



First Presbyterian Church, Fargo & Baker Downer

The Messenger

FEBRUARY 2026

Season of Change

We are living in a season of change, and yet much of the heart of our life together remains steady. Worship continues. Service continues. Formation continues. Care continues. These anchors remind us who we are, even as responsibilities shift and new patterns take shape.

Since Mary's retirement at the end of 2025, we have begun to live into a new rhythm of ministry. Some of what is emerging is clear. Other parts will take time to understand. The Associate Pastor Readiness Task Force has begun its work, and I am encouraged by the intelligence, care, and energy present among its members. Their role is to listen carefully and help us discern where our greatest needs and opportunities lie. This is faithful, patient work, and I am grateful for their leadership.

One change I have personally welcomed is the opportunity to offer more direct pastoral care. This is something I did often in earlier calls and have missed in recent years. It feels both familiar and new, and I am grateful for the chance to walk alongside members of our congregation more closely during meaningful moments of life, illness, grief, and transition.

In staffing news, we recently offered the organist position to Elliot Sander, who chose to decline. Our Personnel Committee continues the search, and in the meantime, we are thankful that Matthew Pechtl, a member of our congregation, is helping lead us in worship.

Work on our building has begun as part of the Shine On campaign, and you will find details in the update included in this newsletter. These repairs and improvements are important investments in the life and future of our congregation, and I am grateful to Rick Fiebiger and Shultz + Associates for their careful oversight.

This year's confirmation students are already completing their projects. One group recently baked and delivered treats to several members of our congregation, spending time visiting and listening. Another group is preparing to serve at Churches United in the coming weeks. Their generosity, curiosity, and openness are gifts to our whole church.

Plans for Lent are underway, including the hope of once again offering Holden Evening Prayer on Wednesday evenings. Lent invites us into reflection, prayer, and deeper attention to God's presence, and I look forward to sharing this season with you.

There is much unfolding around us, but the foundation remains strong. We worship. We serve. We learn. We care for one another. In these steady practices, God continues to shape us and hold us together.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Sarah

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.

Shine-On Campaign Update

Repairs to the stonework in the sanctuary are nearing completion and are moving along quickly. Work in the music office has progressed more slowly after the discovery that the window was missing a lintel. Repairs are underway and are expected to be completed in early February.

At our annual financial meeting in late January, it was reported that we have received \$2.5 million in pledges to date, with \$804,170 already received. This total does not include the National Grant, half of which has already been issued to us.

Next on the schedule are plaster repairs near the windows in the JRR and painting of the music office.

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.

Rick Fiebiger, our Facilities Manager, and Shultz + Associates, our project architects, are actively overseeing the work.

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>.



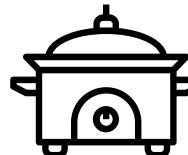
Attention Snow Birds!

Please notify the office of your winter address along with the dates you'll be away. Year-end giving statements are mailed at special non-profit rates and will not forward even if you have a forwarding order at the post office.

Please help us stay in touch!

Make Stewardship Easy!

You can set up the amount you've pledged as a recurring gift to the church.



It couldn't be any easier! We offer both an ACH withdrawal from your bank account (no fees!) or Online Giving through our website. Recurring gifts are like the Crock-Pot of church giving - "fix it and forget it!".

Easy for you and it helps the church to see a steady stream of income through the year. Give it a try! There's an ACH Authorization form on our website under "Forms". Questions? Please contact Jan Lundgren in the church office at jlundgren@firstpresfargo.com.

Musicians Schedule

Feb. 1	Rusty Bender Matthew Pechtl
Feb. 8	Friendship (K-2) Choir Kids of the Kingdom (3-6) Choir Sanctuary & Pro Choirs
Feb. 15	TBD
Feb. 22	Sanctuary Choir St. Andrew's Brass
Mar. 1	Westminster Ringers



Bingo @ Mainline, Feb. 15

You are invited, Sunday, Feb. 15, for lunch and Bingo at Mainline in Downer, MN. The event is scheduled from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM; please note that lunch will be self-pay. Attendees are encouraged to arrange their own meals at the venue during the event. Following the meal we will be playing Bingo for various prizes! We want to extend our gratitude to our friends in Downer, especially Mainline, for supporting the Baker Downer Fish Fry in October, 2025.

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

Monthly Men's Bible Study

The men's Bible study continues its exploration of the Book of Ecclesiastes with Lesson 4 on **February 10th at 6:45 a.m.**, in the Jennie Roberts Room. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month, October through May. 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.

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.

THE UNIVERSITY OF JAMESTOWN
AND DAVIES HIGH SCHOOL
INVITES YOU

February 27th

Directed by Dr. Anne Gassmann

**Concert at 7:00pm
in the Sanctuary**

First Presbyterian Church of Fargo
650 2nd Ave. N.
Fargo, ND 58102

University of Jamestown and Davies High School in Concert

Dr. Anne Gassmann will be leading the University of Jamestown and Davies High School Choirs in song on Friday, February 27th. Mark your calendars and keep your eyes peeled for more information coming soon!

University Jamestown Alumni

Are you a UJ graduate? If so, we'd love to hear it! Please contact Jan Lundgren in the church office (jlundgren@firstpresfargo.org) and we'll add your name to the list.

Presbyterian Women News

PW Bible Study Leaders: On January 14 the PW Bible Study leaders will meet to discuss Lesson 5 of this year's Bible Study, *Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ*.

PW Circles: The morning PW Circles will meet January 20 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.



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