

New Dollars/New Partners Success Story



LESTER BOSS

First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, a New Dollars/New Partners participant, was recently awarded a PHMC Keystone grant to restore its steeple and bells.

In September 2004, Partners completed a *New Dollars/New Partners* training program sponsored by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. Recently, Partners received a letter from one of the 11 congregations participating in that program — First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh:

Dear [Partners],

In the spring of this year, First Baptist applied to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) for a Keystone grant to reinforce the steeple/fleche and to restore or replace the chimola (hemispherical bells) ringing mechanism. PHMC notified us last week that we received an award in the amount of \$90,000....

We want to take the opportunity to thank Partners for Sacred Places... The tools provided through [New Dollars] provided us with valuable information as we prepared our grant application.

One of those tools that proved especially useful was a software program that helped the congregation demonstrate the “public value” of their community ministries, which was included in the Church’s Keystone grant application. PHMC’s Scott Doyle told Partners: “The ‘community benefit’ portion of their application was very strong. It was impressive that such a small congregation was doing so much community outreach.” Using the software program, First Baptist determined that 95% of the people participating in activities or services in their building were not members of the congregation and calculated the public value of those activities and services at \$113,727 per year!

Partners was very pleased — though not surprised — to hear these positive results. First Baptist fits the profile of many *New Dollars* congregations: a small, active congregation that owns a large physical plant suffering from deferred maintenance which houses significant community outreach and offers collaborative use of their building. A national evaluation of the program (discussed in the last issue of *Sacred Places*) showed that *New Dollars* helps congregations such as First Baptist gain:

- ❖ Improved leadership, vision and energy among congregational leaders
- ❖ A new understanding and appreciation of the sacred place’s role in congregational mission
- ❖ Increased motivation among leaders to make better use of their sacred places
- ❖ Improved knowledge on how to make good use of their buildings, and how to raise capital funds

Congregations are using that understanding to create strong fundraising case statements that are appealing to both members and the larger community. Two-thirds of all congregations in *New Dollars* are developing new or deeper community partnerships, and one-quarter are already making progress on longer-term goals such as finding new funding to support their sacred places.

First Baptist was one of those congregations that immediately put the training to use for fundraising. “We had already started a capital campaign so we were ready for *New Dollars/New Partners*,” explains Casey Gnage the chair of the Campaign Committee. In the year since finishing *New Dollars/New Partners*, First Baptist has completed a successful capital campaign with their members and is now:

- ❖ actively planning for the future of the congregation
- ❖ assessing their role in the life of their neighborhood and
- ❖ submitting grant proposals that reflect their unique heritage, community service, and plans for the future.

Gnage continues, “. . . as a result of the *New Dollars* training we were also able to complete an extensive remodeling of our basement restrooms and explore new collaborative uses of our building.”

If you have questions about the *New Dollars/New Partners* program or interest in bringing it to your community, please contact Sarah Peveler, Director of Training, at 215-567-3234, ext. 14 or speveler@sacredplaces.org.