

STAFF AND MINISTRY LEADERS SESSION SUMMARY OCTOBER 2026

Dear friends,

There is much to be thankful for at First Pres.

On October 18, we welcomed ten new members into our church family. Each brings their own story, gifts, and experiences, and we are delighted that they have found a spiritual home among us.

Moments like these reflect the welcome offered throughout our congregation. Through worship, music, friendship, children's and youth ministry, pastoral care, and community outreach, you help people experience the love of Christ. Thank you.

When Session met on October 20, we considered how to support this ministry, care for our shared spaces, and prepare faithfully for the future.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Through the end of September, the General Fund had a year-to-date deficit of approximately \$44,000, compared with a budgeted deficit of approximately \$58,000. Our regular operations were therefore about \$14,000 better than budget.

We are grateful for the generosity and careful stewardship behind these results. An operating shortfall remains, and continued support will be important through the final months of the year.

The Finance Team plans to provide quarterly financial updates through our church newsletter, supported by brief Sunday presentations. These updates will help explain our financial position and show how our gifts support the congregation's ministry.

GIVING IN SUPPORT OF MINISTRY

As people become familiar with the offering boxes, we will improve signage and reminders about the ways to give. Ushers can also help anyone looking for an offering box or our electronic giving station.

The offering boxes will continue to be used for regular Sunday worship, with offering plates available for special services and presentations as appropriate.

We are thankful for every contribution to our shared ministry, whether through financial gifts, faithful prayer, volunteer service, or care for others.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Session affirmed that tickets for The First Christmas Story and A Little Night Music will continue to be distributed at no charge, with a freewill offering received at the presentations.

These events offer a meaningful welcome to our wider community. The First Christmas Story, in particular, provides an opportunity to share the good news of Christ's birth with many people who may not otherwise attend church.

Session also authorized the Finance Team to seek sponsorships for special presentations at its discretion. Sponsorship offers an additional way for community supporters to contribute while keeping admission free.

We are grateful to the musicians, technical volunteers, organizers, and many others whose gifts make these presentations possible.

CARING FOR OUR CHURCH BUILDING

The Property Team continues to develop a proposal for sanctuary painting and flooring renewal. This work considers safety, durability, maintenance, appearance, and cost.

A detailed proposal will come from the Property Team to Session and then to the congregation for approval before the project proceeds. Final materials, costs, and scheduling have not yet been approved.

Session also clarified the distinction between the Decorating Team's work preparing the sanctuary and Welcome Centre for seasonal and worship themes, and the Property Team's responsibility for larger building projects. Written terms of reference will help make those responsibilities clear.

Thank you to everyone who helps care for our building and create welcoming spaces for worship, fellowship, and community use.

PREPARING FOR WINTER

Session authorized the Property Team to finalize this winter's snow-removal arrangements following its review of available options.

The aim is reliable clearing of the parking lot, steps, and entrances so that our congregation and community groups can safely access the building throughout the week.

COMMUNITY SUPPER: THANKFUL FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE

Session expressed deep appreciation for Paulina Monette's twenty years of leadership in food-related ministry, including the Community Supper, and for Ron's support alongside her.

Through nourishing meals, careful organization, and a warm welcome, Paulina and the volunteers have offered Christian hospitality to countless people over the years.

Paulina will step away from Community Supper leadership as of January 2027. She and Ron will continue serving through the growing Love Your Neighbour grocery hamper ministry.

Planning for the Community Supper leadership transition will take place over the coming weeks. We give thanks for the strong foundation laid through so many years of faithful service.

SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session approved an application to the Cooke's Church Trust Fund for a \$5,000 grant toward Behold Youth Retreat 2027 and requested the endorsement of the Presbytery of Barrie.

If awarded, this grant will help support an opportunity for young people to grow in faith, build friendships, and experience the wider church.

Thank you to everyone who encourages our children and youth and supports the leaders who serve alongside them.

NEW BEGINNINGS

New Beginnings remains our most important congregational priority this fall.

There are many good things happening at First Pres. This season of discernment invites us to build on those strengths while considering how God is calling us to serve in a changing world.

Broad participation matters. These conversations will give people an opportunity to listen, reflect, and help shape our congregation's future together.

The Transformational Ministry Weekend takes place October 23 to 25:

- **Friday, October 23 at 7:00 p.m.:** Congregational Gathering.
- **Saturday, October 24:** House Group leader training 9am to 1pm.
- **Sunday, October 25:** Covenanting Sunday and New Beginnings commissioning, with Rev. Ian Fraser preaching.

House Groups will meet weekly from October 26 through November 22. Sign-up sheets are available in the Welcome Centre.

Please consider joining a group and inviting someone else to participate. Even if you cannot attend all four meetings, your presence and perspective are welcome.

DATES TO KEEP IN VIEW

- October 23 to 25: Transformational Ministry Weekend
- October 26 to November 22: New Beginnings House Groups
- November 8: Remembrance Day observation
- November 15: Intergenerational Sunday, focused on our emerging generations
- November 18: Session meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room
- November 22: Communion
- November 29: Advent begins with *Follow the Star*
- December 1: Advent Memorial Gathering
- December 20: Christmas Pageant
- December 24 at 5:00 p.m.: Family Friendly Christmas Eve Service
- December 24 at 7:00 p.m.: Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Thank you for the many ways you contribute to the life of First Pres.

Some contributions are visible on Sunday mornings. Others happen quietly throughout the week—in a conversation, a prepared room, a shared meal, a visit, or a task completed with care. Together, these acts of service help our church live its faith and extend Christ's welcome.

May we continue to Look Up in worship, Lean In to community, and Reach Out with the love of Christ together.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Alton J. Ruff