

Our History

FIRST UNITED's story begins in 1885, when the Presbyterian Church in Canada established a congregation in the township of Granville near Burrard Inlet.

1892

The congregation moves to 320 East Hastings in the heart of the Downtown Eastside, where we remain today.

1925

The congregation becomes **FIRST UNITED** Church as part of the establishment of the United Church of Canada.

1965

FIRST UNITED completes construction of the current building as it exists today.

1930s

During the Great Depression, thousands are thrown into abject poverty and hunger. **FIRST UNITED** steps up to respond to the tremendous need, serving as the major support hub for people struggling in the city and feeding more than 1,200 people each day.

1967

The drop-in centre opens its doors, offering a place to be and necessary resources to the low-income community.

1973

The Advocacy program launches in response to community need for legal advice and support.

1980

FIRST UNITED's tax program files its first returns for low-income people struggling with poverty.

2007

FIRST UNITED's congregation officially closes. The organization transitions fully to an inner-city ministry and faith-based service provider.

1997

The volunteer-run Foot Care Program launches, offering Downtown Eastside residents a chance for relaxation and connection.

2008

In response to the rapid growth in the number of people living on the streets, **FIRST UNITED** opens a low-barrier emergency shelter, shoehorning these essential operations into the existing church building.

2010

With all eyes on Vancouver during the 2010 Olympics, **FIRST UNITED** launches a "Share the Gold" campaign, drawing attention to issues of homelessness and inequality.

2021

The redevelopment of 320 East Hasting progresses, and the First Forward: Building Connections Campaign launches

2020

FIRST UNITED secures a housing partner to build 105 affordable housing units in the Downtown Eastside above a redeveloped purpose-built **FIRST UNITED** facility.