

FIRST RELIANCE BANCSHARES INC  
Form 10-K  
March 31, 2009

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UNITED STATES  
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d)  
OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

(Mark One)

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2008

OR

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from

to

Commission File Number 000-49757

FIRST RELIANCE BANCSHARES, INC.  
(Exact Name of Registrant as Specified in its Charter)

South Carolina  
(State of Incorporation)

80-0030931  
(I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)

2170 W. Palmetto Street, Florence, South  
Carolina  
(Address of Principal Executive Offices)

29501  
(Zip Code)

(843) 656-5000  
(Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

Securities Registered Pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:  
None

Securities Registered Pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:  
Common Stock, \$0.01 Par Value

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act.  
Yes  No

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Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act.

Yes  No

Indicate by check mark whether the Registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the Registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days.

Yes  No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (229.405 of this chapter) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of "accelerated filer," "large accelerated filer" and "smaller reporting company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large accelerated filer  Accelerated filer  Non-accelerated filer  Smaller reporting company

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act). Yes

No

The aggregate market value of the registrant's outstanding common stock held by nonaffiliates of the registrant as of June 30, 2008 was approximately \$31.6 million, based on the registrant's closing sales price of \$9.00 as reported on the Over-the Counter Bulletin Board on June 30, 2008. There were 3,525,004 shares of the registrant's common stock outstanding as of March 14, 2009.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Document	Parts Into Which Incorporated
Annual Report to Shareholders for the Year Ended December 31, 2008	Part II
Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders to be held June 18, 2009	Part III

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PART I

ITEM 1. BUSINESS

Special Cautionary Notice Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

This Report contains statements that constitute forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the “Securities Act”), and the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the “Exchange Act”). Various matters discussed in this document and in documents incorporated by reference herein, including matters discussed under the caption “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations,” may constitute forward-looking statements for purposes of the Securities Act and the Exchange Act. These forward-looking statements are based on many assumptions and estimates and are not guarantees of future performance, and may involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors which may cause the actual results, performance or achievements of First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. (the “Company”) or its wholly owned subsidiary, First Reliance Bank (the “Bank”), to be materially different from future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements. The words “expect,” “anticipate,” “intend,” “plan,” “believe,” “seek,” “estimate,” and similar expressions are intended to identify such forward-looking statements. The Company’s and the Bank’s actual results may differ materially from the results anticipated in these forward-looking statements due to a variety of factors, including, without limitation:

- significant increases in competitive pressure in the banking and financial services industries;
- changes in the interest rate environment that could reduce anticipated or actual margins;
- changes in political conditions or the legislative or regulatory environment;
- general economic conditions, either nationally or regionally and especially in our primary service area, becoming less favorable than expected resulting in, among other things, a deterioration in credit quality;
  - changes occurring in business conditions and inflation;
    - changes in technology;
    - changes in monetary and tax policies;
    - the level of allowance for loan loss;
    - the rate of delinquencies and amounts of charge-offs;
      - the rates of loan growth;
  - adverse changes in asset quality and resulting credit risk-related losses and expenses;
    - changes in the securities markets; and
- other risks and uncertainties detailed from time to time in our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”).

All written or oral forward-looking statements attributable to the Company are expressly qualified in their entirety by these cautionary statements.

## General

The Company was incorporated under the laws of the State of South Carolina on April 12, 2001 to be the holding company for the Bank, and acquired all of the shares of the Bank on April 1, 2002 in a statutory share exchange. The Bank, a South Carolina banking corporation, is the Company's only subsidiary, and the Company conducts no business other than through its ownership of the Bank. The Company has no indirect subsidiaries or special purpose entities. The Bank commenced operations in August 1999 and currently operates out of its main office and five branch offices. The Bank serves the Florence, Lexington, Charleston and Greenville areas in South Carolina as an independent, community-oriented commercial bank emphasizing high-quality, responsive and personalized service. The Bank provides a broad range of consumer and commercial banking services, concentrating on individuals and small and medium-sized businesses desiring a high level of personalized services. The Bank continues to focus on its Easy To Do Business With TM standard of banking by offering products and services including: Totally FREE Checking, Totally FREE Business Checking, Non-Profit Checking, FREE Coin Machines, a Retail Service Guaranty, a 5 Way Mortgage Service Promise, a Worldwide NO FEE ATM Network, and 8-8 Extended Hours in their Florence, Lexington, and Mt. Pleasant locations.

Except where the context otherwise requires, the terms the “Company,” “First Reliance,” “we,” “us,” and “our” refer to First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. and its sole subsidiary, First Reliance Bank.

The Company’s stock is traded on the OTC Bulletin Board under the symbol “FSRL”. Information about the Company is available on our website at <http://www.firstreliance.com>.

#### Marketing Focus

The Bank advertises aggressively, using popular forms of media and direct mail, to target market segments and emphasizes the Bank’s substantial local ownership, community bank nature, locally oriented operations and ability to provide prompt, knowledgeable and personalized service.

#### Location and Service Area

The executive or main office facilities of the Company and the Bank are located at 2170 W. Palmetto Street, Florence, South Carolina 29501. The Bank also has branches located at 411 Second Loop Road, Florence, South Carolina, 801 North Lake Drive, Lexington, South Carolina, 800 South Shelmore Blvd., Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, 25 Cumberland Street, Suite 101, Charleston, South Carolina, and 1154 Haywood Road, Suite B, Greenville, South Carolina. The Bank’s primary market areas are the cities of Florence, Lexington, Charleston, Greenville and the surrounding areas.

According to the South Carolina Department of Commerce, in 2000, Florence County had an estimated population of 125,761. Florence County, which covers approximately 805 square miles, is located in the eastern portion of South Carolina and is bordered by Darlington, Marlboro, Dillon, Williamsburg, Marion, Clarendon, Sumter and Lee Counties. Florence County has a number of large employers, including, Wellman, Inc., Honda, Nan Ya Plastics, ESAB, McLeod Regional Medical Center, and Carolinas Medical Center. The principal components of the economy of Florence County are the wholesale and retail trade sector, the manufacturing sector, the services sector and the financial, insurance and real estate sector.

The Bank opened a branch office at 801 North Lake Drive, Lexington, South Carolina in 2004. Lexington County had an estimated population in 2003 of 226,528. The primary market area is the City of Lexington and the surrounding areas of Lexington County, South Carolina. Lexington County is centrally located in the Midlands of South Carolina just outside the capital city in Columbia and is bordered by Richland, Newberry, Saluda, Aiken, Orangeburg and Calhoun Counties. Lexington County has a number of large employers, including, Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Michelin North America, Winnsboro Assembly Opera, Amick Farms, Inc., and Bose Corporation. Lexington County is a major transportation crossroads for the Midlands with I-26, I-77 and I-20 bordering or running through the county. The Columbia Metropolitan Airport is located in Lexington County, just 10 miles from the town of Lexington, and is the Southeastern hub for United Parcel Service. The principal components of the economy of Lexington County are the wholesale and retail trade sector, the manufacturing sector, the government sector, the services sector and the financial, insurance and real estate sector.

The Bank opened a branch office in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina as well a branch office in Charleston, South Carolina in 2005. Charleston County has a population of 309,969 and the Metro Area has a population of 549,033 according to the 2000 census. Charleston is located on the central and southern east coast surrounded by Berkeley and Dorchester counties. Major employers in the area include US Navy, Medical University of South Carolina, and the Charleston Air Force Base.

The Bank opened a branch office in Greenville, South Carolina in 2007. Greenville is located in the northwestern corner of the state of South Carolina and has a population of 56,2002 according to the 2000 census.



Management expects the Bank to open a new branch office in West Columbia, South Carolina during the second quarter of 2009.

### Banking Services

The Bank strives to provide its customers with the breadth of products and services comparable to those offered by large regional banks, while maintaining the quick response and personal service of a locally owned and managed bank. In addition to offering a full range of deposit services and commercial and personal loans, the Bank offers investment services and products such as mortgage loan origination, wholesale mortgage services and title insurance services.

The Bank continues to focus on its Easy To Do Business With™ standard of banking by continuously introducing new innovative products and services all with the goal of providing our customers a convenient and first class banking experience. To allow customers immediate access to their deposits, the Bank introduced “same day banking” in 2008, extending the cutoff time for transactions until 8:00 pm Monday through Friday. The Bank also offers a “hometown heroes” package of specially priced products for customers who work in the law enforcement, fire and rescue, education, and medical fields, active and veteran military personnel, and employees or board members of religious and charitable organizations. Other products and services include, a customer service guaranty, free coin machines, a worldwide “no fee” ATM network, and a “5-way mortgage service promise.” Branch office locations in Florence, Mt. Pleasant and Lexington offer 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. extended hours and all locations are open on most traditional bank holidays.

First Reliance, has been recognized for its success including being named to The Top 25 Fastest Growing Companies™ in South Carolina four times. For the past three consecutive years, the Bank has been named One of the Best Places to Work in SC™. In January 2009, the Bank was named “lender of the year” by the South Carolina State Housing Authority. The award was based on criteria that included overall production, underwriting quality and low delinquency foreclosure rates. First Reliance also received recognition as a Best Adoption-Friendly Workplace from the Dave Thomas Foundation.

The Bank seeks to promote continuous long-term relationships. Because management of the Bank is located in Florence, Lexington, and Charleston, South Carolina, all credit and related decisions are made locally, which facilitates prompt responses by persons familiar with the borrower’s local business environment.

**Deposit Services.** The Bank offers a full range of deposit services that are typically available in most banks and savings and loan associations, including checking accounts, NOW accounts, savings accounts and other time deposits of various types, ranging from money market accounts to longer-term certificates of deposit. The transaction accounts and time certificates are tailored to the Bank’s principal market area at rates competitive to those offered by other banks in the area. In addition, the Bank offers certain retirement account services, such as Individual Retirement Accounts. The Bank also offers free courier service for business accounts and offers remote deposit capture. The Bank solicits deposit accounts from individuals, businesses, associations and organizations and, governmental authorities. All deposit accounts are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (the “FDIC”) up to the maximum amount allowed by law.

**Loan Products.** The Bank offers a full range of commercial and consumer loans, as well as real estate, construction and acquisition loans. Commercial loans are extended primarily to small and middle market customers. Such loans include both secured and unsecured loans for working capital needs (including loans secured by inventory and accounts receivable), business expansion (including acquisition of real estate and improvements), asset acquisition and agricultural purposes. Commercial term loans generally will not exceed a five-year maturity and may be based on a ten or fifteen-year amortization. The extensions of term loans are based upon (1) the ability and stability of current management; (2) earnings and trends in cash flow; (3) earnings projections based on reasonable assumptions; (4) the



financial strength of the industry and the business itself; and (5) the value and marketability of the collateral. In considering loans for accounts receivable and inventory, the Bank generally uses a declining scale for advances based on an aging of the accounts receivable or the quality and utility of the inventory. With respect to loans for the acquisition of equipment and other assets, the terms depend on the economic life of the respective assets.

As of December 31, 2008, \$70.8 million, or 15% of the Bank's total loan portfolio, was comprised of commercial and industrial loans. Commercial loans involve significant risk because there is generally a small market available for an asset held as collateral that needs to be liquidated. Commercial loans for working capital needs are typically difficult to monitor.

As of December 31, 2008, the classification of the consumer loans of the Bank and the respective percentage of the Bank's total loan portfolio of each are as follows (dollars in thousands):

Description	Total Outstanding as of December 31, 2008	Percentage of Total Loan Portfolio
Individuals (household, personal, single pay, installment \$ and other)	8,011	2%
Individuals (household, family, personal credit cards and \$ overdraft protection)	809	1%
All other consumer loans	\$ 154	1%

The risks associated with consumer lending are largely related to economic conditions and increase during economic downturns. Other major risk factors relating to consumer loans include high debt to income ratios and poor loan-to-value ratios. All of the consumer loans set forth above require a debt service income ratio of no greater than 36% based on gross income.

The Bank's lending activities are subject to a variety of lending limits imposed by federal law. Under South Carolina law, loans by the Bank to a single customer may not exceed 7.5% of the Bank's unimpaired capital, except that by two-thirds vote of the directors of the Bank such limit may be increased to 15% of the Bank's unimpaired capital. The Bank's Board of Directors has approved that increase in its lending limit. Based on the Bank's unimpaired capital as of December 31, 2008, the Bank's lending limit to a single customer is approximately \$8.5 million. Even with the increase, the size of the loans that the Bank is able to offer to potential customers is less than the size of the loans that the Bank's competitors with larger lending limits are able to offer. This limit affects the ability of the Bank to seek relationships with the area's larger businesses. However, the Bank may request other banks to participate in loans to customers when requested loan amounts exceed the Bank's legal lending limit.

Mortgage Loan Division. The Bank has established a mortgage loan division through which it has broadened the range of services that it offers to its customers. The mortgage loan division originates secured real estate loans to purchase existing or to construct new homes and to refinance existing mortgages. The following are the types of real estate loans originated by the Bank and the general loan-to-value limits set by the Bank with respect to each type.

- Raw Land 65%
- Land Development 75%
- Commercial, multifamily and other nonresidential construction 80%
- One to four family residential construction 85%
- Improved property 85%
- Owner occupied, one to four family and home equity 90% (or less)
- Commercial property 80% (or less)



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As of December 31, 2008, the classification of the mortgage loans of the Bank and the respective percentage of the Bank's total loan portfolio of each are as follows (dollars in thousands):

Description	Total Amount as of December 31, 2008	Percentage of Total Loan Portfolio
Secured by non-farm, non-residential properties	\$ 192,707	40%
Construction and land development	\$ 60,744	13%
Farmland (including farm residential and other improvements)	\$ 8,611	1%
Revolving, open end loans secured by 1-4 family extended under line of credit	\$ 37,793	8%
All other loans secured by 1-4 family residential (1st lien)	\$ 72,245	17%
All other loans secured by 1-4 family residential (junior lien)	\$ 4,990	1%
Secured by multi-family (5 or more) residential properties – condos and apartments	\$ 7,105	1%

Of the loan types listed above, commercial real estate loans are generally more risky because they are the most difficult to liquidate. Construction loans also involve risks due to weather delays and cost overruns.

The Bank generates additional fee income by selling most of its mortgage loans in the secondary market and cross-selling other products and services to its mortgage customers. In 2008, the Bank sold mortgage loans in a total amount of approximately \$121.7 million, or 56% of the total number of mortgage loans originated by the Bank.

The Bank does not originate or hold subprime residential mortgage loans which were originally intended for sale on the secondary mortgage market.

All Federal Housing Agency ("FHA"), Veterans Administration ("VA") and South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority ("State Housing") loans sold by the Bank involve the right to recourse. The FHA and VA loans are subject to recourse if the loan shows 60 days or more past due in the first four months or goes in to foreclosure within the first 12 months. The State Housing loans are subject to recourse if the loan becomes delinquent prior to purchase by State Housing or if final documentation is not delivered within 90 days of purchase. All investors have a right to require the Bank to repurchase a loan in the event the loan involved fraud. In 2008, of the 692 loans sold by the Bank, 53 were FHA or VA loans and 69 were State Housing loans. Such loans represented 0.46% of the dollar volume or 17.63% of the total number of loans sold by the Bank in 2008.

In addition, an increase in interest rates may decrease the demand for consumer and commercial credit, including real estate loans. Net fees from residential mortgage originations were \$1.7 million, or 4.13%, of our gross revenue in 2008.

**Other Banking Services.** The Bank focuses heavily on personal customer service and offers a full range of financial services. Personal products include free checking, and savings accounts, money market accounts, CDs and IRAs, and personal mortgage loans, while business products include free checking and savings accounts, commercial lending services, money market accounts, cash management services including remote deposit capture and business deposit courier service. The Bank also offers wholesale mortgage, title insurance and provides Internet banking and eStatements, electronic bill paying services, free ATMs, free coin machines at all branches, and an overdraft privilege to its customers.



Investments. In addition to its loan operations, the Bank makes other investments primarily in obligations of the United States or obligations guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States and other taxable and nontaxable securities. The Bank also invests in certificates of deposits in other financial institutions. The amount invested in such time deposits, as viewed on an institution by institution basis, does not exceed \$250,000. Therefore, the amounts invested in certificates of deposit are fully insured by the FDIC. No investment held by the Bank exceeds any applicable limitation imposed by law or regulation. The Bank's Finance Committee reviews the investment portfolio on an ongoing basis to ascertain investment profitability and to verify compliance with investment policies.

Other Services. In addition to its banking services, the Bank offers securities brokerage services and life insurance products to its customers through a networking arrangement with an independent registered broker-dealer firm.

### Competition

The Bank faces strong competition for deposits, loans and other financial services from numerous other banks, thrifts, credit unions, other financial institutions and other entities that provide financial services, some of which are not subject to the same degree of regulation as the Bank. Because South Carolina law permits statewide branching by banks and savings and loan associations, many financial institutions in the state have extensive branch networks. In addition, subject to certain conditions, South Carolina law permits interstate banking. Reflecting this opportunity provided by law plus the growth prospects of the Charleston, Florence, Lexington, and Greenville markets, all of the five largest (in terms of local deposits) commercial banks in our market are branches of or affiliated with regional or super-regional banks.

As of June 30, 2008, 46 banks and 9 savings institutions operated 417 offices within Charleston, Florence, Lexington, and Greenville Counties. All of these institutions aggressively compete for business in the Bank's market area. Some of these competitors have been in business for many years have established customer bases, are larger than the Bank, have substantially higher lending limits than the Bank has and are able to offer certain services, including trust and international banking services, that the Bank is able to offer only through correspondents, if at all.

The Bank currently conducts business principally through its six branches in Charleston, Florence, Lexington, and Greenville Counties, South Carolina. Based upon data available on the FDIC's website as of June 30, 2008, the Bank's total deposits ranked tenth among financial institutions in our market area, representing approximately 2.05% of the total deposits in our market area. The table below shows our deposit market share in the counties we serve according to data from the FDIC website as of June 30, 2008.

Market	Number of Branches	Our Market Deposits	Total Market Deposits	Ranking	Market Share Percentage
<b>South Carolina (by county):</b>					
Charleston County	2	\$ 50	\$ 7,303	14	2.70%
Florence County	2	320	2,078	3	18.70
Lexington County	1	83	2,686	4	7.70
Greenville County	1	2	10,121	32	0.01
<b>First Reliance Bank (statewide)</b>					
	6	\$ 456	\$ 66,549	22	0.69%

The Bank competes based on providing its customers with high-quality, prompt and knowledgeable personalized service at competitive rates, which is a combination that the Bank believes customers generally find lacking at larger institutions. The Bank offers a wide variety of financial products and services at fees that it believes are competitive

with other financial institutions.

#### Employees

On December 31, 2008, the Bank had 145 full-time employees and 25 part-time employees. The executive officers of the Company also serve as executive officers of and are compensated by the Bank. The Company has no employees.

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### Supervision and Regulation

Both the Company and the Bank are subject to extensive state and federal banking regulations that impose restrictions on and provide for general regulatory oversight of their operations. These laws generally are intended to protect depositors and not shareholders. Legislation and regulations authorized by legislation influence, among other things:

- how, when and where we may expand geographically;
- into what product or service market we may enter;
- how we must manage our assets; and
- under what circumstances money may or must flow between the Company and the Bank.

Set forth below is an explanation of the major pieces of legislation affecting our industry and how that legislation affects our actions. The following summary is qualified by reference to the statutory and regulatory provisions discussed. Changes in applicable laws or regulations may have a material effect on our business and prospects, and legislative changes and the policies of various regulatory authorities may significantly affect our operations. We cannot predict the effect that fiscal or monetary policies, or new federal or state legislation may have on our business and earnings in the future.

First Reliance Bancshares, Inc.

Since the Company owns all of the capital stock of the Bank, it is a bank holding company under the federal Bank Holding Company Act of 1956. As a result, the Company is primarily subject to the supervision, examination, and reporting requirements of the Bank Holding Company Act and the regulations of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the "Federal Reserve").

Acquisitions of Banks. The Bank Holding Company Act requires every bank holding company to obtain the Federal Reserve's prior approval before:

- acquiring direct or indirect ownership or control of any voting shares of any bank if, after the acquisition, the bank holding company will directly or indirectly own or control more than 5% of the bank's voting shares;
- acquiring all or substantially all of the assets of any bank; or
- merging or consolidating with any other bank holding company.

Additionally, the Bank Holding Company Act provides that the Federal Reserve may not approve any of these transactions if it would result in or tend to create a monopoly or, substantially lessen competition or otherwise function as a restraint of trade, unless the anti-competitive effects of the proposed transaction are clearly outweighed by the public interest in meeting the convenience and needs of the community to be served. The Federal Reserve is also required to consider the financial and managerial resources and future prospects of the bank holding companies and banks concerned and the convenience and needs of the community to be served. The Federal Reserve's consideration of financial resources generally focuses on capital adequacy, which is discussed below.

Under the Bank Holding Company Act, if adequately capitalized and adequately managed, the Company or any other bank holding company located in South Carolina may purchase a bank located outside of South Carolina. Conversely, an adequately capitalized and adequately managed bank holding company located outside of South Carolina may purchase a bank located inside South Carolina. In each case, however, restrictions may be placed on the acquisition of



a bank that has only been in existence for a limited amount of time or will result in specified concentrations of deposits. For example, South Carolina law prohibits a bank holding company from acquiring control of a financial institution until the target financial institution has been incorporated for five years.

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Additionally, in July 1994, South Carolina enacted legislation which effectively provided that, after June 30, 1996, out-of-state bank holding companies could acquire other banks or bank holding companies in South Carolina, subject to certain conditions. Accordingly, effective July 1, 1996, South Carolina law was amended to permit interstate branching but not de novo branching by an out-of-state bank. The Company believes that the foregoing legislation has increased takeover activity of South Carolina financial institutions by out-of-state financial institutions.

Change in Bank Control. Subject to various exceptions, the Bank Holding Company Act and the Change in Bank Control Act, together with related regulations, require Federal Reserve approval prior to any person or company acquiring “control” of a bank holding company. Control is conclusively presumed to exist if an individual or company acquires 25% or more of any class of voting securities of the bank holding company. Control is rebuttably presumed to exist if a person or company acquires 10% or more, but less than 25%, of any class of voting securities and either:

- the bank holding company has registered securities under Section 12 of the Exchange Act; or
- no other person owns a greater percentage of that class of voting securities immediately after the transaction.

Our common stock is registered under Section 12 of the Exchange Act. The regulations provide a procedure for challenging any rebuttable presumption of control.

Permitted Activities. The Bank Holding Company Act has generally prohibited a bank holding company from engaging in activities other than banking or managing or controlling banks or other permissible subsidiaries and from acquiring or retaining direct or indirect control of any company engaged in any activities other than those determined by the Federal Reserve to be closely related to banking or managing or controlling banks as to be a proper incident thereto. Provisions of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act have expanded the permissible activities of a bank holding company that qualifies as a financial holding company. Under the regulations implementing the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, a financial holding company may engage in additional activities that are financial in nature or incidental or complementary to financial activity. Those activities include, among other activities, certain insurance and securities activities.

To qualify to become a financial holding company, the Bank and any other depository institution subsidiary of the Company must be well capitalized and well managed and must have a Community Reinvestment Act rating of at least “satisfactory.” Additionally, the Company must file an election with the Federal Reserve to become a financial holding company and must provide the Federal Reserve with 30 days’ written notice prior to engaging in a permitted financial activity. While the Company meets the qualification standards applicable to financial holding companies, the Company has not elected to become a financial holding company at this time.

Support of Subsidiary Institutions. Under Federal Reserve policy, the Company is expected to act as a source of financial strength for the Bank and to commit resources to support the Bank. This support may be required at times when, without this Federal Reserve policy, the Company might not be inclined to provide it. In addition, any capital loans made by the Company to the Bank will be repaid only after its deposits and various other obligations are repaid in full. In the unlikely event of the Company’s bankruptcy, any commitment by it to a federal bank regulatory agency to maintain the capital of the Bank will be assumed by the bankruptcy trustee and entitled to a priority of payment.

South Carolina Law. As a bank holding company with its principal offices in South Carolina, the Company is subject to limitations on sale or merger and to regulation by the South Carolina State Board of Financial Institutions (the “State Board”). The Company must receive the approval of the State Board prior to acquiring control of a bank or bank holding company or all or substantially all of the assets of a bank or a bank holding company. The Company also must file with the State Board periodic reports with respect to its financial condition, operations and management, and the intercompany relationships between the Company and its subsidiaries.



## First Reliance Bank

The Bank is a state chartered bank insured by the FDIC and is not a member of the Federal Reserve. As such, the Bank is subject to supervision and regulation by the FDIC and the State Board. Supervision, regulation and examination of banks by regulatory agencies are intended primarily for the protection of depositors rather than shareholders of the banks.

**South Carolina Law.** Commercial banks chartered in South Carolina have only those powers granted by law or the regulations of the State Board. State law sets specific requirements for bank capital and regulates deposits in and loans and investments by banks, including the amounts, types and, in some cases, rates. In addition, the State Board regulates, among other activities, the payment of dividends, the opening of branches, loans to officers and directors, record keeping and the use of automated teller machines. The State Board periodically examines state banks to determine their compliance with the law and regulations, and state banks must make periodic reports of their condition to the State Board.

**Prompt Corrective Action.** The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act of 1991 establishes a system of prompt corrective action to resolve the problems of undercapitalized financial institutions. Under this system, the federal banking regulators have established five capital categories (well capitalized, adequately capitalized, undercapitalized, significantly undercapitalized and critically undercapitalized) in which all institutions are placed. Federal banking regulators are required to take various mandatory supervisory actions and are authorized to take other discretionary actions with respect to institutions in the three undercapitalized categories. The severity of the action depends upon the capital category in which the institution is placed. Generally, subject to a narrow exception, the banking regulator must appoint a receiver or conservator for an institution that is critically undercapitalized. The federal banking agencies have specified by regulation the relevant capital level for each category. As of December 31, 2008, the Bank qualified for the well-capitalized category.

A “well-capitalized” bank is one that significantly exceeds all of its capital requirements, which include maintaining a total risk-based capital ratio of at least 10%, a tier 1 risk-based capital ratio of at least 6%, and a tier 1 leverage ratio of at least 5%. Generally, a classification as well capitalized will place a bank outside of the regulatory zone for purposes of prompt corrective action. However, a well-capitalized bank may be reclassified as “adequately capitalized” based on criteria other than capital, if the federal regulator determines that a bank is in an unsafe or unsound condition, or is engaged in unsafe or unsound practices and has not corrected the deficiency.

**FDIC Insurance Assessments.** The FDIC is an independent agency of the United States government that uses the Deposit Insurance Fund to protect against the loss of insured deposits if an FDIC-insured bank or savings association fails. The FDIC must maintain the Deposit Insurance Fund (the “DIF”) within a range between 1.15 percent and 1.50 percent of all insured deposits.

The FDIC has adopted a risk-based assessment system for insured depository institutions that takes into account the risks attributable to different categories and concentrations of assets and liabilities. The system assesses higher rates on those institutions that pose greater risks to the DIF. The FDIC places each institution in one of four risk categories using a two-step process based first on capital ratios (the capital group assignment) and then on other relevant information (the supervisory group assignment). Within the lower risk category, Risk Category I, rates will vary based on each institution’s CAMELS component ratings, certain financial ratios, and long-term debt issuer ratings.

Capital group assignments are made quarterly and an institution is assigned to one of three capital categories: (1) well capitalized; (2) adequately capitalized; and (3) undercapitalized. These three categories are substantially similar to the prompt corrective action categories described above, with the “undercapitalized” category including institutions that are undercapitalized, significantly undercapitalized and critically undercapitalized for prompt corrective action purposes. The FDIC also assigns an institution to one of three supervisory subgroups based on a supervisory

evaluation that the institution's primary federal banking regulator provides to the FDIC and information that the FDIC determines to be relevant to the institution's financial condition and the risk posed to the deposit insurance funds.

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For 2008, assessments range from \$0.05 to \$0.43 per \$100 of deposits, depending on the institution's risk category. Institutions in the lowest risk category, Risk Category I, were charged a rate between \$0.05 and \$0.07 cents per \$100 of deposits.

The FDIC may terminate its insurance of deposits if it finds that the institution has engaged in unsafe and unsound practices, is in an unsafe or unsound condition to continue operations, or has violated any applicable law, regulation, rule, order, or condition imposed by the FDIC. Risk Categories II, III, and IV were charged 10 basis points, 28 basis points and 43 basis points, respectively.

Because the Deposit Insurance Fund reserve fell below 1.15 % as of June 30, 2008, and was expected to remain below 1.15%, the Federal Deposit Insurance Reform Act of 2005 required the FDIC to establish and implement a restoration plan to restore the reserve ratio to no less than 1.15% within five years, absent extraordinary circumstances.

On December 16, 2008, the FDIC adopted, as part of its restoration plan, a uniform increase to the assessment rates by 7 basis points (annualized) for the first quarter 2009 assessments. As a result, institutions in Risk Category I will be charged a rate between \$0.12 and \$0.14 per \$100 of deposits. Risk Categories II, III, and IV will be charged 17 basis points, 35 basis points, and 50 basis points, respectively.

On February 27, 2009, the FDIC amended its restoration plan to extend the period for restoration to seven years and further revised the risk-based assessment system. Starting with the second quarter of 2009, institutions in Risk Category I will have a base assessment rate between \$0.12 and \$0.16 per \$100 of deposits. Risk Categories II, III, and IV will have base assessment rates of 22 basis points, 32 basis points, and 45 basis points, respectively. These base assessments will be subject to adjustments based on each institution's unsecured debt, secured liabilities, and use of brokered deposits. As a result of these adjustments, institutions in Risk Category I will be charged rate between \$0.7 and \$0.24 per \$100 of deposits. Risk Categories II, III, and IV will be charged between 17 and 43 basis points, 27 and 58 basis points, and 40 and 77.5 basis points, respectively.

Under an interim rule adopted on February 27, 2009, the FDIC will impose an emergency special assessment of 20 basis points as of June 30, 2009, and may impose additional emergency special assessments of up to 10 basis points thereafter if the reserve ratio is estimated to fall to a level that the FDIC believes would adequately affect public confidence or to a level that shall be close to zero or negative at the end of a calendar quarter.

The FDIC may, without further notice-and-comment rulemaking, adopt rates that are higher or lower than the stated base assessment rates, provided that the FDIC cannot (i) increase or decrease the total rates from one quarter to the next by more than three basis points, or (ii) deviate by more than three basis points from the stated assessment rates.

The FDIC may terminate its insurance of deposits if it finds that the institution has engaged in unsafe and unsound practices, is in an unsafe or unsound condition to continue operations, or has violated any applicable law, regulation, rule, order, or condition imposed by the FDIC.

**FDIC Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program.** On October 14, 2008, the FDIC announced that its board of directors, under the authority to prevent "systemic risk" in the United States banking system, approved the Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program ("TLGP"). The purpose of the TLGP is to strengthen confidence and encourage liquidity in the banking system. The TLGP is composed of two components, the Debt Guarantee Program and the Transaction Account Guarantee Program, and institutions had the opportunity, prior to December 5, 2008, to opt-out of either or both components of the TLGP.

**The Debt Guarantee Program.** Under the TLGP, the FDIC is permitted to guarantee certain newly issued senior unsecured debt issued by participating financial institutions. The annualized fee that the FDIC will assess to guarantee the senior unsecured debt varies by the length of maturity of the debt. For debt with a maturity of 180 days

or less (excluding overnight debt), the fee is 50 basis points; for debt with a maturity between 181 days and 364 days, the fee is 75 basis points, and for debt with a maturity of 365 days or longer, the fee is 100 basis points. The Bank did not opt-out of the Debt Guarantee component of the TLGP.

The Transaction Account Guarantee Program. Under the TLGP, the FDIC is permitted to fully insure non-interest bearing deposit accounts held at participating FDIC-insured institutions, regardless of dollar amount. The temporary guarantee will expire at the end of 2009. For the eligible non-interest-bearing transaction deposit accounts (including accounts swept from a non-interest bearing transaction account into a non-interest bearing savings deposit account), a 10 basis point annual rate surcharge will be applied to non-bearing transaction deposit amounts over \$250,000. Institutions will not be assessed on amounts that are otherwise insured. The Bank did not opt-out of the Transaction Account Guarantee component of the TLGP.

Community Reinvestment Act. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 (“CRA”) requires that, in connection with examinations of financial institutions within their respective jurisdictions, the federal banking agencies shall evaluate the record of each financial institution in meeting the credit needs of its local community, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. These facts are also considered in evaluating mergers, acquisitions, and applications to open a branch or facility. Failure to adequately meet these criteria could impose additional requirements and limitations on the Bank. Additionally, the Bank must publicly disclose the terms of various Community Reinvestment Act-related agreements.

Allowance for Loan and Lease Losses. The Allowance for Loan and Lease Losses (the “ALLL”) represents one of the most significant estimates in the Bank’s financial statements and regulatory reports. Because of its significance, the Bank has developed a system by which it develops, maintains and documents a comprehensive, systematic and consistently applied process for determining the amounts of the ALLL and the provision for loan and lease losses. The Interagency Policy Statement on the Allowance for Loan and Lease Losses, issued on December 13, 2006, encourages all banks to ensure controls are in place to consistently determine the ALLL in accordance with GAAP, the bank’s stated policies and procedures, management’s best judgment and relevant supervisory guidance. Consistent with supervisory guidance, the Bank maintains a prudent and conservative, but not excessive, ALLL, that is at a level that is appropriate to cover estimated credit losses on individually evaluated loans determined to be impaired as well as estimated credit losses inherent in the remainder of the loan and lease portfolio. The Bank’s estimate of credit losses reflects consideration of all significant factors that affect the collectability of the portfolio as of the evaluation date. See “Management’s Discussion and Analysis – Provision and Allowance for Loan Losses” and “ – Accounting and Financial Reporting Issues.”

Commercial Real Estate Lending. The Bank’s lending operations may be subject to enhanced scrutiny by federal banking regulators based on its concentration of commercial real estate loans. On December 6, 2006, the federal banking regulators issued final guidance to remind financial institutions of the risk posed by commercial real estate (“CRE”) lending concentrations. CRE loans generally include land development, construction loans and loans secured by multifamily property, and nonfarm, nonresidential real property where the primary source of repayment is derived from rental income associated with the property. The guidance prescribes the following guidelines for its examiners to help identify institutions that are potentially exposed to significant CRE risk and may warrant greater supervisory scrutiny:

- total reported loans for construction, land development and other land represent 100% or more of the institutions total capital, or
- total commercial real estate loans represent 300% or more of the institution’s total capital, and the outstanding balance of the institution’s commercial real estate loan portfolio has increased by 50% or more.

Other Regulations. Interest and other charges collected or contracted for by the Bank are subject to state usury laws and federal laws concerning interest rates. The Bank’s loan operations are also subject to federal laws applicable to credit transactions, such as the:

- Truth-In-Lending Act, governing disclosures of credit terms to consumer borrowers;





- Home Mortgage Disclosure Act of 1975, requiring financial institutions to provide information to enable the public and public officials to determine whether a financial institution is fulfilling its obligation to help meet the housing needs of the community it serves;
- Equal Credit Opportunity Act, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, creed or other prohibited factors in extending credit;
- Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1978, as amended by the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act, governing the use and provision of information to credit reporting agencies, certain identity theft protections, and certain credit and other disclosures;
- Fair Debt Collection Act, governing the manner in which consumer debts may be collected by collection agencies;
- Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940, as amended by the Service members Civil Relief Act, governing the repayment terms of, and property rights underlying, secured obligations of persons currently on active duty with the United States military;
- Talent Amendment in the 2007 Defense Authorization Act, establishing a 36% annual percentage rate ceiling, which includes a variety of charges including late fees, for consumer loans to military service members and their dependents; and
- rules and regulations of the various federal agencies charged with the responsibility of implementing these federal laws.

The Bank's deposit operations are subject to federal laws applicable to depository accounts, such as the:

- Truth-in-Savings Act, requiring certain disclosures for consumer deposit accounts;
- Right to Financial Privacy Act, which imposes a duty to maintain confidentiality of consumer financial records and prescribes procedures for complying with administrative subpoenas of financial records;
- Electronic Funds Transfer Act and Regulation E issued by the Federal Reserve to implement that act, which govern automatic deposits to and withdrawals from deposit accounts and customers' rights and liabilities arising from the use of automated teller machines and other electronic banking services; and
- rules and regulations of the various federal agencies charged with the responsibility of implementing these federal laws.

#### Capital Adequacy

The Company and the Bank are required to comply with the capital adequacy standards established by the Federal Reserve, in the case of the Company, and the FDIC, in the case of the Bank. The Federal Reserve has established a risk-based and a leverage measure of capital adequacy for bank holding companies. The Bank is also subject to risk-based and leverage capital requirements adopted by the FDIC, which are substantially similar to those adopted by the Federal Reserve for bank holding companies.

The risk-based capital standards are designed to make regulatory capital requirements more sensitive to differences in risk profiles among banks and bank holding companies, to account for off-balance-sheet exposure, and to minimize disincentives for holding liquid assets. Assets and off-balance-sheet items, such as letters of credit and unfunded loan commitments, are assigned to broad risk categories, each with appropriate risk weights. The resulting capital ratios

represent capital as a percentage of total risk-weighted assets and off-balance-sheet items.

The minimum guideline for the ratio of total capital to risk-weighted assets is 8%. Total capital consists of two components, Tier 1 Capital and Tier 2 Capital. Tier 1 Capital generally consists of common stock, minority interests in the equity accounts of consolidated subsidiaries, noncumulative perpetual preferred stock, and a limited amount of qualifying cumulative perpetual preferred stock, less goodwill and other specified intangible assets. Tier 1 Capital must equal at least 4% of risk-weighted assets. Tier 2 Capital generally consists of subordinated debt, other preferred stock, and a limited amount of loan loss reserves. The total amount of Tier 2 Capital is limited to 100% of Tier 1 Capital. At December 31, 2008, our ratio of total capital to risk-weighted assets was 10.86% and our ratio of Tier 1 Capital to risk-weighted assets was 9.60%.

In addition, the Federal Reserve has established minimum leverage ratio guidelines for bank holding companies. These guidelines provide for a minimum ratio of Tier 1 Capital to average assets, less goodwill and other specified intangible assets, of 3% for bank holding companies that meet specified criteria, including having the highest regulatory rating and implementing the Federal Reserve's risk-based capital measure for market risk. All other bank holding companies generally are required to maintain a leverage ratio of at least 4%. At December 31, 2008, our leverage ratio was 8.18%. The guidelines also provide that bank holding companies experiencing internal growth or making acquisitions will be expected to maintain strong capital positions substantially above the minimum supervisory levels without reliance on intangible assets. The Federal Reserve considers the leverage ratio and other indicators of capital strength in evaluating proposals for expansion or new activities.

Failure to meet capital guidelines could subject a bank or bank holding company to a variety of enforcement remedies, including issuance of a capital directive, the termination of deposit insurance by the FDIC, a prohibition on accepting brokered deposits, and certain other restrictions on its business. As described above, significant additional restrictions can be imposed on FDIC-insured depository institutions that fail to meet applicable capital requirements.

#### Payment of Dividends

The Company is a legal entity separate and distinct from the Bank. The principal sources of the Company's cash flow, including cash flow to pay dividends to its shareholders, are dividends that the Bank pays to its sole shareholder, the Company. Statutory and regulatory limitations apply to the Bank's payment of dividends to the Company as well as to the Company's payment of dividends to its shareholders.

Under South Carolina law, the Bank is authorized to upstream to the Company, by way of a cash dividend, up to 100% of the Bank's net income in any calendar year without obtaining the prior approval of the State Board, provided that the Bank received a composite rating of one or two at the last examination conducted by a state or federal regulatory authority. All other cash dividends require prior approval by the State Board. South Carolina law requires each state nonmember bank to maintain the same reserves against deposits as are required for a state member bank under the Federal Reserve Act. This requirement is not expected to limit the ability of the Bank to pay dividends on its common stock.

The payment of dividends by the Company and the Bank may also be affected by other factors, such as the requirement to maintain adequate capital above regulatory guidelines. If, in the opinion of the FDIC, the Bank were engaged in or about to engage in an unsafe or unsound practice, the FDIC could require, after notice and a hearing, that the Bank stop or refrain engaging in the practice. The federal banking agencies have indicated that paying dividends that deplete a depository institution's capital base to an inadequate level would be an unsafe and unsound banking practice. Under the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act of 1991, a depository institution may not pay any dividend if payment would cause it to become undercapitalized or if it already is undercapitalized. Moreover, the federal agencies have issued policy statements that provide that bank holding companies and insured banks should generally only pay dividends out of current operating earnings.

The Company received a capital investment from the United States Department of the Treasury (the "Treasury") under the capital purchase component of the Troubled Assets Relief Program ("TARP") on March 6, 2009. Concurrent with the closing of that transaction, the Company became subject to additional limitations on the payment of dividends. These limitations require, among other things, that (i) all dividends for the securities purchased under TARP be paid before other dividends can be paid and (ii) the Treasury must approve any increases in common dividends for three years following the Treasury's investment.

#### Restrictions on Transactions with Affiliates

The Company and the Bank are subject to the provisions of Section 23A of the Federal Reserve Act. Section 23A places limits on the amount of:

- a bank's loans or extensions of credit to affiliates;
- a bank's investment in affiliates;

- assets a bank may purchase from affiliates, except for real and personal property exempted by the Federal Reserve;
- loans or extensions of credit to third parties collateralized by the securities or obligations of affiliates; and
  - a bank's guarantee, acceptance or letter of credit issued on behalf of an affiliate.

The total amount of the above transactions is limited in amount, as to any one affiliate, to 10% of a bank's capital and surplus and, as to all affiliates combined, to 20% of a bank's capital and surplus. In addition to the limitation on the amount of these transactions, each of the above transactions must also meet specified collateral requirements. The Bank must also comply with other provisions designed to avoid the taking of low-quality assets.

The Company and the Bank are also subject to the provisions of Section 23B of the Federal Reserve Act which, among other things, prohibit an institution from engaging in the above transactions with affiliates unless the transactions are on terms substantially the same, or at least as favorable to the institution or its subsidiaries, as those prevailing at the time for comparable transactions with nonaffiliated companies.

The Bank is also subject to restrictions on extensions of credit to its executive officers, directors, principal shareholders and their related interests. These extensions of credit (1) must be made on substantially the same terms, including interest rates and collateral, as those prevailing at the time for comparable transactions with third parties, and (2) must not involve more than the normal risk of repayment or present other unfavorable features.

#### Limitations on Senior Executive Compensation

Because the Company received an investment from the Treasury under the capital purchase component of TARP, the Company and its senior executives agreed to certain compensation limitations. These limitations include:

- ensuring that senior executive incentive compensation packages do not encourage excessive risk;
- subjecting senior executive compensation to "clawback" if the compensation was based on inaccurate financial information or performance metrics;
  - prohibiting any golden parachute payments to senior executive officers; and
- an agreement not to deduct for tax purposes more than \$500,000 for a senior executive officer's compensation.

#### Proposed Legislation and Regulatory Action

New regulations and statutes are regularly proposed that contain wide-ranging changes to the structures, regulations and competitive relationships of financial institutions operating and doing business in the United States. We cannot predict whether or in what form any proposed regulation or statute will be adopted or the extent to which our business may be affected by any new regulation or statute.

#### Effect of Governmental Monetary Policies

Our earnings are affected by domestic economic conditions and the monetary and fiscal policies of the United States government and its agencies. The Federal Reserve Bank's monetary policies have had, and are likely to continue to have, an important impact on the operating results of commercial banks through its power to implement national monetary policy in order, among other things, to curb inflation or combat a recession. The monetary policies of the Federal Reserve affect the levels of bank loans, investments and deposits through its control over the issuance of United States government securities, its regulation of the discount rate applicable to member banks and its influence

over reserve requirements to which member banks are subject. We cannot predict the nature or impact of future changes in monetary and fiscal policies.

### Selected Statistical Information

The selected statistical information required by Item 1 is included in the Company's 2008 Annual Report to Shareholders, which is Exhibit 13.1 to this Report, under the heading "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" and is incorporated herein by reference.

#### ITEM 1A. RISK FACTORS

An investment in our common stock involves risks. If any of the following risks or other risks, which have not been identified or which we may believe are immaterial or unlikely, actually occur, our business, financial condition and results of operations could be harmed. In such a case, the trading price of our common stock could decline, and you may lose all or part of your investment. The risks discussed below also include forward-looking statements, and our actual results may differ substantially from those discussed in these forward-looking statements.

We could suffer loan losses from a decline in credit quality.

We could sustain losses if borrowers, guarantors and related parties fail to perform in accordance with the terms of their loans. We have adopted underwriting and credit monitoring procedures and credit policies, including the establishment and review of the allowance for credit losses, which we believe are appropriate to minimize this risk by assessing the likelihood of nonperformance, tracking loan performance and diversifying our credit portfolio. These policies and procedures, however, may not prevent unexpected losses that could materially adversely affect our results of operations.

We are subject to the local economies in Charleston, Florence, Lexington, and Greenville Counties, South Carolina.

Our success depends upon the growth in population, income levels, deposits and housing starts in our primary market areas. If the communities in which First Reliance Bank operate do not grow, or if prevailing economic conditions locally or nationally are unfavorable, our business may not succeed. Unpredictable economic conditions may have an adverse effect on the quality of our loan portfolio and our financial performance. Economic recession over a prolonged period or other economic problems in our market areas could have a material adverse impact on the quality of the loan portfolio and the demand for our products and services. Future adverse changes in the economies in our market areas may have a material adverse effect on our financial condition, results of operations or cash flows. Further, the banking industry in South Carolina is affected by general economic conditions such as inflation, recession, unemployment and other factors beyond our control. As a community bank, we are less able to spread the risk of unfavorable local economic conditions than larger or more regional banks. Moreover, we cannot give any assurance that we will benefit from any market growth or favorable economic conditions in our primary market areas if they do occur.

In addition to considering the financial strength and cash flow characteristics of borrowers, we often secure loans with real estate collateral. The real estate collateral in each case provides an alternate source of repayment in the event of default by the borrower and may deteriorate in value during the time the credit is extended. The market value of the real estate securing our loans as collateral has been adversely affected by the slowing economy and unfavorable changes in economic conditions in our market areas and could be further adversely affected in the future.

As of December 31, 2008, approximately 81.9% of our loans receivable were secured by real estate. Any sustained period of increased payment delinquencies, foreclosures or losses caused by the adverse market and economic conditions, including the downturn in the real estate market, in our markets will adversely affect the value of our assets, revenues, results of operations and financial condition. Currently, we are experiencing such an economic downturn, and if it continues, our operations could be further adversely affected.





The FDIC Deposit Insurance assessments that we are required to pay may materially increase in the future, which would have an adverse effect on our earnings.

As an insured depository institution, we are required to pay quarterly deposit insurance premium assessments to the FDIC. These assessments are required to ensure that FDIC deposit insurance reserve ratio is at least 1.15% of insured deposits. Under the Federal Deposit Insurance Act, the FDIC, absent extraordinary circumstances, must establish and implement a plan to restore the deposit insurance reserve ratio to 1.15% of insured deposits, over a five-year period, when the reserve ratio falls below 1.15%. The recent failures of several financial institutions have significantly increased the Deposit Insurance Fund's loss provisions, resulting in a decline in the reserve ratio. The FDIC expects a higher rate of insured institution failures in the next few years, which may result in a continued decline in the reserve ratio.

Beginning on January 1, 2009, there was a uniform seven basis points (annualized) increase to the assessments that banks pay for deposit insurance. The increased assessment rates range from 12 to 50 basis points (annualized) for the first quarter 2009 assessment, which will be owed on June 30, 2009. Beginning on April 1, 2009, the FDIC will modify the risk-based assessments to account for each institution's unsecured debt, secured liabilities and use of brokered deposits. Assessment rates will range from 7 to 77.5 basis points (annualized) starting with the second quarter 2009 assessments, which will be owed on September 30, 2009. In addition, the FDIC has adopted an interim rule to impose an emergency assessment of 20 basis points as of June 30, 2009, which will be owed on September 30, 2009. The FDIC may also impose additional emergency special assessments of up to 10 basis points thereafter if the reserve ratio is estimated to fall to a level that the FDIC believes would adequately affect public confidence or to a level that shall be close to zero or negative at the end of a calendar quarter.

If the FDIC imposes additional emergency assessments, or otherwise further increases assessment rates, our earnings could be further adversely impacted.

If our allowance for loan losses is not sufficient to cover actual loan losses, our earnings could decrease.

Our success depends to a significant extent upon the quality of our assets, particularly loans. In originating loans, there is a substantial likelihood that we will experience credit losses. The risk of loss will vary with, among other things, general economic conditions, the type of loan, the creditworthiness of the borrower over the term of the loan and, in the case of a collateralized loan, the quality of the collateral for the loan.

Our loan customers may not repay their loans according to the terms of these loans, and the collateral securing the payment of these loans may be insufficient to assure repayment. As a result, we may experience significant loan losses, which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. Management makes various assumptions and judgments about the collectability of our loan portfolio, including the creditworthiness of our borrowers and the value of the real estate and other assets serving as collateral for the repayment of many of our loans. We maintain an allowance for loan losses in an attempt to cover any loan losses that may occur. In determining the size of the allowance, we rely on an analysis of our loan portfolio based on historical loss experience, volume and types of loans, trends in classification, volume and trends in delinquencies and non-accruals, national and local economic conditions, and other pertinent information.

If our assumptions are wrong, our current allowance may not be sufficient to cover future loan losses, and we may need to make adjustments to allow for different economic conditions or adverse developments in our loan portfolio. Material additions to our allowance would materially decrease our net income. As a result of a difficult real estate market, we have increased our allowance from \$5.3 million as of December 31, 2007 to \$8.2 million as of December 31, 2008. We expect to continue to increase our allowance in 2009; however, given current and future market conditions, we can make no assurance that our allowance will be adequate to cover future loan losses.

In addition, federal and state regulators periodically review our allowance for loan losses and may require us to increase our provision for loan losses or recognize further loan charge-offs, based on judgments different than those of our management. Any increase in our allowance for loan losses or loan charge-offs as required by these regulators could have a negative effect on our operating results.

Our business strategy includes the continuation of growth plans, and our financial condition and results of operations could be negatively affected if we fail to grow or fail to manage our growth effectively.

We intend to continue pursuing a growth strategy for our business. Our prospects must be considered in light of the risks, expenses and difficulties frequently encountered by companies in significant growth stages of development. We cannot assure you we will be able to expand our market presence in our existing markets or successfully enter new markets or that any such expansion will not adversely affect our results of operations. Failure to manage our growth effectively could have a material adverse effect on our business, future prospects, financial condition or results of operations, and could adversely affect our ability to successfully implement our business strategy. Also, if our growth occurs more slowly than anticipated or declines, our operating results could be materially adversely affected.

Our ability to successfully grow will depend on a variety of factors including the continued availability of desirable business opportunities, the competitive responses from other financial institutions in our market areas and our ability to manage our growth. While we believe we have the management resources and internal systems in place to successfully manage our future growth, there can be no assurance growth opportunities will be available or growth will be successfully managed.

Changes in the interest rate environment could reduce our profitability.

As a financial institution, our earnings are significantly dependent upon our net interest income, which is the difference between the interest income that we earn on interest-earning assets, such as investment securities and loans, and the interest expense that we pay on interest-bearing liabilities, such as deposits and borrowings. Therefore, any change in general market interest rates, including changes resulting from changes in the Federal Reserve's fiscal and monetary policies, affects us more than nonfinancial institutions and can have a significant effect on our net interest income and total income. Our assets and liabilities may react differently to changes in overall market rates or conditions because there may be mismatches between the repricing or maturity characteristics of the assets and liabilities. As a result, an increase or decrease in market interest rates could have material adverse effects on our net interest margin and results of operations.

Since January 2008, in response to the dramatic deterioration of the subprime, mortgage, credit, and liquidity markets, the Federal Reserve has taken action on seven occasions to reduce interest rates by a total of 400 to 425 basis points, which has reduced our net interest income and will likely continue to reduce this income for the foreseeable future. Any reduction in our net interest income will negatively affect our business, financial condition, liquidity, operating results, cash flows and, potentially, the price of our securities. Additionally, in 2009, we expect to have continued margin pressure given these historically low interest rates, along with elevated levels of non-performing assets.

Recent negative developments in the financial industry, and the domestic and international credit markets may adversely affect our operations and results.

Negative developments during 2008 in the global credit and derivative markets have resulted in uncertainty in the financial markets in general with the expectation of the general economic downturn continuing in 2009. As a result of this "credit crunch," commercial as well as consumer loan portfolio performances have deteriorated at many institutions and the competition for deposits and quality loans has increased significantly. In addition, the values of real estate collateral supporting many commercial loans and home mortgages have declined and may continue to decline. Global securities markets, and bank holding company stock prices in particular, have been negatively affected, as has the ability of banks and bank holding companies to raise capital or borrow in the debt markets. If these negative trends continue, our business operations and financial results may be negatively affected.

Our pace of growth may require us to raise additional capital in the future, but that capital may not be available when it is needed.

We are required by federal and state regulatory authorities to maintain adequate levels of capital to support our operations. We anticipate our capital resources following this offering will satisfy our capital requirements for the foreseeable future. We may at some point, however, need to raise additional capital to support our continued growth.

Our ability to raise additional capital, if needed, will depend on conditions in the capital markets at that time, which are outside our control, and on our financial performance. Accordingly, we cannot assure you of our ability to raise additional capital if needed on terms acceptable to us. If we cannot raise additional capital when needed, our ability to further expand our operations through internal growth and acquisitions could be materially impaired.



We face strong competition from larger, more established competitors.

The banking business is highly competitive, and we experience strong competition from many other financial institutions. We compete with commercial banks, credit unions, savings and loan associations, mortgage banking firms, consumer finance companies, securities brokerage firms, insurance companies, money market funds and other financial institutions, which operate in our primary market areas and elsewhere.

We compete with these institutions both in attracting deposits and in making loans. In addition, we have to attract our customer base from other existing financial institutions and from new residents. Many of our competitors are well-established and much larger financial institutions. While we believe we can and do successfully compete with these other financial institutions in our markets, we may face a competitive disadvantage as a result of our smaller size and lack of geographic diversification.

Although we compete by concentrating our marketing efforts in our primary market area with local advertisements, personal contacts and greater flexibility in working with local customers, we can give no assurance that this strategy will be successful.

We face risks with respect to future expansion and acquisitions or mergers.

We continually seek to acquire other financial institutions or parts of those institutions and may continue to engage in de novo branch expansion in the future. Acquisitions and mergers involve a number of risks, including:

- the time and costs associated with identifying and evaluating potential acquisitions and merger partners may negatively affect our business;

- the estimates and judgments used to evaluate credit, operations, management and market risks with respect to the target institution may not be accurate;

- the time and costs of evaluating new markets, hiring experienced local management and opening new offices and the time lags between these activities and the generation of sufficient assets and deposits to support the costs of the expansion may negatively affect our business;

- we may not be able to finance an acquisition without diluting our existing shareholders;

- the diversion of our management's attention to the negotiation of a transaction may detract from their business productivity;

- we may enter into new markets where we lack experience;

- we may introduce new products and services into our business with which we have no prior experience; and

- we may incur an impairment of goodwill associated with an acquisition and experience adverse short-term effects on our results of operations.

In addition, no assurance can be given that we will be able to integrate our operations after an acquisition without encountering difficulties including, without limitation, the loss of key employees and customers, the disruption of our respective ongoing businesses or possible inconsistencies in standards, controls, procedures and policies. Successful integration of our operations with another entity's will depend primarily on our ability to consolidate operations, systems and procedures and to eliminate redundancies and costs. If we have difficulties with the integration, we might not achieve the economic benefits we expect to result from any particular acquisition or merger. In addition, we

may experience greater than expected costs or difficulties relating to such integration.

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Hurricanes or other adverse weather events could negatively affect our local economies or disrupt our operations, which could have an adverse effect on our business or results of operations.

The economy of South Carolina's coastal region is affected, from time to time, by adverse weather events, particularly hurricanes. Our Charleston County market area consists primarily of coastal communities, and we cannot predict whether, or to what extent, damage caused by future hurricanes will affect our operations, our customers or the economies in our banking markets. However, weather events could cause a decline in loan originations, destruction or decline in the value of properties securing our loans, or an increase in the risks of delinquencies, foreclosures and loan losses. Even if a hurricane does not cause any physical damage in our market area, a turbulent hurricane season could significantly affect the market value of all coastal property.

Our recent results may not be indicative of our future results.

We may not be able to sustain our historical rate of growth or may not even be able to grow our business at all. In addition, our growth over the past few years may distort some of our historical financial ratios and statistics. In the future, we may not have the benefit of several recently favorable factors, such as a generally predictable interest rate environment, a strong residential mortgage market or the ability to find suitable expansion opportunities. Various factors, such as economic conditions, regulatory and legislative considerations and competition, may also impede or prohibit our ability to expand our market presence. If we experience a significant decrease in our historical rate of growth, our results of operations and financial condition may be adversely affected due to a high percentage of our operating costs being fixed expenses.

Our corporate culture has contributed to our success, and if we cannot maintain this culture as we grow, we could lose the teamwork and increased productivity fostered by our culture, which could harm our business.

We believe that a critical contributor to our success has been our corporate culture, which we believe fosters teamwork and increased productivity. As our organization grows and we are required to implement more complex organization management structures, we may find it increasingly difficult to maintain the beneficial aspects of our corporate culture. This could negatively impact our future success.

As a community bank, we have different lending risks than larger banks.

We provide services to our local communities. Our ability to diversify our economic risks is limited by our own local markets and economies. We lend primarily to individuals and to small to medium-sized businesses, which may expose us to greater lending risks than those of banks lending to larger, better-capitalized businesses with longer operating histories.

We manage our credit exposure through careful monitoring of loan applicants and loan concentrations in particular industries, and through loan approval and review procedures. We have established an evaluation process designed to determine the adequacy of our allowance for loan losses. While this evaluation process uses historical and other objective information, the classification of loans and the establishment of loan losses is an estimate based on experience, judgment and expectations regarding our borrowers, the economies in which we and our borrowers operate, as well as the judgment of our regulators. We cannot assure you that our loan loss reserves will be sufficient to absorb future loan losses or prevent a material adverse effect on our business, profitability or financial condition.

We are subject to extensive regulation that could limit or restrict our activities and impose financial requirements or limitations on the conduct of our business.

As a bank holding company, we are primarily regulated by the Federal Reserve. Our subsidiary is primarily regulated by the State Board and the FDIC. Our compliance with Federal Reserve, State Board and FDIC regulations is costly



and may limit our growth and restrict certain of our activities, including payment of dividends, mergers and acquisitions, investments, loans and interest rates charged, interest rates paid on deposits and locations of offices. We are also subject to capital requirements of our regulators.

The laws and regulations applicable to the banking industry could change at any time, and we cannot predict the effects of these changes on our business and profitability. Because government regulation greatly affects the business and financial results of all commercial banks and bank holding companies, our cost of compliance could adversely affect our ability to operate profitably.

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and the related rules and regulations promulgated by the SEC, have increased the scope, complexity and cost of corporate governance, reporting and disclosure practices. As a result, we may experience greater compliance costs.

Our ability to pay dividends is limited and we may be unable to pay future dividends.

We make no assurances that we will pay any dividends in the future. Any future determination relating to dividend policy will be made at the discretion of our Board of Directors and will depend on a number of factors, including our future earnings, restrictions imposed by our agreement with the Treasury entered into in connection with its investment under TARP, capital requirements, financial condition, future prospects, regulatory restrictions and other factors that our Board of Directors may deem relevant.

Weakness in the economy and in the real estate market, including specific weakness within our geographic footprint, has adversely affected us and may continue to adversely affect us.

Declines in the U.S. economy and our local real estate markets contributed to our increasing provisions for loan losses during 2008, and may result in additional loan losses and loss provisions in 2009. These factors could result in further increases in loan loss provisions, delinquencies and/or charge-offs in future periods, which may adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations. If the strength of the U.S. economy in general and the strength of the local economies in which we conduct operations continue to decline, this could result in, among other things, further deterioration in credit quality or a reduced demand for credit, including a resultant adverse effect on our loan portfolio and allowance for loan and lease losses.

In addition, deterioration of the U.S. economy may adversely impact our banking business more generally. Economic declines may be accompanied by a decrease in demand for consumer or commercial credit and declining real estate and other asset values. Declining real estate and other asset values may reduce the ability of borrowers to use such equity to support borrowings. Delinquencies, foreclosures and losses generally increase during economic slowdowns or recessions. Additionally, our servicing costs, collection costs and credit losses may also increase in periods of economic slowdown or recessions. Effects of the current real estate slowdown have not been limited to those directly involved in the real estate construction industry (such as builders and developers). Rather, it has impacted a number of related businesses such as building materials suppliers, equipment leasing firms, and real estate attorneys, among others. All of these affected businesses have banking relationships, and when their businesses suffer from recession, the banking relationship suffers as well.

We are subject to liquidity risk in our operations.

Liquidity risk is the possibility of being unable to satisfy obligations as they come due, capitalize on growth opportunities as they arise, or pay regular dividends because of an inability to liquidate assets or obtain adequate funding on a timely basis, at a reasonable cost and within acceptable risk tolerances. Liquidity is required to fund various obligations, including credit obligations to borrowers, mortgage originations, withdrawals by depositors, repayment of debt, dividends to shareholders, operating expenses and capital expenditures. Liquidity is derived primarily from retail deposit growth and retention, principal and interest payments on loans and investment securities, net cash provided from operations and access to other funding sources. Our access to funding sources in amounts adequate to finance our activities could be impaired by factors that affect us specifically or the financial services industry in general. Factors that could detrimentally affect our access to liquidity sources include a decrease in the level of our business activity due to a market downturn or adverse regulatory action against us. Our ability to borrow could also be impaired by factors that are not specific to us, such as a severe disruption in the financial markets or negative views and expectations about the prospects for the financial services industry as a whole, given the recent turmoil faced by banking organizations in the domestic and worldwide credit markets.



The impact of the current economic downturn on the performance of other financial institutions in our geographic area, actions taken by our competitors to address the current economic downturn, and the public perception of and confidence in the economy generally, and the banking industry specifically, could negatively impact our performance and operations.

All financial institutions are subject to the same risks resulting from a weakening economy such as increased charge-offs and levels of past due loans and nonperforming assets. As troubled institutions in our market area continue to dispose of problem assets, the already excess inventory of residential homes and lots will continue to negatively affect home values and increase the time it takes us or our borrowers to sell existing inventory. The perception that troubled banking institutions (and smaller banking institutions that are not “in trouble”) are risky institutions for purposes of regulatory compliance or safeguarding deposits may cause depositors nonetheless to move their funds to larger institutions. If our depositors should move their funds based on events happening at other financial institutions, our operating results would suffer.

The United States Department of the Treasury, as a holder of our preferred stock, has rights that are senior to those of our common shareholders.

We have supported our capital operations by issuing classes of preferred stock to the Treasury under the capital purchase component of TARP. As of March 6, 2009, we had outstanding preferred stock issued to the Treasury under TARP totaling \$16.1 million. The preferred stock has dividend rights that are senior to our common stock; therefore, we must pay dividends on the preferred stock before we can pay any dividends on our common stock. In the event of our bankruptcy, dissolution, or liquidation, the Treasury must be satisfied before we can make any distributions to our common shareholders.

Our agreement with the United States Department of the Treasury under the capital purchase component of TARP is subject to unilateral change by the Treasury, which could adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

Under the capital purchase component of TARP, the Treasury may unilaterally amend the terms of its agreement with us in order to comply with any changes in federal law. We cannot predict the effects of any of these changes and of the associated amendments.

The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (“EESA”) or other governmental actions may not stabilize the financial services industry.

The EESA, which was signed into law on October 3, 2008, is intended to alleviate the financial crisis affecting the U.S. banking system. A number of programs are being developed and implemented under EESA. The EESA may not have the intended effect, however, and as a result, the condition of the financial services industry could decline instead of improve. The failure of the EESA to improve the condition of the U.S. banking system could significantly adversely affect our access to funding or capital, the trading price of our stock, and other elements of our business, financial condition, and results of operations.

In addition to EESA, a variety of legislative, regulatory, and other proposals have been discussed or may be introduced in an effort to address the financial crisis. Depending on the scope of such proposals, if they are adopted and applied to the Company, our financial condition, results of operations or liquidity could, directly or indirectly, benefit or be adversely affected in a manner that could be material to our business.

#### ITEM 1B. UNRESOLVED STAFF COMMENTS

Not Applicable.

ITEM 2. PROPERTIES

The executive and main offices of the Company and the Bank are located at 2170 W. Palmetto Street in Florence, South Carolina. The facility at that location is owned by the Bank. The Bank also owns an adjacent lot that is used as a parking lot. The headquarters building is a two-story building having approximately 12,000 square feet. The building has six inside teller stations, two teller stations servicing four drive-through lanes and a night depository and automated teller machine drive-through lane that is accessible after the Bank's normal business hours.

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On April 26, 2000, the Bank opened a branch at 411 Second Loop Road in Florence, South Carolina. The Second Loop branch facility, which is owned by the Bank, is located on approximately one acre of land and contains approximately 3,500 square feet.

On May 15, 2002, the Bank purchased an additional facility located at 2145 Fernleaf Drive in Florence, South Carolina. The Fernleaf Drive site contains approximately 0.5 acres of land and includes a 7,500 square foot building. The facility will serve as additional space for the operational and information technology activities of the Bank, including data processing and auditing. No customer services will be conducted in this facility.

On June 17, 2004, the Bank opened a temporary branch at 709 North Lake Drive in Lexington, South Carolina. On July 1, 2008, the bank subsequently moved into its permanent branch facility at 801 North Lake Drive in Lexington, South Carolina. The Lexington branch facility, which is owned by the Bank, is located on approximately two acres of land and contains approximately 13,000 square feet.

On March 15, 2005, the Bank opened a branch at 51 State Street, Charleston, South Carolina. This property is leased. On August 8, 2005, the bank changed the street address of this location to 25 Cumberland Street, Charleston, South Carolina because of a change in the primary entrance to the branch.

On March 24, 2005, the Bank leased approximately five acres at 2211 West Palmetto Street in Florence, South Carolina for possible development of a future headquarters location. This property and an adjacent parcel were purchased by the Company on November 24, 2008 and are leased by the Bank.

On October 3, 2005, the Bank opened a branch office at 800 South Shelmore Blvd., Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. The Mount Pleasant branch facility is located on approximately one acre of land and contains approximately 6,500 square feet.

On February 9, 2006, the Bank purchased approximately 0.75 acres at 2148 West Palmetto Street, Florence, South Carolina for a future training facility. On April 1, 2007, the Bank opened its Learning Center which contains approximately 6,000 square feet.

On January 18, 2007, the Bank opened a branch office at 1154-B Haywood Road, Greenville, South Carolina. The property is leased.

The Bank owns property at 44th Business Park, Lots 1, 2 & 3, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, which is a branch site listed for sale.

On March 10, 2008, the Bank purchased 1.37 acres at 8551 Rivers Avenue, North Charleston, South Carolina.

On November 21, 2008, the Bank purchased a one acre lot at 950 Lake Murray Boulevard, which is expected to be a future branch site.

Other than the Bank facilities described in the preceding paragraphs and the real estate-related loans funded by the Bank previously described in "Item 1. Business—First Reliance Bank," the Company does not invest in real estate, interests in real estate, real estate mortgages, or securities of or interests in persons primarily engaged in real estate activities.

### ITEM 3. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

None.



ITEM 4. SUBMISSION OF MATTERS TO A VOTE OF SECURITY HOLDERS

None.

PART II

ITEM 5. MARKET FOR REGISTRANT'S COMMON EQUITY, RELATED STOCKHOLDER MATTERS AND ISSUER PURCHASES OF EQUITY SECURITIES

(a) The response to this Item 5(a) is included in the Company's 2008 Annual Report to Shareholders under the heading, "Market for First Reliance Bancshares, Inc.'s Common Stock; Payment of Dividends," and is incorporated herein by reference.

(b) Not Applicable

(c) Not Applicable

ITEM 6. SELECTED FINANCIAL DATA

Pursuant to the revised disclosure requirements for smaller reporting companies effective February 4, 2008, no disclosure under this Item is required.

ITEM 7. MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL CONDITION AND RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

The response to this Item is included in the Company's 2008 Annual Report to Shareholders under the heading "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" and is incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 7A. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DISCLOSURES ABOUT MARKET RISK

Pursuant to the revised disclosure requirements for smaller reporting companies effective February 4, 2008, no disclosure under this Item is required.



ITEM 8. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

The following financial statements are included in the Company's 2008 Annual Report to Shareholders, and are incorporated herein by reference:

- Management's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting
- Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm
- Consolidated Financial Statements:
  1. Consolidated Balance Sheets dated as of December 31, 2008 and 2007.
  2. Consolidated Statements of Income for the Years Ended December 31, 2008, 2007 and 2006.
  3. Consolidated Statements of Changes in Shareholders' Equity and Comprehensive Income for the Years Ended December 31, 2008, 2007 and 2006.
  4. Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows for the Years Ended December 31, 2007, 2006 and 2005.
  5. Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

ITEM 9. CHANGES IN AND DISAGREEMENTS WITH ACCOUNTANTS ON ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

Not Applicable

ITEM 9A(T). CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES

Disclosure Controls

As of the end of the period covered by this Annual Report on Form 10-K, our principal executive officer and principal financial officer have evaluated the effectiveness of our "disclosure controls and procedures" ("Disclosure Controls"). Disclosure Controls, as defined in Rule 13a-15(e) of the Exchange Act, are procedures that are designed with the objective of ensuring that information required to be disclosed in our reports filed under the Exchange Act, such as this Annual Report, is recorded, processed, summarized and reported within the time periods specified in the SEC's rules and forms. Disclosure Controls are also designed with the objective of ensuring that such information is accumulated and communicated to our management, including the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") and Chief Financial Officer ("CFO") as appropriate to allow timely decisions regarding required disclosure.

Our management, including the CEO and CFO, does not expect that our Disclosure Controls will prevent all error and all fraud. A control system, no matter how well conceived and operated, can provide only reasonable, not absolute, assurance that the objectives of the control system are met. Further, the design of a control system must reflect the fact that there are resource constraints, and the benefits of controls must be considered relative to their costs. Because of the inherent limitations in all control systems, no evaluation of controls can provide absolute assurance that all control issues and instances of fraud, if any, within the company have been detected. These inherent limitations include the realities that judgments in decision-making can be faulty, and that breakdowns can occur because of simple error or mistake. The design of any system of controls also is based in part upon certain assumptions about the likelihood of future events, and there can be no assurance that any design will succeed in achieving its stated goals under all potential future conditions.

Based upon their controls evaluation, our CEO and CFO have concluded that our Disclosure Controls are effective at a reasonable assurance level.



### Management's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

Our management is responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting as defined in Rules 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f) under the Exchange Act. Our internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance that assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition, transactions are executed in accordance with appropriate management authorization and accounting records are reliable for the preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

Management assessed the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2007. Management based this assessment on criteria for effective internal control over financial reporting described in Internal Control—Integrated Framework issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission. Management's assessment included an evaluation of the design of our internal control over financial reporting and testing of the operational effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting. Management reviewed the results of its assessment with the Audit Committee of our Board of Directors.

Based on this assessment, management believes that First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. maintained effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2008.

This annual report does not include an attestation report of the Company's registered public accounting firm regarding internal control over financial reporting. Management's report was not subject to attestation by the company's registered public accounting firm pursuant to temporary rules of the SEC that permit the Company to provide only management's report in this annual report.

### Changes to Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

There have been no changes in our internal control over financial reporting during our fourth fiscal quarter that have materially affected, or are reasonably likely to materially affect, our internal control over financial reporting.

ITEM 9B.

### OTHER INFORMATION

Not Applicable.

## PART III

ITEM 10.

### DIRECTORS, EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Company has adopted a Code of Ethics that applies to its principal executive, financial and accounting officers. The Code of Ethics has been posted to the Company's website at [www.firstreliance.com](http://www.firstreliance.com). A copy may also be obtained, without charge, upon written request addressed to First Reliance Bancshares, Inc., 2170 W. Palmetto Street, , Florence, South Carolina 29501, Attention: Corporate Secretary. The request may be delivered by letter to the address set forth above or by fax to the attention of the Company's Corporate Secretary at (843)656-3045.

The remaining information for this Item is included in the Company's Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders to be held on June 18, 2009, under the headings "Proposal: Election of Directors", "Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management," "Section 16(a) Beneficial Ownership Reporting Compliance" and "Corporate Governance" and are incorporated herein by reference.

## ITEM 11.

## EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

The responses to this Item are included in the Company's Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders to be held on June 18, 2009, under the headings "Proposal: Election of Directors – Director Compensation" and "Executive Compensation" and are incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 12. SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT AND RELATED STOCKHOLDER MATTERS

The following table provides information regarding compensation plans under which equity securities of the Company are authorized for issuance. All data is presented as of December 31, 2008.

Plan category	Equity Compensation Plan Table		
	(a)	(b)	(c)
	Number of securities to be issued upon exercise of outstanding options, warrants and rights	Weighted-average exercise price of outstanding options, warrants and rights	Number of securities remaining available for future issuance under equity compensation plans (excluding securities reflected in column (a))
Equity compensation plans approved by security holders	269,447	\$ 8.36	—
Equity compensation plans not approved by security holders	130,613	10.76	219,387
<b>Total</b>	<b>400,060</b>	<b>\$ 8.25</b>	<b>219,837</b>

The equity compensation plans not approved by our shareholders include non-qualified option grants to four employees of the Company to purchase a total of 8,100 shares of the Company's common stock. All of the non-qualified option grants are fully vested as of December 31, 2008. The table below breaks down the exercise prices of the non-qualified options that have been granted by the Company.

Price	Number of Options
\$ 9.32	2,800
\$ 11.00	5,000
\$ 13.50	300

On January 19, 2006, the Board of Directors approved the First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 2006 Equity Incentive Plan (the "2006 Plan"). The 2006 Plan provides that the Company may grant stock incentives to participants in the form of nonqualified stock options, dividend equivalent rights, phantom shares, stock appreciation rights, stock awards and performance unit awards (each a "Stock Incentive"). The Company reserved up to 350,000 shares of the Company's common stock for issuance pursuant to awards granted under the Plan. This number of shares may change in the event of future stock dividends, stock splits, recapitalizations and similar events. If a Stock Incentive expires or terminates without being paid, exercised or otherwise settled, the shares subject to that Stock Incentive may again be available for awards under the 2006 Plan.

The additional responses to this Item are included in the Company's Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders to be held on June 18, 2009, under the heading "Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and

Management” and are incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 13. CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS AND RELATED TRANSACTIONS, AND DIRECTOR INDEPENDENCE

The responses to this Item are included in the Company's Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders held on June 18, 2009, under the headings "Related Party Transactions" and "Proposal: Election of Directors – Director Independence" and are incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 14. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTANT FEES AND SERVICES

The responses to this Item are included in the Company Proxy Statement for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders to be held on June 18, 2009, under the heading "Audit Committee Matters – Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm" and are incorporated herein by reference.

PART IV

ITEM 15. EXHIBITS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT SCHEDULES

A list of exhibits included as part of this annual report is set forth in the Exhibit Index that immediately precedes the exhibits and is incorporated by reference herein.

## SIGNATURES

In accordance with Section 13 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, the Registrant caused this Report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized.

FIRST RELIANCE  
BANCSHARES, INC.

By: /s/ F. R. Saunders, Jr.  
F. R. Saunders, Jr.  
President and Chief  
Executive Officer

Date: March 31, 2009

## POWER OF ATTORNEY

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that each person whose signature appears on the signature page to this Report constitutes and appoints F. R. Saunders, Jr. and Jeffrey A. Paolucci, his or her true and lawful attorneys-in-fact and agents, with full power of substitution and resubstitution, for him or her and in his or her name, place, and stead, in any and all capacities, to sign any and all amendments to this Report, and to file the same, with all exhibits hereto, and other documents in connection herewith with the Securities and Exchange Commission, granting unto said attorneys-in-fact and agents, full power and authority to do and perform each and every act and thing requisite and necessary to be done in and about the premises, as fully to all intents and purposes as they might or could do in person, hereby ratifying and confirming all that said attorneys-in-fact and agents or their substitute or substitutes, may lawfully do or cause to be done by virtue hereof.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, this Report has been signed below by the following persons on behalf of the Registrant and in the capacities and on the dates indicated.

Signature	Title	Date
/s/ F. R. Saunders, Jr. F. R. Saunders, Jr.	Director, President and Chief Executive Officer (Principal Executive Officer)	March 31, 2009
/s/ Paul C. Saunders Paul C. Saunders	Director	March 31, 2009
/s/ A. Dale Porter A. Dale Porter	Director	March 31, 2009
/s/ Leonard A. Hoogenboom Leonard A. Hoogenboom	Chairman of the Board	March 31, 2009
/s/ John M. Jebaily John M. Jebaily	Director	March 31, 2009



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Signature	Title	Date
/s/ Andrew G. Kampiziones Andrew G. Kampiziones	Director	March 31, 2009
/s/ C. Dale Lusk C. Dale Lusk	Director	March 31, 2009
/s/ J. Munford Scott J. Munford Scott	Director	March 31, 2009
/s/ A. Joe Willis A. Joe Willis	Director	March 31, 2009
/s/ Jeffrey A. Paolucci Jeffrey A. Paolucci	Director, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (Principal Financial and Accounting Officer)	March 31, 2009 March 31, 2009

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EXHIBIT INDEX

Exhibit Number	Description
3.1	Articles of Incorporation of First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 1
3.2	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation authorizing a class of preferred stock <sup>2</sup>
3.3	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation establishing the terms of the Series A Preferred Stock and the Series B Preferred Stock <sup>2</sup>
3.4	Bylaws of First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 1
4.1	See Articles of Incorporation, as amended at Exhibit 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 hereto and Bylaws at Exhibit 3.2 hereto.
4.2	Indenture between the Registrant and the Trustee. 3
4.3	Guarantee Agreement. <sup>3</sup>
4.4	Amended and Restated Declaration. <sup>3</sup>
4.5	Form of Certificate for the Series A Preferred Stock <sup>2</sup>
4.6	Form of Certificate for the Series B Preferred Stock <sup>2</sup>
4.7	Warrant to Purchase up to 767.00767 shares of Series B Preferred Stock, dated March 6, 2009 <sup>2</sup>
10.1*	1999 First Reliance Bank Employee Stock Option Plan. 4
10.2*	Amendment No. 1 to the 1999 First Reliance Bank Employee Stock Option Plan. 4
10.3*	Amendment No. 2 to the 1999 First Reliance Bank Employee Stock Option Plan. 5
10.4*	First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 2003 Stock Incentive Plan. 6
10.5*	First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 2006 Equity Incentive Plan. 7
10.6	Lease Agreement between SP Financial, LLC and First Reliance Bank. 7
10.7*	Employment Agreement with F. R. Saunders, Jr., dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.8*	Salary Continuation Agreement with F. R. Saunders, Jr., dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.9*	Endorsement Split Dollar Agreement with F. R. Saunders, Jr., dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.10*	Amended Supplemental Life Insurance Agreement with F. R. Saunders, Jr., dated December 28, 2007. 9
10.11*	Employment Agreement with Jeffrey A. Paolucci, dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.12*	Salary Continuation Agreement with Jeffrey A. Paolucci, dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.13*	Endorsement Split Dollar Agreement with Jeffrey A. Paolucci, dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.14*	Employment Agreement with Paul Saunders, dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.15*	Salary Continuation Agreement with Paul Saunders, dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.16*	Endorsement Split Dollar Agreement with Paul Saunders, dated November 24, 2006. 8
10.17*	Form of Director Retirement Agreement, with Schedule. 8
10.18*	Amended and Restated Employment Agreement with Dale Porter. 8
10.19*	Employment Agreement with Thomas C. Ewart, Sr. 6
10.20	Letter Agreement, dated March 6, 2009, including Securities Purchase Agreement – Standard Terms, incorporated by reference therein, between the Company and the United States Department of the Treasury <sup>2</sup>
10.21	Side Letter Agreement, dated March 6, 2009 <sup>2</sup>

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1 Incorporated by reference to Quarterly Report on Form 10-QSB, for the quarter ended September 30, 2007.

2 Incorporated by reference to Current Report on Form 8-K, dated March 10, 2009

3 Incorporated by reference to Current Report on Form 8-K, dated July 1, 2005.

4 Incorporated by reference to Quarterly Report on Form 10-QSB, for the quarter ended March 31, 2002.

5 Incorporated by reference to Quarterly Report on Form 10-QSB, for the quarter ended June 30, 2002.

6 Incorporated by reference to Annual Report on Form 10-KSB for the year ended December 31, 2003.

7 Incorporated by reference to Annual Report on Form 10-KSB for the year ended December 31, 2005.

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8 Incorporated by reference to Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2006.

9 Incorporated by reference to Current Report on Form 8-K, dated December 28, 2007.

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- 10.22\* Form of Waiver<sup>2</sup>
- 10.23\* Form of Senior Executive Officer Agreement<sup>2</sup>
- 13.1 First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 2008 Annual Report to Shareholders. Except with respect to those portions specifically incorporated by reference into this Report, the Company's 2007 Annual Report to Shareholders is not deemed to be filed as part of this Report.
- 21.1 Subsidiaries of First Reliance Bancshares, Inc. 7
- 23.1 Consent of Elliot Davis, LLC.
- 24.1 Power of Attorney (appears on the signature page to this Annual Report on Form 10-K.
- 31.1 Certification of Chief Executive Officer pursuant to Rule 13a-14(a)/15(d)-14(a).
- 31.2 Certification of Chief Financial Officer pursuant to Rule 13a-14(a)/15(d)-14(a).
- 32.1 Certification of Chief Executive and Financial Officers pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 1350, as adopted pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002.

\*Indicates management contract or compensatory plan or arrangement.

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