

First Presbyterian Church

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Dear First Presbyterian Church Family:

As I sit in my office on a beautiful fall day, I am overcome with gratitude and joy for our beloved congregation. After a period of challenging transition, this church has emerged stronger and more focused than ever on sharing the love of Jesus Christ. This is a church “on the move,” a church deeply committed to its members and to its community, and a church that strives to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

We do this in so many beautiful ways, both by providing a place of fellowship and “home” to our members, and reaching out into our community and the world. Let me give you a glimpse of this from the last week:

- On Friday, our middle school youth ministry held an overnight “lock-in.” We provided a safe place for 13 middle school students to hang out on a Friday night, share fun and fellowship, and learn about the love of Christ.
- On Saturday, we served 370 hungry and food insecure families in our community through the “United Harvest” mobile food pantry in our Annex, working in partnership with First United Methodist Church.
- On Sunday, we celebrated two glorious worship services with more than 270 people in attendance led by our Celebrate Band, our Praise and Alleluia Children’s choir, and our Chancel Choir. We sang hymns, prayed together, and heard God’s word proclaimed through scripture, reflection and a sermon.
- Today (Monday) our Annex is full again as we collaborate with Hastings Public Schools and their “Artist in Residence” program. The Boy Scouts meet in our basement every Monday evening too.
- On Tuesday, we will do a bible study at noon and the quilters will meet in the Annex in the afternoon.
- On Wednesday, we will do another bible study in the morning. Wednesday afternoons are always spirit-filled with our Wednesday Night Live programming where we do recreation, bible study, choir and a meal for 40+ elementary aged children. Following that, we have choir and youth group for middle school and high school youth. This Wednesday we are also offering a free yoga class to our members and the community in the Annex. And we will have a mid-week adult education class on Wednesday evening.
- On Thursday, we will use the Annex classroom to offer free Spanish classes to our community.

This is just one week in the life of our church! And all of this amazing and faithful work is because of the steadfast support of all of our members. As you can imagine, this kind of programming, ministry and mission that both nurtures our members and serves our community requires hundreds of volunteers and an incredible group of committed, caring and talented staff members.

You make these ministries happen. **Thank you** for your faithful support and financial gifts to the church.

I’d like to reflect a little bit on the call God places on our lives to support the ministry and mission of the church.



In Psalm 24 we read, “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” This is a reminder that all we have, and all we are, belongs to God. As we begin to embrace that reality, we recognize our call to give back from our time, talent, and treasure to the ministry and mission of God.

A pastor friend of mine preached a sermon about offering our “whole lives” to God as part of his stewardship campaign. One of the young girls in the congregation was listening. When it came time to take the offering after the sermon, the usher got to her row. She looked up at the usher and said, “Could you lower the plate?” The usher held it down a bit. “No, a little lower please.” The usher lowered it a bit more. “More; could you just put it on the floor?” The usher was a little concerned but finally put it on the floor. The little girl stepped into the offering plate, stood there, and said, “This is what I give to the Lord!” Each of us are called to offer our whole lives to God and the work of love that God is doing in this world. How will you do that in the coming year?

Our “whole life” offering to God includes our time, talents, and treasure. Enclosed in this letter are two forms I invite you to complete. The first is a pledge card for 2018. Pledge cards have a practical purpose; they help us to plan our budget for the upcoming year. They also have a theological purpose. This card is a tool to help you and your family prayerfully discern how God is calling you to give in the coming year. If you believe in the ministry and mission of First Presbyterian Church, I invite you to give generously to support the work the church is doing. This is an opportunity for you to respond in gratitude and generosity to abundant blessings and the love and grace of God that is manifest through our church.

The second form is a “Time and Talent” sheet. In addition to your financial gift, I encourage you to think about how you will commit your time and talents to the ministry and mission of God that is lived out through First Presbyterian Church of Hastings.

We serve a God who invites our participation in ministry and mission; who invites us to give our whole lives in service to God. The church is God’s instrument in the world; it is the Body of Christ. The church needs you in order to do the work we are called to do. It needs your prayers, your financial support, your time, and your talents.

I humbly invite you to give generously of yourself, your treasure, your time, and your talents to support the ministry and mission of First Presbyterian Church of Hastings.

Your Servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Greg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Greg