



THE GRAPEVINE

First Presbyterian Church of Sandpoint, Idaho
September 2025

Church Ice Age Season and the nut we chase/d...

By Rev. Catherine Lyle

One of my big AHA moments from my interim training at Zephyr Point in July is that we (the church members and leaders) need to not only accept but plan for a “religious ice age”. We used to call the decline of Christian participation a “season” because we knew that churches are a bit like a roller coaster, and sometimes they are up and sometimes down.

The ice age isn’t just the downward trend of people who come to worship on Sunday nor the decline in new members. People are praying less. People might call themselves spiritual, but we religious people know that unless you have regular practices that are in alignment with your values and personal growth... then the person will become just a byproduct of commercialism or whatever power stream that dominates their culture. Just ask any yo-yo dieter (your pastor included) what happens when you break your good diet habits. We fall back into bad habits and put the weight right back on. It is for this reason I believe that it takes more than self-branding to be considered a Christian. You need to be in a healthy community that is helping your spiritual growth in Godly graces and living into the fruits of the Spirit. community that both gently nudges you towards wholeness and loving your neighbor.

After all, the phrase “to do something religiously” used to mean something far more meaningful than it does these days. **I write this to all of you whom I consider to be the Christian root stalks or remnants that have boldly remained.** You all know what it means to endure faithfully. However, with this reality we need to prepare our churches to withstand an ice age. No more false hope. The music is changing, and we are not going to force religion on people when God gave us all freedom.

We are going to do what we can with what we have. We need to “right size” churches, taper down demands on the congregations as their leaders coming up have fewer hours to give, and equip leaders with small personal purses. We need to help our churches become lean for the seasons ahead and prioritize what we can do well for a very long time. We will find ways to invite people to church, knowing many are weary of our old cult. We will let them know we are Christians by our love, not the fear of something else.



When our beloved communities drop the foolish and often alluring idols (TV remotes, debts, faith in politicians, addictions, etc.), they too might be blessed with a holy place for their Spirit to call home. We are being called to save the family table, grace before meals, respectful etiquette, recipes, and communion with one another. We will do more than pray for them; we will equip the future generations. We will sustain organizations that offer wise discerning Christians to journey with them. We will provide safe spaces, community, and a separate place from politics. We will let them know that just because some blasphemed the name of God, turning our creator into a political weapon of war... we did not. We know God is love and they are loved. We will live religiously to our faith and leave what is to come in God's capable hands. We will stop chasing an old nut, and we will stop burying our favorite nuts. We will plant trees to feed future generations. God will take it from there. Amen.

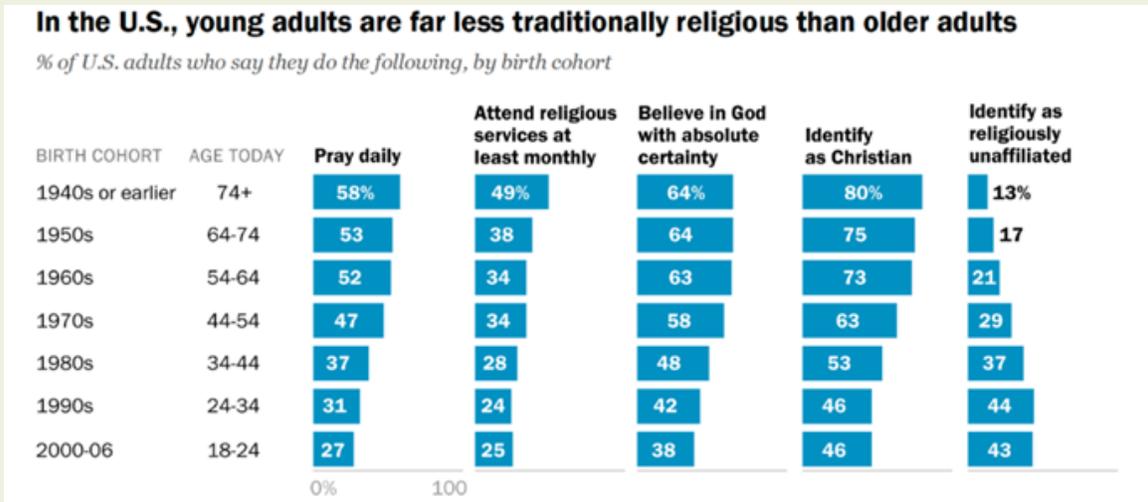


Figure 1 Pew Research Center Graph from February 26, 2025

SESSION NOTES

August 25, 2025

The more appropriate title for this version of Session Notes should read, No Session Notes, as we enjoyed a two-month summer recess from conducting formal meetings. Moreover, not much came up in the way of our common practice of approving routine items via email and formalizing them as part of the consent agenda at our next meeting. That's not to say, however, that church activities went on vacation in absence of session meetings. You will read about our busy summer elsewhere in this issue of the Grapevine.

Thanks to those who coordinated hosting a trans-continental bicycle group, shuffled meeting room assignments to accommodate other activities and to those who worked diligently to maintain our facilities and Peace Garden. The launch of a new church website culminated the intensive efforts of our international tech-team. During the summer, we welcomed Rev. Catherine Lyle as our interim pastor as we acknowledged Rev. Andy Kennaly's fourteen years of dedicated service.

With fall quickly approaching, Session will focus on both the routine business of managing church affairs as well as a couple of new opportunities.

Under Judy McComish's leadership, we will embark upon the Ezra 3 Project. This Presbytery sponsored program encourages churches to explore ways to connect with their local community. We will receive a \$10,000 grant to implement projects developed during this two-year process.

Pastor Catherine will guide Session through the process of calling a permanent pastor. This may result in the formation of a Pastor Nominating Committee as we seek God's guidance in discerning this important decision.

In the meantime,
We follow Christ's light, for we are a congregation of people,
Loving, living and learning the joy of faith.

Bill Love, Clerk of Session

FINANCE

Thank you for your support of FPC missions and ministries! FPC finances are on track with the modified budget as you can see in the snapshot listed below.

A few changes over the summer months include:

The fourth grant applied for as part of the pandemic relief funds was received in the amount of \$2918

Two bank CDs matured at the end of May and the interest earnings were moved into the FPC savings account in the amount of \$4129

A third CD was funded from the savings account in the amount of \$25,000.

FPC FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT through Aug. 1st, 2025

Modified Budget YTD	\$80,000	
Received through Aug. 1st	\$92,690	Per Capita Received: \$1,001
Expended through Aug. 1st	\$80,678	Per Capita Expended: \$2,379 (\$39 dollars per member)

FPC TOTAL ASSETS	Dec. 2024	Aug. 2025
CD-1	\$51,717	\$50,005
CD-2	25,000	25,000
CD-3		25,000
Savings	26,572	7,430
*Checking	29,214	48,280
Petty Cash	61	100
Prepaid Exp.	2725	
Pledge Prepays	(3873)	
TOTAL	\$131,416	\$155,815

* Checking includes the following restricted funds

Checking Restricted- <i>Building Fund</i>	\$14,742
Checking Restricted- <i>Memorial Fund</i>	\$13,005
Checking Restricted- <i>Peace Garden</i>	\$ 3,961
Checking Restricted- <i>Mission/Care</i>	\$ 4,181

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Vincent, Elder

STEWARDSHIP

*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously,
and he will give you everything you need. -Matthew 6:33*

Earlier this summer my siblings and I were reminiscing about our beloved weeks spent as youth at summer church camp. What's not to like about 90+ degree August temperatures, humid days, un-airconditioned cabins, sketchy hot water and more mosquitos than anyone needed? -ha! As teenagers, none of those pesky issues seemed to matter as we gathered from the plains of Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and New Mexico for a week of study, fellowship, camping and singing---lots of singing! Our reminiscing reminded us of one of our favorite camp songs; perhaps it is one of your favorites, too.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things shall be added unto you
Hallelu, Hallelujah
Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and it shall be opened unto you
Hallelu, Hallelujah...

Songwriter: Karen Lafferty

Seek Ye First lyrics © Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing

This beautiful melody and the hopeful message were also the subject of a recent stewardship reflection provided by St. Thomas the Apostle church of Fort Worth.

“Jesus assures us that if we ask, God will take care of what we need. The problem is that our culture often confuses what we really need with what we simply want. ... Many of us need very little; however, we usually want so much more! Stewardship is simply being grateful for all that we are and all that we have been given, and generously sharing all of our God-given gifts with others.”

As we say goodbye to summer, our stewardship team wants to express our thanks and gratitude for the generosity shown by FPC members and friends. Pledges and giving are on track to meet our annual budget in support of the mission of FPC. It is because of your faithful stewardship that we as a body are able to share Christ's love in our community and beyond.

Thank you for your gifts of time, talent and resources!

Susie Haskins, Financial Secretary
Judy McComish, Elder
Paula Vincent, Elder

MISSION

Bike the US for MS:

From August 6 – 8, FPC and United Methodist Church (UMC) hosted 36 Bike the US for MS riders in Sandpoint by providing places to sleep and put up tents. Some of the riders were from Canada, Great Britain, and Australia. Instead of providing meals for the bikers, as we have done in the past, the riders attended the weekly Community Meal at UMC on Thursday, August 7. Several members of UMC spearheaded the meal preparation. FPC members who helped with that meal, where about 100 meals were served, were Kathleen Huntley, Darcy Taylor, Mary Sturgis, and Judy McComish. The bikers expressed much appreciation for all the support shown to them by the two churches while they were here.

Food Bank Donations:

One of the missions of FPC is donations to the Food Bank. From May through July, we donated 97 pounds of food to Bonner Community Food Bank. Thank you for your generosity!

Ezra 3 Project:

The Presbytery of the Inland Northwest has received a grant from the Lilly Endowment: Thriving Congregations Initiative, entitled the Ezra 3 Project. Through the Ezra 3 Project, the Presbytery is exploring how we can steward our land and buildings for community impact in a way that aligns with the mission of the church – how we can use our buildings in ways that help the community to flourish. Cohort 2 for this project is beginning now. The churches in this cohort must put together a design team, identify a pressing community need, and come up with a project that will enable the church to use their building in a new way to meet that need. At the end of the first year, each church will be able to apply for a \$10,000 seed grant to implement the project. Churches that are selected to receive a grant will be assigned a coach to help them implement their project.

Churches with 100 or fewer members are included in Cohort 2, which includes Bethany, Post Falls, Sandpoint, Washtucna, and Whitworth. Our leadership team for this project is Pastor Catherine, Victoria Oliver and Judy McComish. The first meeting of Cohort 2 takes place on August 27 at Post Falls Community Presbyterian Church. We will learn more at that meeting and will be engaging with congregation members, friends of FPC, and the community to discern how we can best use our building to meet a pressing need in our community.

MISSION

Peace & Global Witness Special Donations:

Each Fall, PC(USA) holds a special offering focused on peace. The theme this year is “Pursue What Makes for Peace.” Romans 14:19

Peacemaking is central to the gospel and the mission of the Church. Peace is possible, and it begins with us pursuing peace in every interaction and decision we make.

Since 1940, World Communion Sunday is an ecumenical celebration of our oneness in the Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, bringing churches together in Christian unity.

- The “Season of Peace” is September 7 through Oct 5. On October 5, World Communion Sunday, we will be receiving the Peace & Global Witness Offering.
- 25% of the Offering stays with local congregations, and 25% with regional Presbyteries to unite congregations to support peacemaking.
- 50% of this Offering supports the work for peace and reconciliation being done by Presbyterians across the globe.

In the recent past, churches in the USA have used the 25% of donations that stayed with the church in various ways, such as donating items for seniors who with limited resources who use laundromats or for helping families buy items that food stamps don’t cover (e.g., diapers, laundry soap, etc.), creating programs that promote peace in communities with high rates of violence (e.g. “Guns to Gardens” which takes apart old guns and turns them into garden tools), or providing food for soup kitchens or community meals.

In the past, FPC has given donations to organizations like Bonner Homeless Transitions, Priest River Ministries Advocates for Women, and NAMI. What are the major needs in Sandpoint and Bonner County now? What ideas do you have for using FPC’s 25% of the donations we receive in the Peace & Global Witness Offering this year? Please share your ideas with the Missions Committee (Mary Sturgis, Carol Curtis, Judy McComish).

Judy McComish

Elder, Missions

PEACE is active, not passive.
PEACE is doing, not waiting.

 PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION
SEPTEMBER 7–OCTOBER 5, 2025

BUILDING NEWS

Summer Building Uses

In addition to the regular on-going meetings, on July 16, the Bonner County Human Rights Task Force (BCHRTF) met to offer a presentation to their membership and invited guests. From membership meetings to community events, the BCHRTF board of directors continue to express appreciation for the hospitably and meeting spaces the church offers.

The Music Bridges Borders concert, held on July 19, was as inspiring and energetic as it could be! It is truly delightful to enjoy the talents of local and international musicians. Some of the church choir members even participated in the closing number.

The church co-hosted the Bike the U.S. for M.S. tour group with the United Methodist Church in August. The 12-Step meetings were held in the sanctuary for the three days the bikers were here.

Making affordable space for the community is an important ministry. Creating safe, hospitable gathering space is foundational for a strong resilient community.

Reminder from the Wednesday Soup Kitchen; they can use volunteers and donated soup! Please contact Paddy, 208-290-0685, if you would like to help this important service to the community.

New FPC Website

If you have not explored the new church website, take a moment and see what you think! You can find it at www.fpcsandpoint.org.

So many improvements but some favorites are the church calendar link on the top right on the homepage. Also, under the News tab you can find Announcements for upcoming events and information plus Grapevines found under Church Newsletter.

There are photos, church history, links to community partnerships. Take a look!

Judy Labrie, Building Use Coordinator



Conversations with the Unconscious:
Unveiling the inner self through dream symbols
Dream Workshop Series



When: Saturdays, October 11 & 18
Time: 9:00 am - Noon, both days
Where: First Presbyterian Church Sandpoint
Facilitator: Colleen Russell
Suggested donation: \$75 includes both days
Registration is required, space is limited
email: registration@fpcsandpoint.org



*"Dreams are letters from God and most of them remain unopened", attributed to Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes.
Come explore your dream story.*

You are invited to join us for an exciting dream workshop series on two Saturdays in October.

Conversations with the Unconscious: Unveiling the inner self through dream symbols.

When: Saturdays, October 11 & 18
Time: 9:00 am - Noon, both days
Where: First Presbyterian Church Sandpoint
Facilitator: Colleen Russell

Suggested donation: \$75 for both sessions, there are scholarships available
Registration deadline is October 6. Space is limited.
This workshop series is designed for participants to attend both sessions.
email: registration@fpcsandpoint.org

- In the first session, learn about the foundation of dream exploration. Why look at dreams? What are the benefits? Learn how to record dreams and bring a dream to session two.
- In the second session, look at particular dreams and explore what your dream story might be communicating.

Colleen Russell holds a master's degree in Transpersonal Psychology and is a 2010 graduate of a three-year BodySoul Leadership training taught by Jungian Analyst Marion Woodman. Working with dreams is part of this ongoing training.

You can find more about Colleen by visiting www.selfdiscoverythruart.com

Sign up soon! Space is limited. Feel free to share this information with someone who may be interested.

Have questions? Contact the church office at 208-263-2047.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

The Building and Grounds committee has had a busy summer! We started out weeding the gardens in May and June with lots of volunteers. Then came the polishing of the floors in Fellowship Hall by another group of volunteers! Have you noticed how shiny they are?! In July we put down landscape cloth and spread bark in all our garden areas to try to cut down on the weeding and spruce up our Peace Garden. Then a few weeks later we painted the lower exterior walls and soffits to make our church look well cared for. All of these projects took many volunteers to accomplish the work. We so appreciate all of you who gave your time and energy to get them all done! THANK YOU EVERYONE!!

Mary Sturgis
Building and Grounds Elder



WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Summer time always marks a pause in our usual activities in Sandpoint. Many of us welcome family and friends from far and wide, while some of us take trips to explore new places and visit loved ones. In Sandpoint, we look forward to spending time at the lake, out camping, attending a concert, picking fruit, or just being outside. As August winds down it's hard to miss the days shortening, and nights getting a little longer, and a little chillier. The change of seasons is one of the many things most of us treasure about the Sandpoint area.

At First Presbyterian, we have also adapted to new leadership from the pulpit. Our resilient community has embraced the new 11 o'clock worship hour. Pastor Catherine Lyle has led us through some interesting and spiritually challenging lessons from the pulpit. We've also enjoyed the leadership from Reverend Becky Anderson, Sheryl Kinder-Pyle, and our own Mickey Quinn and Bill Love. We are blessed to hear from voices new and old with messages of hope and challenge in these interesting times we live in.

As Fall approaches, we look forward to Dana Stockman restarting the choir with some old and new musical choices well suited to our small but mighty group of singers. Interested in choir?? A love of music and a willingness to learn and be led are the basic requirements for membership. Please contact Dana or any choir member for more details. Choir practice will begin September 3 with a new time of noon to 1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. Come and see if choir is a good fit for you!

As always, the church needs ushers, live streamers, and worship assistants each Sunday. A new duty of a volunteer to open and lock up the church building has been added to our weekly roster. Many thanks to all our intrepid volunteers who welcome friends and visitors, and keep the church looking tidy. Please reach out to me if you're not on the list of volunteers, and you want to be added. I'll keep your email in-basket full.

Many blessings to all - Kirsten Thompson, thompsonkj2019@gmail.com 503-816-6384



FAMILY FAVORITES

Do you have a treasured (non-copyrighted!) family recipe that you'd like to share with the church family? Drop them off in the church office or email them to Dana at Office@fpcsandpoint.org. Please share a little info about the person who created the recipe, if you can.

This month's recipe is shared by Sue Helander, who made it for fellowship on August 24. She was given the recipe by Mollee Hecht.

Earth Mother, Mollee Hecht was a long standing member of 1st Pres prior to her moving back to Southern Idaho. She was a fabulous mother, cook, gardener, outdoor enthusiast, and a true Hipster!

Peanut Butter Chocolate Bars

Preheat oven to 325.

Ingredients

- 1 pkg yellow cake mix
- 1 C. peanut butter
- 1 Stick of butter
- 2 eggs

Mix these four items well, and remove 1 1/2C and press into an 9x13" pan.

- 2 C. chocolate chips
- 1 small 14oz can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tsp butter
- 1 C. coconut
- 1C. walnuts or pecans (chopped)
- 2 tsp vanilla

Melt chocolate chip and butter in condensed milk. Once chips are melted, add coconut flakes, nuts and vanilla. Pour over the bottom crust evenly, crumble remaining mixture on top and bake for 30 minutes. Allow to cool for 30 minutes before serving.



Mollee Hecht



9/1-9/4 Pastor Catherine on vacation

9/3 Choir starts back up, noon-1:00

9/17 Session Meeting, 1:30-3:00

9/22 October Grapevine articles due in the office, 9:00 a.m.

9/29-10/1 Pastor Catherine at a conference in Wenatchee



September

BIRTHDAYS

9/1 Sylvia Humes

9/5 Donna Bricker

9/21 Carol Ballard

9/21 Judy Labrie

9/24 Karen Rockhill

9/30 Marian Cox

*Did we miss your birthday or get the date wrong?
Email the office and let us know!
office@fpcsandpoint.org*

Regular Monthly Events



Sunday

- 11:00 a.m. Worship, In-Person and Livestream (<https://www.youtube.com/@firstpresbyteriansandpoint>)
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Monday-Saturday

- 7:00 a.m. AA meeting

Monday

- 9:00 a.m. TOPS meeting (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)
- 6:00 p.m. Al-Anon meeting

Tuesday

- 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Book Study and Contemplative Prayer Group
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Wednesday

- 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Rainbow Soup Kitchen community meal
- 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Church choir practice
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Thursday

- 12:00 p.m. Al-Anon meeting
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting



First Presbyterian Church

417 North Fourth Avenue, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864

208-263-2047

office@fpcsandpoint.org

www.fpcsandpoint.org

Ministers

Members and Friends

Pastor Catherine Lyle

Pastor cell phone: 509-570-3938

Pastor email: pastorcatherine@fpcsandpoint.org

Office hours

Monday 9:00-12:00

Wednesday 9:00-12:00