

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

THE
FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
WEST CHESTER, PA



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FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR



Well, it's hard to believe that it has been five months since my family and I arrived in West Chester and I began serving at First Pres. Since our arrival, your hospitality towards me and my family has been above and beyond. From helping us move into our home, to bringing us meals, praying for us, and simply letting us know you're here for us—you have been a true gift. When you move from a city that has been your home to a brand new, unfamiliar city, it can certainly be challenging, and even amidst challenges your love and hospitality for me, Megan, and our boys, has helped to ease our adjustment period.

Many churches call pastors who uproot their lives to accept a call, and yet they are met with churches and congregants who so often do not embrace them. First Pres, you have been a far cry from this!

You called me to be your Senior Pastor, and you have faithfully embraced this call, and for this, and for you, I have deep gratitude!

In these five short months a lot has happened, and it feels as though God's Spirit is alive and well in our church. One of the things that I love about our church is for a church that is almost two-hundred years old, it is not entrenched in its ways, and it is full of people who really want to see our church thrive and reach our community. With these inclinations toward thriving, change is inevitable. And although there has not been significant change, there have been changes along the way. Those changes have not led to disruption or conflict, but rather true open hearts and minds toward what God's Spirit is calling us to do and who we are called to be.

The reality is, you would be hard-pressed to find another church like First Pres that is truly open to preserving its beautiful and important history while at the same time being willing to do what it takes, and make changes to care for its current congregants while reaching out to welcome new ones.

Our church is this, a beautiful mix of differing opinions, theological and political persuasions, faith backgrounds, generations, and outlooks on the world, but what is apparent is that at the core of our life together is the proverbial table that Christ sets for all of us.

FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR

At the table we are willing to allow Jesus, the perfecter of our faith, to check and balance all of our beliefs and commitments that we might be continually shaped and molded into a more beautiful union of Jesus's hands and feet in the world. I am so grateful for your faith and the way I have seen it lived out and continue to grow.

I want to share with you some of the highlights from these last five months that continue to echo in my mind. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things that have been exciting and that I am very excited about:

- Enumerable cups of coffee and meals shared with church members.
- Meeting with people and leaders in our community.
- Spending time at our Wednesday lunches with our friends from the neighborhood.
- Our staff development and planning days – we have a wonderful staff!
- First Pres Community Trick-or-Treating.
- The Annual Candlelight Christmas Concert.
- Christmas Eve was full of old faces, new faces, and people in the pews. Our 10 am Christmas Eve service was FULL of children!
- Increased attendance at both 9 am and 10:45 am worship.
- Our two new members classes full of adults and young families.

- Spending time with our parents of youth at our new parent fellowship gatherings.
- Speaking at the Youth Winter Refresh Retreat and being amazed by their questions, insights, and faith.
- Beginning Strategic Planning with Session.
- Preaching and worshipping with you every Sunday.

These are simply some of the things that have given me excitement and energy along the way, and I am confident there will be plenty of excitement for our church in the future. We have lots of work ahead of us, but it is work that is both good and well worth it. And, if we continue, together, to keep our eyes set on Christ and what he is calling us to do in West Chester and beyond, I have no doubt that our church will continue to thrive and grow. It is so wonderful to be in ministry with and alongside you, and a privilege to serve as your Senior Pastor. It's a New Day here at First Pres, and with God's help there will be plenty more new days to come!

With Hope!



Rev.
Andrew Esqueda
Senior Pastor

FROM THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR



What an extraordinary year this has been. I have been continually struck by God's bold presence with us: placing people with specific gifts in our path just as those gifts are needed; newly flourishing relationships between our members and the wider community, and a deepening sense of who we are not just as a church, but as *this* church, rooted in a very specific context (albeit one with limited parking).

Along with you, I've been overjoyed at the Esqueda family's arrival and at Andrew's leadership. He has far exceeded my highest hopes, and I'm deeply grateful to Megan and their children for being willing to uproot their lives and move to Pennsylvania. We're still working on his sports affiliations but prayerfully hope for resolution in that area.

Much of my focus during the beginning portion of the year was to work with you in readying the church for a new Senior Pastor's arrival. On the personnel side that meant working to fill several key positions and to plan for growth in specific areas. We expanded the half-time youth position to a new full time Director of Youth and Young Adult ministries and were fortunate enough to hire Emily Tang into that role. Kiana Rivera's leadership in contemporary worship was expanded, and Pete Galloway joined a returning Claire Kramer as part time Office Administrator, adding that position to the many hats he wears at First Pres.

We navigated denominational hoops to bring on Rev. Tara Woodard-Lehman as Bridge Pastor, lending a sense of consistency to worship during a time of great change. Behind the scenes I worked with the Finance and Personnel Committees on plans for transitioning our financial systems management in light of Jeff Somers' upcoming retirement.

Throughout it all I was moved by the flexibility and generosity of the tenured staff. They were consistently willing to take on new responsibilities for the good of the congregation. I have also been grateful for the wisdom and guidance of our Session and congregational leaders.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR

The highlight of the summer was accompanying our choir, brass players and students from West Chester University to Central Europe. Along with feasting on the remarkable beauty of that part of the world, it was another reminder of how much this community truly enjoys one another's company. Whether it was scootering across Budapest, climbing into ancient tombs, or eating all the strudel we could find, it was wonderful just to be together.

Fellowship happened state-side too; we had our first Pie Sing and Cookie Carol (baked goods being another thing we do well together), and we revamped our Wednesday Lunches, creating a team structure that allows more of our members to get involved. As congregations have done throughout the ages, we grieved deaths together, welcomed new babies, celebrated marriages and baptisms, said goodbye to some and welcomed others.

Though change is constant, the privilege of being invited into these sacred spaces in your lives remains a treasured and humbling part of my own.

I could go on and on about the joys of this congregation. Most of all, thank you for being a church full of joy, energy, and imagination. It is my deep privilege to serve among you.

Caroline Cupp

Rev.
Caroline Cupp
Executive Pastor



The grateful survivors of our inaugural axe-throwing event



First Pres has embarked on a New Day in the life of our church as we care for our congregation, welcome new members, and seek to be a light for Christ in West Chester.



"I am so thankful for the call to serve as the Senior Pastor of First Pres. In my five months of being here I have seen a church that is growing and thriving in membership, reach, and faith, and willing to put itself out there for the sake of loving our neighbors and those in need."

Rev. Andrew Esqueda
Senior Pastor

I have been continually struck by God's bold presence with us: placing people with specific gifts in our path just as those gifts are needed; newly flourishing relationships between our members and the wider community, and a deepening sense of who we are not just as a church, but as this church.

Rev. Caroline Cupp
Executive Pastor



OUR SESSION

Members of Session

Moderator

Rev. Andrew Esqueda

Clerk

Peter Galloway

Minister Member

Rev. Caroline Cupp

The Session is made up of Elders who serve a three-year term with no more than two consecutive terms and are representatives elected by the congregation. Elders are responsible for all areas of church life and governance, they approve the annual budget, approve the sacraments, and support specific ministry areas and staff.

Class of 2024

Peter Guman
Mary Hambleton
Lori McDermott
Tricia Minicozzi
Jean Russell
Holly Reigner
Bob Smith
Frank Skomorucha

Class of 2025

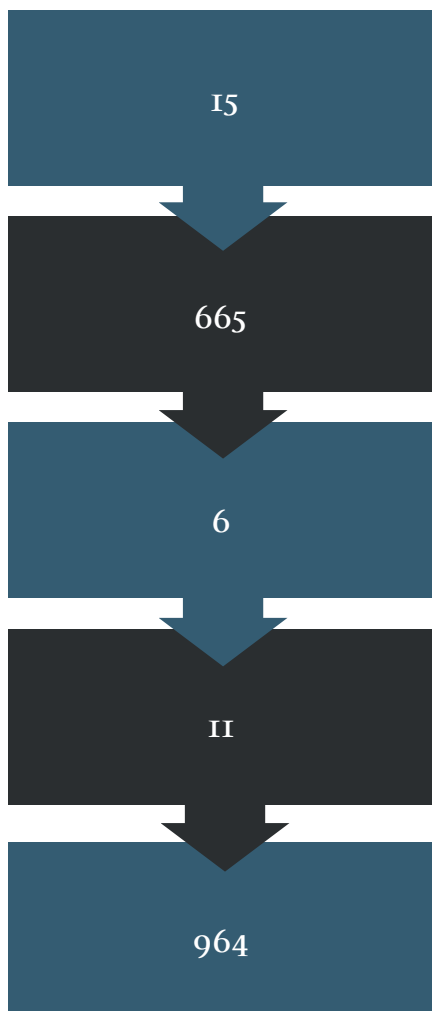
Anna Bentley
Beth Congdon-
Martin
Taryn Gross
Jim Haughton
Gail Rader
Karl Schroeder
Dick Seiwel

Class of 2026

Glenn Burkland
Gail Coxe
Esther Smith
David Stone
George Zumbano

Our Membership

Our membership is composed of a diverse group of people. While First Pres stands in the heart of West Chester, it lives on the edge of the residential area of the borough and the business district. There are families, young adults, empty nesters, and retirees who either walk to church or drive in from the surrounding townships, and at the same time we have folks living within the borough who are experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity. First Pres is largely homogenous with its ethnic makeup, we are socioeconomically diverse, politically diverse, theologically diverse, and diverse in our faith backgrounds. The unique part of our membership lies in a commitment to The Table that Christ sets for us where all people are welcome. This does not mean that we ignore challenging issues of the day or our diversities, commitments, and beliefs, but it does mean that we seek to love God and one another well, and to have the gospel be the driver of our lives both inside and outside of the church.



New Members

In 2023 we welcomed 15 new members and we look forward to their participation in the life of our church, as well as opportunities to welcome new members in 2024.

Average Weekly Worship Attendance

With in-person and online attendance combined, our average worship attendance was 665, which is something to be excited about. Almost 70% of our church attended worship weekly.

Baptisms

In 2023 we baptized 6 children, and look forward to watching them grow in stature, and most of all, in faith.

Deaths

In 2023, 11 church members entered the church triumphant. We are grateful for these saints and their witness of faith.

Membership

Our church membership remained steady in 2023, and we're on good track to grow leading into the future.

2023 Highlights



First Pres Calls Rev. Andrew Esqueda as Senior Pastor

On August 6, 2023 the congregation of First Presbyterian Church unanimously voted to call Rev. Andrew Esqueda to serve as the new Senior Pastor. He and his family, Megan, Isaiah, Desmond, and Maddox, officially joined our church on October 15, 2023.

Wednesday Lunches Continue to Serve Those Experiencing Food Insecurity

Wednesday lunches at First Pres continue to serve an important need in our community. Led by volunteers and Rev. Caroline Cupp, people in need of food, care, community resources, or simply a friendly face are welcomed each week and seen and cared for as valuable people created in God's image.



Trick-Or-Treating Was in Full-Force Again

Trick-Or-Treating was back in full-force and was a huge success with increased numbers of trick-or-treaters and guests from the community. It proved to be an incredibly successful outreach and fellowship opportunity for our church.

Christmas Eve Was A Huge Success

Christmas Eve was wonderful and included a new 10 am service targeted at engaging our families. Sara Pantazes led and organized an amazing Christmas pageant for this service. All services saw increased attendance with regular attenders and guests all feeling welcome by the joy of Christ's birth.



The Candlelight Christmas Concert Saw Full Pews Again

The Chancel Choir along with the Miner Street Brass, the Celebration Singers and the Brandywine String Quartet put on a magnificent concert for our church and the entire West Chester community, led by the excellent conducting and leadership of Sándor Kádár.



PERSONNEL



George Zumbano
Chairperson

The highlight of 2023 was that God answered prayer for First Pres in 2023 and called Andrew Esqueda to shepherd our congregation, beginning in the Fall. We are so grateful for Caroline Cupp and her leadership as we waited for God's plan to unfold. We were also so grateful and blessed to have had Tara Woodard-Lehman serve as Bridge pastor thru August. Her outgoing personality and meaningful messages from the pulpit were thankfully received by our congregation.

Our staff continue to be dedicated and faithful in everything that goes on behind the scenes to help make First Pres a wonderful place to worship and serve. It was a year of some changes as we said goodbye to several devoted staff members: David Teager, Marci Major, and Peyton Cole. Nolan Prochnau is continuing to work behind the scenes to support contemporary worship, but we miss his presence on Sunday mornings.

We also welcomed Pete Galloway (long-time member) and the return of Claire Kramer to serve as co-Office Administrators; Karen Goldstein continues to manage all of our office needs, and Gretchen Huebner faithfully supports all of our weddings and funerals. Emily Tang joined us as our new Director of Youth and Young Adults, and Joe Tang as interim AV and Streaming tech.

Our Youth Program was without a director for some time. We would not have enjoyed continued success with our youth, without Sara Pantazes' support and the tireless volunteer commitment of many during the time of transition.

Our music ministry continues to thrive and grow under the talented leadership of Sándor Kádár, and the dedicated members of our eight music ensembles. Amanda Erno joined us as Children's Choir Director as well as Ann Ellis as interim Choir Accompanist. Kiana Rivera is a wonderfully talented singer for the Worship Band, leading our Contemporary Worship Services.

Ann Dickey, Parish Associate, continues to share pastor caregiving duties with occasional preaching. Our blessings continue with Anderson Porter sharing his love and ministry.

PERSONNEL

The Bucket School is enjoying sustained growth under the enthusiastic leadership of Jen Rosenberg. In addition to teaching our youngest about the wonders of God, it has been wonderful outreach for the church.

Willie Oliveras is one of the best kept secrets in the church. He is behind the scenes keeping the church facility in pristine condition, making the transitional use of our space seamless and always with a willing smile.

Sara Pantazes, Director of Faith Formation continues her good work with our Sunday School children and congregation members in growing their faith.

Elizabeth Hess, our Director of Engagement, does a wonderful service in overseeing outreach to the community and hospitality to our members and neighbors.

We are so thankful for our wonderful staff and we look forward to supporting them in 2024.

OUR STAFF

Pastoral Staff



Senior Pastor
Rev. Andrew Esqueda



Executive Pastor
Rev. Caroline Cupp



Parish Associate
Rev. Ann Dickey



Parish Associate
Rev. Anderson Porter

Program Staff



Children's Music Director
Amanda Erno



Office Administrator
Pete Galloway



Office Manager
Karen Goldstein



Director of Engagement
Elizabeth Hess



Wedding and
Funeral Coordinator
Gretchen Huebner



Director of Music
Sándor Kádár

OUR STAFF

Program Staff



Office Administrator
Claire Kramer



Custodian
Willy Oliveras



Director of Faith Formation
Sara Pantazes



Technical Support
Coordinator
Nolan Prochnau



Contemporary Band Lead
Kiana Rivera



Bucket School Director
Jen Rosenberg



Director of Finance and
Operations
Jeff Somers



Director of Youth and Young
Adult Ministries
Emily Tang

THE PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE



2023 brought great joy to our committee as we selected Andrew to join First Presbyterian Church of West Chester as our Senior Pastor. From identifying him as our final candidate and announcing his candidacy in August, to welcoming Andrew, Megan and their family for their first Sunday on October 15, we have been blessed with Andrew's leadership.

Andrew stepped into his role, eager to meet and learn about our congregation. Our PNC Committee has enjoyed the experience of providing Andrew guidance and resources as he navigated his new role. His greatest impact is the positive presence that he has already shared with our church. You all have seen him behind the pulpit on Sundays, playing with our praise band, and getting to know all of you. You also have seen him in your committee meetings, Bible studies, volunteer events and social gatherings.

Our committee has recognized all of the qualities that Andrew shared during our search be put into action.

We are so happy that you all have now witnessed the reasons why we were confident that he was the best candidate to join us. The end of 2023 brought great joy to our church family, and great hope for all there is to come in 2024.

On March 17th, we will formally install Andrew Esqueda into his role as Senior Pastor of our church. We look forward to celebrating this exciting occasion.

Since Andrew has joined us, he has provided valuable input to our endowment planning, was actively involved with our pledge campaign along with leadership in many of our church's ministries.

THE PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Andrew's leadership has brought us increased worship attendance and overall church engagement, a renewed sense of hope and stability, brand new people in worship, important Session leadership, much needed support for our staff, and an important addition to Rev. Caroline Cupp's excellent pastoral care.

In 2024, we look forward to seeing continued church growth, in faith and in number, engagement with families, the results of staff and session strategic planning, and exciting new opportunities to engage our congregation and our broader community.

Thank you for your trust, support, and prayers throughout our search. God brought us new beginnings in 2023, and we look forward to witnessing all the ways that He will guide us in this next chapter of our long history and bright future.

TRUSTEES



Cory Scheibe
Chairperson

2023 was another busy year for the Trustees. We addressed a range of maintenance needs. Some of the larger projects included painting the pastor's offices; painting/refreshing the front of the church building in the office area; replacing nine of the windows in the building additions; replacing several hot water circulation pumps; repairing sewer lines; elevator evaluation and return to service; recaulking the outside sanctuary and middle entrance steps; basement bathroom refresh (remodel); railing replace/repair; landscape maintenance; moving the clothing warehouse from the basement to the second floor; air conditioning repairs.

We replaced the kitchen ice machine, added additional soil outside the elevator rooms along with installing additional gutters on the adjacent 126 W. Miner building to minimize water inflow into the elevator shaft, and inspected and serviced our kitchen facilities.

The Trustee committees continue to work and partner with other ministries of the church such as First Crew and Welcoming Spaces, and third party contractors when needed to evaluate and perform repairs, replacement, and maintenance work.

Looking to 2024, we plan to continue to work on window replacement to improve efficiency and function. We also plan to work on painting part of the outside front of the church; replacing water line valves; and replacing parts of sewer lines. Other projects will be addressed as the need arises.



DEACONS



Meg Bauer
Chairperson

Our Deacon ministry is here to enhance the experience and warmth of community and connection with our diverse range of services at First Presbyterian Church of West Chester.

Whether you're a college student away from home or a longtime member of our congregation, we strive to enhance your spiritual journey and foster a sense of belonging.

Over the past year, our dedicated team has brought the sacred tradition of communion to the comfort of many homes. Being away from the church doesn't mean being away from our care. Our thoughtful care packages for college students are filled with love, comfort, and essential items to make the student academic journey a bit brighter.

The deacon ministry stays connected and informed with our parish members.

Deacons provide updates on upcoming events, prayer requests, and community news, ensuring members are always in the loop and part of our extended family. Over the holidays, we celebrated the joyous seasons with our Poinsettia delivery service. Beautifully crafted arrangements were brought to many doorsteps, spreading festive cheer, and adding a touch of warmth to homes.

Deacons also strive to start every Sunday right with our heartwarming coffee service, a cup of freshly brewed coffee, fostering fellowship and creating opportunities for meaningful connections.

In 2024, we are looking forward to continuing our connections with our parish members. We hope to continue to foster the sense of unity, growth, and outreach that reflects the love and compassion of our shared faith.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE



Lori McDermott
Co-Chair



Tom Pantazes
Co-Chair

The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to serve First Presbyterian Church in nominating and electing church officers, members of a Pastor Nominating Committee, and the church universal in faithfully discerning the call and gifts of members of the congregation.

Describing why she chose to lead the 2023 nominating committee, Diane Rosier Miles said, "I joined Nominating Committee because I sensed that the Holy Spirit called me to expand on my current skill sets in ways that were new to me in order to benefit our congregation and to prepare me for future responsibilities."

Under Diane's leadership, the committee met 13 times between March and October to prayerfully consider and select the 25 individuals who formed the next officer class.

Over eight months, the committee contacted 64 individuals to fill the 25 session, deacon, trustee, and nominating committee positions.

The 2023 nominating committee was chaired by Diane Rosier Miles and included Lori McDermott, Mark Creager, Scott Gamble, Tom Pantazes, Kelly Pruden, and Charlie Myhre.

The 2024 nominating committee will be co-chaired by Lori McDermott and Tom Pantazes and includes Scott Gamble, Charlie Myhre, Dan Ohms, Adriana Park, and Kelly Pruden. This year's committee is looking forward to reaching out to those individuals who declined this past year, but expressed an interest in being considered in the future.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC



Jim Haughton
2024 Chairperson



Tracy Burke
2023 Chairperson

Worship brings joy to us as a community at First Pres. We gather each week to receive and respond to God's Word for us. In our presence together—in person and online—we experience the empowerment of the Spirit that inspires us in our living and in our service. This year we are particularly grateful for God's faithfulness in providing leadership to our community in word and music.

As the year began, we welcomed our Bridge Pastor, Tara Woodard-Lehman. Her leadership brought us into a creative period of intellectual, spiritual and visual excitement about our faith. Caroline Cupp, our Executive Pastor, partnered with Tara in that effort giving us her always thoughtful leadership in sermon and prayer.

The congregation missed no opportunity to show appreciation to Caroline, whose constancy in the three years without a settled Senior Pastor gave us the comforting assurance of hope and guidance we needed.

We were ready in October to welcome with joy Andrew Esqueda as our settled Senior Pastor. His opening sermon series started at the beginning, in Genesis, inspiring us to look forward as co-creators in entering the salvation story as God's beloved people called to serve the community around us as well as God's peoples of the world.

During the year we experienced an invigorated worship on Sunday morning. Throughout the year, our average attendance experienced a strong upward trend. Our summer numbers held steady with attendance increasing through the fall, with doubled numbers from the recent past. A concerted effort to make our church neighbors and others aware of the worship opportunities for regular and special services contributed to this result.

The 10:42 service morphed into the 10:45 service. Kiana Rivera was hired as the Lead Singer of the band. We are grateful for Kiana, and for all the musicians who contribute to this evolving ministry.



WORSHIP AND MUSIC

We continue to make technical improvements to enhance our online worship experience. This year we added a camera in the front of the sanctuary which allows viewers to see the organ console and to see more directly the activity in the chancel, at the chancel steps and into the congregation. New microphones have allowed for sound adjustments to enhance the quality of online and in person worship, as well.

There are many more opportunities to support the worship at First Pres. During the year we created guidelines for three Ministry Teams. The Ushering Ministry Team was created with Tracy Burke as Elder and Elizabeth Hess serving as staff. The Christmas Decorating Ministry Team was active in creating a beautiful Christmas atmosphere inside and outside the church.

We work to recruit more volunteers—including our friends visiting from Iglesia Getsemani in Guatemala—the group had fun learning how to make bows by in-house expert Gerri Zumbano.

The Communion Ministry Team is still being considered. We hope to firm up these areas of hands-on ministry and offer opportunities for service to both members and interested friends of FPC. The excitement of the music ministry that reaches into all ages of the

community adds delight and depth to the experience of worship. The Worship Committee is immensely grateful to the leadership of Sándor Kádár who offers the Music Report of this expanding program.

The year 2023 was a particularly special one for the Music Ministry, with highlights including a successful Weekend with the Arts event featuring over 30 local artists and Hungarian organist Adam Tabajdi in March. He returned to the US in June and won the third prize at the Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition.

In June, forty-five First Pres members and West Chester University students traveled to Europe, where they visited Dresden, Leipzig, Prague, Vienna and Budapest. It was an unforgettable trip filled with incredible history, food, and music led by Sándor and Caroline.



WORSHIP AND MUSIC

They traveled to an ancient monastery, toured the crypt of a medieval cathedral, ate all the strudels, went on an evening sightseeing cruise on the Danube River and sang in stunning churches. The bonds formed between First Pres members and the students from West Chester University made the journey even more special. The memories made and connections forged during such travel experiences often prove to be the most enduring and meaningful takeaways.

The establishment of the Miner Street Stringers in September was a wonderful initiative that brought together church members and community players to create a cohesive music ensemble directed by Adriana Park. It demonstrates the power of community outreach and collaboration in fostering a sense of unity and shared passion for music.

This was also the year when the Miner Street Bell Connections, our intergenerational bell choir, outgrew the bell room. It's amazing to see such growth in such a short time span! The increase in membership truly speaks to the popularity and appeal of intergenerational music making. The commitment to training the next generation of bell ringers is essential for the continued preservation and evolution of the bell choirs at First Pres.

The Candlelight Christmas Concert was a truly unforgettable musical event, providing a rich tapestry of performances from various music ensembles such as the Chancel Choir, Miner Street Brass, the Children's Choir, the Brandywine String Quartet, and student soloists from WCU. The range of musical styles, from the choir to brass to strings, added to the overall appeal of the concert, while a hymn sing-a-long and the unique organ-drum duo piece made for an engaging and dynamic program that pleased the audience.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND MEMBERSHIP



Mary Hambleton
Chairperson

Congregational Life and Membership (CLM) had a wonderful year engaging and encouraging members and friends of all ages. Our goal each year is to provide a variety of fellowship opportunities that enable members and friends to connect with their faith through fellowship with one another. Just like Jesus and the disciples gathered over food and fellowship, our First Pres family enjoys that too!

Our committee is an open one, so if you are interested in becoming more involved in events like these at First Pres (or maybe have an idea for something new), we'd love for you to join us! We thank God for the opportunities he's provided us to have a lot of fun with one another this year.

We held New Member Classes in January, June, and November which received 13 new members and reactivated two members.

This year our Bridge dinners were held the first quarter as a fellowship event, a women's group met each season for 6-8 week Bible studies and fellowship, and we hosted an Old-Fashioned Indoor Picnic in May.

We sent out nearly 50 Valentine's Cards to homebound members, signed by church members on Sunday mornings. We provided Easter Baskets in collaboration with the Missions committee, and those who participated shared dinner together and then dozens of baskets of candy/goodies and larger baskets of food donations were packed up and given to our mission partners.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND MEMBERSHIP

Together with Music Ministry we hosted a Pie/Hymn Sing on an August evening with about 20 people (and 20 pies!) in attendance, and in September 50 women attended a dinner and service project to pack care bags of toiletry items for Wings for Success.

We held an open house to welcome Rev. Andrew Esqueda in early August, and CLM was delighted to host a new pastor welcome on October 15 for Andrew and his family. Nametag Sundays in October through the end of the year helped Rev. Esqueda become acquainted with the congregation.

We welcomed over 300 people to our Community Trick or Treat at the end of October - yay! The morning of November 26 was our first annual Deck the Halls event - a church-wide activity that included a wreath-making workshop, a Family Advent party run by Faith Formation, and Christmas decorating. We had members, friends, and visitors join us and it was a huge success!

We sang Christmas carols and enjoyed homemade cookies in December with a carol sing. Also, we advertised Christmas Eve services in weekly West Chester emails, as well as an Outreach social media campaign for Christmas Eve



FAITH FORMATION CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



Taryn Gross
Chairperson

It was a busy year for Faith Formation here at First Pres! We continued our regular Sunday programming with Sunday School, Kids Connect, VBS over the summer, third grade Bible presentations, and we continue to support the wonderful efforts of our Children's Choir. This year that included starting an embodied prayer program to show kids a different way to pray.

Faith Formation worked alongside our Youth Ministry Elders to create mission and values statements to guide the attitudes and actions for all adults who work with children and youth at First Pres. This is intended to help us maintain strong, healthy ministries.

Some exciting events and mission opportunities for our children were done this year as well, such as:

- Kids MLK, Jr. Day program
- Assembled blessing bags for Wednesday lunch attendees

- VBS canned food collection
- Thanksgiving lunch helpers

The Young Justice Builders Club continued to thrive this year with a focus on non-violence and creation care. Families continue to find value in these sessions that help our children think through the ways our faith connects to the struggles of our world, our neighbors, and all of creation.

We looked for opportunities this year not simply to connect with children, but engage the entire family. We held a family picnic in August, and organized a family Advent party with take-home devotional bags. We were able to share these devotionals with our Bucket School families at their Christmas Pageant as well.

We surveyed families with nursery aged children to help determine their involvement with the church, offer opportunities for fellowship and connection, and get their feedback on how we can strengthen this important ministry.

One of the most exciting things this year was the introduction of the Christmas Pageant during our new 10am Family Christmas Eve Service. We had a ton of families and children, both members and visitors, and we look forward to making this service a Christmas Eve mainstay for our congregation and community.

FAITH FORMATION CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



FAITH FORMATION

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS



Holly Reigner
Co-Chair



Frank Skomorucha
Co-Chair

There was a lot that went on in the life of the Youth Ministry at First Pres in 2023! On June 1, 2023 we officially welcomed Emily Tang to First Pres as our new Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. We are so thankful for the energy she has injected into our youth ministry.

Throughout the year, our youth participated in weekly Bible studies and youth group with opportunities to grow in fellowship with God and one another, develop greater Biblical knowledge, and deepen their faith.

In the summer of 2023, youth participated in monthly ice cream nights, the Fun in the Sun high school trip, Great Escape middle school trip, and monthly fun events such as a Hershey Park trip, mini golf, and game nights.

This Fall our high schoolers had a “Friendsgiving” themed Fall Retreat, and our Middle Schoolers had our Breakaway Fall Retreat. In addition to weekly programming, youth participated in monthly fellowship and outreach events in the Fall including Glow Night, a Halloween party, Christmas party, and more.

Our 6th-12th grade youth engaged in a winter retreat, and in December, our youth planned and successfully hosted a hot cocoa jar fundraiser. The youth raised over \$2000 to support our mission trip for Summer 2024 and other retreats and trips.

Youth and young adults connected with leaders and one another through personal and small group discipleship opportunities.

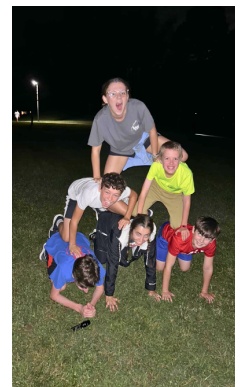
FAITH FORMATION YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Youth programming had robust attendance throughout the year, and our youth connected and collaborated with other local churches in a variety of events and retreats.

Our youth committee said goodbye with gratitude to Amanda Blevins for her tireless efforts on behalf of the Youth Committee by navigating the open Youth Director position, hiring Emily Tang and supporting Emily as she successfully began her tenure with our youth, and her continuous effort as the chair of the committee.

We welcomed two new dedicated co-chairs to our committee at the end of 2023 - Holly Reigner and Frank Skomorucha.

In 2024 we are looking forward to our Summer Mission trip to Appalachia, Weekly Youth Group and Bible studies, various service projects with local community partners and intergenerational mission and service opportunities with various groups within the life of our church.



FAITH FORMATION YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Beginning in June, Emily Tang launched our Young Adult Ministry. Our young adults and college students have enjoyed the opportunity to connect with one another for monthly fellowship events. We have been blessed to already see growth in the program as local college students, church members, and their friends have met once a month for events such as game night, dinners in the borough, a Christmas party, candle-making, and more.

This Fall, we were excited to kickoff of a young adult small group that will include Bible study, fellowship events, and much more.

Finally, we are thrilled to continue connecting with college students at West Chester University, Eastern University, and beyond through outreach events and opportunities.

Your prayers are appreciated as we seek to minister to young adults in our church and community!

As we look to 2024, we are excited for our Young Adult beach and fellowship retreat, and continued opportunities to connect with college students and young adults as we seek to grow in relationship with God and one another.



FAITH FORMATION ADULT MINISTRY



Taryn Gross
Chairperson

In 2023 a variety of groups met year-round, on a weekly, or monthly basis for study and fellowship. Below are some of the wonderful adult faith formation opportunities we offered throughout the year:

- Offered one Young Justice Builders Club session for adults to experience the program
- Sent a survey to review engagement and gather suggestions regarding the church library
- Held a Summer Speakeasy series to offer creative engagement with the themes of rest, light, change, and hope
- Adult study topics:
 - 1 Corinthians, Gospels and power
 - Manna & Mercy
 - Book of Joy
 - Jesus in Luke & Acts
 - Psalm 23/shepherd Scriptures

- Faith of the Puritans
- *Schooled & Justice for the Poor* (CFI)

This year we also began partnering with Congregational Life to offer much needed fellowship opportunities for our parents of children and youth.

We're excited about the opportunities we offered this past year, and look forward to more opportunities in 2024 for both adult and intergenerational programs for fellowship and formation.

THE BUCKET SCHOOL



Jen Rosenberg
Director

The Bucket School finished the 2023 school year with great strides. We opened the 2023-2024 school year with 62 students and added six more in January of 2024. Our goal at The Bucket School is to educate the whole child. We foster a place for independence and emotional, social, and academic learning through our hands-on and play-based curriculum.

The students enjoy weekly physical education and library classes and monthly music and mini-worship classes. We open our doors to the members of the church to come and show the students their musical instruments during our music classes. Our mini-worship classes are generally run by Sara Pantazes, Director of Faith Formation, with the occasional guest church leader or pastor.

We opened registration for the 2024-2025 school year in December and out of the seven classes, three are already full and two of those have wait lists. We currently have 71 students enrolled for next year. Our best advertisement is word of mouth and we have gained several new students via former and current families and teachers.

Several of The Bucket School families have joined the church as members. We look forward to growing our school as well hoping more young families join the church. If you know of anyone looking for a preschool, please recommend The Bucket School!



MISSION



Peter Guman
Chairperson

Our Mission Committee continued in its good work to serve our neighbors and those in need in West Chester and throughout the world. First Pres supported the Center for Development and Civic Engagement at the VA, Lincoln's Promise Pantry, Kennett Area Community Services, and West Chester Food Pantry- during the 2023 Matthew 25 campaign with each organization receiving \$3000. We continue to give emergency grants to individuals who would otherwise fall through the cracks. These grants are used for rent, utilities, cars payment, brief hotel stays and the like. Many of the people receiving these grants are seniors, parents of young children, or disabled.

2023 was a significant year for First Crew with the celebration of our 20 year anniversary. Major projects were undertaken throughout the year at the Barn at Springbrook Farm including repair of vegetable garden beds, construction of

digging area for children, painting barns, and repair of tree house decking.

Similarly, many volunteer hours were dedicated to Act in Faith projects to facilitate the move to their new facility, including painting of the entire new building. A team of First Crew volunteers traveled to Kentucky in 2023 for our 20th National Disaster Relief trip. Numerous projects at church included cleanup of the area east of the church, including removal of the patio wall.

We performed repairs of one of the first floor rooms, oversaw the repair of the steps, assisted the move-in of Andrew Esqueda and his family, and other minor projects. Finally, First Crew frequently takes on smaller projects throughout the greater West Chester community, such as repairs at the Presbyterian Church in West Grove and assisting a young student recently graduated from WCU with moving to a home.

In 2023 our Wednesday lunch program was revamped. A new team approach was created with the goal of including more congregational members. The changes have allowed deeper connections with individuals affected by housing and food insecurity in our area. The original hope was to have a connection beyond money, and we now see that happening.

MISSION

The Giving Tree enabled the congregation and others friends of the church to provide gifts for The Pocopson Home Naphtali, Matthew 25, North Star, Maternal & Child Health Consortium, Domestic Violence, West Chester Food Cupboard, and Migrant Ministry.

The Missions Committee did an annual review of our mission partners in our community and beyond. Using a consistent set of criteria, the Committee designate the budget funds for Mission giving to the following partners:

- ACT in Faith
- Chester County Migrant Ministry
- Safe Harbor of West Chester
- West Chester Area Senior Center
- West Chester Food Cupboard
- North Star (was Interfaith Housing Assistance Corp)
- Habitat for Humanity
- Domestic Violence Center
- Friends Association
- Good Samaritan
- Kennett Area Community Services
- Melton Center
- The Barn at Spring Brook Farm
- CC Opportunity Industrialization Ctr
- Legal Aid of Southeastern PA
- Meals on Wheels

- Getsemani Partnership
- Harrar Wycliffe Bible Translators
- Lifetime Wells
- Naphtali
- Presbytery Mission
- Jeff & Christi Boyd (Congo)
- Cheryl Barnes (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi)
- Cindy Corell (Haiti) - \$2,000
- Dan & Elizabeth Turk (Madagascar)
- Leith & Carol Fujii (Thailand)
- Jed Koball (Peru)

Getsemani Visit & Renewal of Partnership

In November 2023 we hosted three of our brothers and sisters from Iglesia Evangelica Presbyteriana Getsemani from Villa Nueva, Guatemala. They were Herbert Hernandez, Josue Hernandez, and Amanda Hernandez. This was a very special visit since we were celebrating 20 years of our partnership and we renewed our Covenant, which was delayed due to the pandemic. Our friends spent four days here and were able to spend quality fellowship time with many members of our congregation. Some highlights include: learning about our men's and women's groups, taking part in a First Crew project, meeting with our youth and our young adult group, lunch with members at Tel Hai, attending a banquet celebrating this unique relationship and worshipping with us on Sunday, November 19.

MISSION

We continued our Easter Basket project, and ESL Classes resumed. We visited/Zoomed with several Missionaries we support - Jed Koball preaching from Peru, Cheryl Barnes from PEB (Presbytery Education Board) that supports Presbyterian Schools in Pakistan (donation of \$2,000), Dan and Elizabeth Turk (Madagascar), and The Harrar's Bible Translators. Other activities included hosting a Missions Partners fair in September, Caroline and Andrew leading the Homeless Persons' Memorial at the Courthouse in December, and holding a coffee drive for veterans active in programs at the VA.

We are looking forward to continuing to fund our mission partners with the very generous donations from our congregation and through the many volunteer hours put in by Church members. We also plan to explore new mission partners that are aligned with our Church's goals and expand our personal relationships with our existing partners. We will continue our focus on people in our local community at risk of food and housing insecurity and look for ways to expand our Wednesday lunch program to reach more members of our community. In addition, we are seeking ways to see how we can support Social Justice needs, both locally and globally.



FINANCE



Bob Smith
Chairperson

This year's financial report includes a summary of our results in 2023 and our budget for 2024. There are also two important updates on changes going into effect in 2024 regarding how our finances will be managed going forward.

One pertains to our day-to-day income/expense management and monthly financial reporting and the other pertains to Investments (see Investments page). Overall, we are on a firm financial foundation, thanks to your generosity in supporting First Presbyterian Church, West Chester, the faithful stewardship of the staff and your elected Elders, Trustees and Deacons!

2023 Budget Results

We had a surplus of income over expenses in 2023 of \$74,277. We transferred the surplus to capital reserves to bolster our ability to absorb unplanned maintenance needs that arise with our "vintage" buildings.

Both income and expenses were under budget for the year. Expenses were under primarily due to the open head of staff position until October 2023. Income was less than planned due to a shortfall in pledge income and not receiving the Federal Employee Retention Credit (ERC) we applied for in late 2022. That program has been suspended indefinitely by the IRS.

2024 Budget

The total budget for 2024 is very close to the 2023 budget. Income and expenses are expected to be \$1.163 million. The personnel budget is higher than 2023 as we begin the year fully staffed, unlike recent years. Pledge income is up, modestly offsetting the elimination of the ERC and slightly lower non-pledge income.

Missional Business Services (MBS)

The Finance Committee has been evaluating the potential to outsource elements of our financial management for nearly two years. During that time, we looked at three potential candidates, as well as the pros and cons of outsourcing. During 2023 we made the decision to engage Missional Business Services (MBS) to support our financial reporting needs. MBS specializes in servicing the financial management needs of churches. In addition to handling day-to-day financial operations and reports, they also provide support for contract negotiations with insurance and other service providers, as well as insights into best practices. The transition to MBS began in December 2023 and will be completed during the first quarter of 2024.

INVESTMENTS



Jim Serum
Chairperson

2023 brought some excitement and energy into our Investment Committee. Originally, two endowment funds were established in 2019 for Mission and 2020 for Legacy Giving. Investment policies were instituted to govern asset management and the use of funds at the time these funds were established. The Investment Committee also established a reserve fund in 2023 to be used for larger, unanticipated, and non-budgeted needs of the church.

Over the course of the year, the Investment Committee determined that we should investigate the benefits of outsourcing asset management to investment professionals. Five asset management firms were evaluated during the process, all of which were deemed solid candidates suitable for our needs.

However, one firm, The Texas Presbyterian Foundation (TPF), stood out as the best fit for First Pres.

TPF has a long and successful track record of nearly 100 years supporting the mission and ministries of their partners. They have a well-defined investment management process and an at-cost business model that keeps their asset management fees very low.

TPF also provides extensive tools and resources to assist their clients with establishing and sustaining Legacy Giving programs. These are tools that First Pres plans on using going forward. There will be more to come in 2024 regarding Legacy Giving and how you can contribute to these investment opportunities.

For this transition, only the Legacy Endowment and Mission Endowment funds were moved to TPF. The Reserve Fund remains at Vanguard and will continue to be managed by the Investment Committee. The Investment Committee will also be responsible for oversight of TPF's services and investment performance.

We look forward to faithfully working with and adding to our endowed funds as we seek to help First Pres think about sustainable ministry into the future of an ever changing world.

We are excited to be working with TPF and implementing new legacy giving efforts in 2024.

STEWARDSHIP



Rev. Andrew Esqueda
Senior Pastor

It was a wonderful year for stewardship here at First Pres, and you can see the success of our stewardship campaign reflected in our 2024 finances.

This year we began our stewardship campaign a little bit late, in large part due to the timing of my arrival at First Pres. However, Bob Smith, chair of finance, our finance committee, along with Jeff Somers, and Caroline Cupp helped pave the way for us to start the campaign off prepared and with enthusiasm for our financial future.

This year we used Isaiah 43:19 *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert"* to guide our stewardship campaign. In thinking through the new things God is doing and new time it is in the life of our church we named this year's stewardship campaign "A New Day," and a new day it is at First Pres.

Not only does it feel like God's Spirit is alive and at work doing a new thing in our midst, but together, and with God's help, we are ushering in a new day of ministry and outreach to our community supported by your incredible generosity and an overall increase of 8% per annual pledge.

In the stewardship letter I wrote, I asked you to consider four reasons why you should give to our church. They were:

1. Out of joy and being a part of God's family of faith.
2. As an opportunity to serve God's Kingdom and give back to God.
3. So that we can care for our church, support its ministries, and pay our staff fairly.
4. Out of anticipation of the amazing things God is going to do in our midst.

You faithfully considered these reasons to give, and you gave abundantly so that we can continue in the good ministry of our church, and truly look forward to the amazing things God is calling us to. Stewardship is certainly a season in the church, but it's more than this. Stewardship is about who we are as people of faith for everything that we have belongs to God. Thank you for your faithful stewardship as an outpouring of your faith, I am so grateful! It's a new day here at First Pres and there are many more new days to come!

2023 FINANCES

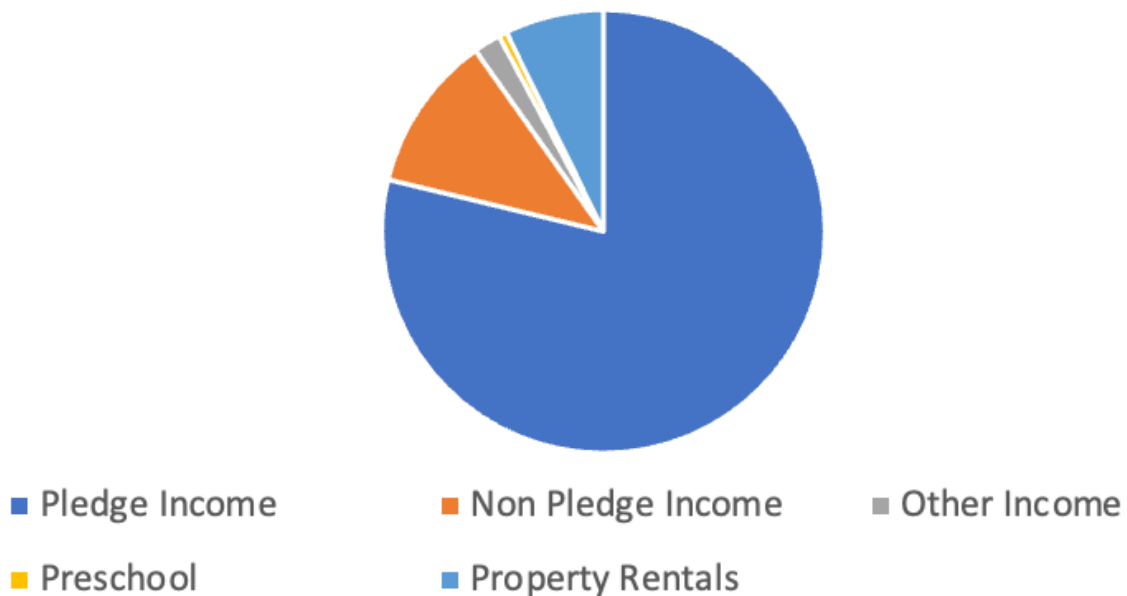
INCOME	2023 ACTUAL	2023 BUDGET
Pledge Income	\$831,336	\$892,977
Non Pledge Income	\$141,901	\$139,929
Other Income	\$22,804	\$21,290
PPP Loan forgiveness	\$0	\$26,000
Preschool	\$7,169	\$7,000
Transfers from Investments	\$0	\$0
Designated Funds and Property Rentals	\$84,000	\$84,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,087,210	\$1,171,196

EXPENSES	2023 ACTUAL	2023 BUDGET
Personnel	\$644,437	\$817,363
Programs	\$68,737	\$70,561
Administration	\$51,665	\$43,882
Comsys	\$27,705	\$20,280
Building and Grounds	\$103,619	\$98,658
Mission	\$116,770	\$120,452
Transfers	\$74,277	\$0
TOTAL Expenses	\$1,087,210	\$1,171,196

2024 FINANCES

2024 INCOME	2024 Budget
Pledge Income	\$916,185
Non Pledge Income	\$133,083
Other Income	\$23,000
PPP Loan forgiveness	\$0
Preschool	\$7,000
Transfers from Investments	\$0
Des. Funds and Property Rentals	\$84,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,163,268

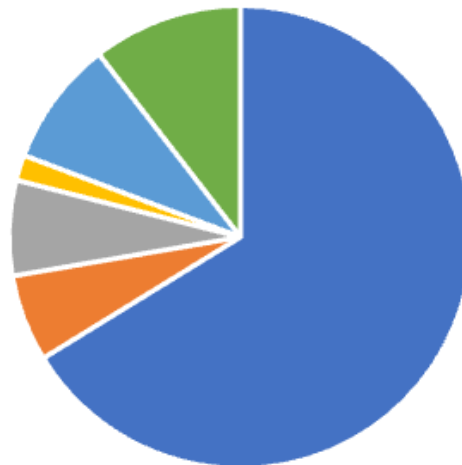
2024 Income Budget



2024 FINANCES

2024 EXPENSES	2024 BUDGET
Personnel	\$770,475
Programs	\$70,561
Administration	\$77,482
Comsys	\$20,750
Building and Grounds	\$102,000
Mission	\$122,000
TOTAL Expenses	\$1,163,268

2024 Expense Budget



- Personnel
- Programs
- Administration
- Comsys
- Building and Grounds
- Mission

INVESTMENT BALANCE

FUND	Balance as of 12/31/23	Balance as of 12/31/22	Balance as of 12/31/21
Reserve Accounts	\$518,873	\$334,482	
Mission Endowment	\$103,872	\$90,406	
Legacy Endowment	\$1,645,953	\$1,381,426	
Total Endowment Funds	\$2,268,698	\$1,806,314	\$2,015,179
Morgan Music Scholarship	\$19,583	\$18,299	\$21,187
McCardle Music	\$3,763	\$3,156	\$4,192
MacIver Music Scholarship	\$5,084	\$4,751	\$5,664
Thompson Memorial	\$14,841	\$13,868	\$16,534
Eeles Scholarship	\$10,169	\$9,502	\$11,329
Total Presbyterian Foundation Funds	\$53,440	\$49,576	\$58,906
Whiteley - BNYM	\$61,591	\$61,638	\$77,013
Bogle - Wells Fargo	\$135,456	\$127,600	\$153,144
Shared Equity Mortgages	\$252,000	\$0	\$0
Total Investments	\$2,771,185	\$2,045,128	\$2,304,242

RENTAL PROPERTIES

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
▶ Financial Activity		
▶ Total Income	\$117,326	\$ 142,780
▶ Operating Expenses	\$ 34,363	\$ 36,087
▶ Transfer to GOF	\$ 36,000	\$ 84,000
▶ Margin	\$ 46,963	\$ 22,693
▶ Balance Sheet		
▶ Assets		
▶ Total Cash	\$205,557	\$ 237,056
▶ Total Investments (Bldg)	\$1,656,937	\$1,656,937
▶ Total Assets	\$1,862,495	\$1,893,993
▶ Liabilities		
▶ Security Deposits	\$ 10,855	\$ 10,855
▶ Fund Balance		
▶ Unrestricted	\$1,801,867	\$1,860,445
▶ Current Yr. UFB	\$ 49,972	\$ 22,693
▶ Total Fund Balance	\$1,851,839	\$1,883,139
▶ Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$1,862,495	\$1,893,993



THE
FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
WEST CHESTER, PA