

# SEPTEMBER 2025

# FIRST FOCUS

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR OUR ANNUAL RUMMAGE SALE

The Rummage Sale is coming soon and we need everyone to help in multiple ways: 1) donate items in good condition (no adult clothing except for jackets, coats, hats, shoes); 2) invite friends to donate items; 3) sign up to volunteer - volunteers are needed 9/28-10/2 for set-up and 10/3 & 10/4 to help during the sale and to help clean up after the sale; 4) help advertise the sale on social media or by word-of-mouth; and 5) shop yourself! The proceeds will go to Home Sweet Home's sheltered village, "The Bridge," and \$1,000 will be donated to the Green Team. Additionally, help is needed in the Holiday Room and the Children's Room. This involves helping organize, sort, and display items in each of these spaces. Contact Cheryl Hoepker at [choepker@comcast.net](mailto:choepker@comcast.net) or 309-530-8103 if you can help.

### 3 WAYS TO SIGN UP



SCAN THE  
QR CODE



SIGN UP IN PERSON  
ON 9/14 & 9/21



EMAIL CAROL MORRIS  
[bctnk@hotmail.com](mailto:bctnk@hotmail.com)

## KICK OFF SUNDAY

September 7<sup>th</sup> - 10am Service  
Festivities will follow

The Fellowship Committee will provide pulled pork, buns, and drinks. Please bring a nut-free dish to share. Our two service schedule will resume on Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> with an 8:30am traditional service and an 11am contemporary service.

## THE GREEN TEAM'S SEPTEMBER STORY STROLL

Enjoy our September Story Stroll and read about "Mrs. Spitzer's Garden" while strolling around our lovely church grounds. Scan the QR code to populate questions to discuss with children. Additionally, please invite your friends and neighbors to visit anytime during the month.



## PRAIRIE UPDATE

The Native Prairie is underway! Ground preparation will be done in mid-August and again 4-6 weeks later, with planting done in November. Next spring, we can expect to see new growth that will provide food and shelter for native birds, butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. By summer, we'll see lots of blooms. Patience, though. Remember kids going through those awkward teenage years? Prairies do the same thing. They grow and grow down into the soil creating an amazing root system, but sometimes they look funny for a while. In 3 to 5 years, we should see the full beauty of a mature prairie like God originally planned for our part of the world. These are exciting times. Keep an eye on the prairie part of the church website for further updates and information. And be sure to "like" the information on Facebook.

## Thanks & Blessings for our 2025-26 Sunday School Teachers!

- Elissa Bailey
- Eric Barbour
- Josh Beal
- Jessica Briggs
- Gail Franklin
- Hannah Hogue
- Jenny Johnson
- Lauren Kramer
- Melissa Moran
- Kelli Owens
- Cheyenne Sanchez
- Cody Walker
- Leslie Walker
- Melissa Walles
- Aubrey Whitfield
- Meredith Whitfield



## MUSICIANS WANTED!

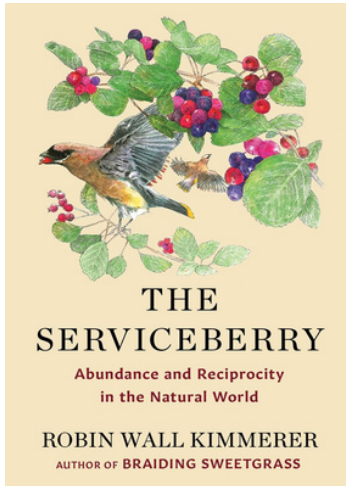
If you're seeking a musical outlet or a way to share your love of singing or ringing, both Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir are looking for participants. As Marty Haugen's hymn reminds us, "All are welcome; all are welcome; all are welcome in the choir." There are also other ways to get involved in Music Ministry. Please prayerfully consider joining us. Contact Phil Enge if you are interested at [penge@firstpresnormal.org](mailto:penge@firstpresnormal.org).



## PASS - PROVIDING AFTER SCHOOL SAFETY

Starting on Tuesday, September 16, First Pres will begin our after school program. We partner with Fairview Elementary School to offer homework help, a light snack, and a Bible story time to K-5<sup>th</sup> graders. All of the volunteers are members of our church. Please pray for the kids who come to our church to learn more about the radical love of Christ and the volunteers who teach them. Contact Ann Lamkey with questions.

# ADULT DISCIPLESHIP OPPORTUNITIES



## FLOURISHING: SEPTEMBER 14 - 28

Join members of the Green Team to discuss themes from the short book, *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Our economy is rooted in scarcity, competition, and the hoarding of resources, and we have surrendered our values to a system that actively harms what we love. Meanwhile, the serviceberry's relationship with the natural world is an embodiment of reciprocity, interconnectedness, and gratitude. The tree distributes its wealth to meet the needs of its natural community—a distribution that ensures its own survival. Please sign up on the website by Wed, Sept 10. Contact Sarah Jome for more information.

## READING THE BIBLE IN 2025

### START THE NEW TESTAMENT ON OCTOBER 1ST

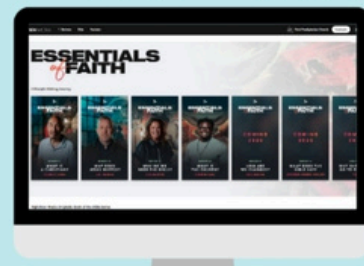
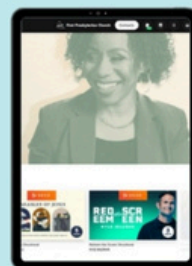
We've had a great group of Bible readers making their way through the Old Testament together since January 1. In our reading, we have validated that the Israelites just can't follow the rules no matter how many chances God gives them, and we may admit to skimming the text a little when we encountered long genealogies! As we head into October, we are about to shift gears. On October 1st, our chronological reading plan finally reaches the New Testament. If you haven't been reading along with us so far, this is a great time to jump in! We'll still be following a common daily reading program (with an accompanying daily video or podcast) that completes the New Testament by the end of 2025. We plan to continue Sunday morning and Wednesday afternoon discussions. Contact Sheila Melzer ([sheilamelzer49@gmail.com](mailto:sheilamelzer49@gmail.com)) or Matt Litwiller ([boilermatt@hotmail.com](mailto:boilermatt@hotmail.com)) to get started.

## RIGHTNOW MEDIA SEPTEMBER FEATURED RESOURCE: CREATION CARE

Stewardship of God's creation (creation care) is a clear biblical command and an integral part of what it means to follow Jesus as Lord. God's creation is in the midst of a crisis that is pressing, urgent, and that must be resolved in our generation. This series seeks to inspire us all to understand the importance of creation care in all we do. To find this and thousands of other video studies for individuals, kids, families, and groups: scan the QR code, text FPCNORM to 49775, or visit [app.rightnowmedia.org/join/firstpresnormal](http://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/firstpresnormal) (this is also linked to our website) to log in to your free account. Contact Pastor Karol for more information.



**rightnow**  
MEDIA®







First Pres workday, Habitat for Humanity

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WORK DAYS

Thank you to everyone who has helped with the Habitat for Humanity house build for the Conely family thus far. This is a reminder that anyone is welcome to join us on the second Saturday of every month until the house is built. We will work 8am-12pm with a 10am snack break. You don't have to have any construction experience to help, and all the tools will be provided to you. Call Dave Seyller if you would like to volunteer at (309) 242-7440.

## USHERS & LITURGISTS NEEDED

**Looking for a new opportunity to be more involved? The Worship Committee is seeking additional Ushers and Liturgists. Volunteering on Sunday morning requires a minimal time commitment but is very helpful in making worship a meaningful experience for everyone. Can you help once a week, once a month, or even once a quarter?**

**Liturgists** – The liturgy is provided to you before Sunday. Anyone of any age can participate, including school-aged children.

**Ushers** – We need four ushers per service. Ushers need to arrive 20 minutes early to greet people and hand out bulletins. Ushers pass the offering plate, count attendance, count the offering, and clean up anything left on the pews after the service.

**Sign up on our website** <https://www.firstpresnormal.org/sign-ups>

**Questions?** Contact Beth MacDonald at [bmacdona2012@gmail.com](mailto:bmacdona2012@gmail.com) or Lynn Litwiller at [mlne.litwiller@hotmail.com](mailto:mlne.litwiller@hotmail.com).

## FINANCIAL UPDATE

The table below displays our actual receipts and expenses compared to budgeted receipts and expenses for the six months ended June 30, 2025:

	ACTUAL	BUDGET
General Contributions	\$ 418,662	\$ 424,339
Expense Recoveries and Miscellaneous Receipts	10,816	11,800
TOTAL CASH INCOME	429,478	436,139
General Budget Expenses	436,213	421,620
EXCESS (DEFICIT) OF RECEIPTS OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES	(6,735)	14,519
Investment Market Gain	27,220	-
NET INCREASE (DECREASE) IN OPERATING RESERVE	\$ 20,485	\$ 14,519

General contributions to the operating budget in the first half of 2025 fell below budget by about \$5,700 but are very slightly ahead of actual receipts for the same point in the prior year. Investment gains were excluded from the budget due to unpredictability; market returns were positive for the first half of the year. Total revenues from all sources, including investment gains, were \$20,600 above budget through June 30.

The primary reason that expenses exceeded budget for the year to date is related to building repair and maintenance expenses, including significant amounts spent on heating and cooling equipment, energy efficiency investments, and ongoing repairs and remodeling in the kitchen area. Otherwise, expenses are below budget in almost every other budget line.

The unrestricted operating reserve (net assets) stands at \$465,447 as of June 30, 2025, representing about six and one-half months of 2025 general budget expenses. The operating reserve has increased by about \$20,000 so far in 2025.



*Inspired by God's love, we seek to be a community that follows Jesus.*



WEBSITE



FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



BIRTHDAYS



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firstpresnormal.org