

PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS
ONE HUNDRED and THIRTY-FOURTH STATED MEETING

March 21, 2026

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) held its stated meeting at the Unruh-Sheldon Building (Room #132) on the University of Jamestown campus, in Jamestown, ND.

Moderator Ruling Elder (RE) Rusty Bender called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM and opened with prayer.

CLP Candidates Carrie Lauber, Corday Goddard, Scott Halstead, and Donna Preston led the Presbytery in a worship service. Holy Communion was celebrated as part of the service, under the care of Rev. Dr. Spencer Homan. An offering was received for the benefit of the Youth Connection Team.

The roll was taken by means of registration forms by the attendees.

P – Present in person; Z – Present via Zoom; E – Excused; A – Absent; HR – Ministers Honorably Retired, excused if absent; LOB Ministers laboring outside the bounds of the Presbytery, excused if absent. (*Numbers preceding Ministers' names are ecclesiastical occupational designations.*)

Other abbreviations:

TE = Teaching Elder (Minister of the Word and Sacrament)

RE = Ruling Elder

CRE = Commissioned Ruling Elder (also known as Commissioned Lay Pastor, CLP)

Pastoral Leaders			
Designation	Minister	Ministry	Attendance
299	Billings, Dan	HR	P
101	Bigwood, Sarah	Fargo	P
299	Bishop, Catherine	HR	HR
101	Boyar, Robert	Jamestown	P
797	Burger-Peery, Deborah	Member at Large	E
107	Chapman, Casey	CLP, Grandin-Hunter	A
299	Cory, Darrel	HR	HR
299	Danielson, Cheri	HR	HR
299	Danielson, Marli	HR	HR
101	Dill, Robin	Grafton, Minto	P
101	Dumont, Trudy	Devils Lake	Z
797	Emerson, Nancy	Member at Large	E

107	Goddard, Corday	Pulpit Supply, Colgate	P
299	Graf, Gretchen	HR	HR
299	Graham, Ron	HR	HR
101	Holtey, Mary	Fargo	P
101	Homan, Spencer	Grand Forks	P
151	Kana-Mackey, Sue	Langdon	E
299	Kargard, Rick	HR	HR
107	Legerski, Nancy	CLP, Bismarck	A
299	Mansell, Henry	HR	HR
299	McCullough, Cheryl	HR	HR
299	McDowell, Martha	HR	HR
797	Meier, Mindy	Member at Large	A
299	Monteith, Donna	HR	P
107	Norstog, Jamie	Pulpit Supply, Moorhead	P
797	Ozaki, Michael	Member at Large	A
101	Reikow, Deanna	Mandan	P
797	Rhoad, Johnny	Member at Large	E
501	Sanders, Ruth	Crookston (UMC)	P
107	Schnackenberg, Dave	CLP, Rolla-St John	Z
101	Simmons, Leanne	Bismarck	E
107	Sorenson, Raenelle	CLP, Arvilla	Z
299	Suk, David	HR	HR
501	Sweet, Elaine	Minot (Zion Lutheran)	P
299	Swanson, Joan	HR	HR
299	Watts, Gary	HR	HR
299	Woodford, Don	HR	HR

Congregation	Ruling Elder Commissioners	In Person or Zoom
Angus, Angus-Tabor Presbyterian		
Arvilla, Arvilla Presbyterian	Brenda Beck	Z
Baker, Westminster Presbyterian		
Bismarck, First Presbyterian	Jim Skaret	P
Bismarck, Glencoe Sloan Memorial	Karen MacDonald Alice Nix	P Z
Bottineau, United Parish		
Buffalo, First Presbyterian		
Calvin, Glenila Presbyterian		
Casselton, Westminster Presb.	Lana Schultz	P
Cavalier, Cavalier Presbyterian	Zelda Hartje	P
Colgate, Colgate Presbyterian	Alfred Johnson Sharon Johnson	P P

Cooperstown, First Presbyterian	Vicki Goplen	P
Crookston, First Presbyterian		
Devils Lake, Westminster Presb.	Katie Nettell	P
Dilworth, Dilworth Presbyterian		
East Grand Forks, Mendenhall	Janet Sjol	P
Edgeley, First Presbyterian	Bill Weispfenning	P
Ellendale, Presbyterian		
Fairview, Community Presbyterian		
Fargo, First Presbyterian	Richard Laraway Kit O'Neill	P P
Fordville, Community Presbyterian		
Forest River, Midway Parish		
Gilby, Gilby Presbyterian		
Grafton, Federated Church		
Grand Forks, First Presbyterian	Evan Andrist Ben Shannon	P P
Grandin, Grandin Presbyterian	Donna Preston	P
Hallock, First Presbyterian	Betty Jo Younggren	Z
Hamilton, First Presbyterian		
Hannah, Hannah Presbyterian		
Hunter, First Presbyterian		
Inkster, Inkster Presbyterian		
Jamestown, United Presbyterian	Tiffany Dauer	P
LaMoure, First Presbyterian	Bill Weispfenning	P
Langdon, Presbyterian Church		
Lisbon, First Presbyterian	Dean Kirsch Ross Cole	P P
Mandan, First Presbyterian	Suzy Pfliiger	P
Minto, Knox Presbyterian	Ellen Misialek	Z
Moorhead, First Presbyterian	George O'Neill	P
Oakes, First Presbyterian		
Park River, Federated Church	Carmen Bell	Z
Pillsbury, Baldwin Presbyterian		
Portal, First Presbyterian		
Red Lake Falls, First Presbyterian	JoAnn Zutz	Z
Rhame, Lyle Presbyterian		
Rolla-St John, Presbyterian Church		
Rugby, Emmanuel United Church		
Tower City, Tower City Presbyterian	Mary Cockerill	P
Towner, Towner Presbyterian		
Walhalla, Park Center-Walhalla		
Watford City, First Presbyterian		
Webster, Webster Chapel	Wayne Lindenberg	Z
West Fargo, Community Presb.	Carrie Lauber	P

	Andrew Thostenson	Z
Westhope, First Presbyterian		

Others in Attendance	Position	In Person or Zoom
Rusty Bender	Moderator	P
Jamie Norstog	Vice Moderator	P
Adam Montgomery	Stated Clerk	P
Sherri Stern	Financial Task Force	Z
Jennifer Kolodka	Visitor, Communications Coord.	P
Erin Anderson	Clearwater Forest Director	P
Kirstie Dobson	University of Jamestown, Campus Ministry Leader	P
Thomas Pittinger	Visitor, UofJ Campus Ministry	P
Justin Rosenboom	Visitor, UofJ Campus Ministry	P
Becky Mace	Visitor, West Fargo Comm Presb	P
Mary Reed	Visitor, Jamestown United Presb	P
Nancy Laschkewitsch	Visitor, Glencoe Sloan	P
Scott Halstead	Visitor, Grand Forks First Presb	P

In accordance with the bylaws (Article IV, B-4.0500), Stated Clerk Adam Montgomery advised the Moderator that a quorum was established.

M/S/C = moved, seconded, and carried (of a motion)

Approval of the Agenda – **Monteith/Younggren/Approved.**

Seating of Correspondence – Erin Anderson, Clearwater Forest; Kirsti Dobson, Chaplain, Campus Ministries, University of Jamestown.

Approval of the Minutes of the 133rd Stated Meeting of the Presbytery -

- Brenda Beck was incorrectly identified as a Devils Lake delegate.

Preston/Bigwood/Approved, as amended.

University of Jamestown (Campus Ministries) Report - Kirsti Dobson. Thomas Pittinger (Colorado) spoke about his experience with Campus Ministries. Justin Rosenboom (Minnesota) spoke about his Faith Works Team and his faith journey that brought him here. The three speakers thanked the Presbytery for the continued support of their mission.

Treasurer's Report (RE Ellen Misialek) - Report submitted. **Dill/Billings/Accepted.**

Financial Task Force/Investment Committee (RE Sherri Stern) - Report submitted. The investment portfolio balance at the end of the 2025 calendar year was \$1,643,114.18. In accordance with the pledge approved at the previous Presbytery meeting, \$100,000.00 was

donated to Clearwater Forest's Capital Campaign. In addition, \$50,000.00 was paid to offset the Presbytery's General Fund deficit, at the year-end.

Connectional Care Pastor Report (TE Deanna Reikow) - Report submitted. March 31 is Rev. Reikow's last day as the Connectional Care Pastor. The year saw an increase in youth involvement. For the first time, it is the churches guiding the Presbytery; it is not a leader/top-down approach. Reikow spoke to the advantages of hiring an Executive Presbyter. Moderator Bender thanked Rev. Reikow for her work, on behalf of the Presbytery, and presented her with flowers and a token of our collective appreciation.

Consent Agenda - **Norstog/Preston/Approved.**

Moderator Bender asked for a motion to recess for lunch. 11:51 Dill/O'Neill/Approved. Return at 12:45 PM.

Moderator Bender called the regular meeting of the Presbytery back to order at 12:46 PM.

Congregational Vitality Report (TE Sarah Bigwood) - Report submitted. Rev. Bigwood presented the State of the Presbytery/Minister's Report. There were a number of retirements and Bigwood acknowledged and thanked those who continue to volunteer and serve.

Proposal for an Executive Presbyter (EP) - Bigwood recapped the online forums and survey results that were considered when proposing the idea of hiring an EP (included in the submitted report). The submitted report highlights a number of the issues being factored into this proposal.

TE Boyar inquired as to the church process for identifying EP candidates. Moderator Bender shared that a committee, designated by the Nominating Task Force, made up of equal numbers of TE and RE, will evaluate candidates. This search committee will be chaired by RE Brian McClure.

Bigwood highlighted aspects of the proposed EP job description (JD). These include, but are not limited to, travel, vitality, preaching, coordinating Presbytery meetings and worship services, and administration.

TE Boyar inquired if a prospective candidate had to be Presbyterian to be considered. Bigwood stated candidates would be considered like any other pastor seeking a Call.

TE Boyar inquired as to office space for an EP. Although there are no specific plans for an identified or required location, Bigwood shared her thoughts and asked the body if they

would agree in housing an EP in a local church of the candidate's choosing. There were no audible objections.

Proposed financials for hiring an EP were presented.

TE Homan spoke in favor of the proposal.

Moderator Bender called the question; the motion comes from committee. **One abstention was noted; Approved.**

Presbytery Grant Program Report - Bigwood highlighted the survey results for the program, when churches should apply for consideration, and the notion of how "first come, first served" would be used including ranking of additional requests from the same church(es). The idea to "invest in the congregation" is the important goal of this program and to continue the ministry of the Church.

TE Boyar inquired as to the Congregational Vitality Pod's role in evaluating the requests. Bigwood shared that the Congregational Vitality Pod would review the request, but the Leadership Pod would be the ultimate decider of requests.

TE Boyar further inquired as to the time frame for requests. Bigwood reiterated the semester idea of reviewing, approximately two sets of six-month periods of grant spending.

Moderator Bender called the question; the motion comes from committee. **Approved.**

Continuing Preparation for Ministry Report (TE Spencer Homan) - Report submitted. Rev. Dr. Homan corrected a date stated in the report. The committee met with three candidates in their final stages of preparation: Carrie Lauber, Scott Halstead, and Corday Goddard.

Chogoria Ministry Team Report (CRE Jamie Norstog, RE Carrie Lauber) - Report submitted. Norstog shared his experiences since the last Presbytery meeting.

Clearwater Forest Report (Erin Anderson) - oral presentation. Anderson shared that the camp had developed promotional videos that can be found on the Clearwater webpage. The theme of "Fan the F.L.A.M.E." continues. The videos were presented for viewing. The capital campaign continues with additional matching pledges from other area presbyteries, based on PNP's pledge last fall! Anderson highlighted programming and important dates in the next year.

Good News - Moderator Bender shared the day's offerings, taken for Youth Connection, collected \$669.00. Lisbon applied for a grant and is now able to purchase a new Hymnal Plus. Edgeley is finishing up a major structural renovation. Jamestown has been working with church consultants to grow the congregation. Presbyterian Women is hosting an event at Mendenhall on April 25.

There was no Unfinished Business.

Moderator Bender asked for a motion to adjourn. **Bigwood/Dill**. Bender closed the meeting with prayer. The 134th Regular Meeting of the Presbytery was adjourned at 2:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam R. Montgomery
Stated Clerk



Presbytery of the Northern Plains

5555 South Washington Street ~ Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201

Ph: (701) 248-0227 email: pnpooffice@gmail.com

Moderator

Rusty Bender

701-840-2618

rbender@firstpresfargo.org

March 9, 2026

CALL TO STATED MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY

The Spring meeting of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains is called for

Vice Moderator

Jamie Norstog

701-339-0912

jnorstog@gmail.com

**SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026 at 10:00 AM
UNIVERSITY OF JAMESTOWN,
6000 COLLEGE LN , JAMESTOWN, ND 58405**

Stated Clerk

Adam Montgomery

701-361-4644

pnpstatedclerk@gmail.com

Registration and fellowship hour will begin 9:30 AM in Unruh Sheldon Building.

Worship Service will be led by Carrie Lauber
at 10:00 AM in Voorhees Chapel

Meeting Agenda will begin after Worship,
at 10:45 AM in Unruh Sheldon Building, #132.

Treasurer

Ellen Misialek

701-520-3220

emisialek@outlook.com

All are encouraged to prioritize attending in person.

Ministers of the Word & Sacrament and Ruling Elder Commissioners
are asked to pre-register your attendance.

Communications Coordinator

Jenn Kolodka

701-248-0227

pnpooffice@gmail.com

The meeting will be hybrid via Zoom for those who cannot attend in person.

The meeting agenda, registration link, Zoom link, previous meeting minutes,
and reports will be available on the PNP website:

<https://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/presbytery-meeting>

Connectional Care Pastor

Rev. Deanna Reikow

701-726-3857

drfpcmandan@hotmail.com

Please contact Jenn Kolodka for registration matters
and Adam Montgomery for meeting business.

Respectfully,

Adam R. Montgomery, J.D.

Stated Clerk

134th Stated Meeting of
The Presbytery of the Northern Plains

March 21, 2026 - 10:00 AM

University of Jamestown
Jamestown, ND

1. Call to Order - Opening Prayer (*at Voorhees Chapel*)
2. Worship
3. Roll Call (*at Unruh-Sheldon Classroom #132*)
4. Approval of the Agenda
5. Seating of Corresponding Members
6. Approval of October 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes
7. University of Jamestown (Campus Ministry) Report
8. Treasurer Report
9. Financial Task Force Report
10. Connectional Care Pastor Report
11. Consent Agenda
 - a. Officer Reports
 - b. Stated Clerk Report
 - c. Pod Reports
 - d. Committee Reports
 - e. Synod Commissioner Report
 - f. Partner Reports
12. Recess for Lunch
13. Congregational Vitality Pod Report
 - a. Proposal: Executive Presbyter Position
 - b. Proposal: Congregational Vitality Grant Program
14. CPM Report
15. Chogoria Ministry Team Report
16. Clearwater Forest Report
17. Good News
18. Unfinished Business
19. Adjourn - Closing Prayer

PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS
ONE HUNDRED and THIRTY-THIRD STATED MEETING
October 11, 2025

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) held its stated meeting at the Presbyterian Church of Langdon (ND).

Vice-Moderator Ruling Elder (RE) Rusty Bender called the meeting to order at 11:05 AM and opened with prayer.

The Rev. J. Sue Kana-Mackey, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Langdon, led the Presbytery in worship. Holy Communion was celebrated as part of the service. An offering was taken for the benefit of Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons, TE of Bismark, to assist with living and medical expenses.

The roll was taken by means of registration forms by the attendees.

P – Present in person; Z – Present via Zoom; E – Excused; A – Absent;
HR – Ministers Honorably Retired, excused if absent; LOB Ministers laboring outside the bounds of the Presbytery, excused if absent. (*Numbers preceding Ministers' names are ecclesiastical occupational designations.*)

Other abbreviations:

TE = Teaching Elder (Minister of the Word and Sacrament)

RE = Ruling Elder

CRE = Commissioned Ruling Elder (also known as Commissioned Lay Pastor, CLP)

Pastoral Leaders			
Designation	Minister	Ministry	Attendance
299	Billings, Dan	HR	E
101	Bigwood, Sarah	Fargo	Z
299	Bishop, Catherine	HR	Z
101	Boyar, Robert	Jamestown	Z
797	Burger-Peery, Deborah	Member at Large	
107	Campbell, Paul	CLP, Casselton	Z
107	Chapman, Casey	CLP, Grandin-Hunter	
299	Cory, Darrel	HR	E
299	Danielson, Cheri	HR	E
299	Danielson, Marli	HR	E
101	Dill, Robin	Grafton, Minto	P
101	Dumont, Trudy	Devils Lake	
797	Emerson, Nancy	Member at Large	P
299	Graf, Gretchen	HR	E

299	Graham, Ron	HR	E
101	Holtey, Mary	Fargo	P
101	Homan, Spencer	Grand Forks	P
151	Kana-Mackey, Sue	Langdon	P
299	Kargard, Rick	HR	E
107	Legerski, Nancy	CLP, Bismarck	
299	Mansell, Henry	HR	E
299	McCullough, Cheryl	HR	E
299	McDowell, Martha	HR	E
797	Meier, Mindy	Member at Large	
299	Monteith, Donna	HR	P
107	Norstog, Jamie	Pulpit Supply, Moorhead	P
797	Ozaki, Michael	Member at Large	
101	Reikow, Deanna	Mandan	P
797	Rhoad, Johnny	Member at Large	
501	Sanders, Ruth	Crookston (UMC)	
107	Schnackenberg, Dave	CLP, Rolla-St John	P
101	Simmons, Leanne	Bismarck	E
107	Sorenson, Raenelle	CLP, Arvilla	Z
299	Suk, David	HR	E
501	Sveet, Elaine	Minot (Zion Lutheran)	
299	Swanson, Joan	HR	E
299	Watts, Gary	HR	E
299	Woodford, Don	HR	E

Congregation	Ruling Elder Commissioners	In Person or Zoom
Angus, Angus-Tabor Presbyterian		
Arvilla, Arvilla Presbyterian	Brenda Beck	Z
Baker, Westminster Presbyterian		
Bismarck, First Presbyterian	Signe Snortland Alice Nix	Z Z
Bismarck, Glencoe Sloan Memorial	Nancy Laschkewitsch Karen Macdonald	P P
Bottineau, United Parish		
Buffalo, First Presbyterian		
Calvin, Glenila Presbyterian		
Casselton, Westminster Presb.	Lana Schultz	P
Cavalier, Cavalier Presbyterian	Zelda Hartje	P
Colgate, Colgate Presbyterian		
Cooperstown, First Presbyterian		
Crookston, First Presbyterian		

Devils Lake, Westminster Presb.		
Dilworth, Dilworth Presbyterian		
East Grand Forks, Mendenhall		
Edgeley, First Presbyterian		
Ellendale, Presbyterian		
Fairview, Community Presbyterian		
Fargo, First Presbyterian	Brian McClure Sharon Secor Bruce Maylath	Z P P
Fordville, Community Presbyterian		
Forest River, Midway Parish		
Gilby, Gilby Presbyterian		
Grafton, Federated Church	Gale Fisher	P
Grand Forks, First Presbyterian	Ben Shannon Evan Andrist	P P
Grandin, Grandin Presbyterian	Donna Preston	P
Hallock, First Presbyterian	Betty Jo Younggren	P
Hamilton, First Presbyterian	Dorothy Robinson	P
Hannah, Hannah Presbyterian		
Hunter, First Presbyterian		
Inkster, Inkster Presbyterian		
Jamestown, United Presbyterian	Bill Weispfenning	Z
LaMoure, First Presbyterian		
Langdon, Presbyterian Church	Clinton Esckilsen	P
Lisbon, First Presbyterian		
Mandan, First Presbyterian		
Minto, Knox Presbyterian	Ellen Misialek	Z
Moorhead, First Presbyterian	George O'Neill Elizabeth Swee	Z P
Oakes, First Presbyterian		
Park River, Federated Church		
Pillsbury, Baldwin Presbyterian		
Portal, First Presbyterian		
Red Lake Falls, First Presbyterian		
Rhame, Lyle Presbyterian		
Rolla-St John, Presbyterian Church	Anita Barrett	P
Rugby, Emmanuel United Church		
Tower City, Tower City Presbyterian		
Towner, Towner Presbyterian		
Walhalla, Park Center-Walhalla	Kent Dalzell	P
Watford City, First Presbyterian		
Webster, Webster Chapel		
West Fargo, Community Presb.	Carrie Lauber	Z

Westhope, First Presbyterian		
------------------------------	--	--

Others in Attendance	Position	In Person or Zoom
Tom Brusegaard	Moderator	E
Rusty Bender	Vice Moderator	P
Adam Montgomery	Stated Clerk	P
Sherri Stern	Financial Task Force	P
Jennifer Kolodka	Visitor, Communications Coord.	P
Erin Anderson	Clearwater Forest Director	P
Chandra Mendieta	Bdecan	P
Elsie Magnus	Visitor (Cavalier, Pulpit Supply)	P
Scott Halstead	Visitor (Grand Forks)	P
Betty Kaehn	Visitor (Langdon)	P
Kristy Forest	Visitor (Langdon)	P
Gail Pearson	Visitor (Langdon)	P
Wendy Waslaski	Visitor (Langdon)	P
Joyce Esckilsen	Visitor (Langdon)	P
Glen Millar	Visitor (Walhalla)	P

In accordance with the bylaws (Article IV, B-4.0500), Stated Clerk Adam Montgomery advised the vice-moderator that a quorum was established.

M/S/C = moved, seconded, and carried (of a motion)

Approval of the Agenda – Vice-Moderator Bender moved Line Item #9 – Recess for Lunch to Line Item #8 and re-numbered accordingly. **Preston/Youngren/Approved.**

Seating of Correspondence – Chandra Mendieta, Bdecan; Erin Anderson, Clearwater Forest.

Approval of the Minutes of the 132nd Stated Meeting of the Presbytery -

Lana Schultz provided the stated clerk with minor name corrections, via email. Without objection, those changes were accepted. **Reikow/Monteith/Approved, as amended.**

Care for Congregations (Vitality) Pod Report (Rev. Sarah Bigwood) - Report submitted.

On behalf of committee, TE Bigwood presented a motion to accept the dissolutions of the following pastoral relationships:

1. Rev. Robert Drake and The First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead, MN;

2. Rev. Marge Landwehr and The First Presbyterian Church of Hallock, MN;
3. Rev. Michael Osaki and The First Presbyterian Church of Crookston, MN.

Motion Carried.

The revised PNP Family Leave Policy was approved on June 19, 2025 and presented.

Bigwood presented a proposal to hire an Executive Presbyter for the consideration of the Presbytery at the Fall 2025 meeting.

Bigwood presented a proposal for a Congregational Vitality Grant Program for the consideration of the Presbytery.

Rev. Mary Holtey led the Presbytery in a blessing of the Inkster Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Hamilton on their closings. Church members present were recognized and prayed for.

On behalf of the committee, Bigwood presented a motion to dismiss the Inkster Presbyterian Church, giving thanks for its faithfulness to the gospel and its enduring witness to the grace of Jesus Christ. **Motion Carried.**

On behalf of the committee, Bigwood presented a motion to dismiss the Hamilton Presbyterian Church, giving thanks for its faithfulness to the gospel and its enduring witness to the grace of Jesus Christ. **Motion Carried.**

Vice-Moderator Bender recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:30 PM.

Vice-Moderator Bender called the meeting back to order at 1:20 PM.

Connectional Care Pastor Report - Rev. Deanna Reikow spoke to her work of connecting with churches and understanding their needs, especially for those churches losing a pastor to retirement and other various reasons this year.

Rev. Deanna Reikow and Rev. Dr. Spencer Homan acknowledged those individuals preparing for ministry.

Bylaw Changes Proposal – Vice-Moderator Bender presented the suggested revisions of the Presbytery's bylaws, as outlined in the meeting materials, for approval. Rev. Nancy Emerson suggested friendly amendments to the proposed bylaw amendment that were accepted by Bender. **Changes were accepted.**

Vice-Moderator Bender presented the current officers, staff, pod leaders, task leaders, pod members, & task teams. Bender highlighted appreciation for churches who could forward one member's name to serve the Presbytery's needs. Nominations from the floor were accepted. With a motion from the committee, **the nominations were approved.**

Consent Agenda Preston/Dill/ Accepted.

Correspondence - University of Jamestown – Report submitted.

Vice-Moderator Bender spoke about his visit to the campus to see the stained-glass window restoration project finished. The university gifted the Presbytery a replica of the window pinnacle in appreciation of the monetary donation to the project.

Clearwater Forest – Handout

Erin Anderson conveyed Clearwater's appreciation for the Presbytery and those who give and partake in the camp's programming. She also introduced the camp's "Fan the FLAME" capital improvement project initiative.

On behalf of the Leadership Pod, Sherri Stern proposed the Presbytery be a "leading donor" with a \$100,000.00 gift to challenge the other Presbyteries to do the same. **Motion/gift approved.**

Vice-Moderator shared pictures and his experience, on behalf of the youth, at Triennium.

Chogoria Ministry Team – Report submitted. CLP Jamie Norstog presented.

Annual Statistical Report – Report submitted.

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Proposal – Budget submitted.

On behalf of Ellen Misialek, Treasurer, Sherri Stern presented the proposed budget, noting concerns of an operating deficit, due to deficient per capita. Stern also shared the investments' financial report, which remains positive. Misialek noted the budget reflects the recommendation of maintaining 2026 per capita at \$50 per member. **The budget was approved, as recommended.**

Good News

Glencoe-Sloan, “North Dakota’s Oldest Presbyterian Church” at 135 years old, needs new windows. Karen Macdonald presented insights on her membership, the church, and its history. A financial ask will be made of the Presbytery, at a later time.

Donna Monteith shared a memory of her time at Glencoe. As current moderator of Buffalo, Monteith shared the church has a “Dollars For Scholars” endowment, due to the sale of its manse.

Jamie Norstog shared he and his sister purchased a home in Fergus Falls, MN. This past spring, he took a call to long term pulpit supply for Moorhead and notes the change in the church’s energy with a 14% attendance increase.

Vice-Moderator Bender shared news that Baker-Downer is bringing back their fish fry on October 24, since its COVID-19 hiatus. First Presbyterian Fargo will host “Kirkin’ O’ the Tartans” on November 2.

Donna Preston thanked everyone for their support of Bdecan.

Pastor Schnackenberg announced that Rolla-St. John youth will host a “sleep-out” event for homelessness awareness.

Rev. Bob Boyar shared his gratitude for financial assistance to repair Jamestown’s doors after summer storm damage.

There was no Unfinished Business.

Vice-Moderator Bender closed the meeting with prayer. With a collective of motions, the 133rd Regular Meeting of the Presbytery was adjourned at 3:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam R. Montgomery

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Adam R. Montgomery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Stated Clerk



6000 College Lane
Jamestown, ND
58405

701-252-3467
701-253-4318 Fax
UJ.edu

To the members of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains

Greetings from the University of Jamestown!

We are grateful for God's steady presence and for the many ways the University continues to grow and serve. This has been a year of meaningful progress across our academic programs, campus facilities, and student life.

This past fall, we celebrated the dedication of the renovated Voorhees Chapel and the Reuben & Clarice Liechty Center for Faith and Life—now home to the Unruh School of Character in Leadership. These spaces reflect our commitment to forming students in wisdom, integrity, service, excellence, courage, and humility.

Campus Ministry has also moved into its new home in the renovated Badal Nafus Student Union. This welcoming space provides room for fellowship, Bible study, worship, and care ministries, and it has quickly become a vibrant hub of spiritual life on campus.

Our presence in Phoenix continues to expand, and this May we will proudly award UJ's first Ph.D. degrees in Clinical Research—an important milestone in our academic mission.

Student engagement in ministry and service remains strong, and their enthusiasm continues to inspire us. Their lives reflect the hope and possibility that education brings.

Thank you for your faithful support of UJ's mission. We remain guided by the promise of Jeremiah 29:11 and encouraged by the partnership of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains as we continue preparing leaders of character for lives of service in God's world.

Blessings to you and your congregations this spring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Polly Peterson' in a cursive script.

Polly Peterson, Ph.D.

President

Grace and peace to you.

On behalf of the University of Jamestown Campus Ministry, we want to express our sincere gratitude to the Presbytery for your continued support. Your care and generosity make it possible for meaningful ministry to take place on our campus, and we are deeply thankful for the partnership we share with you.

This year so far has been a full and encouraging season for our students.

One of the highlights was our **Night of Christian Leadership**, an event made possible in part through your financial support. We were able to bring in a retired Secret Service Agent and outspoken Christian as our guest speaker. Our speaker, who served 5 US Presidents, spent time with our students discussing what it means to live out their faith in secular workplaces and how to faithfully respond to God's calling in whatever field they enter. For many of our students, especially those preparing to enter professional careers, this was a powerful reminder that their vocation can also be a place of ministry.

Throughout the semester, we have also continued to see strong participation in the various Bible studies offered on campus. Students are showing a genuine hunger to explore Scripture together, ask honest questions, and grow in faith together. Because of your support, we have also been able to purchase Bibles to give to students who do not own one, ensuring that anyone who wants access to God's Word can have it.

Another meaningful development this year has been the launch of **Selah**, a time of quiet prayer and reflection held three times each week in our chapel. Selah provides students with something that is increasingly rare in the pace of college life—space for stillness before God. In the middle of busy schedules and constant noise, students are finding this time to be grounding, restorative, and deeply meaningful.

All of these things are possible because congregations within the Presbytery believe that ministry among college students matters. Your investment is helping students encounter Scripture, deepen their faith, and learn how to follow Christ faithfully in the places God is calling them.

Thank you for walking alongside us in this work.

With our deepest gratitude,

University of Jamestown Campus Ministry

and

Kirstie Dobson, Director

Treasurer's Report

The included pages of information show the historical data for the Presbytery's general fund cash flow for 2024, the budget and actual income and expense for 2025, the budget projection for 2026, and the actual income and expense for the period of January 1-February 28, 2026. The 2025 financial information is preliminary. The financial review will be completed during the summer and the final information will be included in the information for the Fall Presbytery meeting. The Leadership Pod amended the budget for 2025 to include the correct projection of the Board of Pensions dues amount for the Connectional Care Pastor.

In 2025, all staff was in place for the full year: Adam Montgomery, Stated Clerk; Jennifer Kolodka, Communications Coordinator; Rev. Deanna Peterson Reikow, Connectional Care Pastor; and Ellen Misialek, Bookkeeper.

Thank you for the 2025 donations from congregations that were passed on to the PC(USA), the Presbyterian Foundation, the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, or other recipients as follows: Christmas Joy Offering, \$8,007.81; \$500; GA Unified Mission, \$6,743.79; One Great Hour of Sharing, \$18,209.23; GA Peace and Global Witness, \$2,144.85; Pentecost Offering, \$3,617.15; Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, \$3,470; Theological Mission Support, \$800.08; Synod Unified Mission, \$6,243.75; Synod Peace and Global Witness, \$214.51; Clearwater Forest, \$500; and University of Jamestown, \$850; the grand total is \$50,801.17--\$33.90 more than in 2024.

Per Capita info for 2025: 36 congregations paid in full, 3 congregations made partial payment, and 16 congregations, no payment. The total received was \$116,612.50—\$9,687.50 less than in 2024. The Presbytery of the Northern Plains remitted its full per capita apportionment to the General Assembly, \$31,414, and to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, \$15,939. During the period of January 1-February 28, 2026, 19 congregations made full or partial payments of their 2026 per capita totaling \$22,992 and \$9,347 was received in Prior Years Per Capita. Thank you for those faithful and prompt responses!

Please visit the Presbytery's website www.northernplainspresbytery.com, click on Grants and Financial Programs, to see information and application forms for the grants that are available for Clergy Renewal, Congregational Development, New Church Development, Peace and Global Witness, Seminary Scholarships, and Small Church Ministries. Church officers will also find remittance forms and other helpful documents on the website.

The Presbytery meeting on March 21 will include the discussion of the proposal to authorize the search for an Executive Presbyter and the proposal to initiate a new grant to encourage congregational vitality and enhanced ministry. Your input on these decisions is crucial as we look forward to the future and determine the best practices in using the Presbytery's support funds.

If there is anything I can do to answer financial questions or be of help in any way, please contact me. My email is emisialek@outlook.com and my phone number is 701-520-3220.

Ellen Misialek, PNP Treasurer

Presbytery of the No. Plains Approved Budget 2026 Prior Years' Financial Info February 2026	Per Capita 2024 3028X\$50= \$151,400	Per Capita 2025 GA \$10.84; SLP \$5.50; PNP \$33.66; Total \$50 2898x\$50=\$144,900		Per Capita 2026 GA \$11.26; SLP \$5.50 PNP \$33.24; Total \$50 2622X\$50=\$131,100	
	Actual 2024	Budget 2025	Actual thru 12/31/2025	Budget 2026	Actual 2/28/2026
CASH FLOW - GENERAL FUND					
Loan Repayment	1500		1000		
Per Capita (Prior Years)	4700	3000	1000	3000	9347
Per Capita (Current Year)	126600	144900	116913	131100	26992
Uncollectible Per Capita		-25000		-23000	
Investment Income	3428	3000	1730	2000	324
Endowment Earnings	20000	50000	150000	70000	
Miscellaneous Income	1500	400	500	500	
Synod Support	10000	10000	10000	10000	1667
PNP Unified Mission	28096	25000	28368	25000	4354
Steele Church Closing	8978	0	0		
Hamilton Church Closing			6855		
Total Fiscal Cash Flow-In	204802	211300	316366	218600	42684
DISBURSEMENTS					
Per Capita Payment to GA	29674	31414	31414	29524	9040
Per Capita Payment to Synod	16654	15939	15939	14421	4185
Total Per Capita Payments	46328	47353	47353	43945	13225
Personnel Expense					
Connectional Care Pastor-Salary	28840	30000	30000	31200	5200
Connectional Care Pastor-BOP *	14292	13477	13477	14016	2336
Connectional Care Pastor-Travel	5576	5000	4896	5000	
Connectional Care Pastor-Prof. Ex.	600	2000	1597	2000	
Connectional Care-Intern Program		500		500	
Director of Communications-Salary	25750	26784	26784	27864	4644
Director of Communications-Travel		250	187	250	
Director of Communications-Prof.Ex.	411	500		500	
Personnel Expense-FICA	4443	4900	4893	5091	849
Stated Clerk-Salary	17000	21216	21216	22080	3680
Stated Clerk-Office Ex & Travel		1000		1000	
Bookkeeper-Salary	15326	15960	15960	16608	2768
Workers Compensation	250	250	250	250	
Total Personnel Expense	112488	121837	119260	126359	19477
*Amended by Leadership Pod 2024 & 2025					
Office Expense					
Equipment		1500		1500	
Finance Software	389	400	389	400	
Insurance	1630	1650	1630	1650	
Postage	282	300	156	300	156
Supplies & Miscellaneous	1396	1500	1354	1200	103
Telephone & Zoom & Website	812	300	249	300	37
Total Office Expense	4509	5650	3778	5350	296

Administrative Expenses

Committee on Representation		100		100	
Nominating Committee		100		100	
Administrative Commissions		100		100	
Mediation&Conflict Res.-Team		300		300	
Board Representatives		100		100	
Educational Events		1000		1000	
Search Committee Expense		1000		1000	
GA Alternates		0		2000	
Synod of Lakes & Prairies Academy		2500	2500	2500	
Moderator		500		500	
Presbytery Meetings	150	500	332	500	100
Total Administrative Expenses	150	6200	2832	8200	100

Pod Expense & Pledges

Cont. Prep. For Ministry Pod	61	4500	3556	4000	1863
Care for Congregations Pod	289	500	720		
Care for Pastoral Leaders Pod	500	500	500		
Congregational Vitality Pod				1000	
Leadership Pod	50	1000	500	1000	
Mission Pod	100	100		100	
Subtotal Pod Expense	1000	6600	5276	6100	1863

Undesignated 2024& 2026, Clearwater 2025	1500		100000	1000	
Bdecan Food Pantry Pledge	10109	7500	7500	12000	1121
Chogoria Ministry Team	10000	10000	10000	10000	
Clearwater Forest Pledge	10000	10000	10000	10000	
Univ. of Jamestown Pledge	8000	7500	7500	10000	
Youth Conn. Ministry Team	2000	10000	10000	2000	
Subtotal Pledges	41609	45000	145000	45000	1121

Total Disbursements	206084	232640	323499	234954	36082
----------------------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	--------------

Net Position before Reserves	-1282	-21340	-7133	-16354	6602
-------------------------------------	--------------	---------------	--------------	---------------	-------------

Transfers to/from Reserves	15000	16000	14000	17000	0
-----------------------------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	----------

Net Position after Reserves	13718	-5340	6867	646	6602
------------------------------------	--------------	--------------	-------------	------------	-------------

2021 Grants \$10,027; 2022 Grants \$3,850; 2023 Grants \$13,249; 2024 Grants \$9,000

June 2025: Small Church Ministries, West Fargo, \$1000, PNC Expenses

July 2025: Gift from Cash Reserves, Jamestown University Foundation, \$25,000, Chapel Stained Glass Windows

September 2025: Congregational Development: Grand Forks, \$3965, Board of Pensions Support

September 2025: Disaster Assistance: Hunter, \$4000

September 2025: Disaster Assistance: Grandin, \$4000

September 2025: Disaster Assistance: Jamestown, \$4000

September 2025: Disaster Assistance: Bismarck, \$4000

PNP Budget Report

October 2025: John Fong, Church Growth Workshop, \$2000

Feb-26

October 2025: Bigwood Consulting, Websites Creation, \$1000

December 2025: Clearwater Forest Camp, Capital Campaign, \$100,000

Approved at Fall Presbytery Meeting, transferred from New Covenant

February 2026: Congregational Development: Mendenhall, \$2,000, Sound System

February 2026: Congregational Development: Lisbon, \$2,000, Sound System

Presbytery of the Northern Plains
Financial Task Force/Investments
New Covenant Trust Company
Presbyterian Foundation

February 27, 2026

Total Fund Balance **\$1,698,482.58**

- PNP Endowment Acct XXX0527 \$1,140,059.02
- PNP Support Acct XXX0551 \$ 506,719.90
- Generosity Fund Acct XXX1127 \$ 51,703.66

December 31, 2025 Balance **\$1,643,114.18**

Disbursements:

(\$100,000 Clearwater Forest, Capital Campaign Pledge, 12/20/2025)

(\$ 50,000 PNP Gen Fund to offset portion of year-end 2025 Deficit, 12/20/2025)

Account Performance YTD

Acct beginning balance ;

December 31, 2020 \$1,142,700.00

Acct Growth to Date;

February 27, 2026 \$ 705,782.58

Respectfully Submitted,

Sherri A Stern

PNP Finance/Investment Moderator

A moment to thank everyone who has dedicated so much time, energy and effort into arriving at this point in our Presbytery. Today, I am excited to report that we are officially moving from a transitional point to a place of stability, innovation and outreach. Your leadership has worked diligently to re-connect our congregations and to chart out a way forward after much prayerful listening to your thoughts, needs and ideas.

The Presbytery is all of us together, created to strengthen the Church in our geographical area by sharing our resources, talents and wisdom by connecting with one another to accomplish more in mission and ministry. You and your congregation no matter its size are essential. You have been called to this time and place to make a difference, to be a light on a hill and a reminder that "Christ still goes this way with us". Together we have decided to use all that we have as a Presbytery to reinvest into each church. The Presbytery will be focused on providing specific leadership and training that will help grow your congregation and financially so you can access exactly what is needed in a timely manner to help your ministry in your community.

It is important to note the Presbytery does not have a top down leadership model. This means in our shared leadership your specific gifts and help are needed to connect with other churches too. It might be that you like to teach or preach and could fill in for a class or church service. It may be that you are a "foodie" and you could help by attending fundraisers and snapping photos at great meals. You could be great with finances and share your investment knowledge. You could let other churches know about what is working in your community. You could be on a leadership team pod that meets working to problem solve or to find pastors for our churches. If you are a church cleaner or decorator, you could volunteer to help out an aging congregation to spiff up their building. The possibilities are endless.

God isn't finished with us, we are needed more than ever in this difficult, hateful world to be a place of solace, safety, and encouragement. The work before us is great but filled with the Holy Spirit, nothing is impossible with God. In Esther, we are reminded if not you then who has been called to do this? Jesus says if we remain silent, the rocks will cry out. I don't know about you but I don't want to be outdone by a box of rocks, I am smarter than that...I hope. Please partner with all of us regular folks who are in this Presbytery to make a real difference on the Northern Plains.

Today you have a chance to vote on two specific items. The first is to approve a grant proposal that will fund the future of individual congregations up to \$50,000/yr worth of grants presbytery wide. The second is to call a full-time executive presbyter who will continue to strengthen our connections with one another, provide spiritual leadership and direction to congregations, and to connect us with the larger church to help us find and bring more pastors and resources into our area. I hope you will be as excited as I am not just about the future of our Presbytery but about the fact that we have all we need to live in the now and be about making an incredible ministry Today. In doing so, we are making sure there will be a church tomorrow.

Rev. Deanna Reikow
Connectional Care Pastor

Mission Pod Report: 2026 Spring Presbytery Meeting

Bdecan Ministry Team: Continues to partner with Bdecan Presbyterian Church on Spirit Lake Reservation as well as contributors throughout the Presbytery and beyond. Fund raising for the many programs continued strong in the final months of 2026. I have received lots of donations of clothes, blankets, and household items for the clothing closet that I will get to Bdecan once Spring weather is here to stay. A huge thank you to all the churches and individuals within our Presbytery who continue to support Bdecan Church. The team will also meet in the near future with church members to continue to find ways to walk alongside the members of the church as well as the reservation members.

Clearwater Forest: I am happy to announce that Clearwater Forest Bible Camp received a Presbyterian Women's Thank Offering grant in the amount of \$50,000 to purchase an used van to help with transportation of youth to attend the camp.

Youth Connection: YCT held a winter retreat at 1st Presbyterian Church, Grand Forks Jan 30-Feb 1 with 27 youth and 13 adults. The theme was "God in the Movies". The movies that were highlighted were The Karate Kid, Spiderman: Leap of Faith, The Blind Side, Hacksaw Ridge, and Guardians of the Galaxy 3. The youth enjoyed devotions, free time, vespers, service project, some fun time at Choice Health and Fitness, movie time, and finally worship on Sunday am.

We are working on planning our Spring Retreat May 1-3 at Moorhead 1st Presbyterian Church. Please plan to have your youth in gr. 6-12 attend.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Preston

PRESBYTERY SPRING YOUTH RETREAT



MAY 1ST - 3RD

Join us for an unforgettable weekend as we gather for SPRING YOUTH RETREAT!



What to Expect:

- ✓ Bonding
- ✓ Food, Faith, and Fun
- ✓ Service Project
- ✓ Sleepover
- ✓ Games and Movie



\$ FREE Per Attendee

📍 2900 5th St. S.
Moorhead, MN

11+



SDOP IN THE NAME OF LOVE

(with apologies to The Supremes)

By SDOP, I am referring to Self-Development Of People, one of the three missions that are funded by One Great Hour Of Sharing. SDOP provides funds to small groups of people who are at the poverty level when they have a project which will lead to increased economic stability.

In 2024, our Presbytery SDOP was able to provide a \$5,000 grant to a group of immigrant farmers who are in a training program on how to farm in the US called The New Roots Cooperative. The money is being used to help a farmer graduating from that program to lease a plot of land and purchase equipment in order to begin farming.

Please *SDOP in the name of love* through giving to One Great Hour of Sharing this Lenten season.

George O'Neill

Chair,

Self-Development Of People for the Presbytery of the Northern Plains

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN IN NORTHERN PLAINS PRESBYTERY
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

PW groups reported the following highlights of favorite mission activities and why:

- (1) Hosting the annual Bazaar scheduled the same time every year brings PW members and community residents together. With record numbers in attendance and fundraising, this event allows the PW to support dozens of local organizations and benefits;
- (2) Working with the Emergency Food Pantry and New Life Center with their success in providing food, housing and jobs to the community;
- (3) Giving to Heifer International ensures gifts go directly to people in need;
- (4) Supporting radio broadcast of Sunday Service, now livestreamed, reaches out to a greater audience; and
- (5) several PW groups have donated school supplies, backpacks, milk cards, sweats, pants, underwear, socks, mittens, and caps. The local schools now often contact PW first if a child has a specific need.

GOOD NEWS—PW groups are growing in number of events hosted for mission, the amount of funds raised for mission, time spent in mission, and a small but bold increase in members serving in mission activity. As a strong supporter of mission, the PW in Northern Plains Presbytery again this year is offering mission grants to ministry teams and church groups within the Presbytery. Application forms are included in your packets and on the Presbytery's website.

All women in PC(USA) are welcome to join in this mission that's PW. On April 25, we will gather under the theme "No Greater Joy" (3 John 1:4) at Mendenhall Presbyterian Church in East Grand Forks, MN. Please post the Gathering flyer in your church. This is a great opportunity to meet new and reconnect with old friends, network with PW groups on creative mission ideas, enjoy great food and worship together with sisters in Christ. Register before April 20 by calling PW Moderator Donna Preston at 701-238-7414 or email at preston@gra.midco.net.

I have

No Greater Joy

than to hear that my children are
walking in the truth. 3 John 1:4



Presbyterian Women in the
Northern Plains Presbytery

2026 PW Spring Gathering
Saturday, April 25, 2026

Mendenhall Presbyterian Church
East Grand Forks, MN
Registration Cost: \$15.00
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Remember a Gift Basket for the Silent Auction. All proceeds to:
2026 PWP Mission Partner – Chogoria Ministry Team
Dr. Carrie Lauber, Co-Team Leader & Gathering Worship Leader

RSVP to Donna Preston at 701-238-7414 or at
preston@gra.midco.net
by April 20, 2026

Presbyterian Women—Northern Plains Presbytery

Mission Grant Application due December 1, 2026

Deadline for Application: December 1, 2026 / Maximum Request per Application: \$2,000.00
Return this application to PWP Mission Coordinator Lana Schultz by mail at PO Box 891,
Casselton, ND 58012 or by email lanaj0@casselton.net. Any questions should be directed to
Lana Schultz at 701-238-4538.

As part of the Presbyterian Women Purpose “we commit ourselves to support the mission of the church worldwide.” Any church group and/or ministry team affiliated with the Northern Plains Presbytery is eligible to apply for a mission grant (max. \$2,000). Funds will be distributed at the discretion of Presbyterian Women of Northern Plains Presbytery. Project must be underway within 12 months of receiving the grant. **A project budget is required.**

Group Name and Contact Person _____

Contact Person’s Address and Email _____

Total cost of mission project _____

Amount of funds requested _____

Purpose of the mission project _____

Describe how these funds will be used to achieve the purpose of the mission project

How many people will be served and describe the population served by this mission project

List other sources applied for or received to achieve your mission project goal

Would you be willing to present a report (written or oral) on your project to local Presbyterian women groups and to Presbyterian Women of the Northern Plains Presbytery Spring Gathering?

“And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance
so you may share abundantly in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8

Congregational Vitality Report

March 21, 2026

State of the Presbytery

- Minister Report – See attached, page 7.
 - Rev. Sarah Bigwood met with Rev. Deb Peery-Berger (Minot) on Nov 18th, and Rev. Gretchen Graf (East Grand Forks) on Nov 24, and Rev. Darrel Cory (Thief River Falls) on Nov 24.
 - Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons – we continue to hold Pastor Leanne in our prayers as she undergoes medical treatment. Rev. Deanna Reikow has been closely following Rev. Simmons' journey.
 - **In November, the Leadership Pod accepted the dissolution of the following pastoral relationships.**
 - Rev. Mary Jo E. Holtey & The First Presbyterian Church of Fargo (exit interview with Deanna Reikow)
 - Paul Campbell, CLP & Westminster Presbyterian Church in Casselton (exit interview with Sarah Bigwood)
 - Mark Flaten, CLP & The First Presbyterian Church of Colgate (exit interview Sarah Bigwood)
 - Rev. Beth Kelsey & The United Parish of Bottineau
- Executive Presbyter – See separate report, pages 8-15.
- Congregational Vitality Grant Program – See separate report, pages 16-24.
- 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. These services are free to all of our congregations. Several congregations have already begun working with John and are experiencing a resurgence of energy. If your congregation is interested in being a part of this growth training, contact Jenn in the Presbytery office.
- If you are a small church in need of guidance on soundboard or streaming, the Presbytery can help. Contact Sarah Bigwood.

Angus (Angus Tabor)

Argyle (Community)

Arvilla

Bismarck (FPC)

Rev. David Reiter is filling in The Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons while she is on medical leave. His first Sunday was November 9, 2025. The church has joined with Mandan and Glencoe to create a shared Associate Pastor position with an emphasis on Evangelism. They have put the PNC process on hold until Rev. Simmons' treatments are complete. In Advent, the church began meeting in their Sanctuary again after a few months of meeting in the Fellowship Hall due to water damage that caused wet material to fall from ceiling. Repairs and cleanup are complete.

Bottineau (United Parish)

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

Buffalo (FPC)

Calvin (Glenila Presbyterian Church)

Casselton (Westminster)

The church said good-bye to their pastor, Paul Campbell, in December. Sarah is their Moderator. They've elected RE Mike Faught to conduct their meetings. Travis Porter is training with the Presbytery to offer communion. Sarah met with Session in March to go over options. Casselton is working with growth consultant John Fong.

Cavalier

They received a legacy gift and will continue for the immediate future. The Cavalier church has successfully negotiated the Per Capita Forgiveness program and is current on all payments.

Colgate (FPC)

Colgate has extended an offer for long-term pulpit supply, Corday Goddard, who started in January 2026.

Cooperstown (FPC)

The congregation continues to meet at the Assisted Living and is enjoying making donations that help with needs in the area. Since the hospital and nursing home moved to the new facility, they no longer get people from the nursing home attending services but have from 2 to 5 who attend from the assisted living facility.

Crookston (FPC)

Trinity Lutheran is still in the mix with Crookston but need to complete their head pastor search before a formal arrangement can be discussed.

Devils Lake (Westminster)

Dilworth

Dan Billings visited in mid-December and found that worship was not being held. The congregation must have an informal system for communicating whether they will gather.

East Grand Forks (Mendenhall)

Mendenhall and Crookston have had discussions about sharing resources. Neither congregation is struggling to find pulpit supply. Mendenhall was awarded a \$2000 Congregational Development Grant to help with costs associated with upgrade in sound system.

Edgeley (FPC)**Ellendale (Presbyterian United Methodist Church)****Fairview (Community)****Fargo (FPC)**

Pastor Mary retired at the end of 2025 after 33 years of faithful steadfast service. Fargo has submitted project ready documentation to the National Fund for Sacred Places to release ½ the funds from their award. The Shine On campaign has over \$2M in commitments and \$280,000 in contributions. All indoor projects are nearing completion and will begin outdoor renovations as soon as the weather permits.

Baker (Baker Downer)

Baker Downer has contracted with John Fong to begin a yearlong program of growing the church. Their adventure began in November. They have plans to reach out to the neighborhood in early May inviting neighbors to consider the church a community center of sorts. There are also plans to recondition the ballfields on their property. They've been offered an opportunity by the local school district to purchase the land adjacent to the ballfield. It is currently maintained by the church.

Fordville

Fordville has declined to a few members in recent years. The CVP will work with their minister to discern what if anything is being discussed about their future plans.

Forest River (Community Presbyterian)

See Midway Parish

Gilby (Gilby Presbyterian)

See Midway Parish

Glencoe Sloan Memorial Church

The church has joined with Mandan and Bismarck to create a shared Associate Pastor position with an emphasis on Evangelism. Glencoe will take January through March off while many members are away for the winter and will resume gathering at Easter, including a celebration for a new class of confirmands. The following Elders have permission to administer the sacraments for another 3 years (until EOY 2028) Nancy Laschkewitsch, Josie Hornbacher, and Alan Wilson.

Grafton (Federated, yoked with Minto)**Grand Forks (FPC)**

Membership and giving are increasing yet increasing costs are putting pressure on the budget. Applying for BOP Assistance Program again this year.

Grandin

Grandin has started Livestreaming services on YouTube thanks to help with a retired gentleman who used to be the IT person at a local public school. He provided an used computer and helped set up a channel and has been advising them of what is needed for additional equipment.

They also took advantage of the free website which can now be found at <http://grandin.my-church.org/>

On Sunday, November 23, the church hosted a Fall Fest Community Dinner. PW organized and provided the food. The entire community is involved.

Hallock (FPC)

The congregation is moving forward in partnership with Skjeberg Lutheran near Drayton and is assembling a strong compensation package. A manse is available. Sarah has been in conversation with ELCA bishops as the process unfolds. The Lutheran congregation is transferring synods. Sarah visited on December 16, to hear the joint discussion and tour the Skjeberg church. An agreement between the two churches is drafted. A survey was distributed at the two churches. They can now proceed in drafting a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP). Budgets are still being worked out. They intend to share more staff than just the pastor.

Hannah**Hunter (FPC)****Jamestown (United)**

The doors damaged by summer storms are finally repaired. They express gratitude to the Presbytery for emergency relief. United Presbyterian is working with growth consultant John Fong.

LaMoure**Langdon****Lisbon (FPC)**

Leadership Pod approved \$2000 Congregational Development Grant to assist with costs of purchasing a Hymnal Plus HT-400 US machine.

Mandan (FPC)

The church has joined with Bismarck and Glencoe to create a shared Associate Pastor position with an emphasis on Evangelism. They will begin the PNC process once Rev. Simmons' treatments are complete. Rev. Deanna Reikow will leave the Connectional Pastor position and return to full-time ministry at Mandan in March.

Minto (Knox, yoked with Grafton)**Midway Parish**

Meetings with the Midway Parish were productive, and both the parish meeting and session meetings went well. They continue to negotiate pacing of the process. Overall, the parish is moving forward, and all required items are expected to be ready for approval by mid-January. They've received permission to post their MDP on the Church Leadership Connection (CLC).

Moorhead (FPC)

The session voted to contract with Jamie Norstog, CLP, for quarter time worship leadership and outreach pastor. Average worship has increased by 10-15 people over a year ago. An agreement was reached through the Per Capita Forgiveness Program and Moorhead took all of the necessary steps to ensure that they are current on Per Capita payments.

Oakes (FPC)**Park River (Federated Church)**

Sarah Bigwood visited on Nov 18 and met with Carmen and Roberta (Bobbie). She took a tour of the facilities; the upgrades are very welcoming and appealing to younger generations. We also discussed per capita obligations. The Presbytery has been basing Park River's obligation on total membership and not on the number of PCUSA members. Ellen and Sarah reviewed their obligation and under the Forgiveness Program, the Park River church is current on all per capita payments. Park River is currently working on upgrading their sound system and streaming.

Pillsbury (Baldwin)**Portal (FPC)**

A successful connection has been made with members. First Presbyterian Church Portal stopped weekly services in 2022. Building is being used as a community center of sorts under the direction of church members. When they are ready, we will help members figure out what to do with the building and land. There is no urgency.

Red Lake Falls (FPC)**Rhame (Lyle Presbyterian)**

Updated exterior siding and foundation. Added handicap ramps, entryway decks and new heating system. Their kitchen & fellowship area renovations are coming along nicely. They continue to meet weekly for worship and meals even during renovations.

Rolla & St. John**Rugby (Emmanuel United)****Tower City**

Tower City congregation hosted the summer worship schedule with one service for the parish. They feel privileged to have a rotation of ordained and lay pastors for each month as well as Moderator Donna Monteith to guide and direct their congregation. Coffee and treats are part of each Sunday fellowship time. They are thankful for a neighbor who keeps an eye on the church in various ways throughout the year including using a tarp to cover the steps for winter snow and ice. Clerk of Session, Phyllis Otterness, says, "the church is a blessing to all of us!"

Towner**Walhalla**

In the October 2025 Presbytery Report, we mistakenly reported that Walhalla is gathering twice a month. They meet regularly and pulpit supply rotates, preaching a few Sundays each month.

Watford City (FPC)**Webster (Webster Chapel)**

West Fargo (Community)

West Fargo continues the search process for a designate pastor. Rev. Bob Boyar has taken over helping them vet candidates. Members continue to fill the pulpit each Sunday.

Westhope (FPC)

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Sarah M. Bigwood". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

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), Jenn Kolodka (PNP communications).

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. 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
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

Rev. J. Sue Kana-Mackey (UMC) - Langdon

Active CLPs

Pastor James Crandall, (CLP, UMC) - Angus
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 CLPs

Carrie Lauber (candidate)
Corday Goddard (candidate)
Donna Preston (candidate)
Scott Halstead (candidate)

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

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

*retiring or leaving ministry in 2026

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

EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER PROPOSAL REPORT

March 2026

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains is proposing the creation of an **Executive Presbyter** role to provide relational, pastoral, and administrative leadership. Dates for Presbytery-wide Zoom meetings were January 22 and February 10 at 7pm. Invites were sent to churches via monthly newsletter.

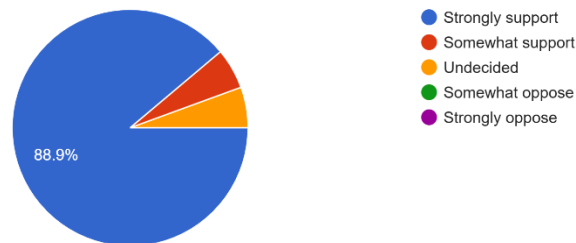
These Zoom meetings were critical in understanding some of the biggest questions and concerns that members of our Presbytery have regarding this proposal. We'd like to share with you those findings.

Survey Results

- 22 people representing 16 churches participated in the Zoom calls. 18 people responded to our survey.
- When asked based on what you know today, do you believe the Presbytery has reached a point where volunteer leadership alone is no longer sufficient? 100% of participants answered, Yes. 0% answered no or unsure.

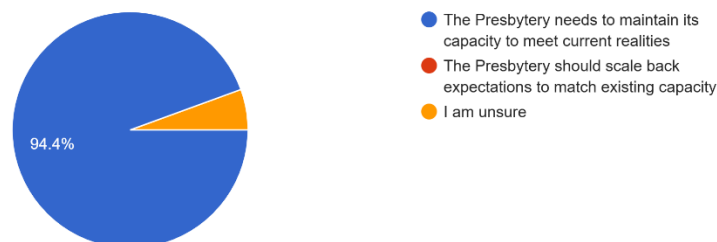
If the vote were held today, how would you lean on the proposal to hire a full-time Executive Presbyter?

18 responses



Which statement comes closest to your view?

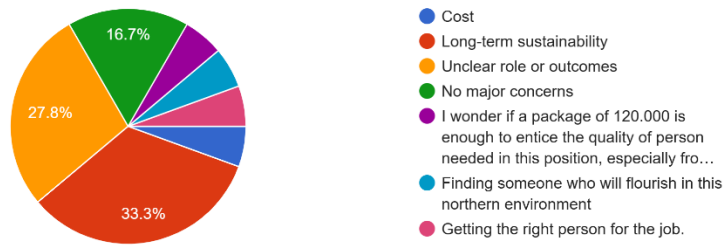
18 responses



- Over a third of respondents were concerned about the cost and long-term sustainability of an EP role. Nearly a third were concerned that the job description has unclear roles or outcomes. Several respondents were concerned that we be able to attract a candidate that is a good fit for our Presbytery with one noting that our package might be too low to attract a good candidate.

What is your primary concern, if any, about hiring an Executive Presbyter?

18 responses



- Trust in presbytery leadership among survey participants is strong. Over 83% expressed clear trust and the remaining respondents expressed moderate trust, with no respondents indicating distrust.

Feedback

In addition to the survey, we asked participants to discuss these proposals with each other and learned several key things from those conversations.

Cultural Fit

Participants emphasized that past challenges with Executive Presbyters often arose when leaders did not understand the character of this presbytery. The Presbytery of the Northern Plains covers a large geographic region made up primarily of rural and small-town communities where churches often operate with limited staff and resources. Participants stressed that these congregations are resilient, well educated, and deeply committed to their ministries. They value humility, steadiness, and authenticity rather than institutional flash or complex programming. Because of this, there was strong support for seeking a leader who understands rural and small-town life, respects the wisdom already present in congregations, and builds trust through relationships rather than through new presbytery wide initiatives.

Relationships Over Programs

Closely connected to this theme was the desire for an Executive Presbyter whose work focuses on presence and relationship building rather than program development. Many participants expressed that congregations are already stretched and do not need additional presbytery programs that create more work. Instead, they hope for a leader who travels across the presbytery, visits churches, drinks coffee with pastors and members, celebrates the ministries already happening, and helps congregations learn from one another. The emphasis was on strengthening relationships between churches and between congregations and the presbytery so that people feel more connected to the broader body.

Clearly Defined Duties

Participants asked for greater clarity about what the Executive Presbyter would actually do week to week. The Executive Presbyter should serve as the primary point of contact for questions about the Book of Order, presbytery procedures, and available resources. The role also includes regular congregational visitation, preaching across the presbytery on Sundays, maintaining regular contact with churches and pastors, traveling throughout the region to maintain presbytery presence, participating in Leadership Pod and Congregational Vitality Pod meetings,

coordinating presbytery gatherings and worship, and assisting with administrative tasks such as background checks for incoming pastors.

Travel

Questions were raised about travel expectations and the resources needed to support them. Because congregations are spread across a large geographic region, there was concern that the position include a sufficient travel budget to make this level of presence realistic and sustainable. Participants noted that travel should be planned thoughtfully, coordinating visits when possible so that time and financial resources are used wisely while still maintaining a strong and visible presbytery presence among our congregations.

Compensation and Structure

Some participants wondered whether the proposed salary level would be sufficient to attract a strong candidate. Others asked whether the presbytery might consider creative ways to structure the position if necessary. One example discussed was defining the role as three out of four weeks per month, which might allow the presbytery to remain financially responsible while still maintaining clear expectations for travel, preaching, and presence.

Financial Sustainability

Participants asked whether the presbytery could fund the position at a full time level for several years and requested that leadership develop a longer term financial picture. In particular, there was interest in seeing a three year funding plan and budget projection so that the presbytery can understand how the position fits within long term financial realities.

Search Process

Participants asked for clarity about how the search process itself will work. Questions included how the search committee will be formed, how geographic and congregational diversity will be represented on that committee, and where the position will be posted and publicized. There was interest in ensuring that the search casts a wide and appropriate net so that the presbytery can consider a strong and diverse pool of candidates.

Presbytery Leadership

The conversations were also highly affirming of the work that has taken place since COVID to reconnect the presbytery. Many participants expressed appreciation for the efforts made to strengthen relationships, improve communication, and create meaningful opportunities for churches and pastors to engage with one another. Several noted that they feel more supported than they have in a while.

Much of this work has been carried by a small group of leaders who will not have the same capacity in 2026. These conversations therefore served as both affirmation and invitation. The presbytery is not an “other.” Together, we are the presbytery. Trust grows as more churches and individuals participate in the shared work of connection, leadership, and ministry across the body.

Summary

Participants consistently expressed the desire for a relational pastor who understands rural ministry, builds connections between congregations, offers clear guidance and support, and serves the presbytery with humility, steadiness, and respect for the communities that make up this region.

Feedback Response

In response to the feedback we received, we updated the Executive Presbyter job description to reflect several key themes from the conversations. The revisions emphasize cultural fit, prioritize relationships and congregational presence over new programs, and clarify core duties such as visitation, preaching, regular church contact, and serving as a point of contact for presbytery guidance.

We also prepared a short process addendum to accompany the job description. This document outlines how the leadership team will proceed if the presbytery grants approval, addressing questions raised about the search process, budget planning, committee formation, and how the position will be posted and publicized.

Presbytery of the Northern Plains
Executive Presbyter Proposal
March 2026

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.

Our Context

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains spans a wide geographic region of 54 congregations. Many serve rural and small-town communities where neighboring churches may be hours apart and where there is little infrastructure beyond the local congregation. Travel across the presbytery is significant and regular presence matters.

Our congregations are resilient, well educated, deeply committed, and accustomed to doing much with limited resources. We value humility, steadiness, authenticity, and practical wisdom. We are not ostentatious and we do not seek complexity for its own sake.

We are not seeking a program architect. We are seeking a pastoral presence. We desire a leader who will travel, listen, build trust, drink coffee in fellowship halls, celebrate what is already happening, and strengthen the relational fabric between congregations and The Presbytery. We seek someone who approaches churches with curiosity and respect, honoring the wisdom already present within them.

Core Responsibilities:

Primary Point of Contact

- Serve as the first point of contact for churches and pastors with questions regarding the Book of Order, presbytery processes, required forms, appropriate pods for assistance, and available presbytery resources.
- Provide clear guidance or connect individuals to the appropriate body or resource in a timely manner.

Congregational Presence

- Preach in presbytery congregations 40 to 48 Sundays per year.
- Build relationships not only with church leaders but with members of congregations.
- Contact every congregation at least twice annually for intentional check ins.
- Visit congregations as needed to convey presbytery presence and care during times of celebration, transition, conflict, revitalization, or closure.

Pastor Care

- Maintain regular contact with pastors at large and those between calls.
- Offer pastoral encouragement and appropriate support.

Travel and Visibility

- Spend up to three days per week traveling within the presbytery meeting with pastors, sessions, and congregational leaders.
- Spend up to three weeks per month visiting congregations across the presbytery.
- Coordinate travel and congregational visits thoughtfully to minimize travel time and expenses while maintaining consistent presence throughout the region.

Presbytery Leadership

- Attend and contribute to monthly Leadership Pod meetings.
- Attend and contribute to monthly Congregational Vitality Pod meetings.
- Coordinate stated presbytery meetings in collaboration with Leadership Pod.
- Ensure presbytery gatherings include meaningful and well-prepared worship.

Administrative Oversight

- Manage staff and budgets responsibly.
- Respond in a timely manner to presbytery communications.
- Assist with background checks and required clearances for incoming pastors.
- Maintain familiarity with Board of Pensions matters and other PCUSA developments and communicate relevant information to churches.

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 often** 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 _____.

Executive Presbyter Search Process

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains is seeking to call an Executive Presbyter whose role is primarily relational and pastoral, with clearly defined responsibilities for congregational presence, administrative guidance, and presbytery leadership.

Guiding Priorities

We will prioritize cultural fit, relational leadership, and experience in rural or small-town ministry. We seek a leader who values presence over program development, strengthens connections without increasing workload, and approaches congregations with humility and respect. Defined expectations for visitation, preaching, regular church contact, pod participation, and administrative oversight will guide evaluation.

Compensation and Sustainability

The presbytery will review whether the proposed salary is sufficient to attract a strong candidate. We may consider structuring the role creatively, such as three out of four weeks per month, if this supports sustainability while maintaining presence. A three-year funding plan and projection will be developed.

Search Committee and Posting

A search committee reflecting geographic and congregational diversity will be formed. The position will be widely posted through appropriate denominational networks. The process will emphasize transparency, fiscal responsibility, and prayerful discernment.

BUDGET PROJECTIONS - EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER

	2026		2027	2028	2029
	w/o EP	EP	EP	EP	EP
INCOME					
CASH FLOW - GENERAL FUND	\$ 160,000.00	\$ 160,000.00	\$ 165,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 175,000.00
INVESTMENT INCOME					
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 160,000.00	\$ 160,000.00	\$ 165,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 175,000.00
EXPENSES					
PER CAPITA	\$ 44,000.00	\$ 44,000.00	\$ 44,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 46,000.00
PERSONNEL	\$ 74,000.00	\$ 194,000.00	\$ 199,820.00	\$ 205,814.60	\$ 211,989.04
OFFICE & ADMINISTRATIVE	\$ 13,600.00	\$ 13,600.00	\$ 13,600.00	\$ 13,600.00	\$ 13,600.00
POD EXPENSES	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
MISSION & MINISTRY	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 182,600.00	\$ 302,600.00	\$ 308,420.00	\$ 315,414.60	\$ 322,589.04
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	\$ (22,600.00)	\$ (142,600.00)	\$ (143,420.00)	\$ (145,414.60)	\$ (147,589.04)

PRESBYTERY GRANT PROGRAM REPORT

March 2026

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains is proposing the creation of a Congregational Vitality Grant Program to support churches that are strengthening their ministries and expanding their witness in their communities. This program would provide financial support for projects that enhance congregational life, increase community engagement, and encourage thoughtful stewardship of church resources.

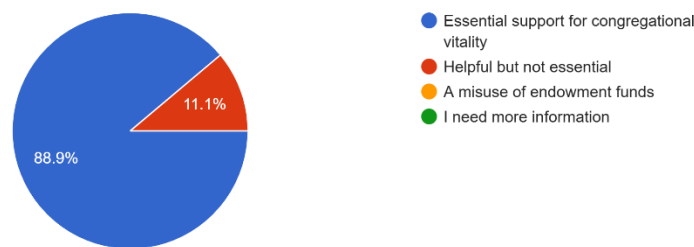
In order to gather feedback on this proposal, the CVP hosted Presbytery-wide Zoom meetings on January 22 and February 10 at 7pm. Invites were sent to churches via monthly newsletter. These conversations helped clarify both the goals of the program and the questions that congregations have about how it would function. We would like to share those findings.

Survey Results

- 22 people representing 16 churches participated in the Zoom calls. 18 people responded to our survey.
- When asked if they support using endowment earnings to provide direct grants to congregations, 100% of participants answered, Yes. 0% answered no or unsure.

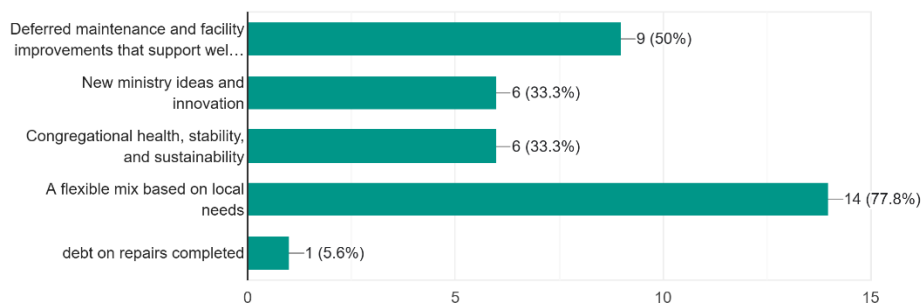
Which best reflects your view of the grant program?

18 responses



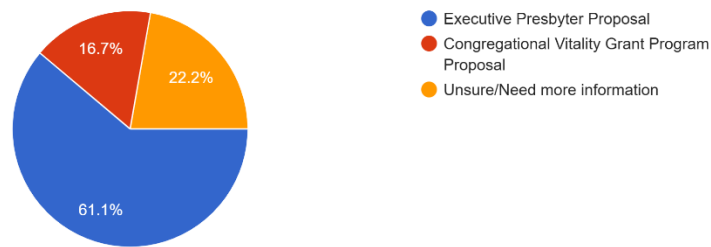
These grants are intended to support congregational vitality in ways not already covered by existing Presbytery funds. Which uses best reflect how you think they should function?

18 responses



If financial constraints require choosing only one proposal, which should be prioritized for funding?

18 responses



- Most participants felt some level of comfort at moving forward with a vote on this proposal with 72% responding that they would be ready to vote in March.
- Trust in presbytery leadership among survey participants is strong. Over 83% expressed clear trust and the remaining respondents expressed moderate trust, with no respondents indicating distrust.

Feedback

In addition to the survey, participants were invited to discuss the proposed Congregational Vitality Grant Program with one another. These conversations raised several questions and helped clarify how the program should function. The themes below summarize the most common areas of interest.

Financial Sustainability

One of the first questions raised was whether the presbytery can responsibly make up to \$50,000 available each year for this program. Participants wanted assurance that funding the grant program would not jeopardize other priorities, particularly the proposed Executive Presbyter position.

In response to these concerns, leadership clarified that up to \$50,000 may be made available annually depending on the health of presbytery accounts, with priority given to maintaining the Executive Presbyter position. The grant program is intended to operate within the financial capacity of the presbytery rather than placing strain on its long term stability.

Use of Funds

Participants also asked how grant funds could be used. In particular, several people wondered whether grants could support salaries or staff positions.

The preference of the program is not to fund ongoing salaries or personnel costs. Instead, funds are intended to support programs, ministry initiatives, and infrastructure projects that strengthen the work of the congregation. A congregation may propose a pilot program designed to test a new ministry initiative that could include a salary provided there is a clear plan for how the congregation would sustain that program beyond the initial grant.

Timing of Projects

Questions were raised about whether grants could be used to reimburse projects that have already

been completed.

The program requires that applications be submitted before work begins. This allows the Congregational Vitality Pod to review the vision for the project, confirm readiness through bids or documentation, and ensure that funds are used in alignment with the goals of the program.

Application Timing

Participants asked how often churches could apply and how the application cycle would function.

Churches may apply at any time during the year, and applications will be reviewed quarterly. To ensure that funding remains available throughout the year, half of the annual funds will be available during the first two quarters and the remaining half during the final two quarters.

When reviewing applications, priority will be given to congregations that demonstrate a clear and thoughtful plan for ministry growth and engagement.

Multiple Applications

Another question concerned whether a congregation could receive more than one grant.

Churches may apply for multiple grants over time, but priority will be given to congregations applying for the first time. This approach allows the program to support a broad range of congregations across the presbytery while still permitting churches to pursue additional projects when appropriate.

Transparency and Reporting

Participants asked how the presbytery would be informed about which congregations receive grants and how funds are being used.

To maintain transparency, the Congregational Vitality Pod will report at each presbytery meeting which churches have received grants. In addition, congregations that receive funding will be asked to share a story or newsletter article describing the project and how it is strengthening their ministry. These reports will allow the presbytery to celebrate the work happening across our congregations and learn from one another.

Decision Process

Questions were also raised about how grant decisions would be made and what governance structure would guide the process.

The Congregational Vitality Pod will review applications and make recommendations, while the Leadership Pod will vote on final approval. A 60 percent quorum of the Leadership Pod must be present for a vote to take place, ensuring that grant decisions reflect shared leadership within the presbytery.

Building Projects

Several participants asked whether the grants could be used for improvements to church

buildings.

Grants may be used for building related projects, particularly when those improvements help a congregation better serve its community or expand its ministry. As with other projects, preference will be given to congregations that can clearly demonstrate how the proposed project contributes to a larger plan for growth and engagement.

Purpose of the Congregational Vitality Grant Program

Participants also asked for greater clarity about the broader purpose of the program itself.

First, the presbytery has an opportunity to invest in congregations that have invested in the life of this presbytery. The grant program allows the presbytery to return some of those resources to congregations so they can strengthen their ministries.

Second, the program is designed to encourage thoughtful and intentional growth. If we want the Presbytery to remain strong in the years ahead, we must be willing to invest in ministries that reach new people, deepen community engagement, and expand the witness of the gospel. These grants provide practical tools that allow congregations to pursue those goals.

Finally, there is wisdom in actively investing the resources entrusted to the presbytery today. Holding funds indefinitely carries its own risks. By supporting congregations now, the presbytery strengthens ministries that are already serving their communities and ensures that these resources are used to further the work of the church in this region.

Summary

The Congregational Vitality Grant Program is designed to support congregations that are actively strengthening their ministries and seeking new ways to serve their communities. Participants consistently expressed interest in a program that is financially responsible, transparent in its decision making, and focused on projects that contribute to meaningful congregational vitality and growth.

Feedback Response

In response to the feedback we received, we clarified several aspects of the Congregational Vitality Grant Program. These clarifications include guidelines regarding the use of funds, expectations around project readiness, the quarterly review process for applications, and how the presbytery will be informed about grant awards.

We also emphasized that the program prioritizes ministry initiatives, infrastructure improvements, and pilot projects that strengthen congregational vitality rather than ongoing personnel expenses. These adjustments reflect the desire expressed in our conversations for a program that supports practical ministry growth while maintaining strong financial stewardship.

Congregational Vitality Grant Program

03-21-2026

Introduction

The Congregational Vitality Grant Program provides financial support to congregations within the Presbytery of the Northern Plains for projects that strengthen ministry and expand the church's witness in local communities. Because our churches faithfully support the shared work of the presbytery through leadership, participation, and financial contributions, this program returns some of those resources to congregations.

Program Overview

The Congregational Vitality Grant Program will provide financial assistance for projects that strengthen congregational ministry, deepen community engagement, or expand the capacity of churches to share the gospel.

The presbytery may make available up to \$50,000 annually from presbytery endowment funds to support this program. The amount distributed each year will depend on the financial health of presbytery accounts and will remain secondary to funding the Executive Presbyter position.

Program Details

- Congregations may request grants of up to \$50,000.
- The amount awarded may not exceed 150 percent of the appraised value of the church property.
- 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.
- Applications will be reviewed quarterly. To ensure funds remain available throughout the year, half of the annual allocation will be available during the first two quarters of the year and the remaining half will be available during the final two quarters.

Eligibility Criteria

Congregations applying for a Congregational Vitality Grant must meet the following criteria.

- The congregation must be a member church of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains.
- The congregation must demonstrate vitality through active engagement in ministry, outreach, or community service. We are flexible in how congregations define vitality within their context.
- The congregation must present a clear description of how the project will strengthen its ministry or support future growth.
- The congregation must be current on per capita payments or engaged in a repayment plan approved by the Presbytery Leadership Pod.

- Applications must include documentation of bids or plans or equivalent materials showing the project is ready to begin.

Note: Grants cannot be awarded for projects that have already been completed or for expenses incurred prior to approval.

Use of Funds

- Grants may be used for ministry programs, outreach initiatives, infrastructure improvements, building projects, or other efforts that strengthen congregational vitality.
- The program is not intended to fund ongoing salaries or permanent staffing positions. In limited cases, a congregation may request support for a pilot program that tests a new ministry initiative, provided the congregation includes a clear plan for how that program will be sustained beyond the grant period.
- Congregations may apply for more than one grant over time. Priority will be given to congregations applying for the first time in order to ensure broad participation across the presbytery.

Application Process

- Congregations will submit a formal application describing the project, its anticipated impact on congregational vitality, and documentation demonstrating project readiness. (Application form attached).
- Applications will be reviewed by the Congregational Vitality Pod, which will make recommendations to the Presbytery Leadership Pod.
- The Leadership Pod will vote on final approval of grants. At least 60 percent of Leadership Pod members must be present for a vote to occur.
- Funds will not be released until all required documentation has been received and approved.
- Congregations receiving grants will be asked to submit a brief report or newsletter article describing the project and how it has strengthened the ministry of their congregation. These stories will be shared with the presbytery so that churches may celebrate and learn from one another's work.
- The Congregational Vitality Pod will also report regularly to the presbytery regarding grants that have been awarded.

Conclusion

The Congregational Vitality Grant Program reflects the presbytery's commitment to nurturing strong congregations and encouraging faithful stewardship of shared resources. By providing accessible funding with clear accountability, the presbytery seeks to support ministries that strengthen congregations, expand community engagement, and share the good news of Jesus Christ across our region.

CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY GRANT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much funding is available?

Up to \$50,000 may be available each year depending on the financial health of presbytery accounts. Funding for the Executive Presbyter position will remain the presbytery's first financial priority.

How large can a grant be?

Churches may request grants of up to \$50,000. The grant may not exceed 150 percent of the appraised value of the church property.

When can churches apply?

Churches may apply at any time during the year. Applications will be reviewed quarterly.

To ensure fair access, half of the annual funds will be available during the first two quarters of the year and the remaining half during the final two quarters.

Can a grant be used for staff salaries?

The program is not intended to fund ongoing salaries or permanent staff positions. However, congregations may request funding for pilot programs that test a new ministry initiative if they include a plan for sustaining that work in the future.

Can grants be used for building projects?

Yes. Building improvements may be funded when they help a congregation expand ministry, strengthen community engagement, or support future growth.

Can grants reimburse projects that have already been completed?

No. Applications must be submitted and approved before work begins.

Can a church apply for more than one grant?

Yes. Congregations may apply for multiple grants over time, but priority will be given to churches applying for the first time.

Who decides which churches receive grants?

The Congregational Vitality Pod reviews applications and makes recommendations. The Presbytery Leadership Pod votes on final approval. At least 60 percent of Leadership Pod members must be present for a vote.

How will the presbytery know which churches receive grants?

The Congregational Vitality Pod will report regularly to the presbytery. Churches receiving grants will also be asked to share a short story or newsletter article describing how the grant supported their ministry.

Presbytery of the Northern Plains
CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY GRANT PROGRAM
Application (outline)

Church Information

Church Name
City / Town
Primary Contact Person
Contact Email
Contact Phone
Pastor (if applicable)

Application Information

Date of Application
Amount Requested
Total Project Cost
Brief Project Title

Project Summary (100 word limit)

In 3–5 sentences, describe the project for which you are requesting funding. This summary may be used when reporting to the presbytery about awarded grants.

Purpose of the Project (100 word limit)

Describe the need or opportunity this project addresses. Explain why this project is important for your congregation at this time.

Congregational Vitality (100 word limit)

Describe how this project will strengthen the vitality of your congregation. Examples may include:

- *expanding ministry in the community*
- *increasing participation in congregational life*
- *supporting outreach or mission*
- *improving the congregation's ability to serve neighbors*
- *strengthening programs that support growth in faith or membership*

Growth Vision (100 word limit)

Explain how this project connects to your congregation's broader vision for ministry and growth. How will this project help your church reach new people, deepen engagement, or strengthen its presence in the community?

Project Description (500 word limit)

Provide a clear description of the project including:

- *what will be done*
- *who will carry out the work*
- *the expected timeline*
- *when the project will begin and be completed*

If the request involves a pilot ministry program, describe how the congregation plans to sustain the program after the grant period.

Project Readiness (100 word limit)

Describe the current status of the project and how the congregation is prepared to begin the work.

Required Documentation

Applications must include documentation showing that the project is ready to begin. Please attach the following where applicable:

- *contractor bids*
- *vendor estimates*
- *project plans*
- *architectural drawings*
- *program plans or budgets*

Note: Grants cannot be awarded for projects that have already been completed or for expenses incurred prior to approval.

Project Budget

Please provide a breakdown of project costs.

Amount the Congregation Will Contribute

Other Funding Sources (if applicable)

Use of Funds (250 word limit)

Describe specifically how the grant funds will be used.

Note: Grants are intended for ministry programs, outreach initiatives, infrastructure improvements, or building projects that strengthen congregational vitality. The program does not fund ongoing salaries or permanent staffing positions. Pilot ministry programs may be considered if the congregation provides a plan for sustainability.

Congregational Commitment (100 word limit)

Describe how the congregation will support this project through volunteer leadership, financial contributions, or other resources.

Expected Impact (250 word limit)

What changes or outcomes do you hope this project will create for your congregation or community?

Reporting and Storytelling

Congregations receiving grants will be asked to share a short report or newsletter article describing how the grant supported their ministry. This may be shared with the presbytery.

Do you agree to write and share your story with the wider presbytery?

Certification

By submitting this application, the congregation affirms that:

- the project has not yet begun
- the information provided is accurate
- the congregation agrees to provide required documentation before funds are released
- the congregation agrees to share a short report about the project if the grant is awarded

Name and Title of Person Submitting Application

Signature

Date

Chogoria Partnership: Growing Connections, Growing Impact

The Chogoria Partnership Ministry Team continues to nurture relationships between our Presbytery of the Northern Plains and our partners in Chogoria, Kenya. This work is grounded in shared faith, mutual respect, and a commitment to walking alongside one another.

This past October, Sharon Secor, Carrie Lauber, and I traveled to Chogoria to spend time with church leaders and community partners. Our visit was centered on listening, learning, and strengthening relationships. These face-to-face connections continue to shape how we engage in this partnership—with humility and care.

One area of shared work is the development of a **Youth-Friendly Center**, envisioned by leaders in Chogoria as a space to support young people in their spiritual, emotional, and social well-being. We are grateful to be in conversation and partnership as this vision takes shape.

We also learned more about the hopes of the leadership at **Mpangua Primary School**. The school's board has a vision of expanding into a secondary and boarding school, increasing access to education for students in their community. Our role is not to direct this vision, but to listen, encourage, and discern together how we might support their goals.

Looking ahead, another trip to Chogoria is being planned. Ginger Dietz, Carrie Lauber, and I will be traveling, and we are hoping to invite a small number of others to join us. This would be an opportunity to build relationships, learn from our partners, and experience the partnership firsthand.

As this ministry continues to grow, we are seeking others who feel called to be part of this shared work:

- Individuals interested in joining the Chogoria Partnership Ministry Team
- Congregations interested in building relationships with sister churches in Chogoria
- Those interested in participating in future trips to Kenya

We also invite support for the **Chogoria Hunger Fund**, which provides direct assistance to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.

This partnership is not about one side helping another—it is about relationship, mutual transformation, and recognizing Christ in one another. If you feel drawn to this work, we would love to connect with you.

Jamie Norstog,
CPMT Co-Chair