

The Session and members of First Presbyterian Church Fargo extend a sincere welcome to you. We are grateful for your presence today! We welcome all persons regardless of race, nationality, disability, gender or sexual orientation. This includes an open invitation to membership, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, marriage, funerals, memorial services and to serve as an officer of the church.

Everyone is invited for coffee and fellowship in the Gathering Space after worship.

We recycle! If you are not taking your bulletin, please drop it in the blue bin at the door as you leave.

* Please rise in body or spirit.

December 14, 2025 Third Sunday of Advent

We Gather in Christ

PRELUDE

Haf Trones Lampa Färdig O Little Town of Bethlehem Elliot Sander, organ arr. Michael Burkhardt arr. John Ferguson

Holdman Family

OPENING SENTENCES

"Darkness" by Jan Richardson

% HYMN 146

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger; there he lay, the undefiled, to the world a stranger. Such a babe in such a place, can he be the Savior? Ask the saved of all the race who have found his favor.

Angels sang about his birth; wise men sought and found him; heaven's star shone brightly forth, glory all around him. Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing; all the plains were lit that night; all the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger; he is still the undefiled, but no more a stranger. Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the story; praise his name in all the earth; hail the King of glory!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Mary Jo E. Holtey

God of hidden places, we confess that we prefer the light to the shadows. We admit that waiting is hard. We admit that listening is harder. Too often we rush past mystery, ignoring the quiet stirring of your Spirit. Too often we cling to old habits instead of opening ourselves to new patterns that could bring life. Forgive us for resisting the holy work that begins in dark and tender places. Give us the courage to embrace the shadows. Grow in us what we cannot yet see. Amen.

* RESPONSE 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs. 4)
O come, thou Root of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

* PASSING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Rev. Sarah M. Bigwood

The Word

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:39-58, pp. 932 Whirl Story Bible, pg. 178 Jane Roggensack, reader

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Darkness

* HYMN 112 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing

On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring; on Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring, news of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our merciful King's birth.

Then why should we on earth be sad, since our Redeemer made us glad; then why should we on earth be sad, since our Redeemer made us glad, when from our sin he set us free, all for to gain our liberty?

When sin departs before his grace, then life and health come in its place; when sin departs before his grace, then life and health comes in its place; heaven and earth with joy may sing, all for to see the newborn King.

All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night; all out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night: "Glory to God in highest heaven; peace on earth and goodwill. Amen!"

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Responding to the Word

BEHOLD! THE LEGACY: Honoring Pastor Mary's Ministry



FESTIVAL OF TREES

Amy Wilkens

Use the QR code to access the secure giving portal on our website!

OFFERTORY

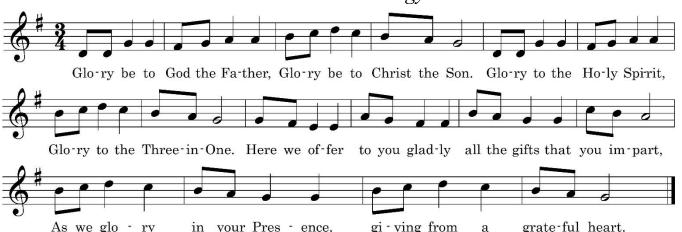
In the Bleak Midwinter

arr. Mark Hayes

Sanctuary Choir; Bryan Poyzer, director; Elliot Sander, piano; Emily Erpelding and Matthew Pechtl, violins; Jayci Lawrence, cello

RESPONSE

Christmas Doxology



PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Bearing the Word into the World

♦ HYMN 119

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king. Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Joyful all ye nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies; with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!" Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord, late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate deity, pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die, born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

*** BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

Go Forth in Peace Elliot Sander, organ arr. Gary Allen Smith

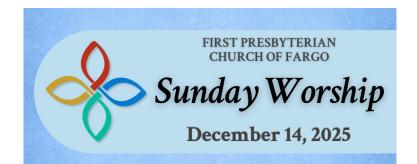
Thank you to Jaden Argall and Tom Bigwood on livestream and soundboard, The Holdman family and Jane Roggensack for assisting in worship, and our Welcome Team: Curt Brickman, Toby Christensen, Candy Shultz, Sharon Secor, Dianne Connelly, and all our ushers for taking such good care of us this morning.

A special thank you to our musicians: Elliot Sander, the Sanctuary Choir, directed by Bryan Poyzer, Emily Erpelding, Matthew Pechtl, and Jayci Lawrence



Join us TONIGHT at 6:30 pm for Carols by Candlelight. As always, this program will feature all of our church's vocal and instrumental ensembles, along with congregational carol-singing, in a celebration of word and seasonal music.

Christmas goodies will be served following the service.



Retirement Party for Pastor Mary: First Presbyterian Church of Fargo invites you to join us for a luncheon celebrating Pastor Mary as she retires after 33 years of faithful service. The luncheon will take place on Sunday, December 7th, following worship in the Social Hall. No RSVP needed! Questions? Contact Casey in the church at clemier@firstpresfargo.org.

The festivities continue through December 28, 2025. Even if you cannot attend the lunch, come any Sunday to congratulate Mary.

Other Upcoming Opportunities to Celebrate

- Dec. 21, 10:30 a.m. Celebrating Mary's leadership
- Dec. 24, 5:00 & 10:00pm Christmas Eve services



Notice:

Congregational Meeting

Dec. 28 following worship

The purpose of this meeting is to dissolve the relationship between the First Presbyterian Church of Fargo and the Reverend Mary Jo E. Holtey.

Covenant of Prayer: Chuck Richard and family upon the death of his wife, Kristen, on December 7; Family and friends of Jim Gompf upon his death, memorial service set for Dec. 19, 10am at Boulgers; David Hoffman, recovering from back surgery; Penny Andrist, immunotherapy; Beatrice Janaka's husband, James

<u>PW Circles:</u> The morning PW Circles will meet Dec. 16 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 Barbi Kessel.

Red Kettle Campaign: If you are able to take a turn at participating this year, please stop at the table in the Gathering Space to sign up, or call Ginger Deitz! All sites are indoors again this year. Proceeds go to support the Salvation Army's feeding programs.



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!

2025 Year End Giving: Please have all contributions intended for the 2025 giving year turned in to the church office by Monday, January 5th. The church office will be open from 9:00am—4:00pm that day. You can also use the drop box by the office door if you arrive after office hours. Any contributions received after the 5th will be recorded on 2026's giving record. If you would like to know the balance of your 2025 pledge, please email Jan Lundgren at jlundgren@firstpresfargo.org



Christmas Office Hours

The church office will be closed December 24th through January 1st



Hearing devices are available, please ask an usher for assistance.

Nursery: Staff will be present **beginning at 9:15** for infants-3 years, in the nursery complex on the 1st floor.

Activity Bags for Children: Fun-filled tote bags are located at both doors.

Restrooms: Restrooms are located in the Gathering Space and on the lower level.

Prayer Request Cards: Cards are in pew racks for your use. Prayers will be committed to God along with the other offerings and also lifted up in prayer by the staff.

Peace Candles: The candle burning on the chancel symbolizes peace. We ask guests to take a candle back to your church as a gift from us. Peace candles can be found at the Welcome Center, near the west doors.

Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi is available throughout the church. (password: community650)

FPC Officers

Session: Curt Brickman, Kathryn Byrd, Deb Dawson, Tom Dawson, Colleen Ford-Dunker, Jody Hudson, Kurt Kooyer, Dick Laraway, Bruce Maylath, Brian McClure, Jim McEvers, Sharon Secor, Paula Thomas (clerk), Jeff Wilkens, and Steve Wonderlich. Deacons: Paula Christensen, Toby Christensen, Dianne Connelly, Steve Dawson, Brenda Deckard, Sydney Goddard, David Hoffman, Gayla McGoldrick, Wayne Sander, Candy Shultz, Virginia Stern, Kathleen Thomas, Kevin Thomas, Debbie Tight, and Amy Wilkens. Church Treasurer: Sherri Stern.

Church Staff

The Rev. Sarah M. Bigwood: Head of Staff, Pastor
The Rev. Mary Jo E. Holtey: Associate Pastor
The Rev. Daniel Billings: Parish Associate
The Rev. Cathie Bishop: Parish Associate
Rusty Bender: Director of Church Life
Bryan Poyzer: Adult Choir Director
Elliot Sander: Interim Organist
Carrie Lawrence: Sunday School Coordinator
Jan Lundgren: Business Manager
Casey LeMier: Communications & Admin Assistant
Rick Fiebiger: Facilities Manager

Drew Brovold: Custodian
Staff emails are: (first initial and last name of person)
@firstpresfargo.org

Poinsettia Orders due Very Soon: We encourage you to purchase poinsettias to decorate our Sanctuary for the Christmas season! More information can be found on the order forms, which are available at the Welcome Desk, or by contacting Casey LeMier in the office. Orders and payment should be delivered to the office no later than noon tomorrow, December 15th.

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L: Live Stream Option, H: Hybrid, Z: Zoom Times shown in italics indicate am.

Sunday, December 14

11:30 Fellowship

12:00 Confirmation V

6:30 Carols by Candlelight Service (L)

Monday, December 15

10:00 Staff Meeting

6:30 Session Meeting (H)

Tuesday, December 16

9:30 PW Circles

1:00 PW Circle

Wednesday, December 17

5:00 Wednesday Activities Meal

5:30 St. Andrew's Brass

5:30 Genesis Ringers

6:15 Children & Youth Choirs

6:30 Westminster Bells

7:00 Youth Group

7:30 Sanctuary Choir

Thursday, December 18

12:15 Centering Prayer

4:30 Heart-n-Soul Meal

5:30 Confirmation VI

Friday, December 19

No Church Events

Saturday, December 20

10:00 PW Circle (H)

Sunday, December 21

8:45 Sunday School Christmas Pageant

10:30 Worship Service (L)

11:30 Fellowship

Reminder: Use the QR code found in the bulletin to access the secure giving portal on our website. Also, like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram!

For Your Information

December 7, 2025 Attendance: 318 272 in person 46 households livestreamed Contributions received: \$52,548.34



Church Information

Office Hours: M-TH, 9:00 am-4:00 pm Phone: 701-293-6311 www.firstpresfargo.org 650 2nd Ave. N. Fargo, ND 58102