



themilestone

WINTER 2025 - 2026

UTILIZATION OF ESTATE GIFT

You may recall that FRC was blessed with a significant estate gift in 2025. **Our responsibility is to faithfully steward this gift,** along with all other gifts, to maximize our ministry impact to the glory of God. The consistory has approved the formation of a Gift Utilization Committee to begin exploring possible uses. Elder Grant Hegstad has graciously agreed to lead this group.

Staff representation includes Director of Facilities Pat Van Gelder, Pastor Fred, and Worship Director Amanda Haverdink. Other committee members are Deacon Chris Jelken, Emma Wiersma, Teresa Gunderson, and Marty Guthmiller. This group has recently begun meeting and gathering information. **If you have questions or ideas, please contact any of the committee members.**

Large gifts like this allow us to be a blessing in ways we might not normally consider and enable ministry dreams to become realities more quickly. They also help ensure that your regular giving can continue to support our annual operating budget, fulfill our mission commitments, and bless others through offerings that exceed our budgeted needs. In all areas, **we remain committed to serving and meeting the needs of our congregation, our community, and the church at large.**



DEEPER AND WIDER

Rooted in Christ. Reaching our Community.

At FRC, we believe following Jesus is worth our very best. We are committed to growing deeper in spiritual maturity and leadership while reaching wider through meaningful connection and community impact.



Our Five Ministry Priorities:

- **Local Outreach and Financial Generosity:** Serve beyond the church by building relationships, helping those in need, and sharing Christ's love through partnerships and personal outreach.
- **Young Adult Ministry:** Invest in discipleship, care, and involvement, inviting young adults and college students to serve, lead, and grow.
- **FRC Groups & Discipleship:** Build deeper connections through groups focused on discipleship, care, and spiritual growth.
- **Next Generation Leadership Development:** Equip and mentor emerging leaders to step into their God-given callings.
- **Digital Ministry and Connection:** Create meaningful ways for digital viewers to engage, grow, and become part of our church family.

Welcome LITTLE ONES

Content Not Available Online

WELCOME New Faces

Content Not Available Online

A CHURCH THAT PRAYS, STAYS

Submitted Anonymously

Recently, I received a call from an FRC staff member letting me know that a prayer team would be praying for me during the coming week. While I've been encouraged by prayer before, **knowing that a group of people would intentionally and confidentially lift me up for an entire week felt especially meaningful.**

When I inquired to learn more about the prayer ministry at First Reformed Church, I discovered that this congregation-wide prayer ministry began in 2017 and continues faithfully today. I learned that **as of January 2026, the teams had made 8 complete prayer trips through the membership of FRC.** Prayer teams focus each week on approximately 10–11 family units. Those contacted are primarily individuals and families connected to FRC, though others with ties to the church are often included as well.

God knows what each person needs.

The staff member said, **“Responses to these prayer calls are overwhelmingly positive.** Many are grateful simply to be remembered, while others share important decisions or events they are facing during the week of prayer. Sometimes people notice changes after that week concludes; other times, there is no follow-up at all—and **that’s okay. God knows what each person needs.”**

This ministry is supported by care elders, staff members, and dedicated prayer team volunteers, some of whom have served since the beginning. Together, **they ensure that prayers are offered daily and that unexpected or urgent needs can be added as they arise.**

If you would like to be part of this prayer ministry, we would love to have you join a prayer team. You can learn more at frcoc.org/prayer.



Beast Feast

Written by the De Jong Family

On Wednesday, December 3, FRC hosted the inaugural Beast Feast event in our church fellowship hall. Guests were able to taste many wild game dishes that were generously prepared and donated by several outdoorsmen (and women) from our congregation and community, including venison, pheasant, fish, antelope, and other wild game in a variety of recipes and dishes. In addition, those who attended were able to admire many animal mounts, furs, antlers, and trophies of God's creation and to view a slide show of several people from our church family who enjoy these sports and hobbies with family and friends. **It was a memorable event that brought both outside visitors and members of our church family alike into our church doors to enjoy fellowship together.** The large turnout was amazing and was a meaningful outreach opportunity!

Joel Boersma and Aden De Jong were fondly remembered at this event, as they both loved and were active in hunting and fishing alike. As Aden's family, we would like to personally thank everyone who planned this event, brought in food and memorabilia, worked behind the scenes, prepared the wild game samples and the main meal, donated items for the silent auction, and donated to both the scholarship in memory of Aden at Northwestern College as well as the Special Youth Challenge of Iowa fund. **We had no idea that Aden and his college professor, Cody Rozeveld, who both shared a love of the outdoors, had already been talking about planning an event like this someday.**

Special thanks to Cody and Ross Enger for spearheading this and making it actually happen. **We have said so many times that Aden would have loved everything about this event.** It encompassed all of his favorite things... hunting and fishing, good food, his home church, and most of all, bringing people together in community. **We continue to be very blessed by and grateful for the continued love, support, and encouragement from our church family and this community,** not just in this event, but in so many ways. You are all truly the hands and feet of Jesus. Thank you for being a blessing to our families and also to all those who attended. **May it all bring glory to God!**

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- Romans 15:5-6



You are all truly the hands and feet of Jesus.







FRC Kids

Written by Sarah Kuiper

This year's Christmas program, *Tell Me a Story*, invited our church family to experience the Christmas message in a warm, childlike, and wonderfully cozy way. On a chilly December evening, the Sanctuary was filled with singing, fun, and laughter as our children took the stage in their pajamas, **calling to mind bedtime routines and stories shared before sleep, those quiet moments when hearts are open, and imaginations are awake.**

Pastor Fred and I joined them, also dressed in pajamas and slippers, and Pastor Fred even donned a Cat in the Hat hat, as we shared the **true story at the heart of Christmas.**

Together, we began at the very beginning, in the garden, and followed **God's story of love and redemption, all the way to that holy night in Bethlehem:** a long journey, a crowded town, shepherds startled by angelic news, and **a baby laid in a manger who was anything but ordinary.** Through storytelling, scripture, music, and joyful moments, the children helped bring the story to life in a way that was meaningful and full of wonder.

***Beneath the smiles and laughter was a powerful truth:
Christmas is the night hope arrived.***

God stepped into our world humbly and lovingly, meeting us right where we are. *Tell Me a Story* reminded us that **no matter our age, the Christmas story never grows old, and it still has the power to change everything.**





Christmas at FRC





Orchestra Reflections

Written by Matt Honken

Each year, Amanda and I sit down together and discuss songs to help best lead worship with the FRC Orchestra. We try to find songs that will be powerful and impactful to the congregation, while also giving special consideration to the sermon series and the message from Pastor Fred. **This year, as we had a conversation over a cup of coffee, we felt like the Spirit was putting an emphasis on the word "Behold".** The music we were led to put this emphasis on our hearts. There were the obvious songs with the titles of *Behold Our God* and *Behold, a Christmas Moment*, but also we felt the pull of the lyrics in *Manger Throne* and *Holy Forever* - **two songs that encourage us to come and worship the Baby-King!** With these lyrics, we praise God for His glory, holiness, and majesty.

This year, as we prepared to lead worship, I asked the orchestra to consider themselves **a bit like the shepherds in the fields that night.** Consider all of the wonders that came upon them in one night! One angel appears, then a whole host of angels show up, and they're singing, and then **the greatest of all wonders - Jesus.** At this greatest of all wonders, the shepherds stop and behold their King. It is a beautiful reminder to us that **Jesus coming into our lives is the greatest gift we could ever receive.** We behold God in all of his glory, holiness, and majesty wrapped up as a tiny baby in the manger. **Then, like the shepherds, the call that is placed on the orchestra is to invite others to behold Christ.**

As the orchestra, we use music that is practiced, rehearsed, and is then lifted up with instruments by so many people of all ages and abilities as an offering. **Our prayer is that we touch the hearts of the congregation, bringing us all more in tune with the Holy Spirit who is at work.** As the director of the orchestra, I am humbled to get the "surround sound" experience! I get to take in the orchestra, working to lead others towards Christ while also feeling the joy of the congregation in response. **The Christmas Orchestra at FRC has become one of my favorite traditions of the season.**



Youth Ministry

Written by Ross Enger

The Loft doesn't suddenly fill.
It gradually comes alive.

Down the hall, in the Sanctuary, the first worship service is moving toward its close. Amanda and the worship team are transitioning into the final song, helping the congregation connect what they've just heard in the sermon with what they're about to sing together. **At the same time, students begin to drift into the Loft, some on their own, some with siblings in tow, all following a rhythm that has become familiar over time.**

They head first to the table.

There's a simple handout waiting for them, printed with the Scripture and discussion questions for the day. Nearby are muffins or granola bars, an intentional but unremarkable gesture, just making sure kids have something to eat. Many of them wash it down with a Sunny D grabbed on the way from the Welcome Center, which, by the end of the hour, will almost certainly be an empty cup tucked under a chair along with a napkin or wrapper.

Music is already playing. A Christian playlist hums in the background, filling the room without demanding attention. As students find seats, sitting with friends in the rows of chairs arranged with an aisle down the middle, I stand near the iPad, checking them in. It's a simple system, but it matters. It helps me put names to faces and track who's here, week after week, as relationships quietly take shape.

Off to the side, adult leaders begin to arrive. These are people who have done this faithfully for years, some for decades. They value this hour not because it's flashy or efficient, but because it's formative. Every week, they prepare to guide a 20-minute discussion, weaving together Scripture, questions, and stories from their own lives.

The leaders come to listen, to ask good questions, and to take students seriously.



When the lights dim, the room naturally turns forward.

A video plays on the screen, a highlight reel from Rocky Mountain High at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park from a few years back. Clips flash by of worship, games, students jumping, laughing, and crowding together under stage lights. As the video plays, some students quietly point at the screen, nudging a friend, recognizing someone they know, or maybe even themselves. Over the footage, the speaker talks about Jesus and the difference He has made in their life.

The lights come back up. I point out the postcards near the snacks, each one with information and a link to register for the upcoming Rocky Mountain High trip. Then I ask a question.

"From zero to a thousand, how well do you think you understand love?"

There are a few head shakes, some uncertain looks, students unsure of exactly where this is going. That's okay.



We talk about how Scripture doesn't point us to an idea of love, but to a person. To Jesus.

We open Scripture together, turning to 1 John 4. We talk about how love gets defined and discussed in our world, in the news, in pop culture. **We talk about how Scripture doesn't point us to an idea of love, but to a person. To Jesus. To a love that doesn't just make us feel understood, but actually reshapes how we live.**

After prayer, music plays softly again, Hillsong United's *Not Today* filling the space as students break into smaller groups. Some stay in the Loft. Others head into the Sunroom or into breakout rooms nearby. Each group is small enough to talk honestly, usually around ten middle school students with one or two adults who know them well.

They talk about the week. A ski trip coming up. Something that happened at school. Sometimes the conversation wanders.

And more often than not, those moments are where the real trust is built.

Eventually, the conversation finds its way back. Back to Jesus. Back to the reminder that God's love doesn't depend on performance or clarity or having everything figured out. That anxiety, pressure, and the things we use to cope don't have the final word. That the love of God, made visible in Jesus, invites us to trust Him today, not someday.

Groups close in prayer. Pens are set down. Bibles are closed. Students stand up, talk a bit more, and head off to find their parents, either to go home or to join the second worship service.

And next week, they'll do it again.

This hour happens week after week because it matters. God is glorified not only in the Scripture read and prayers spoken, but in volunteers who show up consistently, semester after semester, offering their time, their stories, and their presence. This is what makes a church strong. Ordinary people using their gifts, responding to Jesus' call to gather, to listen, to pray, to laugh, and to learn together.

It's not flashy. It's faithful.



MORE THAN A CUP

The Ministry Brewing Every Sunday Morning



Most Sunday mornings at FRC begin the same way. Lights flick on in the kitchen. Coffee makers hum to life. Bags of freshly measured grounds are opened. Air pots are lined up, ready to be filled. And **before most of us walk through the doors**, a faithful team of volunteers is already at work, brewing connection, one cup at a time.

To better understand the heart and behind-the-scenes work of these quiet servants, we asked Dane Palsma and Karen & Randy Van Der Maaten a few questions about what it takes to keep the coffee flowing each Sunday.

On an average Sunday, the team prepares **21-22 gallons of coffee**, with numbers dropping slightly in the summer and climbing in the winter as attendance increases. Holiday weekends push those numbers even higher. "Recently, Randy made 26 gallons on Thanksgiving weekend, which is the most he's ever made on a Sunday morning," Karen shared. Dane added that 27 gallons have been made on especially busy Sundays like Easter and during the Advent season.

One of the team's biggest surprises is how early people start drinking coffee. "Randy is always amazed by how much coffee is gone before the 8:30 service even begins," Karen said. Many air pots are already empty by worship time, requiring fresh batches before the fellowship rush between services.

Behind the scenes, **preparation begins long before Sunday morning.** Dane carefully pre-measures coffee into individual bags, each one perfectly portioned to brew 1½ gallons. Karen and Randy purchase creamers and restock sugar and sweeteners throughout the week. Merilee Pennings orders cups, lids, sleeves, and stir sticks. And towels and dishcloths are faithfully washed and returned by Karen and Paula Achterhof.

It's a coordinated effort that makes a smooth Sunday experience possible.



If you've ever wondered which creamer is the congregation favorite, the answer changes often. "We go through a lot of Caramel Macchiato, but it fluctuates," Karen explained. "Some weeks it's French Vanilla. Other times, Peppermint Mocha. Lately, Plant Oat Oatmilk Caramel has been very popular." **On average, 8-10 bottles of creamer are replaced weekly.**



The fellowship space becomes holy ground each Sunday.



But more than coffee, this team is passionate about connection. "The coffee ministry is a community effort," Karen shared. "We've been blessed by the friendships within our team and by getting to know people during coffee time. It's worth the effort to see people being blessed." Dane echoed that sentiment, saying, "I've been blessed by seeing people socializing and connecting before and after church. I've especially seen growth in people arriving early just to be together."

That fellowship space becomes holy ground each Sunday. Guests are welcomed. Relationships are nurtured. Conversations unfold. **And God is quietly at work, using something as simple as coffee to bring people together.**

If you're looking for a place to serve, the coffee ministry offers a simple but meaningful way to make an impact. Whether behind the scenes or face to face, this team helps create a welcoming space where **connection begins, and community grows, one cup at a time.**



Thanksgiving Community Meal

Written by Sara Van Zee

Community as a noun is defined as a **feeling of fellowship with others**, formed through shared attitudes, interests, and goals.

This year, our church had the privilege of hosting the community Thanksgiving meal on our own campus for the first time. While this meal has been a meaningful tradition for many years, **opening our doors in this new way felt significant.**

Thanksgiving, and the holiday season as a whole, is meant to draw people together. It's a time when many speak about slowing down, gathering with family, and sharing meals with friends. **Yet for those who find themselves without those connections, the holidays can magnify feelings of loneliness and isolation.** When something-or someone-is missing, the ache can feel especially heavy.

Jesus understood this deeply. Throughout His ministry, He intentionally gathered people together, creating spaces of belonging that ultimately pointed others toward Him.

That same calling remains for us today.

Our desire to draw people to Christ continues, and **partnering with other churches to create a safe, welcoming place of belonging** is a beautiful picture of what the Thanksgiving meal represented.

As we look ahead to our strategic goals for the coming years, **community outreach stands as a clear priority.** We often ask ourselves what we truly share in common with our broader community. **The answer is found in shared human experience:** joys and losses, celebrations and grief, calm seasons and unexpected storms.

God has planted us here for a purpose.

As a church, we have an opportunity to become a place where people belong, not because we are all the same, but because we are willing to share life together. Through fellowship, hospitality, and intentional presence, **we can continue to build a community that reflects Christ's love and points forward with hope.**



We have an opportunity to become a place where people belong.



A Moment in Missions

Bountiful Table & Diaper Drive

Each year, our church partners with the community through Bountiful Table, providing Christmas meals in the form of grocery boxes. Inside each box are a variety of meats, side dishes, and recipe cards to help families prepare a **meaningful holiday meal together**.

This year, on December 17, we distributed 80 boxes. We were especially grateful for a group of high school students who reached out to partner with us by hosting a diaper drive alongside the event. **The initiative was led by Kaleigh Tooker**, who, along with her family, is new to our church. **We are so thankful for the leadership and heart she and her group showed through this partnership.**



*"This past December, I had the opportunity to work with First Reformed Church on hosting a community diaper drive. From the start, the church members were eager to make this event successful. Because I have been involved with First for a while, I wanted people to experience **the welcoming and happy feeling of this church that I get every Sunday**. I also knew they would put their full effort towards this project, and they did exactly that! The church offered a nice and spacious place for us to comfortably hand out our diapers.*

*They ensured that everyone who entered those doors felt valued by offering a meal and the opportunity to be prayed for. They also had volunteers help us get everything ready and laid out to make the process run smoothly, which was very respected by the people who came through! **Seeing the church community work together to serve others in a Christ-like way was so cool to see.** The experience meant a lot to many families and brought the community together!"*

An excerpt from **Kaleigh Tooker**, sharing her perspective on being involved with the Diaper Drive.



Upcoming Events

Ignite Youth Leadership Conference
March 13-14

Guaymas, MX Work Trip
March 16-23

Palm Sunday
Sunday, March 29
8:30 AM & 10:30 AM

Maundy Thursday
Thursday, April 2
6:30 PM

Community Egg Hunt & Festival
Saturday, April 4
11:00 AM- 1:00 PM

Easter Sunrise Devotions
Sunday, April 5
6:45 AM | West Lawn Cemetery

Easter Sunday
Sunday, April 5
8:30 AM & 10:30 AM

