

PASTORAL MINISTRY TEAM REPORT
Yellowstone Presbytery Meeting - March 13-14, 2026
Federated Church of Forsyth - Forsyth, Montana

The purpose of the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) is to come alongside churches, sessions, pastors and CREs to provide encouragement, support and training as we work together to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The PMT has had monthly meetings since the Presbytery meeting in October 2025.

Items for Action from the Pastoral Ministry Team:

- recommend Yellowstone Presbytery dismiss Rev. Richard (Dick) Davis and Rev. Mary Davis to Glacier Presbytery at their request, and if the way be clear

PMT acted on the following items since the October 2025 Presbytery meeting:

- approved request for revalidation of MWS JP Carlson's campus ministry position serving as a Campus Pastor in Bozeman supervised by Table of Grace. Table of Grace is in partnership with several local congregations: St. James Episcopal, Bozeman United Methodist, First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman, Christ the King Lutheran Church Bozeman.
- approved request for revalidation of MWS Brent Long as pastor to Big Timber First Congregational Church
- approved the Mile's City churches request to allow Caroline Fleming to preside over the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on January 4, 2026
- approved final contract between Madison Valley Presbyterian Church and LP Brian Conklin (see Attachment A)
- formed a subgroup to address barriers to churches being more involved with presbyterian and how to form relationships between churches, people and Yellowstone Presbytery
- formed a subgroup to start a Prayer Team to come together across the Presbytery to lift in prayer our pastors, CREs, congregations, communities, to support and encourage, to lead workshops on why we pray, how to pray, different types of prayer and learning to pause and listen to God

- approved dissolution of relationship between First Presbyterian Church Lewistown and Rev. Kimmy Briggs as of December 31, 2025
- approved Margee Smith as moderator to Lewistown session beginning 1/1/2026; approved Margee Smith's commission to the Lewistown church and the contract between Margee Smith and First Presbyterian Church of Lewistown (see Attachment B)
- assigned Laura Wood to mentor CRE Margee Smith
- celebrated Jim Tarr's and Gail Beckham's time on PMT
- welcomed new member, MWS Laura Wood, to PMT
- Noted Gail Beckham was selected President of the Colstrip Session
- Gail Beckham will continue as liaison to Hysham church
- approved the proposed Administrative Commission to install Rev. Nicole Melara as the pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman with the addition of Rev. George Goodrich on February 7, 2026 at 1:00 PM. Those nominated to the Commission are:
Debbie Blackburn, RE Manhattan
Julie Boksich, RE Church of the Big Hole
Debbie Ernst, RE Bozeman First
Russ Kline, RE Billings First
Rev. Sarah Tunall, TE Manhattan
Rev. JP Carlson, Specialized Ministry at Table & Grace
Rev. Dave Thompson, Billings First
Rev. Ashley Birk, Member at Large
Guest: Rev. Eric Heinekamp, General Presbyter -Illinois Prairie Presbytery
- approved the contract between Forsyth Federated Church and Vicki Waddington (see Attachment C)
- approved Lewistown's Mission Study
- Steve Hundley assigned as moderator for Dillon church
- approved Terry Community Presbyterian Church to elect two additional members to the combined PNC and begin the process of PNC work including a shortened Mission Study

- assigned Debbie Ernst, RE and Rev. Laura Wood as co-moderators of Manhattan Session as Rev. Sarah Tunall has resigned
- approved dissolution of relationship between Manhattan Presbyterian Church and Rev. Sarah Tunall as of March 31, 2026
- approved to pay any extra cost incurred from a second meeting between CRE candidates and the psychologist, up to \$200.00 per candidate, from the PMT budget
- approved Andy Pehl and Cheryl Banks to schedule and conduct Exit Interview with Rev. Ashley Birk
- approved Julie Boksich and Neva Rathbun to schedule and conduct Exit Interview with Rev. Kimmy Briggs
- reviewed and approved the Liaison List for 2026 (Attachment D)

We are always sad to say goodbye to pastors who leave our presbytery. Since a number of pastors have left us in the last year or soon will leave our presbytery, PMT offers this update on where these pastors have gone and/or what they are doing or planning to do:

- Daniel Triller was sought out by the Presbyterian Church in Ellensburg, WA where Callie's parents live and closer to his family in the greater Seattle area. On January 20, they welcomed a third son.
- Mary Grace Reynolds left to pursue graduate work and a career as an attorney.
- Kimmy Briggs left to accept the hoped for position as Associate Director for Mission with the Outreach Foundation, focusing on the Middle East.
- Ashley Birk's term as interim at Bozeman was completed as planned when the church hired a new pastor. She needs to be closer to family and accepted the Interim Pastor position @ FPC in Santa Fe, NM.
- Sarah Tunall left feeling a solo pastorate in a small church in a small town as well as not being in a city on the NW Coast in general were not good fits for her.
- Dick and Mary Davis, retired, have been living in Missoula. They have accepted a part-time temporary pastor position in Whitlash, MT and are transferring to Glacier Presbytery.

PMT met with the following for Annual Reviews or Exit Interviews since the October 2025 Presbytery Meeting:

- PMT met with CRE Margee Smith, Lewistown, for annual review
- PMT met with CRE Veva Larson, Anaconda, for annual review
- Steve Hundley, MWS and Cheryl Banks, RE conducted Exit Interview with Rev. Sarah Tunall
- PMT met with United Methodist Licensed Local Pastor Vicki Waddington, Forsyth, for annual review

Respectfully submitted,

Co-Moderator Cheryl Banks
Co-Moderator Debbie Ernst

Attachment A

Madison Valley Presbyterian Church Interim Pastoral Contract (7/01 /2025 - 6/30/2026)

This contract provides the terms and conditions that govern the agreement between **Madison Valley Presbyterian Church** (located at 308 W. Hugel St. Ennis, MT), and **Brian Conklin** (22 Centennial Drive, Ennis MT) who agree to be bound by this Agreement.

1. Terms

Brian Conklin will be employed as a lay interim pastor on a half-time basis, serving approximately 20 hours per week. The period of employment spans from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

Either Party may terminate this Agreement for any reason with 30 days written notice to the other Party.

2. Pastoral Responsibilities

- Plan, prepare and lead worship services.
- Be a teacher of the Word by providing spiritual and administrative leadership to the congregation.
- Serve as ex-officio member of the Session, and report monthly activities to session.
- Engage in pastoral care, such as hospital and home visitations, and spiritual encouragement and support for those with special concerns and struggles.
- Disciple, equip, empower and challenge members and friends of the congregation to grow deeper in faith, discover and identify their individual gifts, and participate in ministry and mission; enabling them to know they are valued and needed in this body of Christ and sent into the world as Christ's ambassadors.
- Be actively engaged with the Presbytery.
- Lead and equip the church in understanding, engagement with, and mission in the wider church community. Pursue ecumenical connections.
- Nurture one's own physical and spiritual life and love for God, engaging in regular spiritual practices, including praying for the congregation and community.

3. Congregational Responsibilities

- Partner with the Interim Pastor in the shared work of ministry.
- Pursue an active faith life, seeking to continually grow in faith and respond to God's calling.
- Support the Interim Pastor in his ministry.
- Provide regular financial compensation according to the terms outlined below.
- Provide regular constructive feedback during monthly session meetings.
- Pray for the Interim Pastor.
- Participate in the wider ministry and mission of the Yellowstone Presbytery, when needed / as appropriate.

4. Compensation and Benefits

- Effective Cash Salary (including Housing Allowance, if applicable): \$30,000.00
- Covenant Package: Calculated as 10% of the Effective Cash Salary, totaling \$3,000.00
- Continual Education: \$600 is allocated, with the option to accrue this amount for up to three years.
- Professional Expense: \$300 is provided for professional expenses.
- Mileage Reimbursement: Reimbursed at current IRS mileage rate
- Paid Vacation: Four weeks of paid vacation are included.
- Continuing Education Leave: Two weeks of leave are designated for continuing education.

5. Family Paid Leave Provision

Family paid leave is available under the following circumstances:

- Up to twelve weeks for the birth or adoption of a child.
- Up to four weeks for leave related to a spouse.
- Up to four weeks for the care of a seriously ill family member.
- Up to four weeks in the event of a personal loss.

Total Compensation

The total compensation package for the term of employment is \$33,900.00.

Signatures

Moderator Date

Clerk of Session Date

Interim Pastor Date

PMT Date

Attachment B

Approved by Session - December 14, 2025

Terms for Commissioned Ruling Elder for Pastoral Services

Name: Margee Smith

Church: First Presbyterian Church, Lewistown

Dates of Service: January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026

Commission Description

Margee will be a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) at First Presbyterian Church of Lewistown, MT. The commission will function as one part of the bridge between the departure of the current pastor and the arrival the new pastor in the future. Working with the Session of First Presbyterian, Margee will help provide worship leadership, pastoral care, and general oversight to the church during the transition. In addition, as part of this Commission, Margee will be permitted to administer the Sacraments of Communion and Baptism and officiate weddings and funerals as needed.

Regular Responsibilities

- Worship leadership 1x/month, typically the 1st Sunday of the month, including preaching and presiding at the Table.
- Provide leadership for a Worship Committee who will be responsible for weekly worship, including scheduling worship leaders.
- Provide pastoral care to the congregation and community, including officiating funerals as needed (and as available) and visiting with and administering Communion to homebound members.
- Moderate the Session and Congregational Meetings of First Presbyterian Church.
- Work with the Session, and other leaders of the church, to see to the continuation of various church ministries (such as children's ministry, adult education, and fellowship). Note, this is not the responsibility to DO that work but to serve as a point of the connection to the leadership of the church to see that the work and ministry of FPC continues during the interim.
- Attend, if needed, monthly Deacon meetings.
- As the person present in the office most frequently, provide support and guidance to the Administrative Assistant, but the Personnel Committee will act as the supervisor of the Administrative Assistant.
- Be active in Yellowstone Presbytery and regularly attend Presbytery meetings.
- Participate in the ministerium w/ St. James Episcopal, Zion Lutheran, and Lewistown United Methodist, including participation in ecumenical services as available

Time Expectations

- The terms of this commission account for roughly 20 hours/week
- Presence in the church office at least 1x/week (9am-1pm one day per week), though this could increase to 2x/week
- Worship and sermon preparation
- Pastoral Care, including on-call availability

Approved by Session - December 14, 2025

Compensation

Based on the outlined time expectations, Margee will be considered half time (roughly twenty hours per week). It is understood by all parties that some weeks (such as a week she preaches or has a funeral) might require additional hours, which might mean fewer hours another week. Margee will not be expected to submit an accounting of her exact hours. In addition, because of the time requirements of preaching, if Margee preaches more than 1x/month, compensation should come at the pulpit supply rate.

Salary: \$22,000 annually

BOP Benefits: Covenant Package, plus Dental and Vision Insurance

Professional Expenses: \$1500 in 2026, which includes the purchase of laptop, a subscription to Call to Worship, and the opportunity to purchase books/resources needed for ministry

Continuing Education: \$600 (can be cumulative for up to three years), including two weeks for study leave

Mileage Reimbursement: \$400

Family Leave Policy in accordance with Yellowstone Presbytery's Policy

**Vacation is not included because it is only expected that Margee be present on a Sunday when she is preaching. While she will help arrange worship leadership on other weeks, she would have the freedom to travel/be away from worship on those weeks. In addition, while ordinarily Margee will be present in the office one time per week, her absence from that routine would not change the compensation offered to her.*

Terms of Service

This commission is for one year from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026, and can be renewed annually under the authority of PMT. Should the situation change, including when a new, installed pastor is called to FPC, PMT and the Session of FPC can consult to change the details of this Commission.

Supervision/Oversight

Margee will serve under the direction of the session of First Presbyterian Church in Lewistown, MT, with support and oversight from the Pastoral Ministry Team of Yellowstone Presbytery. Laura Wood will serve as her mentor. After two months (in March 2026), Margee, the FPC Session, and PMT will evaluate the terms of this commission and makes adjustments to time, compensation, and/or responsibilities as needed.

Margee will comply with the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Yellowstone Presbytery, including completing the required boundaries training and abiding by the sexual misconduct policy.

December 2025

Signatures

Margee Smith, CRE

Margee Smith

Lisa Sanders, Clerk of Session at FPC

Lisa Sanders

PMT

Attachment C

**Contract Agreement for Temporary Supply
Between The Federated Church and Vicki Waddington, LLP
(Licensed Local Pastor, Retired, of the United Methodist Church)**

Purpose: To provide pastor services for the Federated Church of Forsyth for the budget year, to begin on January 1, 2026, as agreed upon by terms stated in this contract including the compensation package. See attachments.

Accountability: The contract employee, Vicki Waddington, will work directly with the Session and be accountable along with the Session to the Presbytery.

Term of Office: Beginning January 1, 2026, for each budget year, subject to mutual agreement with the Contract Employee, this may be renewed by the Session as necessary after review at the end of the calendar year.

Responsibilities:

1. To provide a worship and teaching ministry, including all services of the ministry of the Word.
2. To provide pastoral services to the congregation and to the community, providing services for weddings, funerals and other pastoral activities and duties including visitation.
3. Attend Session meetings and provide training for Elders for their ministry.
4. With church boards and committees as ex-officio member, to assist them in conducting their assigned tasks. i.e., Sunday School, VBS and Communicants classes.
5. Clarify roles of Session and church officers and facilitate communication within the Congregation.
6. Listen to pain and problems, to provide comfort and assistance.
7. Help the Congregation recognize what acts of service God is calling it to, especially by identifying unmet needs in the community and mobilizing the Congregation to service.

**Compensation Plan
Contract agreement with Vicki Waddington
and Federated Church of Forsyth**

Base salary \$1,050.00 per month, with eligibility for annual cost of living increase.

This compensation package is based on no more than 5 days per month for scheduled office hours, not to exceed 40 hours per month; and which includes 2 hours for twice monthly Sunday Worship pulpit supply.

Additional mileage reimbursement to be paid by Treasurer upon receipt of voucher.

This contract provides for 2 weeks of paid vacation.

A minimum of \$200.00 for professional expenses, to be paid upon receipt of vouchers.

An amount of \$300.00 for continuing education expenses, to be paid upon receipt of vouchers.

There are no allowances for Community Involvement, Health Insurance, Pension and Housing as they are not applicable.

This compensation plan is considered ratified upon the approval of the following parties:

Vicki Waddington
Contract Employee

12-21-25
Date

Gayle Holland
For the Session

12-21-25
Date

For the Pastoral Ministry
Team of Yellowstone Presbytery

Date

Attachment D

CHURCH	MODERATOR	LIAISON	LOCAL CONTACT/CLERK
Anaconda	CRE Veva Larson	Julie Boksich	Sean Larson
Billings First	TE Dave Thompson	Steve Hundley	Carla Bracken
Billings St Andrew	TE Susan Thomas	Cheryl Banks	Ben Larson
Bozeman	TE Nicole Melara	Debbie Blackburn	Donna Beck
Butte	TE Karolee Larson	George Goodrich	Gary Helming
Colstrip	RE Gail Beckham	Neva Rathbun	Joy Murchie
Deer Lodge	TE Laura Wood	Debbie Ernst	Susie Johnson
Dillon	TE Steve Hundley	Julie Boksich	Tara Jones
Ennis	TE Steve Hundley	Julie Boksich	Roberta McKay
Forsyth	TE Dave Thompson	Cheryl Banks	Gayle Holland
Hysham	RE Gail Beckham	Gail Beckham	Dana Cunningham
Jordan	RE Andy Pehl	Andy Pehl	Bev Harbaugh
Lewistown	CRE Margee Smith	Debbie Blackburn	Lisa Sanders
Manhattan	TE Laura Wood & RE Debbie Ernst	Debbie Ernst	Debbie Blackburn
Miles City	TE Jamie Schmeling	Neva Rathbun	Caroline Fleming
Philipsburg	Debra Schmidt (UMC)	Steve Hundley	TJ Victor
Poplar	Jeff Harada	Andy Pehl	Wanda Kirn
Stanford	RE Melissa Bell		Amanda Kelly
Terry	TE Neva Rathbun	Neva Rathbun	Andy Pehl
White Sulfur Springs	TE JP Carlson	George Goodrich	Pam Jackson
Wise River (Big Hole)	TE JP Carlson	TE JP Carlson	Julie Boksich
Wolf Point	Jeff Harada	Andy Pehl	Mary Boysun