

Spring Hill First Presbyterian Church

The Spring Hill Presbyterian Church., built in 1888, is a one-story, eclectic-style church building along the main thoroughfare of the City of Spring Hill in northern Maury County.

The frame structure faces west to Main Street (U. S. 31). Historic Ferguson Hall, now a part of the Tennessee Children's Home, bounds the church to the south and east. Turn-of-the century residences are to the west side, and a few antebellum homes still stand to the north of the church.

The rectangular frame church building rests on a cut-stone foundation. A steeply pitched gable roof is supported at the front by twin entrances with similar roof lines and three pediments featured on the facade. Three bays wide, the west or front facade has a central multi-paned stained glass window, elliptical in shape, flanked by the double-leaf diagonally paneled doors, of the other two bays. The entrances are further characterized by single transom windows over each doorway. An arch just above the transom frames an electric light. White weatherboards frame the building to the pediment line. Pressed tin shingles in a diagonal pattern fill the pediments of the three bays, the eaves supported by decorated turned and chamfered brackets. Originally, the southwestern bay did not have a gable roof, but a projecting conical roof and steeple that was destroyed by a tornado in 1963. The north and south elevations were originally four bays wide; additions to the rear account for another two bays. The sides of the original building are identical, the most interesting feature being a projecting third bay.

The sanctuary of the church retains most all of its original features, including beaded tongue-and-groove paneling on the ceiling and wainscot, stained-glass windows, ash flooring, and the original church furniture. The newest additions to the interior have been four memorial windows in the original ball-and-target frames, electric lights, and an organ. The sanctuary is a central hall with two rows forming three sections of pews. The floor is raised in the front forming a chancel area and choir stall. The rear additions, added in 1911 and 1982, provide space for classrooms, a kitchen, and a small office. There is a small frame bungalow located to the north of the church building.

The Spring Hill Presbyterian Church is nominated under National Register of Historic Places criterion for its local significance in architecture. The Presbyterian congregation in the community dates to 1844 and remains the only one in the city. The frame building is an excellent vernacular structure in the eclectic style, with an interesting west facade and finely crafted interior.

The original Presbyterian Church of Spring Hill was organized with 26 members in May 1844 by the Reverends Robert Garrison and Robert Hardin. The same year, three important local figures were elected ruling elders; they were Philip H. Jenkins, Absolom Thompson, and James M. Alexander. Absolom Thompson, owner of Oaklawn Plantation in south Spring Hill, was the father of F. A. Thompson, the first minister of Spring Hill Presbyterian Church. The first church building is documented in the church minutes as having been built between June 15, 1847, and March 18, 1849, when it was dedicated. In that same year, F.A. Thompson became the minister of the church. Although there is no record concerning the first church's appearance, it is understood that F.A. Thompson oversaw much of the construction.

The church pews are exactly the same as those in the First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tennessee, where Thompson was minister from 1873 to 1878. It is possible that these pews were from the original church. No church records were kept for the period between 1862 and 1863, as later references state that the war "interfered much with our regular church services." Between 1882 and 1887, the church congregation grew to over 100. In 1888, the old church was demolished and in its stead the present structure was erected and dedicated.

On Dec. 23, 1888, at a cost of \$4,000, F. A. Thompson saw the church built and preached in it for one year. It is believed that it took over five years to raise the money for the church's construction. The original part of the structure remains essentially unaltered except for the addition of electric lighting. The two later rear additions (1911 and 1982), do not intrude on the original plan and are not visible from the street. The church has remained in continuous use and the congregation has formed an important part of the community for 130 years.