

*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 7, 2025**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**

**We Gather in Christ**

**PRELUDE**

*Three Advent Chorale Settings:*

arr. Paul Bunjes

*Freu Dich Sehr; Gottes Sohn ist Kommen; O Jesu Christ, dein Kripplein*

Elliot Sander, organ

**OPENING SENTENCES**

*"By Hand"*

Mathew Family

by Jan Richardson

✧ **HYMN 121**

*O Little Town of Bethlehem (vs. 1,2,4)*

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;

the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary and, gathered all above,  
 while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
 and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all on earth.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
 cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us; abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

✧ **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

The Rev. Mary Jo E. Holtey

**God of every generation, we admit that we do not always welcome the new life you offer. We cling to familiar paths and ignore the fresh beginnings you place before us. We resist change, even when it brings healing. We forget that you can create hope from what feels broken or unfinished. And too often we deny others the second chances and wholeness we long for ourselves. Renew us, O God. Shape us by your grace and stir in our hearts a desire for justice. Amen.**

✧ **RESPONSE 88**      *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs. 2)*

O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily:  
to us the path of knowledge show; and teach us in her ways to go.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

✧ **PASSING OF THE PEACE**

**The Word**

**SCRIPTURE**

*Isaiah 11:1-3, 6, 9, pp. 627*  
*Matthew 1:1-17, narrative*

Jean Pladson, reader

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**

*New Life*

The Rev. Sarah M. Bigwood

✧ **HYMN 378**      *We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom (vs. 1, 2, 4)*

We wait the peaceful kingdom, when wolf and lamb shall lie  
in gentleness and friendship without a fear or sigh,  
when lion shall be grazing, when snake shall never strike;  
a little child shall lead us both strong and weak alike.

Where is the peaceful kingdom? When will this new day start?  
We long for peace and comfort to reign within each heart.  
Yet not in our lives only, nor simply in our home:  
we pray that all creation will one day find shalom.

That little child shall lead us to walk the chosen way,  
to share the peaceful kingdom, to greet God's newborn day.  
The child born in a stable is sent to break our chains,  
to bring through word and table the day when justice reigns.

**Sacrament of Communion**

**INVITATION TO THE TABLE**

## **GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

## **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.**

## **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

*The words spoken by the pastor bless the bread and cup on the table and all the elements that are an extension of this table.*

## **HYMN OF APPROACH 99 *My Soul Gives Glory to My God* (vs. 1-2)**

My soul gives glory to my God; my heart pours out its praise.

God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways.

My God has done great things for me: yes, holy is God's name.

All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.

**COMMUNION MUSIC** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* arr. David Harris  
St. Andrew's Brass; Jill Post, director

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

### **Responding to the Word**

## **BEHOLD! THE LEGACY: *Honoring Pastor Mary's Ministry***



## **FESTIVAL OF TREES**

Ryan Johnston

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

## **OFFERTORY**

*Carol of the Bells /*

arr. Lloyd Larson

*God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*

Westminster Ringers; Jill Post, director

❖ **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 100** *My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout (vs. 1,2,4)*

*We dedicate this beloved hymn in honor of The Rev. Mary Jo E. Holtey's retirement at the end of 2025. This hymn has touched her heart throughout her ministry.*

My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,  
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,  
so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?

**Refrain:** My heart shall sing of the day you bring.

Let the fires of your justice burn.

Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,  
and the world is about to turn.

Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me,  
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.  
Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn,  
you will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.

**(Refrain)**

Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast:  
God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp.  
This saving word that our forebears heard is the promise which holds us bound,  
till the spear and rod can be crushed by God, who is turning the world around.

**(Refrain)**

❖ **BENEDICTION**

## **POSTLUDE**

*Prepare The Royal Highway*  
Elliot Sander, organ

arr. Paul Manz

*Thank you to Ally & Josh Trumbo on livestream and soundboard, Jean Pladson for assisting in worship, and our Welcome Team: Tom Dawson, Virginia Stern, Marcia Foss and all our ushers, Ryan Johnston, and Candy Shultz for taking such good care of us this morning.*

*A special thank you to our musicians: Elliot Sander, and the St. Andrew's Brass and Westminster Ringers both directed by Jill Post.*





**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. 14, 10:30 a.m. - Celebrating Mary's teaching
- Dec. 21, 10:30 a.m. - Celebrating Mary's leadership

**Men's Bible Study:** The men's Bible study continues its exploration of the Book of Ecclesiastes with Lesson 3 on December 9th at 6:45 am in the Jennie Roberts Room. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month, October through May. Coffee and breakfast pastries are 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 online, or you can request a copy from Bruce Maylath at [ring4linguist@yahoo.com](mailto:ring4linguist@yahoo.com). No advance preparation is required for each month's study.

**PW Bible Study Leaders:** On December 10 Pastor Mary Holtey will lead a discussion on Lesson 4 of this year's Bible Study, *Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ*.

**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.

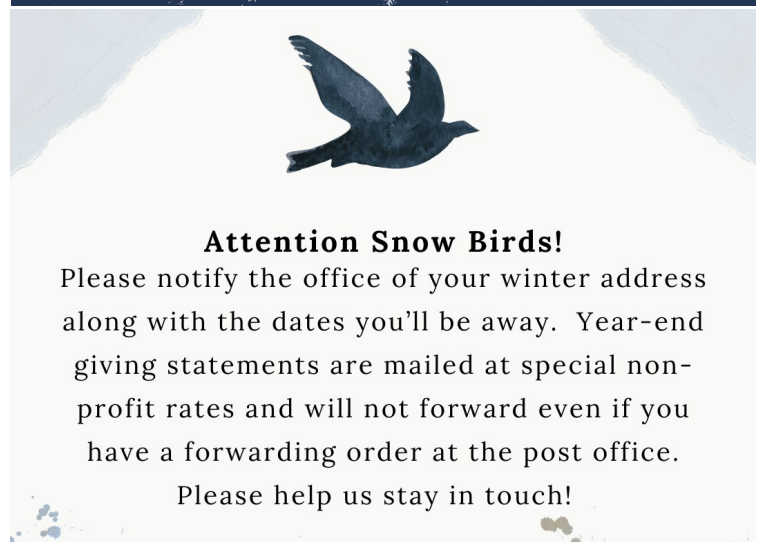
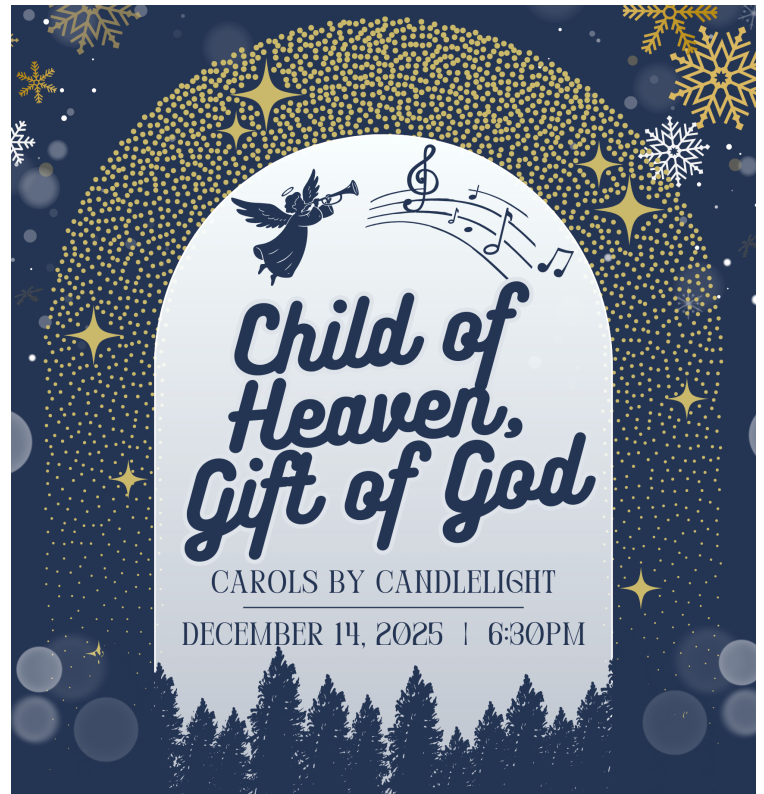
**Red Kettle Campaign:** If you are able to take a turn at participating this year, please stop at the table in the Gathering Space to sign up, or call Ginger Deitz! All sites are indoors again this year. Proceeds go to support the Salvation Army's feeding programs.

**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)

**Covenant of Prayer:** Sara Schenck and family at the loss of Brad Schenck, Jan Harrison and daughter Lisa Johnson, recovering from surgeries; David Hoffman, recovering from back surgery; Penny Andrist, immunotherapy; Beatrice Janaka's husband, James

**\$21,338 to Great Plains Food Bank:** The Mission Committee sends great thanks to all who contributed in November in response to the special appeal for funds for the Great Plains Food Bank. Together, the Fargo and Baker-Downer congregations sent a total of \$21,338 to the food bank, for distribution to food pantries across all of North Dakota's counties, plus Clay County in Minnesota.

The needs continue, and donations through the church will still be accepted and relayed to the food bank. Donations by check should be designated on the memo line with the word "Food"; gifts can be made online at [www.firstpresfargo.org/give](http://www.firstpresfargo.org/give), and make sure to select the "Great Plains Food Bank" fund.



**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 available now:** 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 on December 15th.**

**A Congregational Meeting** has been called for Sunday, December 28, following Worship in the Sanctuary for the purpose of dissolving the relationship between the First Presbyterian Church of Fargo and the Reverend Mary Jo E. Holtey. If you are unable to attend in-person and would like to join virtually, please contact Pastor Sarah.

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

### **Sunday, December 7**

*11:30 Luncheon Celebrating Pastor Mary!*

### **Monday, December 8**

7:00 FM Music Club Program (L)

### **Tuesday, December 9**

6:45 Men's Bible Study

5:30 Board of Deacons Meeting (H)

### **Wednesday, December 10**

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 11**

12:15 Centering Prayer

3:00 Preparing @ Micah's Mission

5:00 Serving @ Micah's Mission

### **Friday, December 12**

*No Church Events*

### **Saturday, December 13**

*10:00 Carols by Candlelight Rehearsal*

### **Sunday, December 14**

*9:15 Sunday School*

*10:30 Worship Service (L)*

*11:30 Fellowship*

*6:30 Carols by Candlelight (L)*

**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**

Contributions received Nov. 23, 2025: \$22,837.00

November 30, 2025 Attendance: 188  
136 in person

52 households livestreamed  
Contributions received: \$10,635.00



### **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