

First Presbyterian Church

2025 Annual Report

Our 194th Year





Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church

Tell me something good! That is the theme of our Lenten worship this year—and of our Annual Meeting as well. And truly, 2025 was a good year for First Presbyterian Church.

We continued to live into our motto, “Seeking the Heart of God in the Heart of the City,” in tangible and joyful ways.

Our second annual Hands On Fort Wayne Day of Service welcomed even more participants than the year before. We hosted our first “South Side Day,” partnering with South Side High School’s fine arts students and staff. Their artwork filled our gallery, their choirs sang on our stage, and a couple hundred students and family members filled our building with energy and joy. It was a wonderful day of welcome and connection.

A small but mighty group from our congregation became part of the new Fort Wayne Area Interfaith Cooperative, seeking common ground in what unites us rather than what divides us. And every Sunday, many of you faithfully packed bags of food for students at Washington Elementary School, ensuring they have meals over the weekend.

We also welcomed 18 new members this year, along with two new staff members: Colin Andrews, Director of Music and Organist, and Jordan Plohr, Director of Dramatic Arts Ministry. In October, we hosted the largest Coffee with the Pastors gathering we’ve ever had, thanks to our pastors and our wonderful Ambassadors. That same month, we joyfully celebrated 100 years of the Church Foundation.

On the operations side, a new boiler has kept us warm all winter, and this spring we will install solar panels, made possible through a generous donor and a government subsidy. We are now fully caught up on all required audits, and COVID-related grants meant we drew less from the Foundation for operational needs than we have in several years.

On a personal note, I want to thank you for your care, prayers, and support during my medical leave. You were crucial to my recovery, and I am deeply grateful to be back—worshiping with you in person and serving alongside you in ministry. I also extend heartfelt thanks to our capable and faithful staff who stepped in so ably during my absence. We are truly blessed by their dedication.

Times are difficult in many ways right now. But we are people of Good News. Let us continue to root our hearts and lives in the expansive goodness of God, and to seek the heart of God in the heart of the city.

With gratitude and blessings,

**Rev. Dr. Anne Bain Epling
Pastor/Head of Staff**





Dear Friends,

When I was a child, whenever I caught a cold or a fever and had to stay home from school, my mother would comfort me with these words:

"Youngsoo, you are hurting because you are growing." Those words provided me with immense comfort. Though there is pain, I believe that such pain is part of God's plan to foster our growth.

On a personal level, 2025 was a tough year. However, pain does not simply remain as suffering; it brings about growth. With that expectation in mind, I came to a conclusion: "I decided to enjoy it." With this heart, I am happy to report several joyful and thankful highlights from our 2025 ministry.

1. A New Wind in KLM

A new wind has blown into the Korean Language Ministry (KLM). This wind is a revival of our Church School, sparked by the joining of young couples. In recent years, Korean companies have built factories and started production in Fort Wayne and the surrounding areas. As a result, many Korean employees have joined our congregation. Furthermore, influenced by the recent "K-Culture" wave, many people from the American community who are interested in Korean culture have begun participating in KLM worship. All of these factors have worked together to bring a new atmosphere, increased attendance, and changes in leadership. Most thankfully, this is just a "gentle breeze." When this wind grows into a "mighty typhoon," our church will be used even more preciously for God's work.

2. The Popularization of K-Culture

Korean culture, which first became known through K-food and K-movies, has recently gained even more momentum through K-pop. Most notably, the song "Golden" featured in the movie K-Pop Demon Hunters became a global hit, further boosting K-culture. To us, however, this news isn't all that surprising. Our church has supported the Fort Wayne Korean Festival for a

long time, even providing our theater and McKay Hall as venues during the pandemic. We have also been hosting K-pop concerts in our church theater for a couple years. Would it be an exaggeration to say that the recent rise of K-culture is due to our church's significant efforts? (This is my joke, of course, but it's certainly possible!) Having arrived here 16 years ago with a priority to invite the Korean community to our church, I do not see this K-culture craze as a mere social phenomenon. I believe it is a clear answer and a sign from God regarding our collective efforts.

3. Expanding the Horizons of Ministry

Since the end of 2025, there has been a change in my job description. My responsibility for pastoral care has expanded to the entire congregation. Having served as a pastor in this blessed church for 16 years, pastoral care has always been a natural part of my ministry—carried out, of course, with the help of the precious co-workers God has provided. However, with Rev. Ann Pitman's retirement at the end of last year, I have taken on most of the pastoral care responsibilities she previously held. While a pastor has many roles, the area that truly makes me feel like a pastor and gives me the most fulfillment is pastoral care. This is why I chose it as my major for my Doctor of Ministry at McCormick Seminary.

I am fully prepared and grateful to take on this expanded role. To do this effectively, I need your help. Please remember that I am now the "first contact person" for your pastoral care needs—please reach out to me. I also ask for your prayers and support. The prayers and help of the congregation, which make me the pastor I am, will enable me to carry out this pastoral care even better.

Thank you.

Youngsoo An

The "Happy Pastor," also known as Rev. An



Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the past year in ministry, I am filled with gratitude for the many ways God has been at work among us through creativity, community, and shared leadership.

MAD2 Camp remains a cornerstone of our summer ministry and a powerful expression of who we are as

a congregation. What unfolds during one joyful week in June is supported by months of dreaming, planning, communicating, decorating, coordinating, and faithful execution by staff and volunteers alike. This year, staff transitions invited us to reimagine our teaching team and strengthen community partnerships, all while keeping the spirit of the program joyful, inclusive, and rooted in our mission. When more than 75 children and nearly 40 volunteers and staff gathered for an arts-based experience inspired by The Wizard of Oz, the result was a beautiful celebration of courage, heart, wisdom, belonging, and shared creativity.

This year stretched us in meaningful ways, inviting creativity, flexibility, and deeper trust in one another. Together with senior staff and congregational leaders, we fostered worship and congregational life that reflected shared leadership and active participation. One expression of that spirit was Ponderings on Passages, a summer series that invited members of the congregation to step into the pulpit and reflect on the weekly lectionary. Their reflections revealed the richness of our collective faith and reminded us that the church is strongest when every voice is welcomed.

Serving as Day School Chaplain continues to be one of the great joys of my ministry. Through weekly chapel leadership and special programming, our youngest learners encounter stories of faith in ways that spark curiosity and belonging. Reading Across America Week was a particular highlight, as storytelling took center stage, and an inflatable unicorn costume reminded us that joy is often a faithful teacher in its own right.

Public witness continued to shape our life together this year. Through participation in Fort Wayne Pride Fest, we offered an arts-based expression of welcome and hospitality. In partnership with neighboring congregations, we helped create sacred space for the Transgender Day of Remembrance, holding lament and solidarity side by side. These moments reflect our commitment to embodying Christ's love not only within our walls, but in the wider community.

It has been a sacred privilege to serve with you this year. I give thanks for the ways God has knit our gifts together in shared purpose and joyful work. Even as years turn and roles shift, the Spirit remains at work among you, and I look ahead with gratitude for what has been and hope for the faithful future that awaits this congregation.

**Gratefully,
Rev. Carrie Winebrenner
Associate Pastor**





*Seeking the Heart of God in the Heart
of the City!*



Worship

Tell Me Something Good...

Worship is at the center of the church, the place where God's call and our response comes together in Word and Sacrament, as we gather to sing, pray, and hear the Word preached.

In 2025, we worshipped at Church in the Park at Shoaff Park, hosted the annual joint PC(USA) worship service, and saw our largest in- person Christmas Eve attendance in many years. We even worshipped with our hands and feet for Hands on Fort Wayne.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our many volunteers working as part of the Chancel Guild, the Pew Guild, and the Ushers Team for their faithful commitment to enhancing our weekly worship services.





Missions

Tell Me Something Good...

The Mission Committee continues engaging in compassionate service and promoting peace and justice, working together to fulfill God's mission.

- **The Triple H Team (Helping the Homeless and Hungry) continued serving the Rescue Mission, Saint Joseph's Women's Shelter, and supplying local food banks at Wellspring, East Wayne Street Center, and United Faith Presbyterian. We are happy to partner with Blessings in a Backpack and the Schools Team packing meals on Sunday mornings.**
- **The Schools Team also continued its support for students and staff at Washington Elementary and South Wayne Elementary with cards, lunches, clothing donations, and by funding projects like the robotics team.**
- **Missions continues to build its relationship with South Side High School by providing volunteers and financial support to the Peacemakers Academy.**
- **Members of the Social Justice Team attended trainings for the *Our Whole Lives*' holistic sexual/reproductive educational curriculum. They also learned about non-cooperation (i.e., nonviolent protest) in the face of injustices we currently see in our world.**

Missions

Tell Me Something Good...

- **The Social Justice Team oversaw FPC’s presence at PrideFest in July with scores of visitors to our tent and participation in our art project.**
- **Missions Committee members have been guiding forces in local interfaith initiatives—they helped create the new FWAIC group and its inaugural picnic; they also directed the fall food drive in partnership with PFW students.**
- **Missions partnered with the FPC Gallery to present “A Moment in Time”, a reflection on the lives and stories of some un-housed members in our community.**
- **The Green Team represented FPC at Ecofest, helped in coordinating a food pantry drive with Purdue Fort Wayne, and managed the E-Recycling event during Hands On Fort Wayne; they earned a re-certification for a tenth consecutive year designating FPC as an EarthCare congregation; and last, but not least, after years of effort, research, planning and persistence, they have the green light for their project to install solar panels on parts of the church roof in 2026.**





Missions

Tell Me Something Good...

Hands On Fort Wayne

FPC's first ever Hands On Fort Wayne was held in 2024. The Sunday after Easter, FPC volunteers went out into the local community together and shared the good news of Christ through our actions—serving hands-on in a variety of settings with many of our community partners. Over 120 participants worked on eleven different projects, including:

- **Wellspring on Broadway – Outdoor Spring clean-up and landscaping**
- **St. Joseph's Women's Shelter on Lake Ave. – Interior Spring cleaning and landscaping**
- **The Towne House Retirement Community– Visiting residents to share food & fellowship**
- **Free e-cycling for the Fort Wayne community**



Faith Formation

Tell Me Something Good...



Marking the Seasons Together

First Pres offered a wide range of programs in 2025 centering on children, youth, and families. Highlights include:

- **Valentine's Day Soufflé Soirée**
- **Men's & Women's Bible Studies**
- **Blessing of the Backpacks**
- **Annual Chili Cook-Off**
- **Middle School & Teen Youth Groups**
- **Book Study Groups**
- **English/Korean Small Group**



Faith Formation

Tell Me Something Good...

Celebrating Together

The annual Chili Cook-Off Championship once again proved how powerful a shared table can be. With sixteen chili entries (and one brave dessert chili), creative decorations, and a room full of energy, McKay Hall became a space of connection, friendly competition, and a lot of joy.

Building Community Together Beyond the Church Walls

One of the great joys of this year was watching relationships form across our English- and Korean-speaking communities. A January toboggan trip to Pokagon State Park brought together for laughter, conversation, and shared adventure. We also continued to explore how faith shows up in the wider world through collaborative conversations with the Brave Alliance, co-hosting a creative, welcoming presence at Fort Wayne Pride Fest, in a partnership with the Queer Art Club, and by hosting the annual Trans Day of Remembrance, emphasizing hospitality, inclusion, and compassion.



Caring for One Another

Tell Me Something Good...

Deacons

Support and care for one another is a key component to our mission. Each of our seventeen Deacons is assigned members to act as a Deacon Connection for our members in need of support, including those who are no longer able to physically attend church, or may need additional support in other ways. The Deacons support members on the Prayer List with calls, visits and/or cards to provide extra support during a difficult time.

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry is a confidential, one-to-one lay ministry that extends traditional pastoral care to members of our congregation experiencing difficult seasons of life, such as serious illness, the death of a loved one, grief, or other personal challenges.

Our congregation has thirteen Stephen Ministers, eleven currently active, including two Stephen Leaders, Marcie Weissner and Carolyn Krebs. Throughout 2025, our Stephen Leaders provided continuing education to strengthen care skills and better equip ministers to support their care receivers, while also participating in off-site learning that benefits the entire ministry. Highlights include:

- An in-depth study of six end-of-life care books by Barbara Karnes, addressing dementia, pain management, life-threatening illness, death (including pet loss), and caregiver self-care.
- A guest presentation from Stillwater Hospice covering hospice and palliative care services, family support, and guidance for navigating end-of-life decisions.
- Ongoing care through handmade comfort shawls, lapghans, and quilts, along with a congregational resource library available to all members.

Korean Language Ministry

Tell Me Something Good...

KLM has the following good news to report:

- **For the 2025 Christmas season, a group of KLM members, including some members of our choir, developed a Christmas Caroling team. We visited about 10 houses of our members to carol and have short fellowship during a weekend leading up to Christmas. We also visited The Towne House Retirement Community and sang for some of their residents. It was successful, and we plan to expand next year, performing for more members, adding more carols, and perhaps visiting more retirement communities.**
- **In 2025, we had many new young families join and attend services regularly. As a result, our group of Sunday school children is expanding.**
- **A Korean-owned company is expected to be established soon in Fort Wayne, so we are expecting additional new members.**
- **As our membership is growing, the diversity of our group is as well, and we are providing regular written English translation to accommodate all our members.**





Ambassadors Outreach

Tell Me Something Good...

First Pres welcomed 18 new members this year! Many chose to join after attending Coffee with the Pastors. Many people attended the October gathering, including many from the Korean language service, and additional participants are preparing to join in February. Two Ambassadors attend each session, and the committee follows up with new members and frequent visitors to help them connect with worship, learning, service, and fellowship at their level of interest—supporting all in experiencing Christ’s love.

The First Pres Ambassadors and Greeter/Guide Team actively welcome visitors on Sunday mornings, at special services, and during major community events hosted at the church. These include the MAD2 Camp Showcase reception, the South Side High School Arts Fest, the City of Churches Christmas Tour, and the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department Amazing Race. During the Christmas Tour, knowledgeable volunteers guided guests through the decorated church while music and refreshments were offered in McKay Hall.

Ambassadors also represent the church at community events such as Eco Fest, Fort Wayne Pride, and the West Central Home & Garden Tour, building relationships and sharing a welcoming presence beyond our walls.

Ambassadors Outreach

Tell Me Something Good...

Digital Outreach 2025

With more than 10,000 total followers across platforms, our online presence continues to be an important and effective tool for sharing our mission, inviting participation, and strengthening community connections.

Our social media presence showed strong and encouraging growth in 2025, reflecting increased visibility, engagement, and connection with both our congregation and the broader community. Facebook reach expanded dramatically, with more people than ever viewing and interacting with our content, while Instagram experienced significant gains in reach, profile visits, and follower growth. These increases demonstrate growing interest in our ministries, programs, and events across multiple platforms.

Overall audience growth remained positive, and both church and theater accounts continued to gain new followers throughout the year. Most notably, our combined social media reach surpassed one million views, highlighting the expanding impact of our digital communications.





Ambassadors Outreach

Tell Me Something Good...

Social Media Stats, 2025 Year End Results:

1.FPC Facebook 2025

- **Views/Reach in 2025 = 651.9k, increase of 558.6% over 2024**
- **Profile Visits 2025 = 18.3k, increase of 5.2% over 2024**
- **Follower Growth = 188 Net Gained in 2025**

2.FPC Intagram 2025

- **Reach in 2025 = 62.2k, increase of 153.4% over 2024**
- **Views in 2025 = 145.9K**
- **Profile Visits 2025 4.3k, increase of 159.76% over 2024**
- **Follower Growth = 352 Net Gained in 2025**

3.FPT Facebook 2025

- **Views in 2025 = 425.5k, increase of 28% over 2024**
- **Profile Visits 2024 = 12.7k, decrease of 44.1% over 2024**
- **Follower Growth = 185 Net Gained in 2025**

Total Combined Views/Reach for Church & Theater = 1,077,546

Total Social Media Followers = 10,267

Fine Arts

Tell Me Something Good...

The rich tradition of the arts at FPC continued in 2025. Our congregation and the Fort Wayne community enjoyed:

- **Four Gallery Exhibits**
- **Four Theater Productions**
- **South Side HS Arts Fest**
- **The Indiana University Singing Hoosiers**
- **MAD2 Camp Summer Arts Program for Children**



The first half of 2025 was a transition time for the gallery, as Beth Iserman assumed the role of Gallery Director. which went very smoothly, thanks to the amazing help and extensive knowledge of former Gallery Director, Sarah Savage, and Carolyn Krebs. Special thanks to the Gallery Team for their time, ideas, delicious food, and finely curated music. First Presbyterian staff and parishioners also stepped up during the year to support the work and mission of the gallery.

Many selections from First Presbyterian’s permanent collection were on display in the spring, showcasing the generous legacy of art collected and gifted to the congregation over the years. The Gallery continued its decades-long support of the Foundation for Art and Music in Education (FAME) over the summer of 2025. The Day School visited for an introduction to the gallery with an artistic scavenger hunt while listening to music inspired by the Caribbean Islands theme of the show.

The “Illusion of Permanence” exhibition showcased the work of talented artists Su A Chae and Kay Gregg. Chae donated one painting and the gallery purchased one piece of work by Gregg, both for the permanent collection.

Fine Arts

Tell Me Something Good...

Upstairs, in McKay Foyer, a partnership with the Social Justice Team of the Missions Committee, St. Joseph Women's Shelter, and poet Marsi Lawson produced the "A Moment in Time" exhibition. Photographs and stories curated and packaged by Lawson highlighted hope for the unhoused population in Fort Wayne.



The gallery exhibited the second year of collaboration between First Presbyterian Gallery and Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana (MHANI)'s Art of Hope artists. A Yellow Frame Project workshop, led by Janet Altmeyer, was held in the Parlor for Art of Hope artists and the congregation.



The First Presbyterian Church Theater produced four shows in 2025, under Interim Director of Drama Ministries, Rev. Dr. John Tolley. John personally directed Dan Clancy's *The Timekeepers* and hosted the playwright himself, an audience talkback session, and a large group from Congregation Achduth Vesholom, including Rabbi Meir Barger.



Fine Arts

Tell Me Something Good...

South Side Arts Fest

In partnership with the Gallery and the Ambassadors Committee, and in keeping with the Session initiative to serve the downtown area, South Side High School debuted their “South Side Arts Fest” at First Presbyterian with dance and choral performances in the theater and a gallery jammed full of art by talented students. Artist Theoplis Smith and principal, Zachary Harl, gave awards to students for their favorite pieces. The Ambassadors hosted and provided goody bags and refreshments for attendees who filled the gallery and theater. Students and teachers were excited and appreciative of the opportunity to perform in the theater and to show work in the gallery.



FPC Day School

Tell Me Something Good...

The FPC Day School had many highlights in 2025, including:

- **First place in the Fort Wayne Newspapers Readers' Choice Awards**
- **Courtney Wallace, Lauren Palmer and Alicia Rogers marked 10 years as employees!**
- **Three FWCS interns in 2025**
- **Enrollment still climbing/maintaining at 50+ families served**
- **Teachers have removed all licensed toys, toys that require batteries, and replaced plastic containers with baskets to be more sensory engaging.**

- **Classroom emphasis on curiosity, wonder and imagination with open-ended materials for our play-based curriculum.**
- **March was Read Across America week, and we welcomed many story telling guests to read to the students**
- **April was Week of the Young Child, and we focused on how STEAM shows up in preschool play**
- **Sept/Oct- Fall sale of cookies, mums & pumpkins**
- **We held a food drive during November for the Rescue Mission**
- **A "swap shop" featuring clothes, books, and toys was open for families in November and December**



Building & Grounds

Tell Me Something Good...

The Building & Grounds Committee continued its mission of providing church and community members with a safe, secure, comfortable space to work, perform and worship. Highlights for the year include:

- Installation of a new heating/boiler system, which will provide our church with safe and reliable climate control year-round.
- Security enhancements, including the installation of additional cameras and an outer door for the chapel entrance alcove.
- Final installation and ‘fine tuning’ of the new sanctuary sound system.
- Installation of a new security system and new flooring for the day school.
- Theater improvements, including a new bilge pump and assistance in maintaining theater sound and lighting equipment.

Coming up in 2026:

With help from an anonymous donor, the church will be installing rooftop solar panels, which may save as much as \$20K annually in energy costs.



Personnel Committee

Tell Me Something Good...

The Personnel Committee had a productive year supporting our staff and congregation. While there is much to celebrate, here are three noteworthy items from 2025. The committee:

- Helped fill key senior staff vacancies and welcomed Colin Andrews and Jordan Plohr as the new leaders of the music and dramatic arts programs.
- Approved PTO for staff for the period between Christmas and New Year's Day while the campus is closed.
- Celebrated the retirements of staff members, with special thanks to Kathy Miller and Rev. Ann Pitman for their long and faithful service.



Personnel Committee members in 2025 were Luci Gilpin, Sandy Shearer, Heidi Schulenberg, Andrew Palmison, Jack Patton, and Randy Bolinger. Also, key to the work of the committee in 2025 were Annie Epling, Head of Staff; Carrie Winebrenner, Acting Head of Staff; and Bill Hickle, Church Administrator.

On behalf of the congregation, we thank the entire staff for your service to our church and support of our mission to serve others as we seek the heart of God, in the heart of the city.



Our Pastors (from left): Rev. Dr. Anne Epling, Pastor and Head of Staff, Rev. Ann Pitman, Parish Associate for Pastoral Care, Rev. Carrie Winebrenner, Associate Pastor, Rev. Dr. Youngsoo An, Associate Pastor, Korean Language Ministry

Our Mission

Transforming lives through the love of Jesus Christ. In Christ, we experience the love of God that accepts us as we are – not as we're supposed to be. In turn, this unconditional love transforms our lives and empowers us to offer the same transformation to others.





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