

# No lives lost when façade collapsed at Stephenville church

January 25, 2023

First Baptist Church in Stephenville gathered for worship on Jan. 22, four days after the façade on the exterior of one of its buildings collapsed, injuring two construction workers.

A portion of the arched façade on the north side of the church's education building collapsed at 1:58 p.m. on Jan. 18. The century-old building—part of the city's historic district—is undergoing renovation and restoration.

Pastor Ken May was in his office at the south end of the church campus when he and others heard the crash.

"By the time I walked around the building, first responders were already there," he said in a phone interview.

One of the workers injured in the accident was discharged from the hospital the same day he was treated. The other was transported to a hospital in Fort Worth, where he is "stable and improving," May said.

"Buildings are valuable resources, but human lives are what are really precious," he said.

## 'God is with us'

During the [Jan. 22 morning worship service](#), May encouraged his congregation to praise God for his presence in difficult times and thank God for the protection he provides.



Pastor Ken May speaks to his congregation during a Sunday worship service four days after a portion of the facade collapsed at the entrance to its educational building. (Video screen grab)

“God is good. All the time, God is good,” he said. “It has been a tough week. ... Even when the façade on the church crumbles, God is with us.”

The church’s Kinderbridge Preschool meets in the education building, but no children or staff were injured. The collapse occurred after the time when the children were outdoors on a playground and prior to dismissal, when they would have been exiting the building with their parents, May noted.

“They were inside taking naps,” he said. Child care workers immediately followed emergency protocols, relocating the children to a safe location away from the affected part of the building.

“The engineer has inspected the building and concluded that most can be occupied,” a social media post on [the church’s Facebook page](#) stated, prior to the Sunday worship service.

While some preschool classes were moved to the church’s fellowship hall and a couple of adult Bible study classes relocated to the sanctuary on Jan. 22, most were able to meet in their usual areas. All classes were expected

to be in their normal locations on Jan. 29.

“In life, you have to be flexible. ... You just don’t know what’s going to happen. We’ve had to do that in the last few years with the pandemic,” May said.

While individuals are asked to stay clear of the area near the collapsed façade until it can be cleared, an engineer who examined the facility and compiled a 10-page report said it remains structurally sound, May told the congregation.

“Thank you so much for your prayers,” he said. “Prayer is powerful.”

In a [social media update posted Jan. 24](#), May called on the church to praise God.

“This week, we have become mindful of how quickly life can change. We have been confronted with the frailty of our nature and aware of our dependence upon God. Without him, we have no hope, no power and no future. Today is a day of praise,” he wrote.

“Praise him for being a God who is always in control, and One who is never caught by surprise. ... Praise him for being a loving and kind God who watches over us, protects us and provides.”