

Dear FPC family and friends,

So at last week's congregational meeting I completely forgot that I normally present to you my State of the Church address. No excuses, so what if we had 3,456 inches of snow between now and then. Please find below what I presented at the officer retreat, which is my annual state of the church address. It is divided into three sections: local church, that would be us, First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg, Donegal Presbytery, and PC(USA) as a denomination.

FPC

- 1. The strength of Mission** – We had over 25% increase in our mission budget for 2026 brought on by the desire for our youth to do mission in a profound way. Extra giving outside of our budget to mission was not insignificant. \$116,000 with budgeted expenditures. Food Bank 36% increase, and CIC 40 people becoming known entities that if this church were not here it would be felt by a whole swath of people.
- 2. Youth and Young Families** – more babies and more baptisms than I can remember at this church. Youth group can get up to 50 kids a night, more around 30 a night, which was unheard of not that long ago for us
- 3. Finances** are strong because of two things – giving is very strong, the most we have had since Covid. We have a very clear endowment to give us the opportunity to use it generously. Does having more money change the way you think about money, about yourself, or about those around you?
- 4. Worship** – the numbers have decreased from an average of 173 to 169 marking our second consecutive year of decline. Highest Christmas Eve since Covid but lowest Easter. We have stabilized our worship leaders with Jonathan and Goggie. It feels good to worship here at FPC.
- 5. Leadership** – We are good at sending but we need to do better at gathering. What prevents us from inviting people to come and worship with us? I have had the problem before of consistent growth and the finances not keeping up with the growth in people. I've never had the problem before of funding outpacing the attendance.

DONEGAL PRESBYTERY

- 1. Moderator Duties** – It has required a few more meetings each month including just recently becoming the chair of the Administrative Commission for Our Table. It required missing a Sunday to go to Louisville for the Moderator's conference. Next meeting is here in February, come and join.
- 2. Awareness at the Racial Justice level** – continue to lead the Presbytery to a greater awareness of justice issues especially related to race. The Bias Within US tour to West Chester is an example.
- 3. Walter from Inquirer to Candidate** – We hope to get him ordained within the year. FPC is becoming known as a church that produces pastors within our Presbytery. Gather and Send, that is crucial for any church to have both.
- 4. Leadership** – Erin is transitional stated clerk and our Executive Presbyter. Stephanie Borger is Assistant Stated Clerk, Sarah Knier is Assistant Stated Clerk, Matt Randolph is also on staff.
- 5. Finances** – healthy with a large endowment.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

- 1. We no longer send** – the decision was made after General Assembly told the leadership to keep missionaries on the ground to no longer have them on the ground. The decision was made

based upon finances and based upon a false ideology of mission being a colonialist approach. Nothing has shaken my faith in the denomination more than this decision.

2. **Leadership is in disarray** – I think within my lifetime we may see the end of the denomination, or at least this congregation will be forced to make a decision as to what it wants to be. The unification commission did a good job of tearing things apart, but now that they own it, it doesn't seem like they know how to put it back together again. A disconnect between those in the pew and those in Louisville.

3. **Loss in membership** – We saw another 50,000 drop in membership in the denomination. It seems like no one is talking about this, and for me this is the most important indicator that we may be doing something wrong.

4. **Finances** – We will see a precipitous drop in giving over these next few years which will create more crises.

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Auction for Youth Mission to Italy: Join us on February 21st with doors opening at 5:30 and the auction starting at 6:15. You can find a list of items here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QLKE84EqFHRfcQTl6TpEks9IXBm26tWY/edit> There will be food available for purchase as well as great fun and fellowship. We have one fundraiser every four years for this event. Please come and invite as many people as you know on this planet to come as well. We need you!

This Sunday: Souper Bowl Sunday!!: Children will be standing at the doors collecting cans of food to be donated to our Food Bank this Sunday at both services. Make sure you come to church with either canned goods or a cash donation for the foodbank. Join in the fun!

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY: Please mark your calendars that we have started a new Bible Study. Classes are held on Tuesdays in room 4 at 9am or 7pm. All are welcome! We will be using a new 8 session study called, "The Way of Wisdom" – A Study of the Book of Proverbs. The weekly studies are presented by some authors/speakers we know and – for us - some new ones. For any questions please contact Stacy Bronkema, Linda Bredin, or Sandy Wenger.

BLANKET SUNDAY ~ February 15th: Church World Service helps our neighbors in need by providing blankets, hygiene and school kits, cleanup buckets, and more, and offers warmth and essential supplies to people here at home and all over the world who are facing challenging times. Please pray about your contribution to this offering and make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg with "Blanket" on the memo line of your check or online giving memo, or use the envelopes marked for Blanket Sunday that are provided in the pews.

TODDLER GYM is back! Join us weekly on Fridays from 9 – 10:30am (Sept. – May) for playtime for ages 1 – 6 with their caregivers. This program is free and open to the public and follows the Lampeter Strasburg School Calendar. For more information, check out our Facebook or Instagram page, or contact Alyssa Gregory at 717-495-3939 or agregory@straspres.org.

COMMUNITY IMPACT COMMITTEE (CIC): We are in desperate need for people who are willing to process applications for those in need and seeking assistance from the church. The funding is in place, however we recently received an abundance of applications and they

need reviewed. Please reach out to Alicia Eltman at aeltman@straspres.org or Pastor Bob if you are willing and able.

LENTEN SERVICES & LUNCHEONS: Lent is almost upon us! Join us for weekly services here at First Presbyterian Church offered by the Strasburg Ministerium.

Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026

◆6am with ashes ◆12pm – Wesley United Methodist ◆6pm with ashes

12 pm Wednesday Lenten Service Schedule with lunch

February 25 Strasburg Mennonite

March 4 ACTS Covenant Fellowship

March 11 St. Michael's Lutheran Church

March 18 First Presbyterian

March 25

*All services will be held in the sanctuary here at First