individuals. Volunteer engagement has also grown, with both our congregants and community volunteers regularly dedicating their time to this cause.

The renewed energy generated by this focused approach has proven contagious, spreading among our members and extending into the neighborhoods around our church. By maintaining an ongoing, dedicated ministry, we have been able to create a variety of volunteer opportunities—large and small—to suit the interests and abilities of everyone involved. This adaptability has made it easier for individuals to find meaningful ways to contribute, further strengthening our church’s role as a vital resource in the community.

In addition to the impact already described, our clothing ministry has brought significant benefits to our church community. One of the most meaningful aspects is that it gives our congregants opportunities to spend time together outside of Sunday worship. Through their involvement in the ministry, members are able to connect more often, fostering the growth of new relationships and strengthening existing bonds within our congregation.

Another important benefit is the connection that has formed between our volunteers and those in the community who receive clothing assistance. Over the years, as volunteers have regularly worked with those in need, they have come to know many of them personally. These relationships extend beyond the walls of the church; when volunteers and recipients run into each other elsewhere in the community, they often engage in friendly conversations rather than simply passing by one another. These interactions have enriched the lives of both our volunteers and those we serve, helping to build a stronger, more connected community.

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Our church has redefined its mission by focusing on clothing outreach as its primary ministry. Our ministry is about more than just meeting practical needs—it is about nurturing the whole person. By supplying clothing to individuals and families who are struggling, we address immediate challenges while also supporting dignity and hope. In doing so, we aim to clothe not only bodies but also souls, building

meaningful relationships and strengthening the bonds that unite our church, our volunteers, and those we serve.





