

Congregational Vitality Pod
Presbytery of the Northern Plains • Fall 2026 Meeting Report
October 10, 2026

Action Items

- **Approve transfer of The Rev. Cathie Bishop from the Presbytery of the Northern Plains to the Maumee Valley Presbytery, effective September 15, 2026.**
- Casselton: **Pending examination, approve the commissioning of Carrie Lauber to serve Westminster Presbyterian Church in Casselton, ND.** CVP approved the terms of call for Carrie Lauber, CLP in August. By September, Carrie had accepted the position. We received signed terms in September.
- Bismarck: **Approve the dissolution of relationship between First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck and the Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons effective October 26, 2026.** On October 4, the congregation voted to dissolve the relationship.
- Mandan: **Approve the dissolution of relationship between First Presbyterian Church of Mandan and the Rev. Deanna Reikow effective September 30, 2026.** On Sunday, September 13, the congregation voted to dissolve the relationship.
- Devils Lake: **Approve the dissolution of relationship between Westminster Presbyterian Church of Devils Lake and the Rev. Trudy Dumont effective November 30, 2026.** On October 4, the congregation voted to dissolve the relationship.
- Inkster & Hamilton: **Amend the minutes of its October 11, 2025 meeting to describe the action concerning Inkster and Hamilton churches replacing the incorrect language of “dismiss” with “close”.** Inkster and Hamilton were closed; they were not transferred to another denomination. This action corrects the wording of the previously recorded decision.
- Portal: **Approve the removal of all buildings managed by First Presbyterian Church of Portal, North Dakota, and restoration of the property to open land in preparation for closing the church.** Portal’s remaining active member has requested Presbytery’s guidance on formally closing the church and handling its remaining funds and records. Following CVP’s suggestion to remove the building and return the property to open land, demolition discussions are moving forward, with a meeting scheduled with the local fire department on October 6. A plan to preserve and transfer the church’s historical and administrative records is in place.

Grants

- CPC West Fargo pastoral salary support: \$30,000 over three years. CVP approved support from the New Church Development Fund, contingent on an effective salary of at least \$80,000, and forwarded it to Leadership Pod for final approval. September's reported CLC salary was \$80,000. The Leadership Pod approved the allocation.
- Sound and livestream upgrades: \$5,000. CVP approved the request from the new Congregational Vitality Grant and forwarded it to Leadership Pod for final approval.
- Other grants approved by CVP. Mandan: \$2,000 for a sound system, with the email vote ratified in May. Glencoe-Sloan: \$2,000 for a hymn player, approved by Leadership Pod. CPC West Fargo: \$2,000 from the Small Church Grant Fund for HVAC work.
- CVP developed a universal grant application cover sheet describing available funds and clarifying that the Pod may select the most appropriate funding source. Congregational Vitality Grant applications will be reviewed at the March, June, September, and December meetings. Jenn will acknowledge each application and communicate when it will be considered.
- In reviewing Park River's request, CVP clarified that professional estimates are not mandatory when submitted cost information is sufficiently detailed and verifiable.
- CVP did not recommend the Clearwater clergy renewal event request for a Congregational Vitality Grant in May. The request was referred to Leadership Pod for awareness and possible consideration.

Pastoral leadership and support

- Rev. Janis Sue Kana-Mackey, pastor of Langdon Presbyterian Church, died May 20, 2026. Her funeral was held at the church on May 27.
- On September 15, 2026 Rev. Cathie Bishop was welcomed into the Maumee Valley Presbytery.
- CVP expressed interest in developing a congregational blessing service for commissioned pastors. The Pod also recorded a motion to request terms of call for every commissioned and installed pastor, and Sarah began compiling special congregational authorizations, including permission to serve communion.
- Over the summer, Sarah met with Jesse Irvine from Park River and Ruth Sander from Crookston to catch up on their ministries.
- Elaine Bidgood Sweet officially joined the CVP in September. Welcome, Elaine!

Insurance information

- Sherri shared information from a PCUSA Foundation Mid-Council meeting about property and liability insurance challenges. Her written report was sent to Jenn for the Presbytery website and newsletter.

Congregational Updates

- Argyle: A follow-up appended to the September minutes reports weekly worship, Dwight Netzer as regular pulpit supply, and average attendance of 12.
- Bismarck, First Presbyterian: CVP monitored pulpit supply and pastoral care during Leanne Simmons's medical leave. Mary Holtey is providing supply through late October, with additional lay leadership anticipated for July. By November, Leanne will move to long-term disability. A congregational vote on dissolution of the call occurred on Oct 4.
- Devils Lake: Westminster and Webster Chapel. The previous three-church agreement has ended. Trudy was serving 10 hours per week between Westminster and Webster Chapel. Westminster planned a congregational meeting to consider increasing her terms of call to 60%. A congregational vote on dissolution of the call occurred on Oct 4. Westminster has made use of the free church website opportunity to strengthen its online presence, westminster.my-church.org.
- Edgeley: Pastor Bill Weispfenning reported that the congregation worships every other week.
- Fargo - Baker Downer: Rev. Dan Billings continues to serve as a Parish Associate. In the Spring, FPC also welcomed the Rev. Nancy Emerson as a parish associate. In September, Session approved the partnership with the 1001 New Worshipping Community led by Thomas Soadwa, serving African international and immigrant families and beginning to share the building in October. The Sacred Places project and \$175,000 matching grant are complete and the final reports submitted. Average Sunday attendance at Baker Downer has increased since adding a Bluegrass service once a month. The church will begin livestreaming later this fall.
- Forest River and Gilby: CVP helped churches get their information ready on the CLC. They are actively searching for their next pastor.
- Glencoe-Sloan: The congregation is part of the Capitol cluster. The congregation continued to continue worship during the summer using lay leaders from Bismarck.
- Grand Forks: First Presbyterian Church in Grand Forks offered weekly contemporary and traditional worship, livestreaming both services to welcome online participation. Its September fall kickoff featured a Sunday school open house and activities for children, alongside fellowship through the After Eve women's group and Summer Movie Series. The congregation served dinner at Northlands Rescue Mission and collected school supplies and snacks for two local schools.

- Grandin: Grandin has made use of the free church website opportunity to strengthen its online presence. Its website is available at grandin.my-church.org.
- Hallock: Hallock and Skjeberg Lutheran Church are developing a shared call for a full-time pastor. Both completed mission studies. Hallock completed its MDP, while Skjeberg completed the ELCA equivalent. Sarah is coordinating with Genelle Netland of the Lutheran synod on a clear shared-call package. Each denomination will conduct its search through its own system while sharing information about the partner congregation. By September, Hallock was ready to receive matches, with an \$80,000 effective salary.
- Jamestown: United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown continues serving its neighbors through a little free pantry and its Giving Tree collection supporting the Community Action Backpack Program. The congregation's spring Deacons' Offering raised \$1,298 to support ministries for church members and the wider community. Fall faith formation includes confirmation classes, youth Bible study, and Sunday School, with the Right Now Kids app helping parents support their children's learning at home.
- Moorhead: First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead recently held its sixth annual Moorhead Sausage Fest, bringing people together for food, live music, games, and activities for all ages. Local businesses and musicians participated, and families were encouraged to bring nonperishable food donations in exchange for children's game tokens.
- Rhame: Lyle Presbyterian Church (Mound Church), near Rhame, continues renovating its fellowship hall into a welcoming community space. The space is already available for use and welcomed guests for the Memorial Day program, while remaining work includes finishing the walls, kitchen cabinets, flooring, and trim. Recent improvements also include repairs to sanctuary lighting and a replacement LED cross funded by local benefactors.
- West Fargo: The congregation continues its pastoral search. This fall, Community Presbyterian Church collected 1,034 diapers and 3,612 wipes for Churches United, arriving when the organization had run out. The congregation also donated winter clothing and funds for children on the Spirit Lake Reservation and raised over \$800 for Churches United through its West Fest fundraiser. The church completed a sanctuary heating and cooling upgrade, supported by \$4,900 in member donations and a \$2,000 presbytery grant.

MINISTER REPORT

Installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament - PC(USA)

Rev. Sarah Bigwood - Fargo
Rev. Robert Boyar - Jamestown
Rev. Robin Dill - Grafton, Minto
Rev. Dr. Spencer Homan - Grand Forks

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

Rev. Ruth Sanders - Wesley UMC, Crookston
Rev. Elaine Sweet - Zion Lutheran, Minot
Rev. Mindy Meier - First Congregational, New Rockford & Westminster
Camp Ajawah, Camp Director
Rev. Johnny Rhoad - Canadian Churches (Knox United Church, Alsask
United, Cereal United, Oyen United)

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

Active CLPs

Pastor James Crandall, (CLP, UMC) - Angus
Pastor Carrie Lauber (CLP) - Casselton*
Pastor Bill Weispfenning (CLP) - Edgely, LaMoure
Pastor Casey Chapman (CLP) - Hunter, Grandin
Pastor Dave Schnackenberg (CLP, ??) - Rolla St. John
Pastor Jamie Norstog (CLP) - Moorhead*
Pastor Merton (Randy) Kimpland (CLP, UMC) – Westhope
Chaplain Nancy Legerski (CLP) – Bismarck Area
*Need to be commissioned at future Presbytery meeting

Other CLPs

Corday Goddard (approved) - Colgate
Donna Preston (candidate)
Scott Halstead (candidate)

*If you notice a name missing from this list or someone identified incorrectly, please contact Sarah Bigwood at
sbigwood@firstpresfargo.org.*

Other Pastors in our Jurisdiction

Rev. Cheri Danielson (Duluth)
Rev. Cheryl McCullough
Rev. Deb Burger-Peery
Rev. Dan Billings
Rev. Darrel Cory
Rev. David Suk
Rev. Donna Monteith
Rev. Gary Watts (WA)
Rev. Gretchen Daneke Graf
Rev. Joan Swanson
Rev. Marli Danielson (Duluth)
Rev. Martha McDowell
Rev. Mary Holtey
Rev. Michael Ozaki
Rev. Nancy Emerson
Rev. Richard Kargard
Ron, Don, and Henry?

Long-Term Pulpit Supply

Dwight Netzer - Argyle
Raenelle Sorensen (UMC) - Arvilla
Rick Larsen - Dilworth
Tom Olson - Enderlin
Jesse Irvine - Fordville, Park River
Dave Montecuolo - Pillsbury
Terry Bagley - Rhame
Elsie Magnus - Langdon Area, Episcopal Deacon

Departures

Rev. J. Sue Kana-Mackey died on May 20, 2026
Rev. Cathie Bishop transfer to Maumee Valley Presbytery Sept. 15, 2026
**Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons - Bismarck
**Rev. Trudy Dumont - Devils Lake, Webster
**Rev. Deanna Reikow - Mandan
**Leaving positions in 2026

PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS SPECIAL APPROVALS REPORT

CAVALIER

Mary Latozke – Moderator Session and congregational meetings
Mike Carpenter – Administer sacrament of communion
Ruth Carpenter – Administer sacrament of communion
Margaret Page – Administer sacrament of communion
Rita Vaughn – Administer home bound communion

COOPERSTOWN

Vickie Goplen – Moderator Session and congregational meetings

CROOKSTON

Gary Hoerner – Moderator Session and congregational meetings

FARGO

Rusty Bender – Administer sacrament of communion, when TE unavailable

HALLOCK

Julie Lindegard – Moderator Session and congregational meetings
Betty Younggren – Administer sacrament of communion

LANGDON

Linda Hope – Administer sacrament of communion, Moderator Session and congregational meetings
Lynn McGauvran – Moderator Session and congregational meetings

MOORHEAD

Kathy McKaig – Administer home bound communion
Erik Swee – Administer home bound communion
John Ortezt – Administer home bound communion
Jim Gale – Administer home bound communion
Kim Kelsh – Administer home bound communion
Marilynn Woods – Administer home bound communion
Peggy Johnson – Administer home bound communion
Cathie Lutchen – Administer home bound communion

WEST FARGO

Becky DeJong – Moderator Session and congregational meetings
Andrew Thostensen – Administer sacrament of communion, when TE unavailable