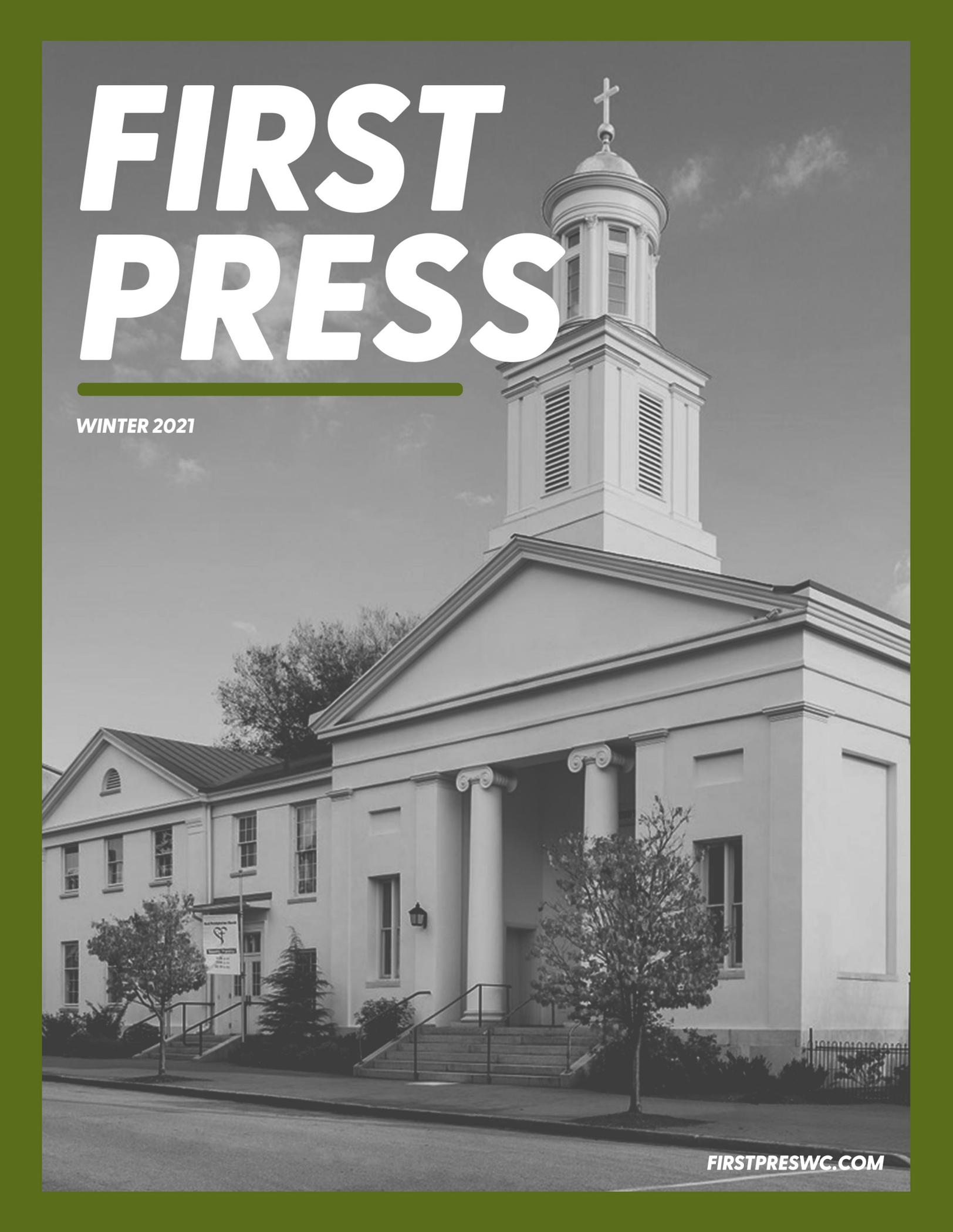


FIRST PRESS



WINTER 2021

FIRSTPRESWC.COM

A Note from Pastor Caroline

I love Christmas. Not just those holy pieces of Christmas that people wiser than I rightly name as the glory of the season, but all of it: the glitter and garlands, the movies and parties, the delightful challenge of choosing the perfect gift for each person on one's list. The annual ritual of getting my husband up on a ladder to pull down boxes of ornaments handed down over generations, whose ranks will be joined by popsicle sticks and egg carton bells crafted by small, glue-covered hands. I love it all.

And yet, even as Dean Martin croons into my headphones, I find this year that I'm longing for Advent, not just as a placeholder until Christmas finally arrives, but as a time in its own right. There's something about the shadows of this season and its anticipation of light that speaks to my spirit this year. We here at First Pres have become a people accustomed to waiting, whether it's for an end to a pandemic or the arrival of a new pastor. Our waiting is bracketed most often by the holy tasks of meetings, committees, and congregational gatherings. We have learned, or been reminded, that waiting is not the absence of activity, but an invitation to a different kind of work. And so as we enter into the Advent season, we come to it as a people who are changed from who we were last year, or any of the years before. We are seasoned now. We know the labors and meaning of waiting without the preacher spinning analogies from the pulpit. We know enough about waiting not to romanticize its difficulties, and have spent enough time with it to see its gifts.

Advent is an invitation to experience not only the tasks of waiting, but its beauty. When we decorate the church or our homes, when we string lights and put ornaments on trees, we participate in God's work of bringing light from the darkness. The most beautiful songs of our Christian tradition are sung at this time of year as our waiting for Christ captures our imaginations and our hearts. Advent is a waiting gift: an invitation to partner with God in making this world beautiful, and gives us a taste of the much greater beauty that is to come. This Advent we will be following Mary's journey from her first encounter with Gabriel through the Nativity. Along the way we will see the themes of her life reflected in our own. Mary's story is one that has inspired painters and musicians throughout the centuries, and we will draw on their works in our worship.

This season we will be returning to cherished traditions: lighting Advent candles in the services each week, the Giving Tree, and the annual Candlelight Christmas Concert. We are adding some new opportunities to connect with one another as well, like a wreath-making workshop for all ages, a women's Christmas Zoom, and a special Advent Bible study. In the pages to follow you can read about these activities, and I hope that you find something that feeds or inspires you for the weeks ahead.

We know as well that for many this is a difficult time of the year, filled with memories of those gone from this world or from our lives. It can be a deeply lonely few months. If this is your experience of the winter season, reach out to me. I would love to connect with you, and to connect you with others. Our wonderful Stephen Ministry program is available for anyone who would benefit from regular one-on-one support during this season.

However you are feeling as we enter this year's waiting season, I hope these holy weeks feed your soul and connect you more deeply to the world around you. I pray that this church will be one place that you experience God's presence in the company of others who are waiting for the light to dawn.

In Christ,

Pastor Caroline

Advent and Christmas Preaching Schedule

November 28 – Caroline Cupp

December 5 – Ann Dickey

December 12 – Eric Hankins

December 19 – Testimonies: Finding God on the Road

Christmas Eve Services – Caroline Cupp (3pm, 5pm, & 7pm), Ann Dickey (10pm)

December 26 – Sara Pantazes

January 2 – Ann Dickey

The Giving Tree is Back!

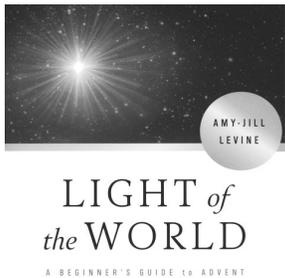
Celebrate the physical return of a treasured First Pres holiday tradition. The ornaments were made this year by the children in our Sunday School classes, the Bucket School students, and the women in the Sew Many Blessings and Sweet Dreams groups. Many thanks to the women of Hope Circle for decorating the tree.

On November 21, the decorated Giving Trees will be in Fellowship Hall. Before and after each service you may choose to support a family, individual, or one of our mission partners by selecting an ornament. Then purchase the gift or gift card and drop it off at the church during one of the drop-off times listed below! It is that easy.

If you are unable to get to the church to select an ornament but would still like to support this ministry, email Daniel Williams (dwilliams@firstpreswc.com). Dan will select an ornament for you and email the information to purchase the gift.

Finally, drop off for the gift or gift cards will be on Sunday, November 28 from 9-12, Saturday, December 4 from 11-1 or Sunday, December 5 from 9-1.

Church-wide Advent Study



This December, all members of the First Pres community are invited to read *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent* by Amy-Jill Levine. In this study, we will joyously explore anew how the Gospel narratives connect to the Old Testament; the role of women in first-century Jewish culture; and the importance of Mary's visitation, the census, the stable, the star of Bethlehem, and the flight to Egypt.

Weekly discussions of the book will be held over Zoom on Wednesday nights from 6:30 – 7:30 pm beginning December 1 and will include a short video with additional thoughts from the author. Participants are encouraged to read the book as we progress through the study. The church has a limited number of copies of the book for sale or you can order it on your own. Contact Sara Pantazes with any questions.



First Crew travels to Arapahoe

For the past 16 years, First Crew (formerly Men of Mission) has led teams of faithful volunteers to storm-ravaged sites across the US to assist families in rebuilding their homes and their lives. From the Katrina flood in Mississippi, the tornado in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the flood in Houston, Texas, to this year's trip to Arapahoe, North Carolina, both novices and veteran volunteers have been applying their skills and talents to address the catastrophic damage caused by these violent storms.

This year a team of 13 volunteers traveled to Arapahoe, North Carolina and worked on two homes that were heavily damaged by flooding. For the past several years, we have partnered with Fuller Center's Disaster Rebuilders organization. They provide the materials, project management and selection of rebuilding sites for all of the volunteers.

The volunteers always speak of the blessings that they personally receive while volunteering on these disaster relief mission trips. One of the volunteers, Howard Lebold, commented after the recent trip, "I learned a long time ago, that one of the best ways for me to hear God speak is through service opportunities, so it was a true blessing to spend a week serving the Moore and Forney families in Arapahoe recently. While it was a taxing week of hard work tearing out floors and rebuilding a kitchen and laundry room, it was an even better week of seeing how God showed up in all of our work and dinner conversations, and even more importantly how he worked on my heart throughout the week."

Over the years, volunteers have moved away but often continue to travel across the country to participate in these life-changing events, not only for the home but also the volunteer. First Crew National team leader, Bob Curran, summed up the trip perfectly in his note to the volunteers following the mission trip: "Thank you for taking the time and expense to travel to North Carolina and spend days helping those that without our help would continue to suffer the effects of the flooding. You crossed that line that separates those that help when convenient to do so vs. those that travel to where the need is when it is clearly inconvenient to do so. You have become part of a special calling and the people of Arapahoe that we impacted truly appreciate it. We may have not changed the whole world this week; however for two families we significantly changed their world. Each of you brought your unique talents and personalities to North Carolina to create a symphony of great results. The sore muscles will go away but hopefully the great feelings of making a difference in the lives of two families will last forever."

Jim Serum, First Crew



Creation of a Justice Ministry Team

Last spring I was reading my seminary's alumni newsletter and came across the following quote from Dr. Rachel Baard, a professor at Union Presbyterian Seminary. She posed the question, "What does it mean to be the church, and not just go to church?" and then answered it. "I think the role of the church has always been the same...To be a community with God's values in the world." I was so struck by her words that I cut the article out and pinned it to the bulletin board in my office. I see it almost every time I look up because it happens to sit right at eye level. In my opinion, discerning how to be a community with God's values in the world is an important part of the work that lies ahead of all churches as we figure out what the church of the 21st century is going to look like.

First Pres has spent the last 18 months working through an answer to this question, beginning with the summer 2020 book studies and subsequent monthly anti-racism conversations. What emerged over those many months of discussion was a conviction that we need to keep learning and keep working to discern what we as Christians might do in response to the injustices we are seeing.

In response, over the summer of 2021, I worked to create a Justice Ministry Team. Working under the oversight of Session's Faith Formation Committee, the members of this ministry team will work with me to plan and offer justice-related programs to the church. The initial members of this ministry team are Ellen Endslow, Carmelo Ortiz, Barb Snyder, and Art Zadrozny. Together, we wrote the following mission statement:

The Justice Ministry Team seeks to help the congregation live out its commitment to "Above All, Love." This ministry seeks to provide educational and action opportunities for participants of the First Pres community to grow in their understanding of:

- * God's justice,
- * how we can become more aware of human injustices in the world that conflict with God's will,
- * what their causes might be, and
- * prompt consideration of how we might respond as people of faith.

During this first year, we decided to continue focusing our programs on the topic of racial justice. We are planning three programs, one each in the fall, winter and spring, that all relate to the theme of "Understanding." Information on each of these programs will be advertised in the bulletin and e-news at the relevant times. We are also curating a monthly email with resources that church members send us that they have found informative and want to share with the group. If you'd like to be on the list to receive this email, let me know.

The idea that Christians should care about justice is at least as old as the words of the Bible. Talking about the specific injustices in our society and our individual and collective responses may feel like a newer thing for the church to do (and for some it may feel like an uncomfortable thing for the church to do!) But practicing talking about hard things with one another is important. So is learning and remembering what the word "justice" means to God. It's a relational term that asserts the equal dignity and value of every human being. The word "justice" is meant to challenge us to consider whether this is the lived experience of every human being, and if not, what we can do to remedy that wrong. I'm grateful to be part of a congregation that cares and is willing to learn and grow. May God continue to guide us as we move forward in faith and hope together.

Bucket School Update

Off to a Great School Year!

The Bucket School kicked off the school year successfully with a well-attended in-person “Back-to-School” night where parents met teachers and learned more about the school’s programming. Students ages 2½ through 5 were welcomed for the first day of the 2021-2022 year on September 10.



September Highlights

In the month of September, new classmates got to know each other through “All About Me” activities and show ‘n tell. Other curricular highlights included themes such as apples and leaves. Love was the Christian value of the month as the students learned about their preschool community, friends, and God’s love for them.

October Highlights

In October, students learned all about fire safety and participated in a fire drill, explored the science of pumpkins, and read lots of stories about the season of fall. This month also marked the start of extended day lunch and enrichment programs, as well as extracurricular activities such as mini-worship in the sanctuary with Ms. Sara, library lessons with Dr. Truong, physical education in Social Hall, and music classes with Makin’ Music teacher Sue McKenna. The school’s social-emotional curricula focused on learning about joy and students participated in conversations and activities about happiness and other emotions. During Fire Safety Week, First West Chester Fire Company visited and students got the opportunity to see a fire truck and a fireman dressed in his protective gear. On October 26 and 27, The Bucket School celebrated Halloween with costume parades and songs performed for families in Fellowship Hall. Also a highlight this month was the generosity of the school’s families who donated over 275 pairs of socks to those in need to our October service project.

Upcoming News and Events

Students will learn about Thanksgiving and Christmas over the next two months. Other fun themes include owls, the night sky, and turkeys. Service projects will include donations for the Plaid Pajamas Project and winter clothing will be collected and donated to those in need.

November 22: Thanksgiving Day Feast for 3s and 4s

December 14 & 15: Silly sweater dress-up day

December 17: Christmas pageant @ 10 in Fellowship Hall

December 20 – 31: Holiday Break



Christmas for Migrant Families Program

The season of Christmas is almost here again and the scriptures, the memories, the joys and high expectations return as many of us look forward to spending more time with our families and friends. But even as some of the pandemic restrictions are beginning to lift, the difficulties of the past two years are still with us all and are especially difficult for the poorest of the migrant workers and their families in Chester County. These families, many from Mexico and Guatemala, have struggled to continue to work and provide the essentials for their children. Chester County Migrant Ministry has been a steady resource for them and is continuing to assist with critical basic needs such as translation at medical appointments and with legal issues, reopening English and Citizenship classes, providing transportation for meetings with ICE, and sharing donated furniture and winter coats where needed. Though we are all praying for a healthier and more prosperous year in 2022 there are still more families than ever who need our help to meet their basic needs.

First Presbyterian Church is seeking sponsors for migrant families in need and we hope you'll join with us this year. Become a family sponsor yourself or with your family or group. Adopt one individual or a whole family. This year gifts will be in the form of store gift cards. This makes shopping safer and more convenient for our family sponsors and has the added advantage of giving the parents the joy of shopping for their children. As in past years, some of the Giving Tree ornaments are dedicated to supporting these families, offering an additional way to participate in this ministry.

As Sponsors you will receive a form containing the names of your family, their ages, and some of their needs and wishes. The forms will also include the names of one or more stores where you can purchase gift cards to buy the requested gifts.

Monetary contributions are always welcome. Your contribution will help to buy gifts for unsponsored families. Send your check directly to the church, made payable to First Presbyterian Church of West Chester and marked for the "Christmas for Migrant Families" program.

Sharing your gifts will be a wonderful blessing, certainly for the families served by Migrant Ministry, but also for our own First Pres families. Contact Anna Bentley (annagbentley@gmail.com, 484-432-0742) or Debbie Shryock (dfs0716@gmail.com, 610-524-0430) for more information.

Women's Christmas Zoom

Save the date of Thursday, Dec. 2 at 6:30 p.m. for an hour together with sisters in Christ. We'll spend a relaxed hour with each other, have a conversation about getting ready for Christmas, enjoying the season of Advent, and have some fun together. You can join the zoom dressed in your Christmas jammies with hot chocolate or a Christmas cookie - we hope you can participate with us! The zoom link will be emailed out the week prior, or contact Elizabeth Hess (ehess@firstpreswc.com).

Women's Luncheon

In mid-September, we had over 40 women gather in Fellowship Hall for a fall women's luncheon and a short program about how we connect with God. We also collected 57 jars of jelly and jam for the West Chester Food Cupboard and the West Chester Senior Center. It was a delightful afternoon! If you'd like to get involved with a women's group, please reach out to Elizabeth at ehess@firstpreswc.com.

English Sunday School

English Sunday School Ends First “Semester”

On Sunday, October 17, the ESL program ended its first semester with a picnic behind the church. It was a time to celebrate this joint endeavor between First Pres, West Chester United Methodist Church, and El Buen Samaritano Methodist Church, and we did it with wonderful Latin food provided by the students.

Looking back at this initial effort, it was a great success. Students and teachers alike came away from it with expanded knowledge, deeper understanding, new friends, and a commitment to do it again! Students reported back that the classes had helped their comprehension and ability to communicate in English, both at work and socially.



So it is with pleasure that we look forward to a new semester that will begin on January 2 and run until April 10. During November and December, we will be looking at how we might improve the program. At the top of the list is finding a new curriculum that will better serve the needs of the students. We will also be considering homework and ways to measure the progress of the students. The students have asked for more time, so we will be expanding our time together to two hours each week, from noon to 2pm on Sundays. For teachers, we will try to provide regular times to touch base together, ask questions, and share successes.



One sign of success is that nearly all of the 18 students have expressed the desire to return for the next session. Of the 25 or so teacher volunteers, about 1/3 are able to return in January, so there are opportunities for those who would like to be involved in a fun, meaningful, important ministry.

If you would like to be part of English Sunday School or just have questions, please contact Doug Congdon-Martin (610-986-1108/dougcm100@gmail.com) or Stacy Tukloff-Vansant (jimnstace@gmail.com).

Christmas Wreath Workshop

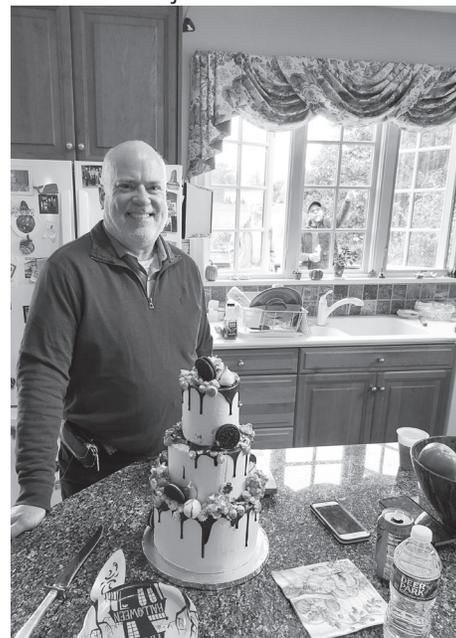
First Pres is hosting a make-your-own Christmas wreath workshop on Sunday, Dec. 12 at 3 p.m. We'll provide a fresh green wreath and the decorations to make it your own! The cost to make a wreath is \$10; please sign up under the sign-up tab at www.firstpreswc.com. The deadline to sign up is Dec. 5. We'll also have snacks, hot drinks, and a craft for our younger friends to work on. If the weather is nice, we'll make our wreaths outside; otherwise we'll be in Fellowship Hall with masks on. Please join us for a festive afternoon!

News from the Music Ministry

We are thrilled to bring back the in-person annual Candlelight Christmas Concert this year, featuring all the great music this church has to offer. Join us on December 5 at 4:00 pm as we ring in the Christmas season! Ensembles including The Chancel Choir, the Children's Choir, Miner Street Brass, and Miner Street Brass Next will perform beloved Christmas classics, as well as popular carols including "Joy to the World" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." In addition to First Pres music ensembles, the featured guest ensemble this year will be the Pennsylvania Chamber Winds. This ensemble of ten musicians consists of former and current WCU students and was founded in 2020 to promote chamber music composed for wind instruments. Seat reservations are required due to a limited capacity. A freewill offering will be received to support our Column Classics concert series to help offset the costs of the concerts.

On another note, I am very glad that after a 18-month hiatus, the Children's Choir was able to resume with in-person rehearsal under the excellent leadership of Dr. Marci Major. She is Chair and Associate Professor of Music Education and Music Therapy at WCU. Marci previously had several church music positions before joining the First Pres staff, bringing many years of experience to the table. She and Sara are re-building a fantastic, high-energy new group, filled with pre-pandemic and new families who are growing their faith through music. The number of children attending the rehearsals is at the pre-pandemic level. We can all agree that young families are crucial for the future of any church; therefore, this program is a true investment into the future of this congregation.

Members of the music ministry attended a very special party in October. What was initially advertised as a Fall Music Ministry party turned out to be a surprise party for Pete Galloway's 60th birthday and Barbara and George Adams' 50th wedding anniversary. The highlight of the party was a three-tier cake from Kira's Cake Boutique.



Sandor Kadar

Christmas Poinsettias

Help to decorate our sanctuary with a memorial or honor gift of poinsettias this Christmas Season. The donation is \$15 per plant. The deadline for ordering is **December 8**. There are several ways to order them: **1.** Complete the online form at firstpreswc.com/poinsettias starting November 10th. **2.** Call the church office at 610-696-0554, or **3.** Fill out the form below and place in the offering plate or mail it to the church - attn: Karen Goldstein.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Name

Phone

Amount Enclosed (\$15 each)

In Memory/Honor of

Celebrate Christmas at First Pres

We hope that you will join us in-person or online for the Christmas season.

Christmas Eve (12/24):

Services will be held at 3pm (Family Friendly), 5pm (Contemporary), 7pm (Traditional), and 10pm (Communion)

- There will be seating available in Fellowship Hall during all services for those who would prefer to maintain more physical distance. We kindly ask that you remain masked during services and while inside the church.
- The nursery will be open for the 3pm, 5pm, and 7pm services, but will not be staffed. Caregivers are welcome to bring children to the space and watch the service on the screen provided. Please know that children of all ages are always welcome in worship!

First Sunday of Christmas (12/26)

- There will be a single, traditional service at 9am with Sara Pantazes in the pulpit. The nursery will be open but will not be staffed.

Second Sunday of Christmas (1/2)

- Two services return, with Rev. Ann Dickey preaching and communion at both. Sunday School will resume and the nursery will be open and staffed for those who wish to leave young children (0-3) there for care



Column Classics Presents

Candlelight Christmas Concert

Sunday
Dec. 5
— 4:00pm

The Chancel Choir, Miner Street Brass, Children's Choir, Miner Street Brass Next, Pennsylvania Chamber Winds, and soloists will perform traditional Christmas music and Christmas carols.

Come and celebrate Christ's birth with us through the magic of music!

To reserve your seat, visit firstpreswc.com/christmas-concert

Church Office Hours

The church building is open from 9am-4pm, Monday-Thursday and 9am-1pm Friday. The church's open office hours are based on the availability of our current administrative staff and volunteers. The ministry and program staff are also on-site throughout the week, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you need to come to the church building outside office hours. We are always looking for more front office volunteers – if you are interested in learning more about this hospitality ministry, please contact our Office Administrator, Daniel Williams, at dwilliams@firstpreswc.com.

In Memoriam

- Joy M. Pietschmann, member of FPC from May 27, 1981 to May 14, 2021
- George W. Fasic, member of FPC from Oct 25, 1993 to Sept 29, 2021
- Joan F. Blackmore, member of FPC from Feb 29, 2004 to Oct 12, 2021
- Myrtle G. Shoch, member of FPC from May 22, 1989 to Oct 28, 2021
- Eugene J. Rader, member of FPC from Feb 29, 1988 to Oct 30, 2021

The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to:

- Faith Battan and family in the death of her daughter, Joy Pietschmann
- Nancy Fasic and family in the death of her husband, George
- The family of Joan Blackmore
- Gail, John, Samantha, Todd Rader and Beth Warrington and families in the death of Gail's husband and John, Samantha, Todd and Beth's father
- The family of Myrtle G. Schoch

Baptisms:

- David Gregory Morris, born October 7, 2020, son of David and Anne Morris
- Nolan August Chappell, born February 8, 2021, son of Alexander and Julie Chappell
- Owen Michael Campbell, born December 28, 2020, son of Peter and Lauren Campbell
- Georgiana Taylor Gerbron, born March 23, 2021, daughter of Charlie and Meredith Gerbron

Births:

- Ariel Rose Luciany, born October 1, 2021, daughter of Melissa and Joe Luciany, granddaughter of Mark and Linda Haake
- Stephen Anthony Sessa, born October 3, 2021, son of Stephen and Christie Sessa, grandson of Joe and Lorrie Fabrizio
- Alexander Hayes Dowd, born November 7, 2021, son of Alex and Lindsay Dowd, grandson of George and Barbara Adams

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	October Actual	October Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Full Year Budget
Income	\$85,521	\$89,172	\$992,708	\$1,026,02	\$1,260,105
Expenses	\$85,036	\$114,289	\$930,128	\$1,063,664	\$1,260,105
Difference	\$485	(\$25,117)	\$62,580	(\$37,652)	\$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:

Marci 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



Christmas Eve

at First Presbyterian Church

Each service will include candlelight.

3:00 p.m.
Traditional music and a children's program during the sermon.

5:00 p.m.
Contemporary music and a children's program during the sermon.

7:00 p.m.
Traditional music with the choir and brass ensemble and a children's program during the sermon.

10:00 p.m.
Traditional music with lute, guitar, and piano. Will include communion.

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