



First Presbyterian Church, Fargo & Baker Downer

The Messenger

MARCH 2026

THE WILDERNESS

We continue to live into a new rhythm of ministry together. Seasons of transition can feel a bit like wilderness, unfamiliar terrain where we learn again to trust God and one another. In recent weeks I've been reminded of the strength of this congregation.

PARISH ASSOCIATES

In February, Session voted to include The Rev. Nancy Emerson as one of our Parish Associates. A full introduction will appear soon, but many in our region may already know Pastor Nancy through her work in the Presbytery and service with other congregations. Nancy brings gifts in pastoral care and teaches accounting at North Dakota State University right next door to our church. Along with Rev. Dan Billings, she will assist with our Maundy Thursday service on April 2 and Easter services on April 5.

The support of our Parish Associates is a blessing. While I was recently on vacation, a pastoral emergency arose. I reached out, and our Parish Associates stepped in to ensure the family received the care they needed. Even as we live into a new rhythm of ministry, our commitment to caring for one another in times of need remains strong.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

In mid February, we welcomed a new Administrative Assistant, Val Anderson. Val is full time, with half of her hours devoted to supporting me as a solo pastor. She assists with communications, scheduling, meetings, and organizing information that keeps church life running smoothly. The rest of her time supports office operations and interaction with the congregation. You may see her on Sunday mornings worshipping with us and helping notice needs as they arise.

Val came to us through an employment agency, yet we quickly discovered deeper connections. Her family worships at the Baker Downer church, some relatives recently became members at the Fargo church, and others have connections within the wider Presbyterian Church. A full introduction will appear soon, but please join me in welcoming Val when you see her around the church.

BUILDING PROJECTS

A full update on current building projects appears elsewhere in this newsletter. Please take a moment to read about the work that continues to care for and strengthen our shared space. Spring clean up days are being scheduled for March 26th and 28th we hope you can join us for a few hours to help get the church ready for Easter.

VISITORS

You may also have noticed a steady stream of college students visiting in recent months, with several returning the following week. This is an encouraging sign, and we are grateful for the movement we see among younger generations to join us in worship.

It remains incredibly important that we offer visitors a warm welcome. Please take a moment in worship to look around you. If you notice someone new, ask their name. Write it down so you can greet them again the following week. Share a little about yourself and introduce them to someone else before moving on.

It is everyone's responsibility to notice who is new and who we have not yet met. We must move past the fear of getting it wrong or worrying we might greet someone who has been here for years. And if someone greets you, even if you have been here forever, receive it as an invitation to know someone better.

Let us be the kind of community that greets freely, forgives easily, and is willing to take small risks for the sake of building stronger relationships. Even in seasons that feel like wilderness, this is how God leads us forward together.

I'll see you in worship.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Sarah

Presbyterian Women

Don't forget all monetary and supplies donated to the Emergency Food Pantry in March are doubled by The MN Food Share Program. The supply box is in the coat room and is delivered to the EFP each Monday. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Our week to fill shifts as "shoppers" is going to be April 20 to 24. Please check your calendar and look for Nancy Lium with her clipboard to take an AM or PM shift for 2-3 hours one of those days.

The morning PW Circles will meet March 17 in the Jennie Roberts Room at 9:30am, and the afternoon Circle will meet at 1:00pm. All women of the church are invited to attend. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Judy Rippentrop, (701) 730-1836.



HOLY BUCKETS!

From now through Easter, you can bring non-perishable food and personal items (toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, laundry detergent, etc.) and place them in the green tubs next to the elevator entrance. We will deliver them to the Emergency Food Shelter, which is partnering with MN Food Share.

Presentation Prayer Center

Lenten program - a book study with weekly meetings; based on the same book we used at FPC for Lent 2025

Centering Prayer - including the Thursday meeting in partnership with The Pilgrimage at FPC

Taize Prayer - at Riverview Place only, no longer at on first Thursdays at FPC

Men's Bible Study March 10th

The men's Bible study continues its exploration of the Book of Ecclesiastes with Lesson 5 on **March 10th at 6:45 a.m.** The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month, October through May, typically in the Jennie Roberts Room. Pastries and coffee will be served. Intended to help men understand what the Bible says in relation to what is expected of a Christian man, the study guide for Ecclesiastes can be obtained at

pcusa.org/sites/default/files/087011.pdf,

or you can request a copy from Bruce Maylath at ring4linguist@yahoo.com. Participants may join at any time. No advance preparation is required for each month's study.

SPRING CLEANING

Volunteers are needed to help clean the sanctuary in preparation for the upcoming season. Join us on **Thursday, March 26, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** or **Saturday, March 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

Sign-up sheets will be available after worship, and a list of tasks will be provided for those who would like to help but need to come at a different time. Thank you for helping care for the space where we gather for worship.

Musicians Schedule

Mar. 8	Sanctuary Choir Virginia Stern, piano
Mar. 15	Second Avenue Band
Mar. 22	Sanctuary Choir St. Andrew's Brass
Mar. 29	Friendship (K-2) Choir Kids of the Kingdom (3-6) Choir Genesis Ringers
Apr. 2	Sanctuary Choir Westminster Ringers Sam Johnson, soloist
Apr. 5	Sanctuary Choir St. Andrew's Brass Westminster Ringers

Shine-On Campaign Update

Several Shine On improvements to the building have been completed in recent weeks.

- **Plaster repairs** in the Jennie Roberts Room and the music room are now finished, and both spaces are being freshly **painted** as this report is written.
- **Emergency lighting** throughout the building was fully replaced. Last year our building did not pass its fire inspection due to aging emergency lights. Working with our architects at Shultz + Associates, Buildings and Grounds included a full replacement of these lights as part of the Shine On Today work funded through the National Fund for Sacred Places. All emergency lights have now been upgraded.
- Additional lighting work is also underway throughout the building. Older fixtures that were beginning to fail are being replaced with new **LED lighting**. This project is more extensive than the emergency lighting replacement and will improve reliability and energy efficiency across the building. Workers have been respectful of the space and careful to keep work areas clean. All interior projects are expected to be completed before Easter.
- In addition, **carpeting** was replaced at the bottom of the stairs leading to the Social Hall. While the carpet project was not part of the Shine On campaign, it was completed at the same time as these other improvements. The carpet replacement was funded through Support and Endowment (S&E).

Shine On kiosks are located at each entrance for visitors and members who would like to learn more about the campaign and offer their support.

Serving at Micah's Mission

Our next date for Micah's Mission is Thursday, February 12th. We need 1 more preparer (3:00-5:00 pm) and 1 more server (5:00-7:00pm). Come and help with this vital project! Please sign up at the Volunteer Opportunities Board in the West Foyer if you're able to help. Thank you for your continued support of Micah's Mission and Churches United for the Homeless. If you have any questions, or if you would like to sign up, please contact Colleen Ford-Dunker at cforddunker@gmail.com.

Library News

Just a gentle reminder to return church library books that you are no longer using. There is a return box inside the library. Thanks.

Holden Evening Prayer Services

Every Wednesday in Lent, starting February 25, join us from 7:05pm to 7:30pm in the Jennie Roberts Room for Holden Evening Prayer.

Per Capita 2026

The Per Capita rate was approved at the October, 2025 Presbytery meeting and will remain \$50. This per capita apportionment is based on the funds necessary for the Presbytery/Synod/General Assembly to unite the work of over 8000+ churches into one PC(USA) body.

We will be accepting payments through the end of the year. Your contribution will be reflected on your giving record and will be greatly appreciated to help offset the Per Capita Apportionment payment sent to the Presbytery.

For more information, please review the PDF pamphlet, available on the Presbytery of the Northern Plain's website under the Clerk's Corner.

2026 rate = \$50.00 per confirmed member.

Financial Review

On January 18, 2026, First Presbyterian Church held a Financial Review Meeting to share updates, review key documents, and answer questions about the church's finances. Thank you to all who participated. For those who were unable to attend, the documents and recording are available at

<https://www.firstpresfargo.org/finance>.

Maundy Thursday Service April 2, 2026 | 7:30PM

Experience a service of shadows in our beautiful Gothic sanctuary.

This unique service combines the celebration of the Last Supper with the dramatic darkening of the sanctuary as the story of Christ's death unfolds.

650 2nd Ave. N | Fargo, ND
admin.assistant@firstpresfargo.org
www.firstpresfargo.org



First Presbyterian Church
650 2nd Ave. N.
Fargo, ND 58102
Phone: (701) 293-6311
www.firstpresfargo.org

First Presbyterian Fargo

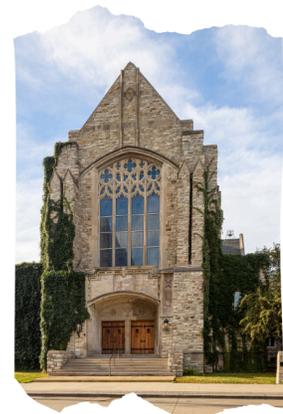
Easter Services

April 5, 2026

9:00AM & 11:00AM

CHRIST IS

Risen!



 **650 2nd Ave. N | Fargo, ND**
 **admin.assistant@firstpresfargo.org**
 **www.firstpresfargo.org**