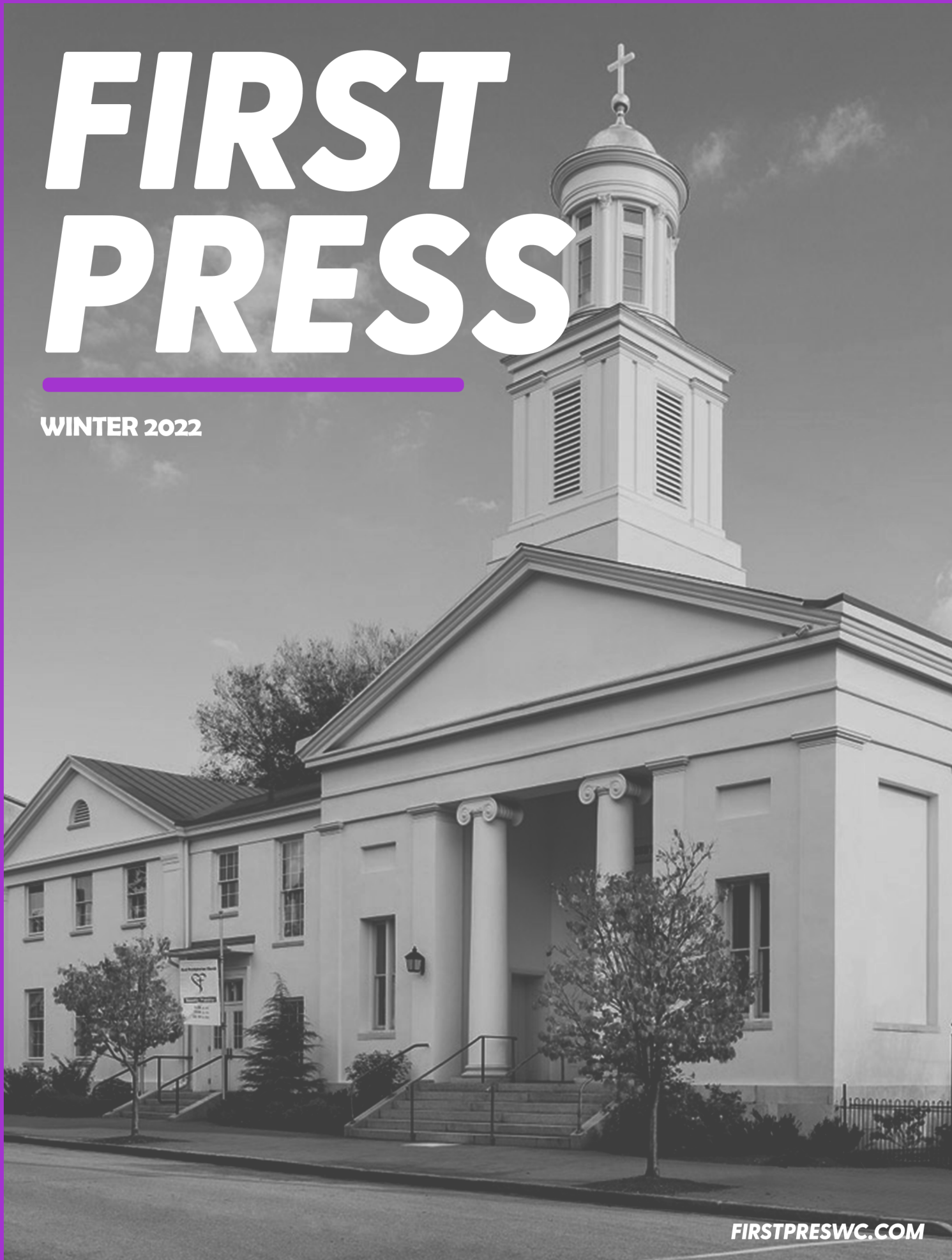


FIRST PRESS

WINTER 2022



FIRSTPRESWC.COM

A Note from Pastor Caroline

Dear First Pres family,

I am composing this Lenten message to you all from a small lodge in New York where my family escaped for a few days of kid's ski lessons and a different set of walls. My son's aunt has been pulling him along the bunny slopes for the past few hours and I'm gulping down views of mountains and winter forests like a desert traveler who's finally found a well. A trip that would have been enjoyable a few years ago feels utterly remarkable after two years of illness, separation, and transition. Perhaps, like me, you are headed into Lent wondering 1) Haven't we been in Lent for a few years now? and 2) I can't possibly give up one more thing.

Indeed, we've often talked about Lent as a time to give up something dear to us, whether it's chocolate, TV, or, as a childhood friend tried year after year, her five younger siblings. Sometimes it's successful and sometimes less so (my friend's mom squashed her Lenten dreams year after year). Fortunately Lent is, at its heart, not about giving something up but about turning down a different path, the path that God chooses for us. It's about setting aside time to work with the Holy Spirit to figure out what path you are being drawn down and to repent, or turn away, from the roads that lead to bruised spirits and broken lives.

Giving up something that distracts us from that invitation can be meaningful, though I tend to think that the Holy Spirit tends to thrive off abundance, not sacrifice. When we fill our bodies with good food we can expend energy; when parents have enough rest they can be more patient with children; when churches live with the confidence that God will provide what's needed, we are more confident in our ministries and missions. Jesus shows his identity through fig trees, precious oils, forgiving fathers, and mother hens. He shows us that God's love is overflowing and that to live in this love means we don't have to make decisions based off of fear of not having, or being, enough.

This Lent our theme is "Full to the Brim," focusing on God's abundant grace. In the pages that follow there are invitations to follow along with this theme in a variety of ways: There are opportunities for groups and individuals, for recharging your spirit or contributing to the well-being of our community. There are chances to be surrounded by beauty, or to get better acquainted with the beauty in your own spirit. I hope that you take part in a few of them over the next few weeks.

This newsletter also shares some of the many things that you have been working on over the past season. The Pastoral Nominating Committee has reached an important stage in the long search process, Matthew 25 is in full swing with another Lenten campaign, and committees are hard at work on everything from property planning and leadership structure evaluations to tidying up the church building. It's a season of fullness, and a reminder how abundantly blessed this community is. While each of us have our own set of gifts (and mine definitely don't involve skiing!), together this church family is capable of more than any of us could imagine.

Blessings to you this Lent – whether it's a time to fill up, a time to pour out, or some of both, I pray that you feel God's presence with you during this holy season.

In Christ,

Pastor Caroline

Lenten Groups are Back!

Our theme for Lent this year is “Full to the Brim.” The theme invites us to trust that we fully belong to God and that God dreams of an expansive life for each of us, full to the brim of grace and love. Each of these groups in their own ways is an invitation to lean into God and this community that seeks to help one another know God. Our aim is that these Lenten groups will help you feel a little more full of God’s goodness. Click the Sign Up tab at www.firstpreswc.com to find out more.

Lent Project for Families

Lent is a season in the church where we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection. Observing Lent can be a complicated thing to explain to young kids, so this year First Pres is offering an easy activity specifically designed for families – kits to create a Lenten paper chain.

Each day during Lent, invite kids to say something they are grateful for, write or draw it on a strip of the provided paper, and then add it to the chain. By the end of Lent, kids will have created a beautiful decoration that represents the many ways God was present in their lives (and can share it with friends or family they might see at Easter!).

Families can sign up to receive a kit on the Sign-up tab of the church’s home page. Contact Director of Faith Formation Sara Pantazes (spantazes@firstpreswc.com) for more information.

Sweet Dreams

Do you love to sew? If you sew and/or have an interest in quilting, Sweet Dreams sewing and quilting group at First Pres is looking for individuals who would love to sew and share fellowship with others who enjoy the same. We meet on Monday afternoons from 1 pm to 4 pm in Room 220 at the church.

Our ministry was started over 10 years ago with the primary purpose of providing a quilt to any child baptized at the church. We expanded that ministry to include fun, seasonal-theme pillowcases for Chester County Hospital Pediatrics Department, delivered on a monthly basis.

You are invited to stop by or contact Nancy Ohms at 484-678-1627 or nmohms@verizon.net.

Rev. Porter’s Biography

Our Parish Associate and friend, Anderson Porter, has been working on his autobiography over the last year, and this labor of love has recently been completed! Copies are still available on the table in Fellowship Hall for a suggested donation of \$25. Please make all checks payable to Anderson Porter.

Legacy Endowment Fund

Over the past few decades, First Presbyterian has created several managed funds for the long-term benefit of the church. Among these have been the Bill and Bev Hess Fund and the 1834 program, both of which received gifts and pledges, but neither of which focused on sustained giving. In 2021, with the support of Session and staff, a team of First Pres members came together to build a Legacy Endowment Fund to help create a robust and thriving reserve of assets to help further the mission of First Pres, support its programs and ensure the upkeep of church facilities. This new fund will allow for the receipt, investment and allocation of funds from bequests and other large gifts made to the church, either for undesignated use or designated for mission, music, youth or church facilities. The Legacy Endowment Fund, with assets currently at around \$1.6 million, is managed by the Session Investment Committee and operates with restricted withdrawal and specific use policies. In the coming months, members of the Legacy Endowment Fund team will embark on a variety of efforts to educate the congregation on the details of this opportunity to help sustain First Pres and how to incorporate the Legacy Endowment Fund into your ongoing, one-time or estate planning support.

Matthew 25

For many Christians, Lent involves the spiritual discipline of “giving something up” as a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice for us. For the past two years at First Pres, we have had a slightly different twist on this old tradition, where we “give something to others,” particularly those in our community who are facing housing insecurity. In this we remember not only Christ’s sacrifice, but his love for us and his identification with “the least of these” in Matthew 25.

Our past efforts have had a great impact on our community, as we gave over \$25,000 dollars each year that has been put to good use by our mission partners and by our pastors to serve those in need. Sadly, despite our caring, the problem persists and in some ways there may be even more need, as the cost of housing and food has seen tremendous rises in recent months.

So the Mission Committee has invited us once again to reach out to those around us. This year we will not only continue to address homelessness in our county, but also address the related problem of hunger. We will be working with three mission partners: the Friends Association, Kennett Area Community Services, and the West Chester Food Cupboard. Proceeds from the Matthew 25 campaign will be given to each of these organizations as grants to help them find new and better ways to serve our brothers and sisters. In addition, we will once again set aside funds for our pastors to serve the many people, from our church and the community at large, who come to them for help in a time of need, and for future mission projects.

At worship in the coming weeks you will hear from these Mission Partners and some of the people whom we have served in the past. Please listen to their stories and prayerfully consider joining this Matthew 25 outreach during this Lenten season.

Get to Know our Children's Choir Director

Dr. Marci Major has been a First Pres staff member since last September. You may have seen her on Sundays when the Children's Choir sang and at the Candlelight Christmas Concert 2021. Her professional bio can be found on the West Chester University's website. However, we wanted to give you the opportunity of getting to know her on a more personal level through this interview Sandor had with her.

What or who inspired you to become a musician?

I remember when I was about 5 or 6 all of my older cousins could play piano. They played on my grandmother's piano and I wanted so badly to be like them. I begged my parents and they enrolled me in lessons. I fell in love and never stopped.

You have been training future music educators. What is the most challenging aspect of your job? What's the most rewarding one?

I love helping learners of all ages grow, connect, and create. During the pandemic it's been very challenging to find ways to inspire and help people achieve these goals. But, it has also been very rewarding to be part of the needed change that continues to make music education more relevant and necessary for all learners.

How do you like working at First Pres?

I love it! The timing for coming on to direct the children's choir was perfect. It's been a wonderful activity to do with my own children and the families are supportive of us learning to worship and have fellowship through music.

You had worked at several churches before joining the First Pres staff. How does our church compare to the churches you worked at before?

My father is a retired minister, so I have been involved with church music my whole life. I have loved every congregation for their accepting, embracing, and immediate connectivity and support. I feel exactly the same way about First Pres.

Do you have any hobbies or interests outside of music?

I love social dancing - east coast swing, lindy hop, salsa, bachata....you name it! To me music is best when I also get to connect the rest of my body! I also love traveling and exploring life with my children and husband. Clayton recently wrote in an autobiography project that he "loves going places." That made my heart sing!

Marci L. Major

Music Education Department Chair, Wells School of Music | Children's Choir Director at FPC

Bucket School Update

The Bucket School had a very busy season by celebrating with annual holiday traditions and fun family events.

November Highlights

In the month of November, students learned through themes such as animals, habitats, and Thanksgiving. Thankfulness was the Christian value of the month as the students learned about what it means to show gratitude and be thankful for what they have and those around them they love. A special holiday tradition of The Bucket School in November is the Thanksgiving Feast! Students came together in Social Hall to enjoy a special time of togetherness as a school while enjoying a kid-friendly, Thanksgiving-themed menu of goodies. The school's generous parents helped to support this event by donating foods, paperware, and yummy desserts!

December Highlights

In December, students learned the Christmas Story and the meaning of giving to those in need. The school collected gently used and new winter clothing for donation to the Salvation Army. Students in our 3-year-old classes celebrated the school's traditions of pajama day and gingerbread house decorating. Each student had a special grown-up helper come to the school to assist with this fun and messy project! On December 17, The Bucket School's Pre-K program performed its annual Christmas Pageant for families in Fellowship Hall. The students sang such classics as Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, and We Wish You a Merry Christmas. Of course, the pageant was not complete without a special song: Happy Birthday to Jesus!

January Highlights

January brought some snow, but that did not stop the fun! Our 3-day Pre-K program had a wonderful "snow day" playing outside in the school's play yard. Inside, the students this past month have learned about winter, hibernation, and migration as well as generosity and sharing. Food donations were collected for the West Chester Food Cupboard.

Upcoming News and Events

Students will celebrate kindness in February and literacy in the month of March. Service projects will include making cards for others and collecting children's books. We will have a special "dress as your favorite book character" day in March. We will also be hosting a few upcoming fun evening events for families.

March 10th: Art Show Night from 6:30 – 7:30 in Social Hall

April 7th: Game Night with a special friend 6:30 – 7:30 in Social Hall



Bucket School Pictures



VBS Returns this Summer



Get excited First Pres families - in person Vacation Bible School is coming back this summer! In order to account for the many uncertainties and pressures that families are still experiencing with the pandemic, VBS will take place during worship on Sunday mornings in June and July, concluding with a big family party on the afternoon of Sunday, July 31. We hope this will give all children the ability to participate (regardless of vacation schedules) and extend the VBS fun. More details will be shared with families as the summer approaches.

Creating a Culture of Trust: Session's Covenant

Following our Congregational survey and Leadership Retreat last May/June, Session has been exploring ways to build a culture of trust at First Pres. As part of that process, members of Session recently developed a Covenant to guide our engagement with one another and with the congregation. We formally adopted it at our meeting in January and plan to visit one tenant of it at each of our meetings over the next year and have it become part of our training for new officers. Our goal is to use the covenant to guide our behaviors and we welcome feedback from the congregation as you hold us accountable to its principles.

We worked to make the covenant comprehensive, yet something easy to digest and very concrete. There are three sections. The first focuses on how we live out this leadership role as a service to God using a practice of discernment. The second focuses on the importance of relationships, reflecting one of the themes of our working vision. The third section highlights specific behaviors that we believe are foundational to creating a culture of trust.

We welcome your prayers for grace and wisdom as we seek to live out this covenant in fulfilling our leadership roles.

We serve with a spirit of worship and faithfulness

Spending time in reflection
and prayer

Acting in a spirit of love and
humility

Listening to where and when
God is leading, being aware
that God may be speaking
through another person

We create deep relationships and connection to one another and the congregation

Intentionally developing
relationships with each
other through worshipping,
praying, studying, working,
and seeking additional
opportunities for fellowship.

Listening with openness and
respect for one another.

Speaking the truth in love
to each other, trusting that
God will lead us through
respectful conflict and
healthy disagreement

We work to build and maintain a culture of trust

Leading by example

Telling the truth in a way
people can verify while
maintaining confidentiality

Speaking as a governing
body

Gift Card Campaign

Presbyterian Women of First Pres has supported the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County (DVCCC) annually for many years. Due to a lack of storage space at their locations, they would especially appreciate gift cards to local supermarkets, as well as Walmart and Target. Please consider helping these families by supporting this on-going need. You may do so as follows:

- Place cards in the Sunday Offering Plate
- Take them to Office Administrator Dan Williams during weekly office hours
- Drop them in the locked mailbox at the office entrance
- Send them by mail (be aware of possible delivery delays)

Please clearly label your envelope with your name (or mark as Anon) and the amount of the card.

The mission of the DVCCC is to provide intervention, education, outreach, advocacy, and programs to prevent, reduce, and remedy domestic in Chester County.

DVCCC is committed to empowering survivors of domestic abuse through providing information and supporting them as they reclaim their lives. It provides services at their main, confidentially located, site and satellite sites in Coatesville, Kennett Square, Oxford, and Phoenixville. Services are available in English and Spanish. All services are free and confidential.

Women's Retreat

Save the Date for a women's retreat this spring! All women are invited to this chocolate-themed retreat, where we'll delight in God's extravagant grace. The retreat will take place at First Pres the evening of Friday, April 29 and the morning of Saturday, April 30. Sign-ups will begin in March.

This program is designed to help women grow in their relationship with God and develop lasting friendships with each other as we explore how God's grace is evident in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Women's Spring Bible Study

All women are invited to our spring Bible study. We'll be reading and discussing *Before Amen: The Power of a Simple Prayer*, by Max Lucado. In *Before Amen*, Max Lucado joins readers on a journey to the very heart of biblical prayer...distilling prayers in the Bible down to one pocket-sized prayer, Max reminds readers that prayer is not a privilege for the pious nor the art of a chosen few. Prayer is simply a heartfelt conversation between God and his child.

This four-week study will meet at the church on Wednesday evenings in May. Sign-ups will begin in the next few weeks, the link will be in the weekly church emails and the Sunday bulletin. Even if you've never done a women's Bible study before, give it a try! This is a great way to meet other women in the church, grow deeper in your faith, and enjoy laughter and conversation.

Weekend with the Arts

Join us for a weekend celebrating art and music as we revive an annual tradition.

Schedule of Events

Friday, March 4

6:30pm-9:30pm

Art Show Gala Opening (Free Admission)

- local artists' work on display and for sale
- live music by Jazz Sanctuary
- Jewelry by Katy Winters will be on site, exhibiting and custom designing silver jewelry for patrons of the show.

Saturday, March 5

9:30am-5:00pm

Gallery Open (Free Admission)

Sunday, March 6

8:30am-5:00pm

Gallery Open (Free Admission)

3:00pm

Concert (Freewill Offering)

WCU's Rosedale String Quartet & ORGANized Mallets Duo

Featured Artists:

Lindsay Adams, George Baldt, Linda Barr, Gregory Blue, Richard Bollinger, Lee Bradley, Richard Chalfant, Kathy Deaville, George Gallatig, John Hannafin, Fred Jackson, Linda Killingsworth, Jeanne Marston, Marty May, Dennis Minch, Roe Murray, Dennis Park, Nick Santoleri, Jim Serum, Don Shoffner, Mary Lou Sicoli, Donna Streisfeld, John Suplee, Nancy Thompson, Barbara Tlush, Kathy Winters, Connie Worth, Jean Roney Yoder

PNC Update

The Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) completed two important pieces of the pastoral transition: the Ministry Information Form, which is required for First Pres to officially enter the PC(USA) search process, and the church brochure which will be given to candidates to introduce them to our congregation. Both of these documents are available on our website. The PNC anticipates receiving a list of potential candidates from the recruiting agency within the next month, and will begin conversations with these individuals shortly after. Thank you for your prayers as we enter into this exciting phase of our search process.

In Memoriam

- Barbara Hoke, member from June 28, 1993 to August 2021.
- Mary Beth Drobish, member from October 10, 1988 to January 10, 2022.
- Carolyn W. Church, member from September 23, 1970 to February 8, 2022.
- Jean F. Bratton, member from February 22, 2004 to February 13, 2022.
- Geraldine D. Gibson, member from November 30, 1960 to February 14, 2022.

The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to:

- Rich and Esther Smith and family in the death of Esther’s mother
- Thomas and Suzy DeGeorge and family in the death of Suzy’s step-father
- The family of Barbara Hoke
- Steve, Sue, Karly and Nolan Soulas and family in the death of Sue’s brother
- The family of Mary Beth Drobish
- Anna Read and Carmelo and Julia Ortiz and families in the death of Anna’s sister and Julia’s aunt.
- The family of Carolyn W. Church.
- The family of Jean F. Bratton.
- Chester Gibson and family in the death of his wife, Geraldine.

Births:

- Annie Sue Heaver, born December 10, 2021, daughter of Philip and Meredith Heaver and granddaughter of Philip and Gwyn Heaver.
- Juniper Rose Hankins, born January 15, 2022, daughter of Eric and April Hankins.
- Nora Grace Robinson, born January 27, 2022, daughter of Brian Robinson and Andrea Ramsey and granddaughter of Carl and Mary Ann Robinson.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	January Actual	January Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Full Year Budget
Income	\$136,364	\$103,015	\$136,364	\$103,015	\$1,094,775
Expenses	\$61,772	\$72,398	\$61,772	\$72,398	\$1,094,775
Difference	\$74,592	\$30,617	\$74,592	\$30,617	\$0

FIRST PRES

CONTACT

Executive Pastor

Rev. Caroline Cupp (ccupp@firstpreswc.com)

Program Staff

Director of Music:
Sándor Kádár (skadar@firstpreswc.com)

Choir Accompanist:
Kira Boros (kboros@firstpreswc.com)

Children’s Choir Director:
Marcy Major (mmajor@wcupa.edu)

Director of Engagement:
Elizabeth Hess (ehess@firstpreswc.com)

Director of Faith Formation:
Sara Pantazes (spantazes@firstpreswc.com)

Preschool Director:
Marissa Truong (mtruong@firstpreswc.com)

Director of Youth & Contemporary Ministries:
Eric Hankins (ehankins@firstpreswc.com)

Church Office

Director of Operations:
Jeff Somers (jsomers@firstpreswc.com)

Office Manager:
Karen Goldstein (kgoldstein@firstpreswc.com)

Office Administrator:
Daniel K. Williams (dwilliams@firstpreswc.com)

Wedding & Funeral Coordinator:
Gretchen Huebner (ghuebner@firstpreswc.com)

Custodian:
Willy Oliveras (contact church office for requests)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

130 West Miner Street
West Chester, PA 19382



Lent & Easter Schedule

March 2 - Ash Wednesday

6:30pm - Service led by the Children's Choir

April 14 - Maundy Thursday

6:30pm - Service led by the Grazer Kappellknaben, an Austrian 40-member boys' choir, with a short concert after the service.

April 15 - Good Friday

3:00pm - Service led by soloist and instrumentalists

April 17 - Easter

6:30am - Sunrise Service at the Abbott Farm

9:00am - Traditional service led by the Miner Street Brass and Chancel Choir

10:42am - Contemporary service led by the Worship Band

