

## **FPC enews for January 16, 2026**

Dear FPC family and friends,

You will find below the yearly report which I wrote for the packet for 2025. I do hope that you come to our yearly congregational meeting on January 25. It is important that you are there and to hear how you have made a difference in the lives of the people around you.

Dear FPC family and friends,

The ability to look at our past year and rejoice in initiatives, grieve over the loss of loved ones, and celebrate births and baptisms is a privilege that we look forward to every year. As you look through this yearly report I pray that you will be able to imagine the individuals who are actively at work behind the scenes. The pages that follow represent the programs in which we are involved, but don't reflect the faces of the people who either administer the work or those who benefit from the work. Numbers tend to be cold and without emotion and feeling. But the church is anything but that, it is life.

If you are reading this report then you care about the First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg. Whether you are new to this community or been here for decades you will understand the sacrifice and the effort that it takes to do that which is contained in these pages. Let me take this time to say thank you to all those who have put work into the life of First Presbyterian so that we can be a place where Jesus is proclaimed and where neighbor is loved. We are a community who loves to gather and be in fellowship, while at the same time understand that we have a responsibility to send and let the Gospel touch people who may have never heard about the love that God has for them. Both are critical, and both are our responsibility.

We experienced a decline in our gathering together as a congregation for worship this year. I know that I've made a big deal of that in the past, and I continue to feel like it is the best viable matrix for congregational and pastoral vitality. If attendance increases in worship then there is a clear mandate by the congregation to support the pastor as they work together. If there is a decline in worship attendance then that mandate is not only weakened, it needs to be called into question. So, our gathering for worship can and should improve and your session will be talking about how to make that a priority in 2026.

But we have sent people out into the world to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus more this past year than in recent memory. This sending is reflected in our mission giving and in the number of individual missionaries and mission agencies that we are supporting. I have to say that I am sensing a specific shifting of culture within our church which may be nascent, but very strong. We are becoming more and more a mission church in how we prioritize our neighbor in a way that doesn't play second fiddle to our own apparent needs or interests.

Leading the way on the mission front is our youth. 2025 saw not only your typical mission trips, but it also saw the youth reaching out into the community in ways that are local and regular. We saw not just "mission tourism" as some would call it, but genuine love for the world and

neighbor which requires that we do something. We love our community and that is shown by the resources that we give out and the care that we have for the least of these around us.

I pray that as you read this yearly report that you will hear the thank you that I expressed in the second paragraph. I hope you will also hear my pride in seeing your work that goes far beyond what maybe some have expected. We will never be satisfied with being a church that only gathers and has no impact upon those around us. No, our gathering is meant to increase our faith so that we can increase our love of God and neighbor. Keep up the good work and don't take for granted the love that we have for one another.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob