

Join Us to Move First Forward

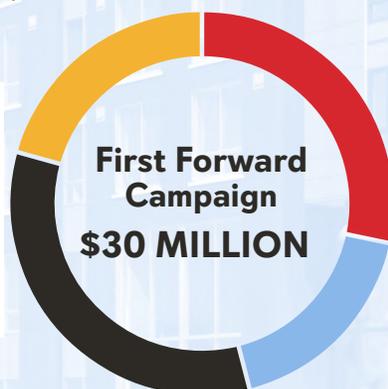
The redevelopment of our aging church building at 320 East Hastings into a multi-storey, multi-purpose facility that provides both critical support services and urgently needed housing has been in contemplation for many years.

Over the past five years, we engaged in several community consultation processes, conducted feasibility studies, formed a partnership with Lu'ma Native Housing Society, assembled a team of professional consultants, and developed preliminary plans for the building. In 2020, a \$10 million leadership gift gave us the resources needed to move the redevelopment of **FIRST UNITED** forward, and we submitted our development permit application in September 2020.

The project has received unanimous support so far from all levels of government throughout the design and regulatory process. With sufficient momentum built, we held our first meeting of the First Forward Cabinet in February 2021. Led by Honourary Chair Mike Harcourt and co-chairs Rudy Kerklaan and the Reverend Cari Copeman-Haynes, the Cabinet kicked off our First Forward Building Connections Campaign with the ambitious **goal of raising \$30 million to fund FIRST UNITED's portion of the redevelopment project.**

As the demolition and construction start at 320 East Hastings draws near, we're excited to announce that **our capital campaign has raised nearly \$22 million to date.** We've received overwhelming support from corporations, communities of faith, individuals, and the public sector. And on November 16th, we took the campaign public!

- **Committed Contributions:**
\$5,300,000
- **Funds to Raise:**
\$8,500,000
- **Leadership Gift:**
\$10,000,000
- **United Churches:**
\$6,200,000



First Forward Cabinet

- ▶ Mike Harcourt, Honourary Chair
- ▶ Rev. Cari Copeman-Haynes, Co-chair
- ▶ Rudy Kerklaan, Co-chair
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, Executive Director
- ▶ Amanda Burrows, Campaign Director
- ▶ Dr. Heather Clarke, Board Chair
- ▶ Don Evans
- ▶ Jim Fletcher
- ▶ Mark Paetkau
- ▶ Randy Smallwood
- ▶ Rev. Nancy Talbot
- ▶ Nancy Trott

We're incredibly excited to be inviting more of our friends, and the metro Vancouver public, to help us move First Forward. Supported by our leadership gift and in-kind media support, the public campaign also presents a unique opportunity to raise awareness about our work and the work of other service providers in the DTES. Grief is a constant companion in the DTES. Facing the compounding homelessness, overdose, and Covid-19 crises, **our neighbours in the DTES are in urgent need of community, connection, and care.** They deserve our attention. And regardless of circumstance, all people deserve the dignity and care that a safe, purpose-built space can provide.

We hope you will help us raise awareness by spreading the word.

Follow us on social media and share, like, or post using the hashtag **#FirstForward**. Tell your friends, family, co-workers, and acquaintances! Learn more and find resources at firstunited.ca



Christmas is Coming: Words from The Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne

Dearest Friends,

Can you believe it's been two years since we've had Christmas holidays without a pandemic? **And can we agree that ALL we want for Christmas this year is unmasked closeness and comfort with our families and friends?**

We need the warmth of human contact and to live without fear. These are some of the blessings we now no longer take for granted – a hug, a hand on your shoulder, sharing an ear to ear grin, laughing out loud, holding hands, and generally being close to those we love!

As we head into the Christmas season, with more freedom of movement than we've had in what seems like forever, let's not forget to treasure these moments with our families. And let's do the necessary work to heal all our forms of brokenness, and open our hearts to giving and receiving the love we need now more than ever.

Embracing the light and the joy is the only way we can calm the pain and look forward to another year ahead where we fight fiercely, with love and dedication, for a better world - a world where our children are safe, our girls are empowered, and our un-homed find sanctuary, care, and dignity.

We can't ever give up on or lose sight of the world we believe in, where everyone thrives! This Christmas season, I challenge you to **refill your cups, take the time you need to reinvigorate yourselves** in preparation to continue as warriors of the good fight. We need you, healthy and happy!

Thank you again for being part of our journey for dignity, equity, and justice in the Downtown Eastside. We could not do this work without you!

Happy holidays! Sending big, warm, hugs and ALL the love from our FIRST family to yours,



Carmen Lansdowne

The Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne



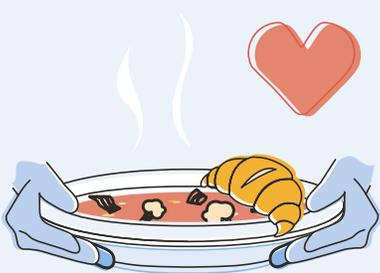
Introducing Food First

We are excited to be launching another new initiative that will enable us to continue serving hot, nutritious meals to our community in the DTES during the redevelopment of 320 East Hastings and beyond—**Food First**, the **FIRST UNITED** food truck meal program!

During the redevelopment, meals for our meal program will be prepared at a commissary kitchen on Clark Drive and then distributed to DTES residents via our new mobile food truck fleet, which consists of a minivan, a cargo van, and a fully-equipped food truck.

Our Food First food truck made its debut appearance at the First Forward campaign launch on November 16th. Keep an eye out for it around the DTES in early 2022!

City regulations usually require that food trucks charge for food, but the City of Vancouver is making a rare exception for us. The food truck will operate on a roaming permit and park at locations in and around our other service sites in the DTES, ensuring that the 200+ meals we currently serve each day continue to reach those in need.



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- ▶ **After the new building is complete, the food truck program will continue to operate, enabling us to expand our meal program and awareness initiatives.**



Community Member Profile: Victor

We recently spoke to Victor, a community member who has used a variety of FIRST UNITED services like our meal program, community help desk, and shelter. Through our wraparound services, we were able to help Victor get permanently housed. For over 135 years we've been helping meet the most immediate and pressing needs of those in our community and we're proud to support our community members thrive and have long-term solutions. Find out about Victor's story:

"I'm blind in one eye and have relied on the use of a wheelchair for four years now to get around – due to instability in my joints and muscles, walking is a significant challenge, and my risk of falling is high. Because of my chair, I am not able to access many places, including most emergency shelters. I also require special, accessible housing.

Without FIRST UNITED, I'd really be screwed. Before coming to First, my health was at stake because I was receiving no support or care and was sleeping out on the street. **With their support, I was able to get off the streets and eventually find a place to live that could accommodate me and provide me with three meals per day.**"





FIRST UNITED

320 E Hastings St,
Vancouver BC Canada V6A 1P4



Second Annual Shelter Gala

We're delighted to announce our second annual Shelter Gala is back on Giving Tuesday, November 30th. We're turning the traditional gala model on its head and giving our shelter residents an incredible meal and celebrating their resilience. Visit firstunited.ca/events to learn more and get involved.



Advent Season: Mark Your Calendars

We're approaching the season of Advent! Visit firstunited.ca for videos and resources produced by our Community Ministry team for the occasion to support and complement your worship.



Come to our Toast Talks

Join us at 4:30 on November 18, or 9:00 am on November 19 for the next series of Toast Talks. Toast Talks are a series of engagement sessions where members of our team provide updates, insights and information about our work in the Downtown Eastside, and the future of FIRST. Visit firstunited.ca/events to register now.