

Care for Congregations Report

April 2024 Presbytery Meeting

Care for Congregations Update

- Jenn Kolodka and Sarah Bigwood are working hard to improve the information we have for each church. We are missing a lot of information regarding moderators. Sarah has clustered our congregations for the purpose of finding folks in each cluster to serve on the Care for Congregations POD.
- In October 2023, Tom Brusegaard, Spencer Holman and Sarah Bigwood crafted an Expedited Gracious Separation Process.
- We have recruited three additional members to sit on the committee. Rusty Bender (Capitol cluster), Deanna Reikow (Congregational Care Pastor), Cathie Bishop (Fargo-Moorhead cluster). We are looking for additional members, especially from the Northeast, North Central, and Central. The Care for Congregations POD goal for 2024 is to build up relationships with Portal, Pillsbury, Dilworth, Calvin, Hannah, Park River, and Watford City.
- In April 2024, Sarah Bigwood and Deanna Reikow will travel to Denver to attend a conference regarding changes being made to pastor benefits through the Board of Pensions. The conference is called: A Season of Rebuilding - A New Benefits Plan for a Changing Church.
- Sarah Bigwood has forged relationships with the UCC and ELCA mid-council reps for our region.

Baker-Downer

In December 2023, Lorelee Benz retired as their pastor after 19 years of faithful service. They held a celebration for Lorelee and representatives from the Presbytery attended. Moving forward, the church considered several options, contract with another CLP, partner with the UCC Church in Barnesville or pursue a consolidation with FPC Fargo. They are currently pursuing the latter and are now presenting the option to their congregation through informational meetings in the month of April. Sarah Bigwood can no longer represent the Presbytery of the Northern Plains without a conflict of interest. Rev. Dr. Spencer Homan has agreed to step in to help with the process as the PNP representative. Elder Carrie Lauber (Leopold, West Fargo) has been preaching at Baker Downer since January. Lay preachers from Fargo will be preaching there this spring.

Bottineau

They love their pastor. Everything seems to be going well they continue to do some really neat fellowship and ministry activities. They have sponsored a family from Ukraine.

Cavalier

The congregation has decided to keep going for now but is considering their options to close either their building or dissolve their congregation.

Colgate

Colgate continues to be very active in the local community, giving support to many local charities. They found younger people to fill the roles of deacon, elder and treasurer. They received a grant to help them do VBS this summer. Their VBS attracts many from surrounding communities, as well as grandkids of the congregation from many states and communities. They are financially able to support local charities who can accomplish what they are unable to do with their small numbers and increasing age.

Cooperstown

Sarah preached in Cooperstown on January 28. The assisted living place where they worship was buzzing with the activity of the many children who came to see the baptism. After worship Sarah moderated their annual meeting. They are joyful and seemed relieved to be out from under the weight of affording a church building. They will now be able to focus on mission.

Devils Lake

For the past few years they made the decision to pay for a pastor although it depleted their reserves. There are signs of growth, but they are now to the point where they are unable to pay full-time for Pastor Trudy. Rev. Trudy Dumont is aware of the situation and has been leading them in conversations. Care for Pastors POD has offered support to Pastor Trudy. With the blessing of Presbytery, Pastor Trudy has pursued an opportunity to work with the NALC (Lutheran) church in the area and is in the final stages of negotiation.

Forest River

Their furnace is being replaced by the daycare center they helped found a few years ago. The daycare has funds from gaming and offered to pay for the new backup furnace. God is good.

Glencoe

Stephan Shroeder is moderator of the Glencoe session. Steve is trained and approved to celebrate communion at the Mandan church and the Glencoe church. Steve has also been given permission to install elders every year. Confirmation is handled by Rev. Deanna Reikow, along with ordination and a rare baptism. They've contracted with Nancy Legerski, CLP to perform the tasks Steve is unauthorized to do when Deanna is unavailable.

Grand Forks

A building campaign is underway to replace new roof on a section of their building. Their fundraising campaign began with each member of Session pledging \$10,000.

Inkster

In January 2024, The Inkster Administrative Commission (AC) asked Presbytery for approval to raze their building and clean up the lot before they sell the church. Upon approval they contacted The Forest River Colony to take the building down in the spring. Most of the stuff has been taken out. The stained-glass windows are being removed. One is going to a family. One is going to Forest River. Pastor Jamie Norstog's next task is to call the foundation to get the funds transferred to the Midway Parish.

Jamestown

Deanna visited Jamestown to lead their elder training. A grant was approved to help pay for a new streaming camera.

Mandan

Mandan has an exciting spring coming up with an event in March featuring their Irish Stew and homemade breads, a Pancake Breakfast Palm Sunday when the children are singing, a movie night in April, and a new "Spring Fling Flea Market" for crafters, bakers and canners. They started a youth group last fall and our children in action (CIA) continues to meet on Wed. The confirmation class meets then as well. Two Students from the Glencoe Church are attending. Presbyterian Women have grown by leaps and bounds. Their mission focus continues to be Blessing Bags for those in crisis or homeless. Mandan's investments hit the million-dollar mark last month! Most building projects have been completed. Lay preachers from our congregation and Bismarck keep filling the pulpit in Glencoe.

Mendenhall

Mendenhall continues to be a small but mighty active church of service to the community. They average 35 people in Sunday worship, with a membership of 85, but are constantly busy in-service projects. In September they held a community wide meal & musical fundraiser for Sole Hope that raised over \$4,000. In January they held another meal & musical fundraiser event for the Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN and raised \$3,000. They are planning to launch and host a new community wide free supper for those in need in EGF once a quarter, the first meal will be served on April 18. They are partnering with the local EGF food shelf to spread the word. They are hoping to connect with other churches and businesses in EGF so that this can be a monthly free meal for the community.

Moorhead

A congregational meeting was held on October 15, 2023 for the purpose of granting their Session the authority to act on their behalf to sell the building. The vote to approve the motion carried by a strong majority. The paperwork to sell the building has been signed and

the building went on the market in January. The Session, with support from the congregation, continued to look for alternatives to selling the building and met with a contingent of Fargo to discuss the possibilities of a merger.

Oakes

They are interested in resources for playing sermons during worship. Any creative ideas to support this congregation are welcome. Can they livestream other churches at the same time?

Portal

This is the church connected with the United Church of Canada. It seems like a grouping of 3-4 churches that rotate services. It looks like they haven't had a full-time minister since June 30, 2022. There is no clear contact information other than a phone number for the office. It looks like all services are at 10:30am at St. Paul's United Church in Estevan, Saskatchewan. Anyone with information about this church is encouraged to contact Sarah Bigwood or Rusty Bender.

Red Lake

Timothy Denney has moved from the area. The primary preaching is done by Rev. Trey Everett.

Rhame

*“We’re pretty far away from other Presbyterian churches.
But the church I thought was dying has found new life,”
writes Jason Waskiewicz, church treasurer.*

Membership is in the process of changing. They lost two of their last three members, but added four and are expanding. Their pastor is Terry Bagley. They have services every Sunday at 9:00 AM, weather permitting. There is no youth leader, there is no phone. The church doesn't even have running water! They are working on rescuing the building and have done a lot of foundation work, put on a new roof, added a new heating system because of what the new roof did to ventilation. The next step is new siding. Future steps are to gut the dining room and kitchen and remove mouse-damaged insulation and drywall and rebuild it in a more usable form, repair and repaint the sanctuary. A wish-list item is to build a more modern bathroom instead of the current outhouses. They are considering using the bricks from the demolished chimneys as a fire pit or some other feature that could be used by the larger community. They have had a lot of generous donations that have funded this work.

Rolla-St. John

Deanna visited with the administrative person from St John. A member of the congregation, David, preaches. They have Bible study and Sunday School. Attendance has increased and some young people are coming to church. We have a very active young people's group who meet on Wednesday evenings. We have a confirmation class of 10 students. We have Sunday school in both churches. And now we are getting ready for VBS."

Tower City and Buffalo

Tower City and Buffalo continue as they have for many years. They have a regular rotation of pastors, so it's almost like having a pastor. Buffalo recognizes that they can't stay open forever, so they are chipping away at tasks that need to be done so that they aren't faced with everything when the time comes. The manse has been sold, and they are in the process of gradually clearing out broken items from the church, and fixing what needs to be repaired. Tower City is doing needed maintenance on the church building as workers are available. Both are financially able to support local charities who can accomplish what they are unable to do with their small numbers and increasing age.

Watford City

Rusty Bender has reached out to Dara Langerud. We are hoping to hear back soon. Anyone with information about this church is encouraged to contact Rusty Bender.

West Fargo

The Session has decided to move forward with the Designated Pastor option. They've established a PNC which began meeting in January, 2024. They've completed a context study and they are nearly finished writing their Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP). They hope to post an opening in April 2024.

Wilton

Wilton has successfully submitted the documents necessary to begin the Expedited Gracious Separation Process. The Leadership POD elected five people to serve within on the ICT, DT, and SNT. Letters for the canvassing scheme went out on Dec. 28 and the participation rate was 100%. A vote to leave the PC(USA) took place on Sunday, February 18th. Sarah Bigwood attended in-person to moderate and handle the technology. A roll call vote was taken to ensure everyone present had their vote properly recorded. The congregation voted to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA). The next step is a vote of Presbytery. Casey Chapman agreed to handle the change of title and letter of dismissal from the PC(USA).

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Sarah M Bigwood
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