



*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

**OPENING SENTENCES**

*"Darkness"*  
 by Jan Richardson

Holdman Family

✧ **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*

Glo-ry be to God the Fa-ther, Glo-ry be to Christ the Son. Glo-ry to the Ho-ly Spirit,  
Glo-ry to the Three-in-One. Here we of-fer to you glad-ly all the gifts that you im-part,  
As we glo - ry in your Pres - ence, gi - ving from a grate-ful heart.

#### ✦ 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.*





FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF FARGO

## Sunday Worship

December 14, 2025

**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](mailto: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

## Family Christmas Pageant

Join us **Sunday, December 21st** for a  
**Family Friendly Christmas Pageant**

8:45 light breakfast provided

9:00 VBS sing along

9:15 narrated Christmas Pageant

Kids will recognize  
mascots and music  
from the True North  
summer VBS theme!  
-See you there!



## 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

**PW Circles:** 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](mailto: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.**

**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](http://www.firstpresfargo.org)

650 2nd Ave. N.

Fargo, ND 58102