



August 23

Pastoral Transition
Town Hall

September 13

Kick-Off Sunday

October 4

World Communion Sunday

FIRST PRESS

First Presbyterian Church, West Chester, PA

September/October 2020

The writer Annie Dillard once remarked, “You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary.” While we have much to be grateful for as individuals and a congregation, this is an undeniably difficult time in the life of our community and nation. We are confronting unprecedented challenges on every front and uncertainty about what lies ahead.

Typically, this August newsletter would talk about the excitement of kicking off our church program year in early September: the new classes we’ll start, Fall mission projects, and blessing our kids and teachers as they head back to school. While we’ll still celebrate all of that on Kick-Off Sunday, September 13, we anticipate that we will still be worshipping and meeting virtually during the fall season due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Session is monitoring a variety of government, healthcare, and denominational guidelines at their meetings each month and making careful considerations about when and how to re-open our church building. They also recognize that there are First Pres members who long to see their church family face-to-face (or at least mask-to-mask).

Further on in this newsletter, you’ll find information on our “First Porch” gatherings – one-time “tiny” groups that meet for fellowship at an outdoor location. You will read about all of the ways children’s ministry is continuing in the current environment. The Pastoral Transition Team is hard at work interviewing applicants for the Interim Head of Staff position; along with the

article in this newsletter, make sure to check for the newest updates at firstpreswc.com/pastoraltransition, or join one of

their Zoom Town Hall meetings.

The church receives calls nearly every day from people seeking help with basic needs, many of whom have lost jobs due to the pandemic. Because of your generous giving to the Matthew 25 and Covid-19 funds, we have been able to provide rent, utility, and transportation assistance to people at risk of homelessness. As we enter a fall without the stability of in-person school, the church is exploring ways in which we can live out the spirit of Matthew 25 in new ways.

While there is much about this time that is discouraging, it has enabled me to see church and



continued inside...

...continued

neighbor in a new way: to better appreciate the privilege of in-person worship, the presence of Christ in two or three gathering together, and gratitude that in starting Matthew 25 at our church, God was preparing us for this season of need in our community. Yes, we're in the dark, but darkness allows us to see the stars.

- Rev. Caroline Cupp

Pastoral Transition Update

On Sunday, August 2, we collectively said farewell to Pastor Greg Stovell. It was a bittersweet day for many of us as we celebrated his ten years of ministry. Gifts from the congregation were presented during the 9:00 and 10:42 services. A framed photograph, one of Greg's favorites taken by Peter Guman, was given to him, along with a beautiful memory book filled with photos and messages from many members of our congregation. A copy of the memory book will be placed in the church library for anyone to view once we are able to return to the church. A drive-by farewell at the church followed the 10:42 service giving everyone the opportunity to see Greg and his family and to wish them well.

Over the past month, the Transition Team, also serving as the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC), has received inquiries and resumes from a number of applicants interested in the Interim Pastor position. The team is scheduling interviews to meet virtually with several qualified candidates to learn more about their ministry experiences and their interest in First Pres West Chester. The team also held two Town Hall sessions (July 26 and August 3) to answer questions about the transition process. Questions (and answers) from these sessions have been added to a Pastoral Transition FAQ, and will be posted on the Pastoral Transition page of the church website. A third Town Hall is scheduled for Sunday, August 23 at 10:00 a.m. Sign-up information is also available on the [transition page](#) of the church website.



The transition process is an important element in our journey to call a new Head Pastor. It is a time for prayer and discernment, a time to reflect on where we've been and where we believe God is calling us. You will have an opportunity to join others in prayers for this transition during the weekly individual prayer time on Thursdays at noon, and collectively at virtual prayer sessions scheduled periodically.

Through the website and other communications, the Transition Team will continue providing updates as we move through the transition process, as well as answering any questions you may have. Transition Team members are available to meet with any groups to discuss the process and answer questions. If you'd like to schedule a team member to meet with your group, or if you have questions or comments for the team, please email us at

pastoralsearch@firstpreswc.com. Updates on the pastoral search will continue to be shared in the mid-week emails, the church website, and in the monthly newsletters.

Matthew 25

While it can feel like life has ground to a halt over the past few months, the work of the Matthew 25 homelessness ministry is more active than ever. The pandemic has pushed people experiencing housing insecurity into even more dire situations and strained the finances of those who were stable just a few months ago. The names you see here are many of those this congregation has been able to help with everything from rent and groceries to diapers and car payments. What isn't captured here are the stories behind all these gifts: the widowed mother who was married at First Pres decades ago, the college grad who aged out of foster care, a domestic violence survivor seeking asylum, the man moving into his first apartment after living on the streets. It doesn't show that many of the names here are people who have disabilities, single parents laid off from their jobs, and families using every last ounce of strength just to make it to the next day. It doesn't capture the many, many thank you messages we've gotten from people helped by these offerings. Thank you for responding to God's call to help our neighbors.

**Michelle • V. • Sarah • Isaiah • Ana • Pablo
WCU Student • Shakia • Mark • Tiffani • Shari
Nicole • T. • Adriana • Carolyn • Julie • Kevin
WCU Student • Adrienne • A. • Kristen • Brian • B.
Franqui • Rolando • Eliudit • Abner • Abel • Bertoni
Yeison • Paz • Luis • Adan • Oscar • Marcos • Josue
Leonel • Omara • Reyna • Yovani • Paola • Walter
Martin • Nervi • Rosario • Riccy • Blanca • Aroldo
Celina • Jimmy • German • Emerita • Alejandra
Elida • Benita • Alejandro • Ronald • Nohemi
Maricela • Alexander • Yeni • Rafael • Samuel
WCU Student • Pablo • Madeline • Salvador**

A Letter From the Finance Committee

Dear First Pres Member,

In the midst of a global pandemic and a national reckoning for racial justice, we thank God for this extraordinary community of believers on Miner Street.

Blessings come in many forms. They are as simple as a phone call that dispels a sense of isolation, or as layered as teachers and parents working together to create safe spaces for learning in unprecedented circumstances. A blessing is a safe space to discuss challenging subjects that transform our hearts and community. A church to call home, even when we can't be together.

Blessings are too precious to take for granted. You are one of these blessings. Each person who calls First Pres home is part of God's family, and part of God's mission in the world.

Blessings also come from financial gifts. Your support of the Matthew 25 initiative, response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and pledge and non-pledge contributions during these especially difficult times has been and continues to be a blessing to our entire community, and supports the ministries of this church. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

Each of our journeys is unique and often changing. Whether you supported the special initiatives, maintained your pledge, or simply gave what you could, your participation makes a difference. It says, "I care." It is a statement of faith.

This Fall we will continue to broaden our understanding of Stewardship in this place. Your gifts enable and empower our shared blessings to unfold.

Sincerely,

Bob Smith
Chair, Finance Committee

Rev. Caroline Cupp
Executive Pastor

Prayer Initiative - Pastoral Transition

Your Church Needs You

Don't be confused that the work of transition is for the Transition Committee alone. During this significant time of uncertainty, the Committee has asked each of us to pray for our church, the staff, and their work in securing a new Head Pastor. You will have two ways of doing this:

1) Weekly Prayer – We ask all of you to pray each week on Thursdays at Noon. While these will be individual prayers, there is power in knowing that many of us will be talking with God at one time about the same issue.

Here is prayer focus for next several weeks:

August 13: Wisdom for Transition Committee and their work – Joe Battavio, Kathy Bird, PJ Dakes, Jeff Gross, Elizabeth Guman, and Kathy Westhafer

August 20: Inspiration for pastors and others who will be preaching on Sundays

August 27: Willingness of congregation to let go of the past and look to the future

September 2: Perseverance for staff as programs for Fall begin in earnest

September 9: Clarity as interviews are conducted with individuals for the Interim Pastor position

September 16: Discernment in moving forward with the Mission Study

September 23: Patience for all as we move through a process that can seem slow and cumbersome

September 30: Strong sense of direction for other leaders in the church (Elders, Trustees, Deacons) as decisions are made through the transition and COVID pandemic

The weekly Wednesday e-news will provide information about what to pray for, so watch for it on Wednesdays.

2) Virtual Prayer Sessions – Periodically, we will have a virtual prayer session from 10:15 – 10:30 (between the two virtual worship services). The prayers will focus on specific needs of the church at that time especially as it relates to the transition. There will be a reading of our Biblical story and a corporate prayer in addition to prayers led by a lay leader. Information for the link to this opportunity will be in the Wednesday e-news prior to the session. The first session is scheduled for Sunday, August 16 at 10:15. Future dates include September 13, November 22, and December 20.

Thank you for helping to lift our collective voices to God in praise and petition.

Women's Bible Study

Weekly Women's Online Bible Study this Fall

All women are invited to join us this fall for an online Bible study that will meet one evening a week over Zoom, for six weeks. We'll be studying Max Lucado's newest book, *Jesus: The God Who Knows Your Name* and learning more about the life and character of the Savior. Divided into six sections (Immanuel, Friend, Teacher, Miracle Worker, Lamb of God, Returning King), this study describes both the person Jesus was on earth and how to live in a personal relationship with him. This study will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, October 7 - November 11 and will be led by Sandy Lebold and Elizabeth Hess. A sign-up link will be shared in the weekly First Pres emails. Please reach out to Elizabeth Hess (ehess@firstpreswc.com) if you would like more information.

Faith Development Opportunities

Covid may be limiting our ability to start the new program year in person, but that's not slowing down First Pres. Below is a list of the many opportunities the church is offering for people of all ages to learn about God and grow in their faith this fall.

Children's Ministry

Monthly Zoom Sunday
School for each class

Opportunities to contribute
to weekly worship

New curriculum for at-home
Sunday School for all ages,
including preschool

Women's Ministry

Presbyterian Women Circles

Fall Bible study

Spiritual Connections

Adult Education

Sunday evening
Bible study

Wednesday evening
Bridge class

Men's weekday
Bible studies

For Information:

Contact Sara Pantazes, Director
of Christian Education, at
spantazes@firstpreswc.com

Go to www.firstpreswc.com

[Sign up](#) to receive the e-news
that is sent out every Wednesday

Youth Ministry

Weekly outdoor Bible
studies continuing on
Tuesday and Wednesday
evenings

Weekly digital youth group

Retreat-like events as
circumstances allow

Presbyterian Women Honor Margaret Barnard Chalfant



An Historical Perspective

Peg Chalfant became a member of First Pres in 1935 at the age of 23. At that time, there were 3 women's groups, each focusing on a specific outreach: The Missionary Society, The Mission Circle, and Lend-A-Hand. These groups were in effect until a reorganization in 1956, resulting from a two-year study (the directive coming from Presbytery and ministers). Upon a formal vote, the first "united" women's group was established and would become The Women's Association.

Primary founding members were Peg Chalfant, Fran Kettenring, Pat Lee, Betsy Fitzgerald, Edie Johnson, and Virginia Kell. Years ago, when asked how Peg became the first Moderator of the new association, she was "convinced by the pastor's wife Virginia Kell and Fran Kettenring to lead the group. I was pushed into it. They wanted someone who knew the background and the people involved." The Women's Association continued through 1988, at which time it became Presbyterian Women.

As a result of the reorganization in 1956, The Women's Association consisted of 12 "circles" named for each month of the year and membership was about 100 women. Recruitment directives across the years have remained fairly constant. According to Peg they were "get going/get the women out; appoint women to specific circles and switch them up yearly; reach out to church members through new-member classes and special events; direct invitation." Changing circle membership yearly proved problematic because it was hard to establish continuity.

Some missions supported early on were Sheldon Jackson (Alaska), Western Indian Groups, Salvation Army, and silk stockings to Japan. Mission outreach has expanded over the years so that some 13 missions are supported locally, nationally, and around the world. Special offerings have remained unchanged over the years: Fellowship of the Least Coin, Leprosy Fund, Thank Offering, and Birthday Offering.

Asked the reasons she remained a member of PW, Peg said "partly habit, made friends, got a lot of warmth-fellowship-love, met new people."

To honor the time, dedication, talent, and contributions that Peg Chalfant gave over so many years to the Presbyterian Women Organization of First Pres, we have lovingly planted a Rose of Sharon "Blushing Bride" in the front garden of the church, so noted by a plaque in her memory. Peg loved the outdoors and flowers of all kinds, so this seemed a fitting way to share that love for all to see.



Presbyterian Women Invitation

Get Connected this Fall

A warm invitation is extended to all women who are interested in finding a place where they can nurture their faith and develop friendships in a caring community of women, while serving Christ together in our church, community and world.

Below are details about some of the groups (called “circles”) which normally meet monthly, September - June. The circles usually meet at the church or in members’ homes, but will likely be meeting virtually through Zoom this fall. The focus of most groups is on fellowship, Bible/book study, and outreach, service and mission projects (unless a study is not listed). The circles are connected through a denominational group called Presbyterian Women, which helps them coordinate their outreach efforts while valuing and recognizing the individuality of each group. Please contact any of the women listed below to learn more about participating at any point in the coming year.

Grace Circle: 2nd Monday of the month at 1:00 PM

Book study: *Jesus: The God Who Knows Your Name*, by Max Lucado

Contact: Vicki Gansner, 610-399-3059, gansner@comcast.net

Peace Circle: 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM

Bible study: *Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament*, by P. Lynn Miller

Contact: Barbara Lidle, 610-692-4588, bjtldle@gmail.com

Praise Circle: 2nd Wednesday of the month at 9:30 AM

Book study: *Box of Butterflies*, by Rona Downey

Contact: Judy Mackleer, 484-356-3005, JudyMackleer@verizon.net

or Lynne Carter, 610-291-1282, lscjrc@aol.com

Hope Circle: 2nd Thursday of the month at 9:15 AM

Bible Study: *Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament*, by P. Lynn Miller

Contact: Becky Gamble, 610-889-0928, sandbgamble@comcast.net

Faith Circle: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM

Fellowship and service oriented: light meal, dessert & fellowship; serves monthly by taking on a small project in the church or local community

Contact: Nancy Ohms, 610-455-1950, nmohms@verizon.net

Pastor Caroline's Change of Title

Rev. Caroline Cupp appointed to the role of Executive Pastor at First Presbyterian Church

We are pleased to announce that Caroline has been appointed the title of Executive Pastor at First Pres as she assumes additional responsibilities and leadership during the pastoral transition. In addition to serving as Co-Head of Staff with Jeff Somers, Director of Finance and Operations, Caroline has also been approved by Presbytery of Donegal to serve as moderator of Session until an interim is in place. Caroline will provide leadership and support in the areas of worship, pastoral care to members of the congregation and community, guiding the mission initiatives of the church, and supporting the areas of Christian Education and Music Ministries. She also serves as staff liaison to the Transition Team, also serving as the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee. Thank you Caroline for all you do in service to our church and community.

Presbyterian Women Library Donations

Each year Presbyterian Women honor women of the church who have passed in the previous year. In doing so, we donate a book to the adult church library and the church preschool library. The following books have been chosen:

For the Adult Church Library:

The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi by Kathie Lee Gifford

Connect deeper with the Bible and your faith as Kathie Lee Gifford journeys with Messianic Rabbi Jason Sobel through Israel, studying the Bible in its Hebrew context.

The Rock (Jesus Christ): Hear directly from Kathie about her life-changing and ever deepening connection with Jesus, the Lover of her soul.

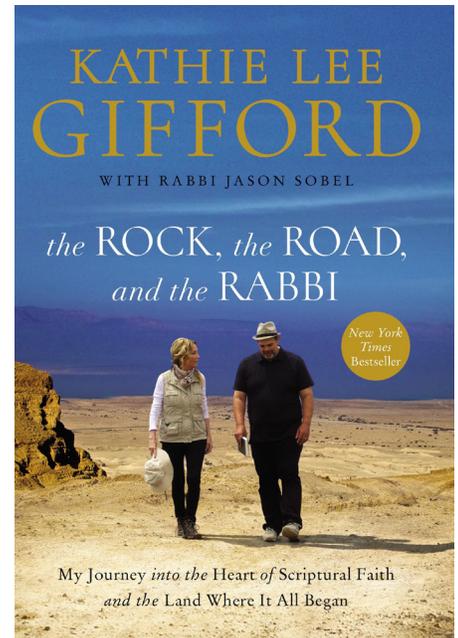
The Road (Israel): Explore dozens of ancient landmarks and historical sites from Israel, the promised land of God's covenant.

The Rabbi (God's Word): Go beyond a Sunday school approach to the Bible by digging into the original languages and deeper meanings of the Holy Scriptures.

For the Church Preschool Library:

The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires

Award-winning author and illustrator Ashley Spires has created a charming picture book about an unnamed girl and her very best friend, who happens to be a dog. For the early grades' exploration of character education, this funny book offers a perfect example of the rewards of perseverance and creativity. The clever use of verbs in groups of threes is both fun and functional, offering opportunities for wonderful vocabulary enrichment. Precise action words are likely to fire up the imaginations of youngsters and is a great tie-in to learning about science, technology, engineering, and math.



COMING UP @ FIRST PRES

- August 23 - Pastoral Transition Town Hall
- August 30 - Blessing of the Backpacks
- September 13 - Kick-Off Sunday (9:00 & 10:42)
- October 4 - World Communion Sunday

FIRST PRES CONTACT

Executive Pastor

Rev. Caroline Cupp
ccupp@firstpreswc.com

Program Staff

Director of Music: Sándor Kádár
skadar@firstpreswc.com

Children's Music/Accompanist: Kira Boros
kboros@firstpreswc.com

Director of Engagement: Elizabeth Hess
ehess@firstpreswc.com

Youth Ministry: Cole Seaman
cseaman@firstpreswc.com

Director of Christian Education: Sara Pantazes
spantazes@firstpreswc.com

Creative Arts Director: Eric Hankins
ehankins@firstpreswc.com

Nursery Coordinator: Maurisa Warren
mwarren@firstpreswc.com

Bucket School Director: Jen Drap
jdrap@firstpreswc.com

Church Office

Director of Operations: Jeff Somers
jsomers@firstpreswc.com

Office Manager: Karen Goldstein
kgoldstein@firstpreswc.com

Administrative Assistant: Claire Kramer
ckramer@firstpreswc.com

For a full calendar of events, visit www.firstpreswc.com or contact the church office.

In Memoriam

- Barbara B. Dickens, member from November 21, 1971 to June 24, 2020
- Rose N. Middleton, member from February 23, 1969 to June 27, 2020
- Isaleen M. Montgomery, member from February 28, 1994 to July 6, 2020

The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to:

- The family of Barbara Dickens
- Tanya Middleton and family in the death of her mother, Rose
- The family of Isaleen Montgomery
- Alfred Miller, Stephen Miller, and family in the death of Alfred's sister and Stephen's aunt
- Walter and Winifred Powell and family in the death of their son
- Jim and Gail Turner and family in the death of Jim's mother
- Art and Janet Zadrozny and family in the death of Janet's brother
- David LaLeike, Beth Farcht, and Greta LaLeike and family in the death of David's mother and Greta's grandmother

We give thanks for the birth of:

- Eleanor Lee Ohms, born July 31, 2020, daughter of Stephen and Elyse Ohms, granddaughter of Daniel and Nancy Ohms.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	July Actual	July Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Full Year Budget
Income	\$70,818	\$84,888	\$625,163	\$669,313	\$1,192,099
Expenses	\$114,811	\$133,593	\$638,664	\$724,454	\$1,192,099
Difference	\$43,993	\$48,705	\$13,501	\$55,141	\$0