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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Implosion of Four Buildings Paves Way for 21st Century Campus at First Baptist Dallas: New Facility to Join Wave of Development Downtown by Easter 2013

DALLAS, Oct. 30, 2010 – With a snap, crackle and boom, four buildings in downtown Dallas imploded this morning as most area residents were starting their day. First Baptist Church of Dallas, a part of the cityscape since 1868, took another step toward recreating its facilities by demolishing the aging buildings Saturday morning. And when the dust settled, the sunlight shone brightly on the steeple of the historic sanctuary, which will remain a vital part of the 21st century campus.

“The last time anyone has seen this view of our church was 1927,” said First Baptist Pastor Dr. Robert Jeffress. “And now, we are seeing the sanctuary in a whole new light.”

Demolition experts used 450 pounds of dynamite and 1,200 charges to implode the Burt, Christian Education, Ruth Ray Hunt and Veal buildings at 8:15 a.m. CT. In a dedicated effort to protect the sanctuary from any flying debris, plywood was installed to cover the stained glass windows and a large blast curtain was placed in front of the exposed side of the old church. The bordering Truett and Mary C buildings are being dismantled separately. When the new construction is complete, the sanctuary, which dates to 1890, will be used for weddings, funerals and other special events.



The demolition paves the way for construction to begin in January 2011 on a campus that will include a 3,000-seat worship center, a fountain plaza with a cross-topped water tower, a new education building and a sky bridge across St. Paul Street that will tie the different parts of the new campus into a unified whole.

“This is a very positive for the city of Dallas,” said Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert. “The best part of the story is yet to come. This change is a new gateway into an important part of Dallas. It will give the entire downtown area a different feel.”

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The new campus is expected to open for 2013 Easter services, adding a spiritual element to downtown Dallas redevelopment, including the Performing Arts Center, which opened in 2009, and the Convention Center Hotel, which will open in 2012.

“As I look around downtown, I see spectacular temples of commerce, culture and government – many new, some restored to former glory, and all intended to stand for generations,” said Jeffress. “The Kingdom of God needs a home to equal them – a spiritual oasis in the middle of downtown.”

First Baptist was one of the largest churches in the U.S. in the 20th century, with many well-known figures having been members, including the Rev. Billy Graham. Although the recent trend in church growth has been toward megachurches in the suburbs, First Baptist has remained committed to downtown.

“These buildings imploded today have been used for generations,” said Mark Lovvorn, First Baptist chairman of the planning and development committee. “It is now time to build for the generations to come.”

Before Saturday, the campus consisted of a hodge-podge of buildings – many woefully inadequate for the needs of a growing church. The Burt Building, the oldest of the four, was built in 1927. First Baptist announced in May a pledge of more than \$115 million to recreate its campus – the most ever pledged for a Protestant church building program in this country.

For more information, visit www.FirstDallas.org/newcampus.

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Editor’s Note: Video of the implosion is available for download at <http://firstdallas.org/download/FirstDallasImplosionBRoll-h264.mov>.

Photo: For the first time in 83 years, as dust clears from the implosion of four buildings Saturday, Oct. 30, the morning sunlight shines unobstructed on the historic sanctuary steeple of First Baptist Church of Dallas.