



First Presbyterian Church, Fargo & Baker Downer

The Messenger

SEPTEMBER 2026

Fresh Eyes

There is something hopeful about the beginning of a new church year. Familiar faces return, new people appear, ministries gather momentum, and the calendar fills quickly. September gives us a chance to look at a familiar place with fresh eyes.

This fall I'm excited about our new **Hospitality & Belonging Committee**. Their vision is to help people move from first-time visitor to actively engaged member of the community, while also strengthening the connections among those who are already here. We have eight members representing five families, all of whom have joined First Presbyterian within the last five years. They know what it feels like to walk through our doors for the first time, and they also know what they have come to love about this church as it exists today.

They are starting simple. This fall, they will take over coffee service, offering coffee, treats, and a friendly face after worship. Taking this over also gives our Deacons an opportunity to explore what a **ministry of compassion** looks like in this new era.

That spirit of welcome will be at the heart of much of our fall. On Rally Day, September 13, we will begin our stewardship season with the theme **Come On In**. The Baker Bluegrass Band, which is bringing such life and joy to worship at Baker Downer, will join us in Fargo that morning. After worship, our newly rebranded **Faith Formation & Fellowship Committee** will host a Southern BBQ, with the **2nd Ave. Band** playing during lunch. And, because we are giving our newly established lawn a chance to grow, everything will be indoors this year. No bees!

Come On In is an invitation to newcomers, certainly, but also to those of us who have been here for years: come in again. Take a fresh look. Notice what is happening. Notice who is here. There are good things growing among us, and some of them may be new.

Yours In Christ,

Pastor Sarah



Holy Buckets 2026!

Holy Buckets will be collecting new or slightly used winter clothing for kids and teens at Bdecan Presbyterian Church. Winter coats, snow-pants, boots and all other gear in all sizes are needed. Put items in the green buckets in the West foyer. Not all winter items are on the shelves yet. If you wish, you may make a financial contribution. Make checks out to First Presbyterian Church and clearly mark your check "Bdecan winterwear," or use the online giving portal under "Other." Items will be delivered in mid-October. Let's make sure children are warm as they wait for the school bus.

Our office will be closed
Monday, September 7th

Happy Labor Day!

Adult Education: Men's Bible Retreat

It's not too early to reserve your room for First Presbyterian's Annual Men's Bible Study Retreat, scheduled for Friday evening, Oct. 9, and Saturday, Oct. 10. The retreat will again be held at the Country Inn & Suites in Detroit Lakes. It begins with dinner at Zorba's on Detroit Lake around 5:45 p.m. The study session will start around 7:00 p.m. on Friday at the inn. It will continue on Saturday morning (breakfast provided) and end around 3:00 p.m.

All men of the church are invited. The retreat is a great opportunity to get to know your fellow men at First Presbyterian and learn about God's message for men.

A block of hotel rooms is being held for retreat participants until Sept. 9. You can make your hotel reservation by calling Country Inn & Suites at 218-846-8763. When making your reservation, let them know that you are with the First Presbyterian Fargo group. If you'd like to split the cost of a room (\$146/night, same as last year, despite inflation!), please contact Dick Blaine (dickandcarolyn@gmail.com) or Bruce Maylath (ring4linguist@yahoo.com or 701-866-2626), and we will coordinate with others seeking a roommate.

The retreat will again be led by Dr. Stephen Reed, former chair of the Religion & Philosophy Department at the University of Jamestown. Stayed tuned for this year's topic.



We're excited to kick off another wonderful year of Sunday School programming beginning September 20th! Children ages 3 (Pre-K) through 5th grade are invited to take part in Sunday morning activities designed just for them. We offer a traditional Sunday School experience with age-based classrooms, caring volunteer teachers, and a Presbyterian curriculum that's both developmentally appropriate and engaging.

Each Sunday begins at 9:15 AM with a large-group welcome featuring songs, announcements, and occasionally a story or video. From there, children head to their classrooms for teacher-led activities and discussions that help them learn about Jesus and the Bible, build a personal relationship with God, and grow in their Christian faith. Sunday School ends at 10:15 AM, just in time for families to attend 10:30 worship together.

Registration is open online, and we'll also have a registration booth available on Rally Day, September 13th. We look forward to seeing your family this fall!

Adult Education: Women's Bible Study

Bible Study Introduction: On September 8, we will watch a video by Rev. Rhonda Mawhood Lee, author of this year's PW Bible Study: *United through Christ, Bound to Each Other*.

PW Circles: The first lesson of the PW Bible Study is *Unity in Christ, Wisdom from God*. The morning PW Circle will meet at 10am on September 15, in the Jennie Roberts Room. The Saturday Circle will meet at 10am on September 19, in the Office Conference Room. All women of the church are invited to attend. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Barb Kessel at (701) 261-6215.



Financial Update

We made it! Kudos to our congregational members for their contributions to our Per Capita. We are now at one-hundred percent of the budgeted \$15,000! This is the first time in history that we have made our Per Capita budget. You all are amazing and truly appreciated. Thank you!

First Presbyterian Church Financial Summary - General Fund Only June 2026

	Year to Date <u>Actual</u>	Year to Date <u>Budget</u>	Increase <u>(Decrease)</u>	Annual <u>Budget</u>
Income	\$445,526	\$426,231	\$19,294	\$842,800
Expense	452,707	445,598	7,110	875,737
Net/Shortfall	<u>-\$7,182</u>	<u>-\$19,367</u>	<u>\$12,185</u>	<u>-\$32,937</u>

Session Summary - August 2026

At its August meeting, Session focused on several forward-looking areas of ministry and congregational life.

- **Associate Pastor Readiness Task Force:** Session received an update on the task force's work assessing the congregation's ministry needs, priorities, and readiness for future staffing.
- **150th Anniversary:** The 150th Anniversary Task Force reported on planning for the congregation's 2027 anniversary, including opportunities for celebration, storytelling, and engagement with the wider community.
- **Hospitality and Belonging:** Session formally established Hospitality and Belonging as a standing committee, strengthening the church's commitment to helping visitors, newcomers, and members find meaningful connection and belonging. The new committee is chaired by Elder Wayne Sander and Deacon David Hoffman.
- **New Worshiping Community:** Session learning about an opportunity to support a new worshiping community led by a PC(USA) Elder from Ghana.

Together, these conversations reflected Session's attention not only to the church's current ministry, but also to where God may be leading us next.

Shine On Update

A lot has happened this summer as our Shine On projects have continued to move toward completion!

This summer we have:

- Replaced the **deteriorating steps** at the historic entrance
- Replaced and painted the **exterior railing**
- Repaired and cleaned the **limestone arch** and surrounding exterior masonry
- Completed **masonry repairs** in the sanctuary and balcony, including repainting where needed
- **Improved the lighting** in the courtyard and at the historic entrance
- Scraped and regraded the **courtyard**, adding new soil and grass seed
- Installed a new **irrigation system** to help establish and maintain a healthy lawn

The difference around the building is becoming increasingly visible. These projects are doing more than addressing years of deferred maintenance, they are helping us care well for this historic building and strengthening its presence in the heart of our community.

Thank you to Rick Fiebiger who has tirelessly served as day-to-day quality control. Thank you to everyone whose generosity through Shine On has made this work possible.

Church Life Update

A new season is upon us, and with it, exciting opportunities to learn, serve, worship, and grow together at First Presbyterian Church of Fargo. From Sunday School and Youth Ministries to handbells, choirs, and instrumental ensembles, there are so many ways to engage this fall. Whether you're new or returning, we can't wait to welcome you.

Fall Kickoff Dates to Remember:

- September 9: Adult Ensemble Rehearsals Begin
- September 13: Rally Sunday Worship indoors
- September 13: First day of Sunday School
- September 16: Children & Youth Activities Begin

Worship Arts at FPC

Whether you sing, ring, or play, there's a place for you in our music ministry. We invite you to share your gifts and grow in faith through music!

- **Sanctuary Choir**
- **St. Andrew's Brass**
- **All Church Orchestra**
- **Genesis Ringers** - Beginner Handbell Choir
- **Westminster Ringers** - Advanced Handbell Choir
- **Children & Youth Ensembles**
 - Friendship Choir (K-2)
 - Kids of the Kingdom (3-6)
 - Proclamation Choir (7-12)

We're excited to walk this journey of faith with you and your family. Let's make this fall one of connection, creativity, and joyful worship. Contact our Director of Church Life, Rusty Bender, at rbender@firstpresfargo.org with any questions or if you would like to get involved in music ministry.

A graphic with a pink background and orange autumn leaves. At the top, the word "Attention!" is written in large, bold, blue letters. Below it, in smaller blue text, is "Office Hours are Changing in the Fall." In the center, there is a white rectangular box with a black border containing the text: "Starting after Labor Day (9/7), the church office will be open: Monday - Thursday; 9:00am - 4:00pm". The times "9:00am - 4:00pm" are underlined in blue.

Phishing Alert!

The staff of FPC will never send email or text-message solicitations for money or gift cards.

The most common signs of a phishing or scam attempt are: an unfamiliar tone or greeting, grammar and spelling errors, inconsistencies in email addresses, links, and domain names, suspicious attachments, threats or a sense of urgency, or vague out-of-the-blue invitations to click something. When in doubt, reach out via a known mode of communication (phone call, verified email, etc.)!



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