



Melissa Van Der Stad / The Forum
A photo of Andrew 'Andy' Grant sits on a chair with a Star Quilt and sage bound with a red ribbon during his celebration of life on Friday in Fargo.

THE FLAME OF THE
FIRE KEEPER

Father, uncle, sun dancer and more: Andy Grant
remembered as shining light to all

BY MELISSA VAN DER STAD
The Forum
FARGO
In a room full of song and companionship, a crowd of people gathered to honor a Fargo man that they all loved. The positive impact

that 67-year-old Andrew 'Andy' Grant had on everyone around him was clearly visible during a celebration of life on Friday, June 6, at the Indigenous Association at 720 First Ave. N., in Fargo. "He was just so sweet," said his daughter Cora 'Mikinukikwe' Allard. "He was a really great

guy." Her father's last moments were filled with prayer, Allard said, because he died in a place that he loved doing what he loved. "He probably wasn't scared," Allard said. "He was probably praying. Praying for me and my sister, so that gives me

comfort." Grant died on Tuesday, May 20, in Chaffee, N.D. First responders said a vehicle Grant was working on had fallen on him. A preliminary investigation by officials found that devices used to support the vehicle had

GRANT on A3

ND leaders at odds over what constitutes veto

Legislative
Council warns of 'steep risk' as AG's office interprets \$35M mistake

BY PEYTON HAUG
Forum News Service
BISMARCK — Branches of the North Dakota government are seemingly at odds about how to



deal with a \$35 million veto mistake made by Gov. Kelly Armstrong and his administration. The mishap involved a line-item veto aimed at cutting a homeless liaison in tribal communities, a single \$150,000 line of a larger budget bill. Instead of striking

through the line, however, the administration mistakenly removed the entire section, which included \$25 million for affordable housing initiatives and \$10 million in homeless services. Of the state's \$20.3 billion budget, the allocation was the only funding to specifically target housing needs. Soon after the mistake was discovered, Armstrong promised the Housing Finance Agency

the funds would be reinstated one way or another. "I have a very talented staff, and I'm very proud of them 99.9% of the time. They, however, apparently forgot their coloring skills from grade school," Armstrong told agency leaders in a May 22 Industrial Commission meeting. "We inadvertently made the mistake, which is on us and our

VETO on A4

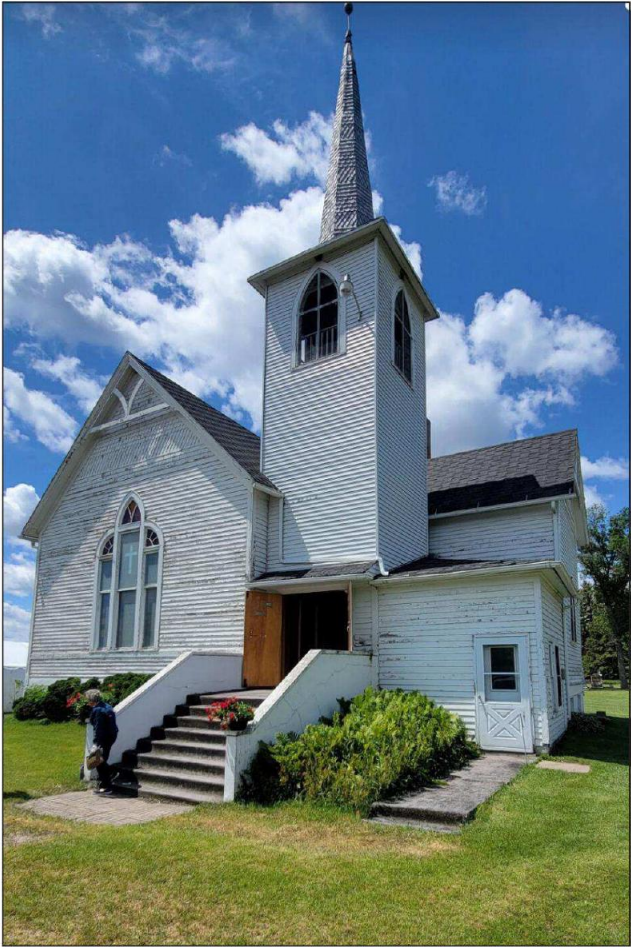
ND families influenced by 1822 Norway blaze

Pentecost Sunday this year is June 8; on that holy day 203 years ago, 113 people died in a Norway church fire

BY SALLY FRIESE HOFFMAN
GRAND FORKS — Whether they know it or not, everyone who has ever walked through any outward-opening egress door has already benefited from the fire of 1822. The worst fire in Norway's history took place 203 years ago on Pentecost Sunday, May 26, 1822, near the Norway-Sweden border at Grue Church in Solør, Kirkenær, Hedemark, Norway. The traditional old wooden stavekirke, which had existed from the 1200s, was totally gone in less than 20 minutes, along with 113-116 people — several of whom have family connections

today in and around Traill County, North Dakota. In 1897 in Traill County, a small group of Norwegian immigrants named their newly formed congregation after their home church in Norway — Grue. The small congregation also brought with them the customs from the old country. For example, the women and men sat in separate areas of the church, just as they did back in 1822 in Norway. John Bye, the former director of NDSU's Institute for Regional Studies, who had ancestors in

CHURCH on A6



Contributed / Sally Hoffman
Historic Grue Church in Traill County, North Dakota.

Motorcyclist killed at Fargo intersection

BY JOHN LAMB
The Forum
FARGO — A motorcyclist was killed in a Fargo crash late morning on Saturday, June 7. According to a report from the North Dakota Highway Patrol, around 11:30 a.m. Saturday, a 26-year-old Fargo man on an Indian Scout motorcycle was traveling northbound at a high speed on 36th Street South and failed to stop at a four-way stop at Westrac Drive. A Ford Expedition, which had stopped, proceeded east into the intersection when it was

struck on the passenger side by the motorcycle. The motorcyclist was wearing a helmet, but died from the injuries. A 55-year-old female passenger in the Expedition received minor injuries and the 47-year-old male driver of the vehicle was uninjured. Both are from West Fargo. No names were released Saturday by the Highway Patrol. The crash remains under investigation by the North Dakota Highway Patrol. Readers can reach Forum reporter John Lamb at jlamb@forumcomm.com.



Michael McGurran / WDAY
The scene after a motorcycle-vehicle crash in the intersection at 36th Street and Westrac Drive in south Fargo.

Fargo will soon seek proposals for a new convention center

Committee sends RFP to City Commission to discuss Monday

BY ROBIN HUEBNER
The Forum
FARGO — A committee tasked with setting the stage for a new convention center in Fargo has forwarded its work on to the Fargo City Commission for approval. The Fargo Convention Center Committee has been meeting regularly since February to create a process for choosing a site and a developer for the convention center. On Friday, June 6, the committee unanimously approved its process and sent a Request for Proposals (RFP) to the City Commission for approval on Monday, June 9. Denise Kolpack, city

commissioner and member of the convention center committee, said she's excited to work on a project approved by citizens. "We just need to be really good stewards of that trust of the taxpayer dollars that are going to go into this project, and I think we have been so far," she said. A potential price tag for the convention center/hotel complex has been identified as between \$40 million and \$45 million. Fargo residents approved the project last November by voting to increase the city's lodging tax from 3% to 6%, to be in place for 25 years. Lodging tax proceeds are projected to generate \$37 to \$41 million for land costs, site preparation, construction, furniture, fixtures and equipment. The city will reserve some of those proceeds for

CENTER on A6

FARMLAND FOR SALE
FOR SALE: 98 acres of Dickey County ND Farmland in and Bordering Ellendale ND.
FOR SALE: 75 Acres of Traill County Farmland East of Galesburg, ND.
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BRIEFS



Pladson

send him nude photos of herself, the release said. Pladson is a lifetime registrant.

The Fargo police website provides a list of frequently asked questions about sex offenders in the city.

Barnesville students safe after bus-car crash

CLAY COUNTY, Minn. — No injuries were reported in a crash involving a school bus

honor the victims.

Survivors

Baptisms were also scheduled that Pentecost Sunday, resulting in a larger-than-usual number of people in attendance; the fire could have been much more lethal.

One of the survivors was the minister, who rather than run for a door, instinctively climbed up to a window and, according to one report, tried to help others escape, although unlikely that his few words of advice would have been heard over the roar of the fire and the screams of the victims. Because 116 of the 2,500 residents perished, every single family (including those who built Grue Church in North Dakota) was personally touched with emotions of guilt, grief, blame, anger, despair resulting in unknown generational repercussions.

Surviving minister

At that time, 1822, the government retained the right to appoint priests for each parish, and there was an official state religion, so the congregation could not hire clergy themselves or stray far from official doctrine. In 1813, nine years before the fire, Iver Hesselberg (1780-1844) was assigned to the Grue congregation. Pastor Hesselberg was open to the ideas of the well-known reformer, Hans Nielsen Hauge.

Hauge was cut from the same cloth as Martin Luther, advocating a direct relationship with God, not filtered through priests or government. Both the psychological effect of the fire, combined with Hauge’s theological influence, undoubtedly affected those who formed the little Grue congregation in Traill County, which was named to honor their home church in Norway.

Historian Sverre Mørkhagen wrote that the first generation of Norwegians emigrating to America were probably mostly Haugeans. In fact, author Thomas E. Jacobson wrote that “the Haugean revival of Norway influenced all Norwegian-American Lutherans to some degree and in different ways — ”*their firm opposition to slavery being one example.*”

In 1839, Hesselberg, the priest who had escaped the fire, was elected to the Norwegian Parliament, the Storting, where he advocated liberalism (that is, allowing congregations to choose their own religion, vs having a state religion chosen for them). Hesselberg’s most lasting contribution to Norwegian history is legislation that required doors of all public buildings to swing outward. Similar laws

spread to Europe and eventually to the USA (we are told). His escape also resulted in the eventual birth of his great-grandson, Roald Dahl, author of “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,” “Matilda” and many others.

Old Grue Church

During the Norwegian Church Auction of 1723, it was decreed that all Norwegian churches would be sold to help the king pay off war debts. Grue Church, like the 632 other churches in Norway, was sold, and then eventually sold back to the congregations. Captain Adolph Carl Helm and Colbjørn Olsen Stemsrud bought Grue and sold it back to the people that same year, with the understanding that local villagers would repair it, but they did not even start until 1727.

According to a 1739 inspection report, the church had exterior open-air corridors along the west and south sides of the building. The nine windows were all located high up on the wall and had small, leaded panes with iron bars. That inspection report is all that lets people today know what it looked like before the fire.

Before the fire, as early as 1794, the parish had already received permission to build a new stone church on the south side of Kirkenær (where it is located today) but for some reason, they chose not to move it at that time. They may have decided it didn’t make sense to put money into a church that would soon be torn down, so it fell further and further into disrepair until it finally went up in flames.

New Grue Church in Norway

Ole Peter Riis Høegh (1806 to 1852), whose father was Baliff Guldberg Høegh, the man who had perished in the fire with his saber, was one of Norway’s first trained civilian architects. In 1823 (the year after the Grue fire), he was hired as a draftsman by Danish architect Hans Ditlev Franciscus Linstow (1787-1851), who had just been selected to build the Royal Palace in Oslo.

Linstow, the architect, had, by this time, published a set of standardized plans for churches, and over 70 churches in Norway followed these plans. Ole Peter Riis Høegh, the Grue draftsman, used one set of these same plans to build the new Grue Church, which opened in 1828. (Anyone who has seen the Royal Palace in Oslo has to appreciate Grue’s connection to the work of architect Linstow, who is also responsible for the surrounding park as well as Karl Johans Gate, the

other adults on board. The students attend the Barnesville School District and were returning home from a field trip.

The driver of the passenger car, a juvenile male, and his passenger also were uninjured. Deputies said both were wearing seat belts at the time of the crash.

The crash remains under investigation.

Officials say that the intersection where the crash happened is scheduled to be reconstructed into a roundabout in 2026.

Forum staff

main street of Oslo).

Commemoration

• In Norway, Anne Berit Gullickstad headed a committee that was formed to plan a year-long commemoration of the 1822 fire. The group wanted it to be remembered that a major improvement in architecture, the outward-swinging church doors, originated in Grue. Much was written about the fire in the past, but the 2022 anniversary prompted many more contributions:May 26, 2022 the Teater i Glåmdal (Theater in Glamdal) presented the premier of “Balladen om Brannen og Elva (the Ballad of Fire and the River).” Buses were chartered to bring visitors from Oslo.

• Part of the event involved placing 116 roses at the memorial monument that was erected in 1922 at the current Grue Church.

• This anniversary year was also behind a reprinting of a 1975 book by local Grue author, Åsta Holth. Her book, “Johannes,” is a fictionalized story of the brave efforts of her great-grandfather Johannes Plate to save people during the fire and how this affected him and his Finnish wife Mari (who was not at church the day of the fire), for the rest of their lives.

• Ole Reidar Mellem was inspired to create a historically correct model of the original church, based on measurements in a 1739 inspection report.

• In 2016 the very well-known Norwegian accordionist, Frode Haltli, wrote “Blissful Pentecost,” based partly on Peter Wessel Zapffe’s 1972 book by the same name and both philosophical explorations of the Problem of Evil.

• “The Fire,” by Tord Langmoen 2022.

• In 1896, Kristian Østberg wrote “Kikebrand Grue in Norway.”

Traill County fundraiser

The Historic Grue Church in Traill County, North Dakota, named for the home church in Norway, was also destined to be burned. In 2020 it closed due to declining membership.

But this building was saved!

A small group formed a nonprofit and has held fundraising Lefse and Lemonade concerts each year. The public is warmly invited to the Fifth Annual Lefse and Lemonade event on Sunday, June 15, east of Buxton. More information can be found on the web page www.historicgruechurch.org.

This story was written by Sally Hoffman, a freelance author.

OBITUARY AND DEATH NOTICE

Jack Schwandt



Jack Schwandt, age 94 of Northfield, Minnesota, passed away peacefully at his home on Tuesday evening, June 3, 2025.

Jack was born in Enderlin, North Dakota, on August 26, 1930, to Alice B. (Hofland) and Gerald R. Schwandt. He was a devoted son of his hometown and First Lutheran Church.

Jack graduated from Enderlin High School in 1948. Concordia College in Moorhead in 1952. His love for Philosophy was encouraged by Reidar Thomte and Sidney Rand (who became president of St. Olaf College).

Jack continued his education at the University of Minnesota, where he obtained his M.A. and Ph. D. in political science. His graduate work was interrupted by two years of Army service in 1956-58.

Jack first taught political science and political philosophy at Oklahoma State University from 1959 to 1961. He joined the St. Olaf faculty in 1963, where he met Pamela Poynter, a teacher in the English department. They were married in 1965.

Jack taught in the political science department until his retirement in 1996, contributing to the education of countless students.

Jack was eased through his battle with cancer by Brighton Hospice and his devoted care giver, Amie.

Jack is survived by Pamela’s sister, Karen Hillger of Garrison, MN, and Pamela’s grandchildren Mercedes, Benjamin, Katie and Sofia Marsh of Maryland.

A memorial service for Jack will be held later in the summer at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Northfield and will be announced. Interment for Jack & Pam will be in Valley Grove Cemetery.

Memorials may be directed to the Reidar Thomte Scholarship Fund at Concordia College, or the donor’s choice.

Arrangements are with the Bierman, Benson & Langehough Funeral Home & Crematory. www.northfieldfuneral.com

Jeffrey Luer

Sep. 11, 1954 - May. 30, 2025

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - Jeffrey Luer, 70, Star Valley Ranch, Wyo. died Friday, May. 30, in University of Utah Medical Center. Graveside service will be 11:00 AM, Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at Highland Home Cemetery, Jamestown, ND. Arrangements by Eddy Funeral Home.

CENTER

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potential operating losses, debt service reserves and future capital expenditures.

Charley Johnson, committee chair and president/CEO of Visit Fargo-Moorhead, said pending approval of the RFP by the city, developers will have until July 11 to submit questions about the project, with those questions being answered within a week.

Developers then have until 5 pm on Thursday, Aug. 7, to submit their phase one proposals online.

“They have to tell us their preferred location, what the status of the land is, who owns it, who controls it, how much it would cost if it’s not owned and then show us adequate parking, either adjacent or on site,” Johnson said.

From there, a committee will review the proposals and recommend no more than five for the second phase.

Those developers then provide a detailed concept plan, development schedule and cost estimates. The committee will rank the proposals and forward the highest ranked to the City Commission.

For the final phase, upon approval, the city will negotiate a public-private partnership with the chosen development team.

The committee has said the winning proposal

ideally will be “creative, Fargo-themed, functionally appropriate and fiscally responsible.”

Per city documents, the project should include these minimum requirements:

- Attached hotel with 150-200 rooms and full service restaurant and bar
- Ballroom/ exhibit space of 50,000 square feet, divisible by sound-proof walls
- Additional meeting rooms of around 8,800 square feet
- Kitchen, minimum of 6,000 square feet
- Storage of 10,000 square feet
- Adequate parking on-site and adjacent, along with other specifics

The location of the new convention center will be driven by developer proposals. Asked if he has a favorite spot in mind, Johnson said, “My favorite would be the perfect one.”

Johnson said the committee will also incorporate a budget for public art in the new convention center, likely a combination of permanent and rotating art displays.

“Obviously it’s too early ... because we don’t know what the building’s going to look like, but we want to be cognizant of it ... (as) the designs start to take shape,” he said.

Readers can reach reporter Robin Huebner at rhuebner@forumcomm.com



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