"*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*"
~Margaret Mead

March 19, 2026

As I am writing this letter (way back in March), it was just announced that the recipient of this year's John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award is "the People of the Twin Cities, Minnesota". Ok, we shared it with Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, but still. The committee who awards the prize wrote: "The people of the Twin Cities responded with extraordinary courage and resolve. Tens of thousands took to the streets to peacefully protest federal overreach and threats to immigrant families and constitutional protections, while others documented enforcement activity and alerted neighbors to federal agents' presence."

Here at the church we received cards and letters from all over the country and around the world letting us know that they were inspired by the heroic actions of everyday people and holding all of us in their prayers. All of the generous acts of love, buying and delivering groceries, giving children rides to and from school, keeping watch on street corners and parking lots, and all those whistles, made a difference. They made a difference for the people they most immediately helped and they made a difference for those of us who watched and listened and did what we could. They inspired us, they challenged us, they gave us hope, they changed us.

This year's stewardship theme is *Make a Difference*. I once had a member of the congregation tell me that they thought it was a little dishonest, or at least lacked integrity, for me to stand in the pulpit on Sunday morning and tell people they their/our financial gifts go to feeding the hungry, sheltering the houseless and caring for the vulnerable when in actuality less than 5% of our budget goes to address these issues. They had a point and since then I'm very careful about how I word these invitations to share.

I fear that sometimes we think that we are only making a difference when we are supporting our Mission and Social Justice in Action programs and opportunities, when I believe that everything we say and do here at the First Presbyterian Church of South St. Paul makes a difference, including just being here, a place people can come to for safety, belonging, comfort, challenge, inspiration, learning and fun.

- Our worship services make a difference.
- Our children and youth classes and programming and service projects make a difference.
- Our movie nights, adult study groups and classes, chili cook-offs, and game nights make a difference.
- Our memorial service receptions make a difference.
- Our love for one another, however imperfect and awkward at times, makes a difference.

People who have never stepped foot in this building before will tell you that they can feel this difference almost immediately. They see it. They hear it. They feel it. In the 2nd century the early Christian theologian

Tertullian wrote on observing how pagans described Christians: "See how they love one another". And it made a difference. The early Church grew exponentially. This place, Us, makes a difference in our lives. We make a difference in each other's lives. And we make a difference to our neighbors and in our communities. Through your generous financial support, we can and will continue to make a difference. Come and make a difference with us.

In this envelope, you will find three additional items.

1. A brochure describing how your financial gifts support the various ministries and missions of the congregation and how they are allocated between the four areas of Worship, Learning, Serving and Community.
2. A chart indicating items you should consider as part of your pledge to finance our unified budget and which are still a part of your community and mission giving.
3. A pledge card.

We ask that you prayerfully consider what God is calling you to do. Before you fill out your card, please know that by *increasing* your commitment to our operating funds, it will allow First Presbyterian to meet the current budget as described in the narrative budget **and help assure the financial sustainability of our congregation for future generations.**

Above all, we rejoice and are glad and grateful for all God's many blessings, including this day and every day we have to share together. We are also grateful for your commitment to the life of First Presbyterian Church. There is no gift too great or too small. Mail your pledge card to the church office, fill out the online form on the church website or bring it to a worship service and place it in the offering plate. We will dedicate all our pledges at the service on May 10th.

In God's Love,

Your Session, your Finance Committee, and your Pastor