

FIRST LIGHT NEWSLETTER

A Monthly Newsletter Published by the Fairbanks First Presbyterian Church, September 2025

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**FATHER GREGORY BOYLE
OF HOMEBOY INDUSTRIES
IS COMING TO FAIRBANKS!**

New York Times bestselling author Fr. Greg Boyle of **Tattoos On The Heart** and founder of Homeboy Industries is coming to speak in Fairbanks this fall with two former gang-members.

THANK YOU to First Presbyterian for taking the lead on this incredible opportunity for our community.

Homeboy Industries provides hope, training and support to formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated people, helping them to redirect their lives and rejoin the community.

SAVE THE DATE
Friday Nov. 21, 2025
6:30-8:30 PM

homeboyalaska.org

Fairbanks First Presbyterian Church
547 7th Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Office: 907-452-2406
Fax: 907-452-7205

**NARTHEX TEAM
MEETING**

JOIN US FOR AN ALL HANDS
MEETING AS NEW AND EXISTING
NARTHEX TEAM VOLUNTEERS
GATHER TO TRAIN AND REVIEW
HOW WE ENSURE EVERYONE IS
SAFE AND WELCOMED HERE AT
FIRST PRES, ESPECIALLY ON
SUNDAY MORNINGS

DATE
9-14-2025

TIME
11:35AM

Our **VISION** is to see the world transformed to love, worship and serve Christ.

We do this through our **MISSION**, which is to welcome all people, equip them for a deep and living faith in Jesus Christ, and send them into the world to share God's love.

~~ From the Pastor ~~

Matthew 11:28-30

[Jesus said] *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Most of us don't spend much time studying yokes and admiring the technological innovations that have come about in the millennia of domestication of wild animals and the agricultural and other labor-related work that we have given to said animals. That being said, as a Pastor and a musher, I have spent a lot of time studying the above passage from Matthew's Gospel and I have spent a considerable amount of time learning about sled dog harnesses; one of the most prevalent "yokes" in our culture today, at least here in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The sled dog harness has come a long way from the historic models used first by the northern Alaska Native tribes and later by other Native American and even later by Europeans in both North America and Europe. By the time such data was recorded in the 1700s, sled dog harnesses resembled horse tack: large contraptions of leather and either metal or wood for the frame. Since then, we have come a long way as harnesses are now made of synthetic fibers and major companies have researched the most ergonomically comfortable and physically efficient models for sled dogs to use. Today, most sled dog harnesses are lightweight, complex designs that work to reduce the impact of pulling heavy sleds over rough terrain for miles and miles at a time. The fabric does not get brittle or less comfortable in extreme cold, and the dogs experience less undue strain or friction than they once did.

This is the whole purpose of a yoke. During Jesus' day, a yoke was designed not for undue pain or strain, but rather as a remedy and a more efficient way to work and solve problems. Carrying a bucket of water is difficult, carrying two buckets of water is more than twice as hard! Having a simple yoke across your shoulders from which equally balanced vessels hang is significantly easier! The weight is distributed across a person's musculoskeletal structure in a far more comfortable and advantageously leveraged way!

In Jesus' day, other rabbis would speak of "the yoke of God's Law," and the way that these rabbis taught the Torah (or God's Law in Scripture) was seen as their own "yoke." Jesus is not introducing a new concept or metaphor here, but He is flipping the script: other rabbis have turned the Word and Law of God into a yoke that is too heavy to bear, bringing guilt and moralism where there should instead be joyful obedience and abundant grace. Jesus tells us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Not because it involves less strict discipleship (if anything, it is far stricter than "the righteousness of the pharisees" [see Matthew 5-7]), rather it is because the yoke of Jesus comes with a promise:

Firstly, we do not do the work of discipleship alone! We have the very presence of Jesus Himself at our side. We have the Holy Spirit to guide our words and actions. We have the Body of Christ surrounding and supporting us when we need to carry less, when we are hurting, and when we just need to stop and breathe. We are yoked to Christ Himself and we are yoked to the fellow disciples of Jesus whom He has brought into our life.

Secondly, the burden is light! We do not carry the weight of a burdensome law that only promises reward to the perfect and punishment to the disobedient. We carry the very Gospel of Jesus Christ: that God sent His only Son into the world that all who trust in Jesus might be saved and made whole: in this life today and in eternity with God. We are unburdened of moralism and shame and the broken ways of the world. We are instead carrying Light and Hope and Truth.

So, the next time you see a dog sled team at Musher's Hall or a skijorer at Creamer's Field, remember the Yoke of Jesus: the promise of rest, important (but never too hard!) work, and the invitation to join Jesus and His beloved community in taking on that work as a joyful response to the salvation that He has already secured for you.



~~Pastor David

Covenant

Notes from Nicole

First Pres Families,

WE JUST DID THAT HYMN NIGHT!!!! Hymn Night was incredible. What a gift it was to see the work of FPC's hands by means of quilts on the pews. Make note: our next 'hymn night' is November 30th for Songs of the Season at 6:00 p.m.

Much like my reflection when I interviewed and what I witnessed in Nome - our students can do things. What a privilege it is to watch your students come alive in their own skills and see them take on new responsibility. Thank you for allowing them to participate.

On hymn night we announced the summer mission trip for 2026: Savoonga. Dates and application will be available in a few weeks. Students and NextGen members who want to participate in the Savoonga trip need to participate in at least three fundraisers.

As we wrap up our summer, spend a few weeks in fall my prayer is for us to reflect on what it means to abide in the covenant of Christ. Exodus 19 shares that we will be His. John teaches us that He is light. May His light shine in us and through us as part of His promise.

We had a full summer and I can't wait to see what happens in the fall weeks.

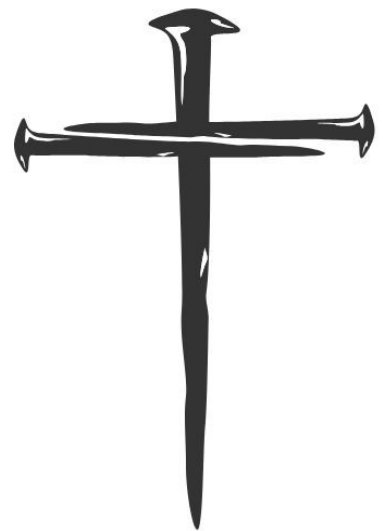
For the good and God,
-Nicole

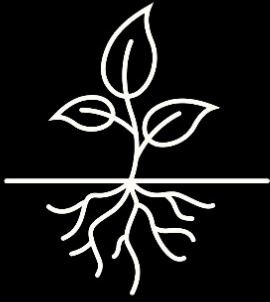
September Calendar

- **August 31st** - NextGen meet @ my house for bible study & dinner at your respective times
- **September 7th** - NextGen Sunday. We'll lead worship and serve as Usher + Greeter.

High School meet @ 4:00 and bring your 'wheels' to church. Bikes, roller skis/skates, skate boards. We'll prayer ride around the city for half an hour then get back to the Studio @ 5:00.

- **September 19th** @ 7:00 Women's Movie Night, Babysitting Fundraiser [Parents check for details]





CHILDREN'S ministry

AUGUST

31

LABOR DAY
NO SUNDAY
SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER

7

PARTY &
INFO MEETING
AFTER CHURCH

SEPTEMBER

14

FIRST SUNDAY
SCHOOL
9:00 A.M.

FIRST DAY OF
CLIMB CLUB
4-6 P.M.

Dear First Pres. Folks,

Hooray! We are launched into the school year and soon, we will be launching back into Children's Ministry full time!

During the Alaska summer, we keep our programs basic because families are busy. During the first weeks of fall, we prepare and we wait: for school routines to be established, for hunting trips to succeed, for families to take that last camping trip. Soon, we'll begin our weekly Sunday school classes, Middle school programs and (in years past) our Roots Club for grades 3-5. This year, as we meet for our party and info meeting (Sept. 7), we will not only be enjoying a meal and having lots of fun, we'll discover the makeup of our program--ages and needs of particular children. We'll discuss whether Roots will be needed this year, how many classrooms we'll fill for Sunday school, which special events will best serve our community. Please join us to chart our course for the year and make sure our programs reflect friends new and old and the reality of our fellowship. May the coming year honor the growing family that God has gathered here at First Pres. Blessings of health, joy and full freezers during these precious golden days of Fall!



KIDS MINISTRY PARTY & INFO MEETING

Sunday, Sept. 7

After the Church Service



- Sign up for activities
- Share a meal
- Learn a Bible lesson
- Have some Robot Fun!

See you Sunday, September 7!

Birthdays

Anniversaries



4 Dan Wells
6 Mark Lawson
7 Josephine Papp
7 Shannon Riggs
10 Norman Klann
10 Ben Logan
10 Sarah Logan
11 Wanda Bowder
13 Sandy Hoak
14 Theodore Matthews
14 Rachel Perkins
15 Qulvaq Hoak
17 Scott Marney
18 Patty Greimann
18 Rick Stovarsky
18 Jason Riggs
19 Nancy Dreydoppel
20 Kil Whiteman
21 Anarrakaq Hoak
22 Adelaide Wietgreffe
26 Hannah Denton
28 Meredith Nava
29 Scottie Klann
29 Sage Gates
29 Lorena Sims

10 Brian & Amber Sunderland
17 Daniel & Dawn Cogan

September

What follows is a short summary of the discussions and actions of the Session, at the August 19, 2025 Stated Session Meeting, which began at 6:00 pm in the Church Conference Room. The minutes of the meeting will contain a more complete record.

- The Meeting was opened with a Devotion and Prayer.
- Elders spent time in prayer. After making prayer requests known, Elders prayed for those needs.
- The minutes from the May 20th Stated Session meeting were reviewed and approved after several errors were identified and corrected. Minutes from the June 10th Stated Meeting, June 22nd Congregational Meeting and a June 22nd Special Session Meeting were reviewed and approved. The vital statistics from June, July and August were reviewed and approved.
- It was moved, seconded and passed to restore Beth and Glenn Brummond to inactive membership.
- It was moved, seconded and passed to ratify the results of E-Mail Voting: July 15th to 19th – Approve baptism for Ansel David Armstrong; Lucy Anne Green; Lucy Linea Menaker; Holly Ann Smith, and Felicity Jensen.
- Correspondence was received from Helping Alaska, notifying Session that they would be ceasing operations immediately. FPC has been a longtime financial supporter of Helping Alaska, which was founded by members of First Presbyterian, as Love In the Name of Christ.
- Items on the Consent Calendar were approved. These included minutes from the Deacons Meetings from March, April, and May. It was approved to transfer membership for Jonathan, Jessica, Adlai, and Grace Romaneski, to Trinity Presbyterian Church of Providence, RI.
- Church membership diminished by 1, to 155 as of August 19, 2025. The average weekly church attendance for the last month was down slightly to 139. Attendance for 2025 Year-to-date is 148, also down slightly.
- On the Financial Report: “For the period January 1 through July 31, 2005 expenses exceeded income by approximately \$20,000, creating a deficit in line with what we have projected for the year.” The General Fund remains healthy.
- It was moved, seconded and passed to ordain and install new Deacons and our new Elder on September 7, 2025.
- the Fall Presbytery Meeting Deacon-elect Joanna Weber was examined and approved for ordination and installation on September 7th.
- It was moved, seconded and passed, with regret, to accept the resignation of Ruling Elder Ted Riggs.
- Ruling Elders Brian Rozell and Brian Sunderland volunteered to assist with communion on September 7, 2025.


- It was moved, seconded and passed to elect Ruling Elders Brian Rozell and Brian Sunderland as Commissioners to , October 3rd to 4th, at Sequim Community Church in Sequim, WA.
- The Baptism of Maevis Coudon, daughter of Sam and Natalie Coudon was approved.
- Ruling Elder Paul Reichardt volunteered to bring snacks to the September Session Meeting.
- Several motions related to policy for the use of the entry area / Narthex during the week and on Sunday mornings have been tabled for further discussion at the September Session Meeting, after a meeting of the Security Sub-Committee.
- Session Ministry Team / Committee assignments were discussed.
- It was moved and seconded to combine the Specialized Ministry Team into the Adult Christian Education Ministry Team. Prior to voting on the main motion, it was moved, seconded and passed to table the vote on the main motion until the September Session Meeting.
- It was moved, seconded and passed to extend the meeting to 9:15 pm.
- Written and verbal reports were received from Ministry Teams. These reports included such topics and information as;
 - ◇ EPC Teaching Elder Andrew Smith, from NYC, will be preaching on October 5, 2025.
 - ◇ A motion from the Mission, Outreach & Evangelism was passed. MOTION: That the session establish a designated gift category named “Homeboy Industries” for receiving designated gifts given in support of the visit by Homeboy Industries in November of this year, and that session appoint a ruling elder or committee to be responsible for the proper accounting of fundraising income and expenditures for this event.
 - ◇ It was moved, seconded and passed to remove Elder Ted Riggs from the check signer list and replace him with RE Sarah Albert.
 - ◇ A motion from the Stewardship and Finance Committee was passed. MOTION: That Session create and maintain a list of “categories” eligible for receiving Designated Gifts, and that steps in the process for adding a “category” to the list of “eligible categories:”, a description of the proposed category and its budget shall be submitted to Session for consideration of approval.
 - ◇ Several other Financial motions were tabled, and will be brought back at the September Session meeting.
- It was moved, seconded and passed to adjourn the meeting with prayer. The meeting was adjourned by the Moderator and he led the closing prayer.
- The next Stated Session Meeting will be held on September 16, 2025 at 6:00 pm, in the Church Conference Room.

1st Pres Staff

David McConnell-Booher
 Nicole Matthews
 Carina Menaker
 Noreen Harwood
 Peggy Nicholas
 Paul Bonnell
Deacons
 Marta Beaudreault
 Aaron Evans
 Bethany Evans
 Debby Foster
 Daniel Griggs
 Emily Kohl
 Kathy Libby
 Shannon Riggs
 Christy Repasky
 Sarah Rozell
 Joanna Weber
Elders
 Sarah Albert
 Charles Beaudreault
 David Dreydoppel
 David Henry
 David McConnell-Booher
 Keith Nore
 Paul Reichardt
 Brian Rozell
 Emma Snell
 Brian Sunderland

SEPTEMBER 2025

Sun Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat

	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Family of Robert Boswell	Emma Snell	Dave & Linda Stephenson	Kathi Stevens	Rick & Peggy Stovarsky
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Our FPC Pastor & Staff	Brian, Amber, Kyle, Caleb, Lily & Luke Sunderland	Sarah Susook	Joyce Tapper	Richard, Andree, Toby, & Sean Thies	Kevin & Cindy Turnbough	Jacob, Christina, Sawyer & Jennifer Turman
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
FPC Deacons	Russ,, Rebekah, Autumn, Benaniah, Margaret & Nathan Lugt	Ian, Heidi, Savannah & William VanHarper	Carol Vondra	Rick Wagner	Victor & Denise Wallace	Paula Ward
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
FPC Elders	Denise Wartes	Ed Washburn	Joe, Joanna & Alice Weber	Dan & Linda Wells	James & Kil Whiteman	Liesl & Seth Wietgreffe
28	29	30				
Our Country	Richard, Linda, Josie & Lydia Wies	Ko., Sje;oa & Seam Williams				

Healing Prayers for
 Pat Fink Joy-el Culligan Sarah Curtis
 George Shoogukuwrk Joan Riggs
 Joyce Tapper Deanna Morris