

# Congregational Vitality Report

Fall 2025

## State of the Presbytery

- **Motion to accept the dissolution of the following pastoral relationships.**
  - **Rev. Robert Drake & The First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead**
  - **Rev. Marge Landwehr & The First Presbyterian Church of Hallock**
  - **Rev. Michael Osaki & The First Presbyterian Church of Crookston**
- The Presbytery of the Northern Plains gives thanks to God for the long and faithful ministry of the Inkster Presbyterian Church. Having served their community and the larger church of Jesus Christ with dedication, and after prayerful discernment, the congregation has voted to bring its ministry to a close. With gracious intent, they have willingly transferred their assets and encouraged their members to continue their witness through the two remaining congregations of the Midway Parish, Forest River and Gilby Presbyterian Churches.

In accordance with its constitutional responsibility to “control the location of new congregations and of congregations desiring to move as well as to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members” (G-3.0303), **the Leadership Pod of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains moves to dismiss the Inkster Presbyterian Church, giving thanks for its faithfulness to the gospel and its enduring witness to the grace of Jesus Christ.**

- The Presbytery of the Northern Plains gives thanks to God for the long and faithful ministry of the Hamilton Presbyterian Church. Having served their community and the larger church of Jesus Christ with dedication since 1882, and after prayerful discernment, the congregation has voted to bring its ministry to a close. With gracious intent, they have willingly sold their building, paid off debts, transferred their assets to the Presbytery, and donated their paraments to Knox Presbyterian in Minto, ND, and a set of eight confessional banners lovingly created by Thelma Collins and Rhoda Enerson are still looking for a church home. Some of their members now worship at St. Thomas Methodist and Knox Presbyterian, and we give thanks to the church universal for their continued care and witness.

In accordance with its constitutional responsibility to “control the location of new congregations and of congregations desiring to move as well as to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members” (G-3.0303), **the Leadership Pod of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains moves to dismiss the Hamilton Presbyterian Church, giving thanks for its enduring faithfulness, its gifts to the larger church, and its joyful witness to Christ.**

- Pod Merger - The Care for Congregations and the Care for Pastoral Leaders Pods recommend a merger and updating the name to Congregational Vitality Pod. Since we are

already meeting jointly, our reports will convey the new name. The motion will come from Nominating.

- Family Leave Policy. Per Book of Order requirements which changed in 2024, we have updated our Family Leave Policy. See attached.
- Congregational Vitality Grant Program – See attached. We are asking Presbytery to approve this proposal at the Spring 2026 meeting. Opportunities for input will take place on ZOOM between now and the Spring meeting.
- Executive Presbyter – See attached. The Presbytery of the Northern Plains is proposing the creation of an **Executive Presbyter** role to provide relational, pastoral, and administrative leadership. We are asking Presbytery to approve a version of this proposal at the Spring 2026 meeting. Opportunities for input will take place on ZOOM between now and the Spring meeting.
- FREE websites for churches. The Presbytery of the Northern Plains has contracted with a service to provide a free one-page website for churches. We know that most people search for a church online before they will attend in-person. If your church needs a web presence and is interested in a website, please contact Jenn in the Presbytery office.
- FREE Small Church Growth Training – The Presbytery of the Northern Plains has contracted with a small church growth expert, John Fong. John specializes in helping small churches grow by applying practical outreach and growth strategies that fit their size and context. By partnering with presbyteries, John ensures that churches feel supported by broader leadership, making the process more effective and sustainable. His approach equips even the smallest congregations with tools to thrive in today's ministry landscape. These services are free to all of our congregations. If your congregation is interested in being a part of this growth training, contact Jenn in the Presbytery office.
- Minister Report – See attached.
- Connectional Pastor – The Leadership Pod has extended the Connectional Pastor position through the end of 2026 or until an Executive Presbyter is hired, whichever comes first.

### **Argyle (Community)**

Jeff Radeke, clerk of Community Presbyterian Church of Argyle, reports that the congregation continues to meet regularly with about 12 in attendance out of 18 members. Dwight Netzer has been leading worship, driving from Grand Forks, and is well-received by the congregation for his heartfelt preaching. Organist Jolene Conway plays weekly, and offerings remain steady, keeping the church financially stable. The building was painted last summer with support from the City of Argyle, and Jeff maintains the grounds and building. The congregation plans to continue services for the time being. Jeff expects to participate in a September 8 gathering at Mendenhall.

### **Arvilla**

Arvilla worships jointly each week with the Larimore UMC and they have developed a strong Christian fellowship. They are very involved in mission projects and in early August they assisted Donna Preston in putting together 184 backpacks for Bdecan. They supplied many of the school supplies that were included in the backpack. They are also collecting money and food for the Northland's Rescue Mission in Grand Forks for their project to provide food for needy

families. Their congregations may be small (they worship 18-30 people each week) but they are active! The Presbytery is grateful for the leadership of Pastor Raenelle Sorensen.

### **Baker (Baker Downer)**

After several years on pause during the pandemic, Baker Downer Church will once again host its community fish fry, this time in partnership with St. James in Barnesville. The event is set to return with the same spirit of hospitality and fellowship that made it a favorite tradition. They are expecting to welcome around 400 guests. Proceeds will be split between the churches with the Baker Downer funds going towards mission.

### **Bismarck (FPC)**

Hosted the Spring Youth Retreat which went very well and was a source of encouragement. Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons is on family leave for the next few months and Rev. David Reiter has graciously accepted a call back into service having formerly served the congregation before his retirement.

### **Bottineau**

Sarah is working with UMC mid-council representative, Kris Mutzenberger, to discern a path forward for the churches in this region.

### **Casselton (Westminster)**

Sarah met with the Westminster Session to explore its options for pastoral leadership following the upcoming retirement of Pastor Paul. Several options were presented.

### **Cavalier**

Zelda Hartje shared that Cavalier Presbyterian remains an active congregation, though membership has declined to about 14, with several non-members attending regularly. Worship is most often led by Elsie Magnus, a deacon in the Episcopal Church, and the congregation has been well served by Marge in recent years. She explained that Session meets quarterly, with additional matters handled informally during coffee time after worship or by text poll when needed. Zelda expressed the congregation's eagerness for a Moderator to be appointed but noted their limited resources for mileage or time commitments. She asked what arrangements Hallock, Walhalla, and Langdon have made for moderators and suggested that perhaps Cavalier could share one as well.

### **Colgate (FPC)**

Colgate Presbyterian Church has spent the past six months preparing for the retirement of their Assemblies of God pastor, Mark Flaten, at year's end. The Session is exploring leadership options, including sharing a pastor with Casselton Presbyterian and Pillsbury, and learning about Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP/CRE) training. Sarah has been involved in these discussions and guiding next steps. A major storm briefly delayed plans, shifting focus to disaster relief for Colgate and nearby communities. The Session remains open and flexible as they work toward a leadership plan for the future.

### **Cooperstown (FPC)**

The congregation continues to worship at the Assisted Living facility, where services regularly include 2-5 residents. With colder weather approaching, attendance may increase as more residents seek connection indoors. The congregation is also actively supporting the community through donations that help meet local needs.

**Crookston (FPC)**

Pastor Michael Osaki stepped down in mid-August to pursue a new career in social work and therapy. The Head of Staff at their partner congregation, Trinity Lutheran, also resigned. Both departures occurred during an active discernment process focused on sustainability, shared ministry, and mission alignment. The two congregations formed a Discernment Team to consider three paths: ending their partnership, maintaining the current collaborative model with a full-time pastor and associate, or shifting to a pastor and a Director of Connection and Care. They have reached out to Mendenhall to discuss the possibility of yoking. Mary Holtey has agreed to serve as moderator through December, and pulpit supply coverage is in place. Despite the transitions, discussions have remained positive and forward-looking. Mary conducted an exit interview with Michael earlier this summer.

**Dilworth**

Dan Billings made two visits to Dilworth Presbyterian Church this spring during their publicly posted worship times, but on both occasions, no one was present. He visited in July and was warmly welcomed. He explained his role as Presbytery rep and expressed a desire to rebuild trust and support. He plans to return regularly, either monthly or every other month. His most recent visit was in August.

**East Grand Forks (Mendenhall)**

As pastoral and preaching resources become scarcer in the region, churches using pulpit supply will find it harder to fill their pulpits. This is happening with Mendenhall. They've recently begun reimagining what they might do and are considering technological solutions as well as the possibility of sharing a pastor with another church, such as Crookston.

**Ellendale (Presbyterian United Methodist Church)**

Actively participating in the United Mission ministries of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains.

**Fargo (FPC)**

Fargo continues with their Shine On campaign. They've received \$230,000 in contributions successfully completing the match required to receive the National Grant for Sacred Spaces grant of \$175,000. They've received over \$2M in commitments. They are planning to roll out the external (community) campaign in the Fall/Winter of 2025. Pastor Mary plans to retire at the end of 2025 after 33 years of faithful steadfast service.

**Fordville**

See Park River Federated.

**Forest River (Community Presbyterian)**

See Midway Parish

**Gilby (Gilby Presbyterian)**

See Midway Parish

**Grand Forks (FPC)**

The church is celebrating the completion of their \$100,000 roof replacement project. Funds have been raised for the entire \$200,000 project. This is the first phase of a two-phase process for replacing the entirety of their roof.

**Grandin**

Grandin Presbyterian Church held summer worship at 9:30 a.m. and returned to its regular schedule on September 7 with Rally Day: Sunday School at 10 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. Nine

children are enrolled in Sunday School. Presbyterian Women will begin their monthly Bible study this month, meeting on Saturday mornings from September through June. Over the summer, the church replaced its aging roof shingles and repaired \$4,500 in flashing damage caused by a June storm. Since January 2025, the congregation has also mourned the loss of three members, with funerals held at the church.

### **Hallock (FPC)**

Pastor Marge retired in August. Mary Holtey is meeting with the Hallock Session to discuss options. Despite its small size and remote location near the Canadian border, Hallock has a relatively strong budget, which could position them well to take advantage of potential incentives through the Board of Pensions. Mary conducted an exit interview with Marge. Marge will be moving to Tennessee and has completed a transfer to the Presbytery there. Sarah Bigwood visited on Marge's last Sunday service as a representative of Presbytery. Deanna Reikow led the service on September 7th. Lay preacher Tim Denney, who lives near the Hallock church, will begin preaching there regularly. Tim has preached twice a month at Mendenhall for some time. The church is exploring a full-time yoked position with the Skjeberg Lutheran Church.

### **Hamilton (FPC)**

Hamilton Presbyterian Church officially voted to close on February 4, 2025, with its final worship service held on February 23 and the official closing date of March 1. The building was listed for sale, and congregational records were prepared for transfer to Rusty Bender to take to Pennsylvania. By June, the property was under contract with a July 1 closing. The sale was finalized in July for \$8,000, leaving about \$6,000 after attorney fees. As of August, the church's remaining checking account and any insurance rebates could be used at their discretion. The church will turn over all records at the Fall Presbytery meeting. A huge thanks to Sherri Stern for all of her attention to the negotiation and sale of this property.

### **Hunter (FPC)**

The church in Hunter sustained over \$20,000 in storm damage earlier this year. Insurance is expected to cover most of the costs, though the congregation will be responsible for a deductible. Worship services were paused during the summer months, as many members spend time at lake cabins, and resumed on September 7 at 9 a.m.

### **Jamestown (United)**

Bob Boyar recently participated in the Interfaith Dialogue on Freedom (May 17) and presented a talk at the Stutsman County Museum on the history of the church, which he also shared at Rotary on September 16. He noted that Rev. James Baldwin, who helped start the Jamestown church, also assisted in founding several other congregations in the presbytery. The congregation begins its Sunday School program in early September and is in the process of replacing Ruth Bossingham, who retired after 46 years of teaching preschool. Bob will also lead an adult education series on God's perspective on poverty beginning September 7. The church received storm damage estimates of \$6,000–\$7,500 for repairing doors.

### **Langdon**

The Langdon congregation is graciously hosting our Fall Presbytery meeting. Rev. Sue Kana-Mackey reports that Langdon Presbyterian Church, with more than 50 members, continues to broadcast and livestream its Sunday worship services via radio. The church has an active Presbyterian Women's group that meets regularly for fellowship and Bible study and hosts a well-attended salad luncheon with entertainment each June. Several members participate in a

knitting and prayer shawl ministry. This year, the congregation honored eight members who are over 90 years old. One youth was confirmed, another is currently in confirmation class, and a baptism is planned for later this fall.

### **Lisbon (FPC)**

The Lisbon church, which has ties to Enderlin AF Lutheran Church located 19 miles away, has resumed its regular rhythm of worship. The congregation follows a pattern of preaching through entire books of the Bible, currently focusing on Genesis, John, and the Psalms, with occasional messages from other books for variety. From May through September, worship has been held on Sunday mornings at 11:30 a.m. Beginning in October and running through April, the service time will shift to 12:30 p.m. to accommodate confirmation at Hope AFLC in Enderlin.

Attendance typically ranges between 6–12 worshipers each week. Though small in number, the congregation is described as joyful in both worship and fellowship. The church remains committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus to members, visitors, and the broader community.

### **Midway Parish**

Deanna is assisting the Midway Parish in finding pastoral leadership. They've elected a PNC. They are considering someone who will be  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. They recently elected members for the pastoral search process. Forest River church members are very pleased with the available pulpit supply they are utilizing during the pastoral vacancy.

### **Moorhead (FPC)**

Moorhead Presbyterian Church is making steady, encouraging progress in revitalizing its ministry and leadership. Under the guidance of Sarah Bigwood, the Session has been restoring committees, strengthening communications through a new website and social media, and coordinating pulpit supply. The reestablished Worship Committee is now actively overseeing bulletins, worship leadership, children's sermons, and music. From May through July, Jamie Norstog provided long-term pulpit supply, creating a warm and welcoming worship experiences on Sunday mornings. In June, the Session extended Jamie's call through the end of the year, which he gladly accepted. In August, the Session began planning for the future, discussing a two-year plan that includes establishing a quarter-time pastoral position in January 2026 and expanding it to half-time by year's end. The congregation has expressed renewed hope and energy as they look toward this next chapter.

### **Park River (Federated Church)**

Carmen and other leaders at the Federated Church of Park River are working to revitalize their congregation, focusing on attracting younger families. Building upgrades, including a new coffee nook, aim to create a welcoming, community-centered space. An estate gift now provides ongoing income, and they are interested in the Presbytery's grant program to support further improvements. The church has expressed a sincere desire for close relationship with the Presbytery. The remodel is 99% complete, with only minor details remaining. Thanks for continued prayers.

### **Portal (FPC)**

We have confirmed that First Presbyterian Church in Portal closed its doors in 2022. Contacts have been identified, and we are reaching out to gather information about the condition of the building and property. The Presbytery will work with those connected to the congregation to determine the most faithful and caring resolution for the property and community.

### **Rhame (Lyle Presbyterian)**

Lyle Presbyterian Church in Rhame, ND has completed exterior repairs on the siding, roof, and foundation and is now renovating the fellowship hall, an addition from 1926. The project has involved removing unsafe insulation, rewiring, and addressing a dangerously unstable chimney. Built with recycled, hand-cut wood, the addition will be opened into one large room with a kitchen and dining space to serve as a community gathering place. Accessibility has been improved with new wheelchair ramps, though the building still lacks running water. Future plans include repairing plaster and repainting the original 1914 sanctuary, with a long-term goal of adding restrooms (or repairing outhouses if not feasible). Pastor Terry Bagley's construction experience has been invaluable. Jason is also compiling a history of the church using archives and local sources, supplementing gaps with photos and contributions from others. He warmly invites visitors to see the progress.

### **Rolla & St. John**

Rolla and St. John Presbyterian Churches kicked off the ACT youth program with 36 teens at game night, a joyful start to the season. Excitement is building for the October 15 Sleepout, when youth will spend the night in boxes to raise awareness of homelessness, supported by the congregation through box donations and volunteer chaperones. Dave Schnackenberg is serving as pastoral leader at Rolla & St. John.



### **Walhalla**

Walhalla gathers once or twice a month with 9–12 committed participants. This small, faithful group continues to meet regularly, though they are discerning what the future might look like for their congregation.

### **Watford City (FPC)**

Deanna Reikow checked in with Watford City by phone. A UCC pastor is currently filling the pulpit, but there are no clear long-term plans in place.

### **West Fargo (Community)**

The Presbytery rescinded the call to Jason at West Fargo Community Presbyterian Church following the discovery of information that had not been disclosed during the call process. While the Pastor Nominating Committee had conducted a thorough and faithful discernment process, new concerns came to light that made it clear the call could not proceed. This was a painful and unexpected development for the congregation, the candidate, and the Presbytery. West Fargo decided not to accept a Designated Pastor through the end of the year and instead elected a new PNC in August.

### **Westhope (FPC)**

Randy Kimpland continues to serve in the pulpit. Average Sunday attendance is about 15, with no children currently participating. Attendance continues to fluctuate depending on seasonal work and activities such as sports, planting, harvest, and vacations. While the church has no active programs or outreach at this time, they have contributed to flood relief efforts and sponsored local youth to attend Bible camp. The building has sustained storm damage in recent

years, and it has been difficult to find contractors willing to travel and work on a church property; roof repairs are still pending. Members remain committed to prayer for their church, community, nation, and world.

### **Others**

There are a few churches we haven't heard from in a while. If you have connections or information regarding any of the following, please contact any member of the Congregational Vitality Pod. Angus, Buffalo, Calvin, Devils Lake, Edgeley, Fairview, Grafton, Hannah, LaMoure, Minto, Oakes, Pillsbury, Red Lake Falls, Rugby, Tower City, Towner, and Webster.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Sarah M. Bigwood". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Respectfully Submitted," text.

Rev. Sarah Bigwood

POD Members: Rusty Bender, Sarah Bigwood (chair), Dan Billings, Cathie Bishop, Bob Boyar, and Deanna Reikow. Advisors: Ellen Misialek (bookkeeper) & Sherri Stern (treasurer).

## **Presbytery of Northern Plains Family Leave Policy**

(Approved 06-19-2025)

### **I. Theological Grounding**

The celebration, nurture, and encouragement of the family takes place in many ways and on many levels in the life of a church. Through Jesus' earthly life, teaching and love, we come to see God in our own lives, in the everyday circumstances of human interaction, relationship, challenge, heartbreak, conflict and joy. Family leave, at the time of birth, adoption, sickness or death gives the opportunity for congregations to extend care for the pastor and pastor's family by offering appropriate time for them to step away from their professional occupation to minister to the needs of loved ones without loss of income or security.

### **II. Individuals Covered by this Policy**

This policy applies to the following members of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains: Teaching Elders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament) serving in installed and temporary pastoral relationships, Validated Ministers serving in PCUSA congregational settings, and Commissioned Ruling Elders (Commissioned Lay Pastors) who are enrolled in the PC(USA) Board of Pensions plan and serving churches in the Presbytery. Those covered will be identified throughout this policy as "pastor".

### **III. Policy**

The terms of call for each pastor serving in a congregation shall include provision for a minimum of 12 weeks paid family medical leave and participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Justification for paid family medical leave includes the following situations:

- birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child
- serious health condition that prevents the employee from performing their job duties
- need to care for spouse, child, or parent with serious health condition
- qualifying events arising from the deployment or separation due to military orders of the employee or their spouse

The twelve weeks need not be taken consecutively. Pastors may not request more than one paid family medical leave within a twelve-month span and three within a five year period of time. The calendar year begins on the first day of leave. Unpaid or partially paid time may be negotiated if more time is needed. Congregations and sessions are encouraged to deal with their pastors with the greatest compassion befitting followers of Christ.

A. Notification to Session: When a pastor or a pastor's spouse becomes pregnant, plans to adopt or foster a child they shall inform the session of the request for family leave at least 60 days prior to the start of the leave, recognizing that the more time the session has to prepare for the pastor's absence, the better the session will be able to ensure provision for necessary pastoral services during the leave. When a pastor's family member needs care, the pastor will inform the session and request family leave as early as is reasonable. When tragic event or bereavement leave is needed, the pastor will notify session as soon as reasonable.

B. Birth/ Adoption/ Foster Placement: In the event of the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child, the pastor shall be granted up to twelve (12) weeks of paid Family Leave. During this leave, the

pastor will receive full effective salary and full pension and benefits coverage through the Board of Pensions.

C. Serious Health Condition: The pastor of a church may request family medical leave when they experience an abrupt change in health or mental health, receive a new diagnosis, or if they need time to acquire a diagnosis or undergo treatment. This gives pastors the time necessary to discern how their health might affect their current call, learn what adaptations may be needed to continue, or arrange for alternative care.

D. Family Member Care: The pastor of a church may require leave to help transition a family member into appropriate care or provide intensive caregiving for another close family member. Often these transitions in caregiving require significant time and energy from family members. Examples of direct family members may include, but are not limited to, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, in-laws, or a spouse.

E. Military Spouse: The pastor of a church may require leave to deal with a spouse's military deployment to deal with issues arising from the military member's deployment including issues related to short-notice deployment, attending military events, briefings, and ceremonies, providing or arranging childcare or schooling for a child, or providing or arranging care for a military member's parent incapable of self-care.

F. Loss or Tragic Event: The human experience involves loss, personal and communal tragedy. We recognize that pastors are not immune to this. Tragic events cannot always be comprehensively defined. Examples of a "tragic event" may include, but are not limited to, natural disasters, community violence, or sexual assault. To protect the privacy of the pastor, it may be necessary for the pastor to consult with the Chair of the Congregational Vitality Pod to request for leave on their behalf. Such matters shall be handled with prayer and care. In the event of the death of a direct family member (may include, but are not limited to, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, in-laws, or a spouse).

G. Session Responsibilities during the Pastor's Leave: The Session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during the pastor's leave. Session should be ready to arrange and pay for pulpit supply, a Session moderator, coverage for hospital and emergency visitation and whatever teaching and programming for which the pastor was responsible. Should this become a hardship for congregation, they may apply for assistance from the Congregational Vitality Pod as per section H.

H. Assistance for Churches: The Congregational Vitality Pod will seek to aid churches unable to meet the financial obligations outlined above in the event their pastor requires leave. This assistance is to assure that the pastor does not feel pressured to return to work prematurely and the church is able to secure sufficient pastoral care during the pastor's absence. Financial assistance will not be given during a pastor's use of accrued vacation. When such cases arise, individual sessions will apply to the Congregational Vitality Pod. Each case will be judged on its own merits.

I. Other Church Staff: The Presbytery invites churches to extend this or a similar policy to all church staff.

## **Proposal for Congregational Vitality Grant Program (Draft)**

### Introduction

The Congregational Vitality Grant Program provides financial support to churches within our Presbytery for projects that strengthen and enhance ministry. By investing in congregations that are actively engaged in mission and growth, the Presbytery seeks to nurture vibrant communities of faith and extend the witness of the church.

### Program Details

- **Grant Amount:** Churches may request up to \$50,000, provided the amount does not exceed 150% of the appraised value of the church property.
- **Funding Cycle:** Up to \$50,000 is available annually from Presbytery endowment funds.
- **Accountability:** Funds are released only after a congregation has provided project-ready documentation (such as bids, contracts, or detailed plans) along with a clearly defined vision for how the project will strengthen their ministry.

### Objectives

- **Support Vital Congregations:** Invest in congregations that are actively engaged in ministry and demonstrating energy for growth in mission, outreach, and participation.
- **Encourage Responsible Stewardship:** Ensure funds are used effectively by requiring congregations to present a clear vision and supporting documentation before receiving funds.
- **Strengthen the Witness of the Church:** Provide resources that enable churches to carry out projects that increase their impact in the community.

### Eligibility Criteria

- **Churches within the Presbytery:** Only congregations within our Presbytery are eligible.
- **Vitality Requirement:** Churches must demonstrate vitality through evidence of ministry engagement and a pattern of growth in mission, outreach, or membership.
- **Project Readiness:** Applications must include documentation of bids or equivalent materials showing the project is ready to begin.
- **Financial Standing:** Churches must be current on per capita payments or actively engaged in a repayment plan approved by the Presbytery Leadership POD.

### Application Process

- **Submission:** Churches submit a formal application (see attached form).
- **Review:** The Congregational Vitality Pod reviews applications and makes recommendations to the Presbytery Leadership POD. Grants are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until the annual allocation is spent.

- Approval and Disbursement: Grants are approved with the condition that funds will not be released until all project-ready documentation has been received and approved.

### Funding

The Congregational Vitality Pod may allocate up to \$50,000 annually from the Presbytery Endowment to support this program.

### Conclusion

The Congregational Vitality Grant Program represents our commitment to nurturing strong, mission-driven churches. By providing accessible funding with clear accountability, the Presbytery empowers congregations to take bold steps that grow their ministries and extend the love of Christ in their communities.

## **Executive Presbyter (DRAFT Proposal)**

### **Presbytery of the Northern Plains**

The **Presbytery of the Northern Plains** seeks a **relational and pastoral leader** to serve as Executive Presbyter. This role is centered on connection, care, and encouragement, helping to strengthen the life of our churches and pastors while fostering unity across the presbytery.

#### **Primary Responsibilities:**

- **Church & Pastor Support** – Visit congregations, check in with pastors, and serve as a pastoral presence throughout the presbytery.
- **Worship Leadership** – Help develop and lead presbytery worship services, ensuring meaningful gatherings for the whole body.
- **Presbytery Engagement** – Encourage participation in presbytery meetings and gatherings, making them accessible and welcoming.
- **Presbytery Cohesion** – Help hold the presbytery together through relationship-building, pastoral care, and encouragement.
- **Congregational Vitality Pod Liaison** – Work alongside CVP to support pastors and congregations in times of transition, challenge, and celebration.
- **Congregational Milestones** – Walk with churches through significant moments—celebrating milestones, supporting revitalization, and providing guidance in closure when needed.
- **Denominational Awareness** – Stay up-to-date on the **Board of Pensions** and other PC(USA) developments, sharing relevant information with pastors and sessions as needed.

#### **Ideal Candidate:**

- A **caring, friendly pastor** with a heart for people and deep love for the church.
- Experience in handling **administrative tasks** including managing staff and budgets, responding timely to requests from churches, being informed by the Book of Order, and organizing communication amongst pods, committees, and congregations.
- Skilled in **worship leadership, preaching, and prayer**, offering spiritual encouragement across the presbytery.
- Comfortable **adapting to changing environments**, meeting churches where they are.
- Naturally gifted in **building relationships** and fostering a sense of community among pastors and congregations.
- Willing to **travel weekly** to be present in the life of the presbytery.

#### **Support Structure:**

The Executive Presbyter will work alongside the **Congregational Vitality Pod (CVP) chair and Leadership POD** to ensure presbytery functions are carried out effectively. This role is designed for someone who thrives as a pastoral presence and can provide administrative oversight.

#### **To Apply:**

Interested candidates should contact \_\_\_\_\_.

## MINISTER REPORT

### Installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament - PC(USA)

Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons - Bismarck  
Rev. Trudy Dumont - Devils Lake, Webster, Peace Lutheran  
Rev. Sarah Bigwood - Fargo  
Rev. Mary Holtey\* - Fargo  
Rev Robin Dill - Grafton, Minto  
Rev. Dr. Spencer Homan - Grand Forks  
Rev. Robert Boyar - Jamestown  
Rev. Deanna Reikow - Mandan

### Installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament - PC(USA) serving other denominations

Rev. Ruth Sanders - Wesley UMC, Crookston  
Rev. Elaine Sweet - Zion Lutheran, Minot

### Installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament – from other denominations serving PNP churches

Rev. Beth Kelsey\* (UMC) - Bottineau  
Rev. J. Sue Kana-Mackey (UMC) - Langdon

### Active CLPs

Pastor James Crandall, (CLP, UMC) - Angus  
Pastor Paul Campbell\* (CLP) - Casselton  
Pastor Mark Flaten\* (CLP, AoG) - Colgate  
Pastor Bill Weispfenning (CLP) - Edgely, LaMoure  
Pastor Casey Chapman (CLP) - Hunter, Grandin  
Pastor Dave Schnackenberg (CLP) - Rolla St. John  
Pastor Merton (Randy) Kimpland (CLP, UMC) – Westhope  
Chaplain Nancy Legerski (CLP) – Bismarck Area

### Other Pastors in our Jurisdiction

Rev. Dan Billings  
Rev. David Suk  
Rev. Donna Monteith  
Rev. Martha McDowell  
Rev. Michael Ozaki\*  
Rev. Nancy Emerson

### Long-Term Pulpit Supply

Dwight Netzer - Argyle  
Raenelle Sorensen (UMC) - Arvilla  
Rick Larsen - Dilworth  
Tom Olson - Enderlin  
Jesse Irvine - Fordville, Park River  
Jamie Norstog (CLP) - Moorhead  
Dave Montecuolo - Pillsbury  
Terry Bagley - Rhame

### Approved transfers

Rev. Marge Landwehr\* to East Tennessee Presbytery  
Rev. Robert Drake to MN Valleys Presbytery

\*retiring or leaving ministry in 2025

If you notice a name missing from this list or someone identified incorrectly, please contact Sarah Bigwood at [sbigwood@firstpresfargo.org](mailto:sbigwood@firstpresfargo.org)