



1315 Central Ave
Great Falls MT 59401-3833
www.firstpresgfmt.org



OFFICE HOURS
Monday – Thursday 8 a.m – 4 p.m.
Friday 8 a.m. – 12 Noon
Phone 406 – 453 – 1411

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Great Falls MT
Permit #351
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Presbyterian

Embracing Grace
Embracing Community

Publication of First Presbyterian Church Great Falls, Montana

February 2026



February 18 Ash Wednesday Soup Supper
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
5:30 p.m. soup supper

February 25 Lenten Soup Supper
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
5:30 p.m. soup supper
6:15 p.m. Movie: **The Way** Part 1

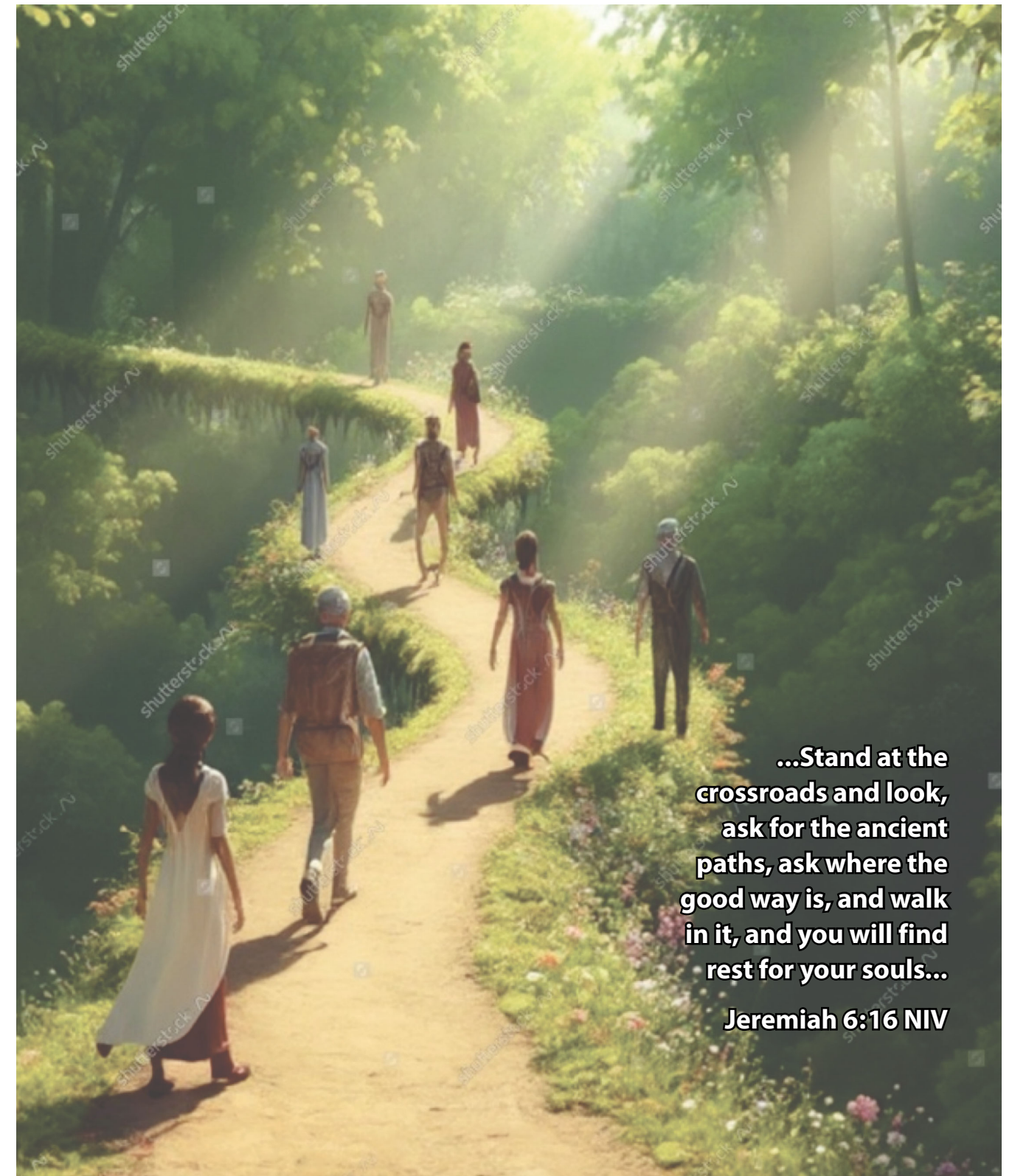
March 4 Lenten Soup Supper
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
5:30 p.m. soup supper
6:15 p.m. Movie: **The Way** Part 2

March 11 Lenten Soup Supper
First Presbyterian Church Great Falls
5:30 p.m. soup supper
6:15 p.m. Movie: **Godspeed**

March 18 Lenten Soup Supper
First Presbyterian Church Great Falls
5:30 p.m. soup supper
6:15 p.m. Movie: **Butterfly Circus**

March 25 Lenten Soup Supper
First Presbyterian Church Great Falls
5:30 p.m. soup supper
6:15 p.m. Movie:
I Heard the Owl Call My Name

Feasting and Fasting
Lenten Soup Supper
All Are Welcome



**...Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...
Jeremiah 6:16 NIV**

FEBRUARY PENSAMIENTOS Pastor Risa Paul

Join us on our 40 day Lenten Journey--The Way

I am always amazed at the speed with which Lent sneaks up on me after Christmas!

Ash Wednesday is February 18!

Lent begins about 40 days before Easter. I say ABOUT 40 days because we don't count Sundays. Sundays are always feast days.

Every Sunday is a day when we celebrate the resurrection.

So, get your joy on for Sundays--even during Lent! And yes, that does mean that if you give up something for Lent or take on something for Lent you can have a break on Sunday--- but just on Sunday!

So, Lent has six full weeks. 6 weeks x 7 days is 42 days. Minus 6 (those 6 Sundays, remember) and that means 36 days.

But we need 40 days. Why? Because it mimics Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness. And also, the 40 years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert after their exodus from Egypt.

So, the way we go from 36 days to 40 days is by starting on the Wednesday before the first full week of Lent. That would be Ash Wednesday. We then add Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday of this week. So, 36 days plus 4 days is 40 days. That's why we begin Lent on a Wednesday-- so we can legitimately come up with the 40 days.

Those are the numbers. Those are the facts. But facts keep us in our heads and this day, Ash Wednesday, the portal into Lent, calls us to engage with our heart and our spirit. With apologies to Dragnet and Sergeant Joe Friday, "just the facts,

ma'am" is not going to cut it on this Lenten journey.

And we are going on a journey. Our theme is "The Way" and we will be looking at several journeys and thinking about our own faith journey.

I am excited that we will share this time with Our Savior's Lutheran, Redeemer Lutheran and some folks from Sunrise Presbyterian as well. It is always good to journey with friends! Look for the Lenten Soup Supper schedule on the back page of this edition of the *Pressbyterian*.

Journeys are always easier with some preparation ... so be thinking about the three parts of our Lenten Journey, often called the three Pillars of Lent - maybe for us this year the three signposts of Lent reminding us of where we have been, where we are, and where we are headed. Prayer, Almsgiving, and Fasting. Where are you in your journey with these virtues - and where do you want to be? How will you set out on this journey?

Pastor Risa
First Presbyterian Church of Great Falls



Happy Birthdays
FEBRUARY

April Hansen	5
Amber Rausch	5
Forney Funderburk	6
Tom Horton	7
Doug Van Dyck	10
Nancy Davidson	12
Dick Olson	14
Randy Gray	17
Jane Hashley	19
Dan Hazen	22
Jeremiah Ormseth	26
Leonard Ormseth	26
Gerrit Bloemendaal	27

The Presbyterian is a monthly publication of First Presbyterian Church of Great Falls
Deadline for submissions: 20th of each month
Send pictures or story ideas our way
Email articles, ideas and/or pictures to:
secretary@firstpresgfmt.org
Subject: NEWSLETTER
For images, please include the name of photographer and any information you'd like added to the newsletter.

First Presbyterian Church Operating Fund		
Activity Report December 2025		
	Actual	Budget
	YTD	YTD
Revenue	\$320,392.48	\$323,258.00
Total Expenditures	273,688.33	314,229.00
Net Operating Revenue	\$ (46,704.15)	\$ 9,029.00

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREAT FALLS
1315 CENTRAL AVENUE
GREAT FALLS, MT, 59401
PASTOR RISA PAUL
SUNDAY SERVICE: 10 A.M.
FELLOWSHIP FOLLOWING SERVICE
PHONE: 406-453-1411
OFFICE HOURS:
MONDAY - THURSDAY 8 A.M. TO 4 P.M.
FRIDAY 8 A.M. TO NOON
EMAIL: secretary@firstpresgfmt.org

Calendar for FEBRUARY:

- 1 Sunday**
Communion
Annual Meeting after service
Potluck after meeting
- 3 Tuesday**
Noon Souler Energy
3:15 p.m. Mission
4:00 p.m. Property
- 4 Wednesday**
10:00 a.m. Galatians-Deep Dive
11:30 a.m. My 1 Word/Sack Lunch
- 5 Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee @ Miss Kitty's
- 8 Sunday**
11:30 a.m. Personal Prayer in sanctuary
- 10 Tuesday**
10:00 a.m. Iris Service
3:00 p.m. Finance
3:15 p.m. Worship
- 11 Wednesday**
10:00 a.m. Galatians-Deep Dive
1:00 p.m. Outreach
- 12 Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee @ Miss Kitty's
11:30 a.m. Grandview Service
6:30 p.m. Session
- 15 Sunday**
Corporate Prayer
- 18 Wednesday**
10:00 a.m. Galatians-Deep Dive
7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service at
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
- 19 Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee @ Miss Kitty's
- 20 10:30 a.m. NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**
- 21 Saturday**
10:00 a.m. Presbyterian Women
- 24 Tuesday**
5:30 p.m. Deacons
- 25 Wednesday**
10:00 a.m. Galatians-Deep Dive
5:30 p.m. Soup Supper
6:15 p.m. movie: "The Way" part 1
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
hosts supper and movie
- 26 Thursday**
8:30 a.m. Coffee @ Miss Kitty's

300 words from Jane~

Some things to think on this Season of Lent

Lent is a 40-day, solemn and penitential season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to prepare us for Easter and the resurrection. It symbolizes Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness, and offering us time to re-center on God. When we put aside personal pleasures to focus on our spiritual growth and resurrection. To repent, and strive for deeper faith.

Sure, we 'give up' something from Ash Wednesday to Easter (excluding Sundays). My grandfather used to give up whiskey for Lent. But only for Lent. And he routinely enacted the Sunday escape clause.

Lent holds deeper truths for us. It offers us a moment where we become honest with ourselves. When we examine our lives and discover where our faith is weak. We have unfettered conversations with God, where that 'still small voice,' offers us a deeper spiritual union with Him. It is a time for repairing damage caused by sin and re-centering one's identity as a child of God.

Lent mirrors the days Jesus spent in the wilderness. We read in Matthew 4:2 that 'After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.' Thinking Jesus was weak and thirsty, Satan tempted him with some really crazy ideas. Hungry? Turn stone into bread. Thirsty? Jump from the top of the temple, you are the Son of God.

But weak and thirsty **is** the trap. Just one bite, one sip. It will be okay. Not in some faraway desert, but in our homes, in our hearts where life happens in unexpected ways. When our superficial self is tired, hungry, and wanting to be satisfied.

In the forty days of Lent, we have the opportunity to examine hidden places in our minds and hearts. Through fasting and prayer, we can create a 'space' in which we may hear the deeper, spiritual voice that satisfies a deep longing for God.



Presbyterian Women meets February 21, Join us!

Any woman who attends First Presbyterian Church is always welcome to join our monthly meetings. Usually held on the third Saturday of each month, we participate in a Bible or Christian-themed study along with discussing worthwhile projects.

Our February meeting is February 21, 10 a.m. at Toni Larson's home, 3400 Bison Lane. Our discussion will center on lesson 5 from the study book "**Let Justice Roll Down**". We also discuss our upcoming projects such as the rummage sale.

We hope to see you there!

You filled up our Mitten Tree/Bin (see picture below)

First Presbyterian Church congregation once again proved how generous you are.

The Mitten Tree aka Mitten Bin is reminiscent of childhood school projects when we donated cold weather items for the less fortunate.

You kindly donated a variety of cold weather clothing including: nine pairs of **gloves**, eight **hats**, four **scarves**, and one pair of **socks**.

We delivered everything to the Rescue Mission.

The Rescue Mission and our Presbyterian Women group are so very grateful for your awesome generosity.



Article No. 19

Walking forward with Faith and Gratitude

By Starfish Scholar Rhizza A. Valderama

Starting school once again marks a meaningful turning point in my life: a season of new beginnings filled with hope, quiet prayers, and renewed faith. As I step into this chapter, I am reminded that I do not walk this journey on my own. Every opportunity placed before me is a reflection of God’s grace, His perfect timing, and His faithfulness in my life.

There were seasons when the path ahead felt uncertain. I experienced moments of doubt, fear, and weariness times when I questioned my abilities and wondered if I was truly capable of continuing. These challenges tested not only my strength but also my faith. Yet through it all, God remained faithful. Even when I could not see the way forward, He was already preparing the path for me.

This journey has taught me patience, humility, and perseverance. I have learned that success is not only measured by achievements or recognition, but by obedience and trust in God’s plan. Every small step forward is meaningful, especially when it is guided by faith.

I am deeply grateful to the people God has used as instruments of support and encouragement in my life. My family has been my foundation standing with me through every struggle, lifting me up through their prayers, and constantly reminding me to trust in the Lord. Their sacrifices inspire me to continue pursuing my dreams, not only for myself but also for them.

I am also incredibly thankful for my church, which has been a source of spiritual strength and guidance. Through prayers, encouragement, and genuine care, my church family has helped shape my faith and remind me of my purpose. Their support has played a significant role in keeping me grounded and focused on God’s calling in my life.

I am sincerely grateful to both the individuals and to First Presbyterian Church, used by God

to support my education. You believed in me during seasons when I felt unsure. Through your generosity and kindness, God opened doors that seemed impossible. As a Starfish Scholar, this opportunity is more than just financial support; it is a reminder that God provides through people who are willing to be His hands and feet.

As I continue my studies, my heart is also being prepared for greater service. I look forward to new ministries the Lord will entrust to me. God placed me in this school to grow academically, but also to grow spiritually and to serve others. I desire to be used by Him in the classroom, in ministry, and wherever He leads me. I want my life to reflect His love, faithfulness, and grace in all that I do.

This journey is not only for my personal growth, but also for my family and the people who have supported me along the way. I carry their prayers, hopes, and trust with me as I move forward. Even when the future feels uncertain, I choose to trust God, believing that He is working everything according to His perfect plan.

As I begin this school year, I surrender my fears, my dreams, and my expectations to the Lord. Wherever He leads me whether in school, in ministry, or in places I never imagined I will follow with faith and obedience. I know that this season is part of God’s greater plan for my life, and I choose to walk forward with gratitude, courage, and unwavering trust in Him.

***“Commit to the Lord
whatever you do, and
He will establish your plans.”***

Proverbs 16:3

Old Maps No Longer Work

I keep pulling it out –
 the old map of my inner path
 I squint closely at it,
 trying to see some hidden road
 that maybe I've missed,
 but there's nothing there now
 except some well-travelled paths.
 they have seen my footsteps often,
 held my laughter, caught my tears.
 I keep going over the old map
 but now the roads lead nowhere,
 a meaningless wilderness
 where life is dull and futile.
 "toss away the old map," she says
 "you must be kidding!" I reply.
 she looks at me with Sarah eyes
 and repeats "toss it away.
 It's of no use where you're going."
 "I have to have a map!" I cry,
 "even if it takes me nowhere.
 I can't be without direction,"
 "but you are without direction,"
 she says, "so why not let go, be free?"
 so there I am – tossing away the old map,
 sadly fearfully, putting it behind me.
 "whatever will I do?" wails my security
 "trust me" says my midlife soul.
 no map, no specific directions,
 no "this way ahead" or "take a left".
 how will I know where to go?
 how will I find my way? no map!
 but then my midlife soul whispers
 "there was a time before maps
 when pilgrims travelled by the stars."
 It is time for the pilgrim in me
 to travel in the dark,
 to learn to read the stars
 that shine in my soul.
 I will walk deeper
 into the dark of my night.
 I will wait for the stars.
 trust their guidance.
 and let their light be enough for me.

© Joyce Rupp
 [from Dear Heart, Come Home]

Why Soup Suppers are Important and what they mean

The origin of the Lenten supper lies in the early Church, when Christians would fast from food and water until sunset and then consume a Lenten supper once sundown occurred. Many churches still engage in this, usually once a week - and we do not fast until sundown. Some of the early church fathers only allowed bread, vegetables, and salt in this meal. We do not follow this tradition now - but I believe that is the origin of the soup in our soup supper.

Why is it important to observe Lent in this way?

In a church filled with people who did not have nor could they read the Scriptures, it was important to have special times and means to teach the concepts of our faith. And to teach the concepts of prayer, almsgiving and fasting - practices we carry throughout our year but that we especially emphasize in this period. So, we now do not HAVE to observe Lenten practices, instead we GET to observe these practices of spiritual formation to help grow our faith.

Why is it important that other denominations join in?

There is only one Church. We have let ourselves be divided by political ambitions and doctrinal hair splitting down through the centuries. But John tells us in his Gospel that God so loved the WORLD - not just Presbyterians, or Lutherans, or *insert name of your denomination here*. As we join together in these Lenten Soup Suppers, we recognize the Christ who unites us in His Church, and not our divisions.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Ann Marie Miller, Fellowship Moderator

Thank you to all who volunteered for donations on the sign-up sheets, helped set up and clean-up for Coffee Hour.

A special appreciation goes out to those who have made monetary donations to the Fellowship Coffee Hour account to help offset expenses during 2025.

As we all know, prices have increased and product quantities have shrunk! We continue to look for ways to cut costs. For example, we use only plastic bags with ties or zipper closures rather than slider bags, which are more costly. Also, encourage people to use size-appropriate bags for left-overs or use plastic wrap.

Freezer Status

Unfortunately, a few weeks ago we found the Social Hall freezer warm and food inside defrosted. Property Committee and Fellowship continue to assess whether the freezer can be repaired and returned to service, or to obtain a new freezer.

Annual Meeting and Potluck

The First Presbyterian Church Annual meeting is Sunday February first after our 10 a.m. service.

A potluck dinner follows in Fellowship Hall.

Beverages, rolls and butter will be provided. Bring your special dish to share!

Ash Wednesday/Lenten Soup Suppers

February 18 is Ash Wednesday followed by 5 weeks of Lenten Soup Suppers shared with our neighbors across the alley and others. Keep a watch out for serving time and sign-up sheets for soup donations! Beverages, rolls, and butter will be provided. Additional information on cookie needs will be provided.

Thank you to all who helped with decorating and undecorating the church this year. We cannot do it without all the volunteers. Each year it becomes more difficult; less volunteers and taking longer. In July 2026, we're planning a "Christmas" meeting to discuss new approaches and prepare for the future open to anyone interested.



"Gathering together to nourish our community."

Our next week to staff FISH- February week 9th thru 13th

I was blessed to have a great crew taking over while Kathy & I were able to enjoy the holiday with my one son in the sun. They served a total of 16 clients the 3 days handing out lots of Food especially at Christmas.

Thanks to Brian for taking charge and Dean helping make sure everything went well. I did miss working with Dick, Debbie, and Jane but also appreciate being able to spend time with my son.

We received from Town Pump the \$25,000 plus an additional \$15,000 because of the food crisis caused by government shutdown.



Dick & Debbie Olson
Brian Massey



Brian Massey
Deb Skinner
Dean Schamp



Brian Massey
Jane Hashley
Dean Schamp