

*Fall 2023*

# FIRST PRESS

Dear First Pres members and friends,

As it does each year, the fall season catches me off guard. The return to the rhythms of school bus schedules and soccer practice, of Bible studies and choir rehearsals, seems out of step with days that refuse to relinquish the sticky humidity of summer. School clothes are prepped and ready but wet bathing suits still make it to the top of the week's laundry pile. Fresh peaches are on the counter, and the repetitive jingle of the ice cream truck hasn't yet lost its magic. In this season, time folds in on itself and, for a few weeks, we live in two worlds at once.

Already. Not yet. Themes that we Christians know well and that seem particularly poignant at this time in our church's life as we wait for Andrew Esqueda to arrive in October. After so many years of wondering about our next Senior Pastor, Candidacy Weekend and its aftermath have felt, at least to me, a bit surreal. In any given hour I'm wandering between celebration, preparation, and trying not to get so caught up in what's next that I miss what's happening right in front of me.

Knowing that a wonderful new pastor is coming has also lent a sense of urgency to preserving the lessons of these past few years. This wilderness season emboldened our congregation. We took on projects that had seemed daunting prior to 2020, deepened our connections to the community, and overhauled outdated systems. Leaders shifted how we communicated with each other and the wider congregation, seeking out opportunities to be transparent and have face-to-face conversations about difficult topics.

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Letter from Rev. Esqueda  
Page 03

Sermon Series & Studies  
Page 04

Faith Formation  
Page 05

Kids Ministry  
Page 07

Youth and Young Adult  
Page 08

Congregational Life  
Page 10

Music Ministry Trip  
Page 11

Opportunities to  
Serve  
Page 12

Membership  
Page 14

Once a church stops being led by fear – fear of what might happen, fear of losing members, fear of our neighbors and of each other – we are left with space to actually explore Christ’s call to us. And while nothing about this time was easy, everything in it seemed to glow with the Holy Spirit’s presence.

So what do we do in the weeks before our next chapter starts? What are the tasks and gifts of this time? One, certainly, is to celebrate and give thanks. Thanks to the God who chose to be bold in his presence with us over the past three years, who consistently put people in our midst to guide and strengthen us. I think about Tara Woodard-Lehman, worship visitor Howard Evans, Bill Wilson, Joe Fabiani, and the many, many, many of you who stepped up to serve in new ways. We also can thank the Pastor Nominating Committee for their steadfast and hopeful service to our church.

In his sermon on August 20, Bill Wilson offered a few more suggestions for how to make use of this in-between time:

1) **Show Up.** In Bill’s experience, church attendance often dips between Candidacy Sunday and the new pastor’s arrival. Spending this in-between time together in worship helps connect us to each other and to God, and helps our church be healthy and strong when Andrew arrives.

2) **Pay Up.** Often people ask what they can do to help a new pastor as they get settled. While this hasn’t been so much the case at First Pres, many times people stop pledging during transition periods. One of the biggest gifts that we can give Andrew and the church leaders who will be supporting his transition is a balanced budget. No one wants to start a new call asking people to resume giving.

3) **Look Up.** We have so very much to be thankful for. And it’s easy to spend a lot of energy thinking about the countless things that aren’t just as we would like them to be. In these next weeks, do not lose sight of what is truly important in our congregation and community. Even welcome change can cause people to get a little anxious and edgy, but this is a time to be gracious and loving with one another.

4) **Give Up.** We have all harbored hopes and expectations around who the next pastor will be for us and to us. If given the opportunity, each of us would have a list of priorities for him. Giving up our individual expectations and priorities will allow us to approach each other and Andrew with curiosity and open hearts.

It has been a great honor to serve alongside you in this capacity over the past three years. You have taught, energized, and inspired me. This is a season I will treasure and look back on with gratitude for the rest of my life. I join with you in excitement for all that lies ahead.

In Christ,

*Rev. Caroline Cupp, Executive Pastor*

# A LETTER FROM REV. ANDREW ESQUEDA

My Dear First Pres Family,

It was so wonderful to be with you on Candidacy Sunday! I am humbled and honored to be your senior pastor and I can't wait to begin our ministry together in October. You went above and beyond in your welcome to me, Megan, and Maddox, and I cannot wait for you to meet Isaiah and Desmond (and Cali our English Bulldog).



As we prepare to leave Atlanta and join you in West Chester, there are two things that continue to pop into my mind. The first, is the importance of the “cloud of witnesses” that I preached about from Hebrews 12:1. It's amazing the ways in which a cloud of witnesses can transform the ways in which you celebrate joys and experience challenging situations and pain. The second is the idea of “beginnings” or new starts. There is a beginning to everything, but over time there are new beginnings, and the new beginnings don't erase the old ones, they actually affirm them. The truth is, there would be no new beginnings without previous ones.

On October 15 we will begin a sermon series called Beginnings: A Journey Through the Book of Genesis. As we lead up to this series I want to challenge you to join me in thinking about the ideas of the cloud of witnesses and new beginnings. Think about the people that make up your cloud of witnesses and who it is that you might be, or need to be, a cloud of witnesses for. Think about beginnings and new beginnings. Reflect on the history of First Pres, your own history of faith and with the church, and the ways in which God may be using beginnings of the past to spark new beginnings in your own faith and in the life of the church.

Throughout this series, we will look at the ways in which God began the world, the themes of creation, fall, and redemption, the importance of the connectedness of people and creation in God's creating work, and, in light of First Pres's long and important history, what new beginnings God is calling us to.

I am so excited for the journey ahead of us and I cannot wait to arrive and be with you. Until then, please pray for us during this transition, and we will hold you in our prayers as well.

I am filled with gratitude for this call, for the amazing staff of First Pres, for all of you, and for all of the new beginnings God has in store for us.

With the Hope of Christ,

*Rev. Andrew Esqueda, Senior Pastor*





# SERMON SERIES & STUDIES

Sermon Series

## *Beginnings*

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF  
GENESIS

October 15, 22, 29

November 5, 12



## MEN'S MINISTRY GROUPS

**Our three weekly Men's Ministry small groups will continue meeting this fall for fellowship, study and prayer. New participants are always welcome!**

### **Tuesday Group**

Tuesdays 6:00-8:00 p.m. - Zoom

Discussion on weekly sermons and Jesus' parables

*Contact:* Gordon Leidy (gkhleidy@aol.com) or Rick Mars (rickmars531@verizon.net)

### **Wednesday Group**

Wednesdays 6:30-7:45 a.m. - Fellowship Hall

*Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues* by N. T. Wright

*Contact:* Jim Serum (jwserum@gmail.com)

### **Thursday Group**

Thursdays 7:00-9:00 pm - Zoom

*Following God Fully: An Introduction to the Puritans* by Joel R. Beeke and Michael Reeves

*Contact:* Phil Heaver (fivormor59@aol.com)



# FAITH FORMATION

## Presbyterian Women

Are you looking for a way to nurture your faith, support the mission of the church, and build an inclusive community of women? If so, please consider participating in one of the five First Pres women's circles that meet monthly in homes, at the church and/or over Zoom. Each circle has elements of fellowship and service/mission outreach, and most engage in a Bible/book study. The circles are part of Presbyterian Women (PW), a women's organization in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The PW connection enables circles to coordinate some Bible study and broader mission outreach efforts, while recognizing and valuing the individuality of each circle. Salvation Army dinners, Friends Association families, Domestic Violence Center household items, Aventura at Pembroke decorations and First Pres Clothing Warehouse coordination are just a few examples of how members of PW Circles share God's love and impact the lives of people in our community. Details on the circles, their meeting times and upcoming studies can be found at [firstpreswc.com/adult-groups](http://firstpreswc.com/adult-groups). All are welcome!



## Young Justice Builder's Club

The Young Justice Builder's Club returns this fall with a new mission for the year – to learn about creation care! Each lesson this year will focus on a different part of God's great creation. We'll explore how that part of creation is part of our lives, why it is important to us and God, how it is being harmed and both practical and spiritual responses. This program is offered to elementary aged kids and their grown-ups on Sunday afternoons from 11:45 – 12:45 pm. Our meeting dates this fall will be October 1 and November 12. Contact Sara Pantazes with any questions.



## Young Justice Builder's Club – for Adults!

Have you ever wondered what exactly Sara and the kids and their families are up to during the Young Justice Builder's Club sessions? This fall Sara is inviting you to experience the lessons for yourself. She will offer the same lesson used with the kids to the church's adults and then allow time for participants to reflect on the learning experience, adding their adult thoughts and experiences to the conversation. The first adult session will be offered on Sunday, October 1 from 7-8pm over Zoom. Contact Sara Pantazes with any questions.

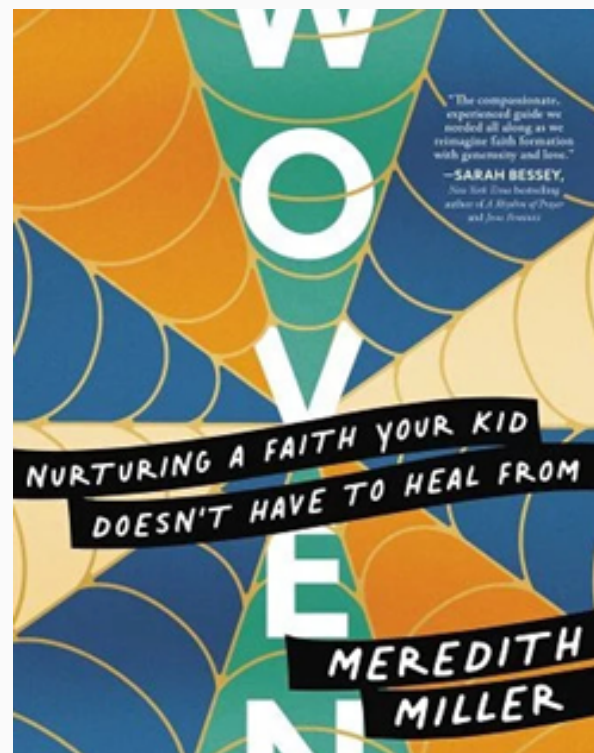
# FAITH FORMATION, CONT.

## Parenting Book Discussion

This fall, First Pres is offering a book discussion event for First Pres parents of children and teens to help us consider how we are raising our children with faith. The discussion will be based on the newly released *Woven: Nurturing a Faith Your Kid Doesn't Have to Heal From* by Meredith Miller. The book's description partly reads:

*"What if it's our job as parents to instead help our kids get to know God and discover that God can be trusted? And what if faith is not constructed brick by brick, but rather woven strand by strand?... With Woven, families can nurture the kind of faith that can flex and grow, be broken and repaired. This is the sort of faith that can stand up to the life a child will live, the doubts they will encounter, and the questions that will come up along the way."*

The discussion will be held on Friday, November 3 from 7 – 9 pm at church and childcare will be available if requested. Parents are not required to read the book ahead of time, but it would be beneficial if some do. Contact Sara with any questions.



## Christian Faith & Issues

The Christian Faith & Issues class resumes this fall with a focus on education. The planned four-week conversation is a follow-up to last spring's study of poverty, which indicated that a lack of educational opportunities is a direct cause of lack of income.

This fall discussion will focus on major decisions that were made regarding education in Pennsylvania this year. Several Pennsylvania school districts, with parents and advocacy groups, recently sued the PA General Assembly, claiming unfair and unequal practices in funding the PA public school system. The court determined that the funding mechanisms for PA's public schools are "inadequate to the point of being unconstitutional" and must be remedied immediately. We will consider this decision and its implications using *Schooled*, a podcast that gives the insider's story of America's public schools, through the eyes of the students, parents, and educators.

This class meets for 45 minutes on the second and fourth Sundays in September and October, at 10:30 am in the Conference Room. To receive emails about this and other topics, contact Dan Campbell at [campbelldt@verizon.net](mailto:campbelldt@verizon.net).





# KIDS MINISTRY THIS FALL

## SUNDAY MORNING NURSERY

A SPECIAL PLACE FOR OUR  
YOUNGEST FRIENDS (3 YEARS  
AND YOUNGER) DURING BOTH  
SERVICES

## SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAMS

SUNDAY SCHOOL  
(9 AM SERVICE) AND  
KIDS CONNECT (10:45 SERVICE)  
FOR PRE-K - 5TH GRADERS

## YOUNG JUSTICE BUILDERS CLUB

EXPLORING CREATION CARE ON  
10/1 AND 11/12 - FOR  
ELEMENTARY AGED KIDS

## CHILDREN'S CHOIR

REHEARSALS FROM 5:15 - 6:15 ON  
WEDNESDAY NIGHTS, OPEN TO  
PRE-K - 5TH GRADERS

[Sign Your Children Up Here](#)

# Fall Kick Off September 10

Pastor Emeritus Bill Hess - 9 & 10:45 Services  
Welcome Back Chancel Choir & Sunday School  
Middle School Bible Study - 9am  
Youth Glow Night - 4-6pm



# **FIRST PRES YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**

Hello First Pres Families & Friends,  
I hope that you all are having a wonderful start to the Fall! Our young people at First Pres had a wonderful summer with two weeklong trips, monthly fun events/ ice cream nights, and our inaugural meetings for our new Young Adult Ministry! Your prayers and support are greatly appreciated as we kick off a wonderful Fall program for our youth and young adults. Thank you to all who participate and to those who show love and care for our ministry! If you know someone in 6th-12th grade or who is a young adult, send them our way! All are welcome here.

Blessings,  
Emily Tang

Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries  
[etang@firstpreswc.com](mailto:etang@firstpreswc.com)



## **FIRST PRES YOUNG ADULTS**

### **Young Adult Bible Study**

2nd & 4th Sundays of the Month from 7-8:30pm

### **Young Adult Friendsgiving**

Sunday, November 12th 7-9pm



# FIRST PRES YOUTH 20 FALL SCHEDULE 23

## WEEKLY PROGRAMS

- **Middle School Bible Study**  
Every Sunday 9-10am
- **High School Bible Study**  
Every Wednesday 7-8:30pm
- **Youth Group (6th-12th Grade)**  
Every Sunday 4-5:30pm



## SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Glow Night Fall Kickoff**  
Sunday, September 10th 4-6pm
- **Youth Parent/Guardian Zoom**  
Monday, September 25th 7-8pm
- **Halloween Trivia Party**  
Sunday, October 29th 4-6pm
- **Fall Service Project**  
Saturday, November 4th 9am-12pm

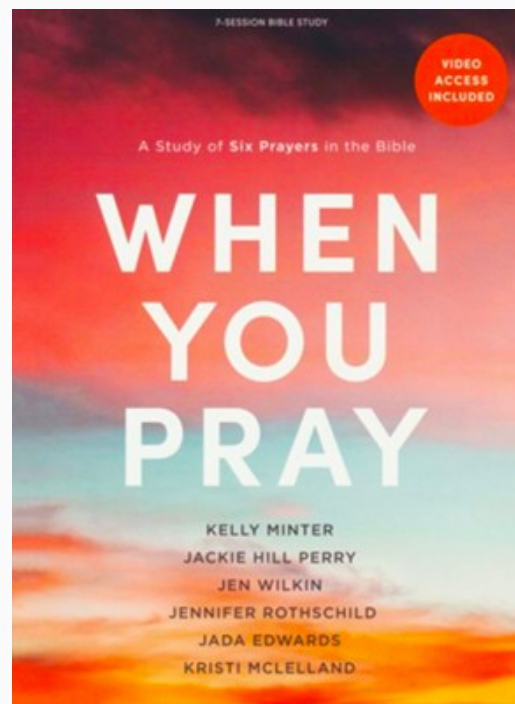


## RETREATS

**Middle School Breakaway Retreat:** 9/29-10/1  
**High School Fall Retreat:** 11/17-11/19

## Women's Fall Bible Study

All women are invited to join us for a Wednesday morning Bible study. We'll meet from 9:30-11am from Sept. 27 – November 8 in the Chapel. This 7-session study, called "When You Pray," will showcase six beloved Bible teachers who will help us study prayers in the Bible that can inspire our own. You'll learn that God welcomes your praise and lament, your thanksgiving and intercession. You'll see examples of how to pray when you're alone and when you're gathered with others. Above all, you'll notice there's no one right way to pray. As you draw near to God through prayer, you'll find your faith strengthened and your heart united to Christ. Use the sign up tab on the church website, or reach out to Elizabeth Hess ([ehess@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehess@firstpreswc.com)). You don't need to be a Bible study pro to attend this group – we learn together and connect with each other through laughter and conversation, too! All women are welcome.



## Women's Fellowship Event

All women are invited on Wednesday, September 20 from 6-7:30pm to a dinner and small service project. We'll meet in Fellowship Hall for a potluck dinner, and then put together small care bags for women who utilize a local organization called Wings for Success. We'll be collecting items for the care bags, specifically: deodorant, women's hygiene items, toothbrushes, travel-sized toothpaste, and travel-sized pain reliever (Advil, Tylenol, Aleve, etc.); there will be a table set up in Fellowship Hall to collect items. Sign up to attend using the sign up tab on the church website, or reach out to Elizabeth Hess ([ehess@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehess@firstpreswc.com)). Bring a friend – all are welcome!

## Wreath Workshop Ministry Team



Follow the advice from Peanuts Lucy: "You need involvement!" Get into the Christmas spirit by joining the Wreath Workshop Ministry Team! Do you enjoy crafting and/or decorating? This team will meet a once or twice this fall to plan and host our annual Wreath Workshop event at the church. We'll plan the decorating, activity details, and advertising. New ideas and fresh perspectives are welcome! The date for the event is Sunday, November 26. Please reach out to Trisha Minicozzi (484-515-5562) or Elizabeth Hess ([ehess@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehess@firstpreswc.com)) if you are interested in joining our team!



# MUSIC MINISTRY TRIP

In June, 45 First Pres members and West Chester University students traveled to Europe, where we visited Dresden, Leipzig, Vienna, Prague, and Budapest. It was an unforgettable trip filled with incredible history, food, and music. We traveled to an ancient monastery, toured the crypt of a medieval cathedral, ate all the strudels, and sang in stunning churches. For Sandor and Caroline, the best part of the trip was getting to spend time with people outside of Sunday mornings and choir rehearsals. There's nothing like exploring a new place (or a five-hour bus ride) to bond people together.



Other favorite memories included:

*"It is both the dress rehearsal and concert in Vienna. So many people watched us rehearse and then stayed for the concert. It was an incredible experience to sing in that beautiful, historic church and to witness the joy on the faces of many in the audience/congregation." – Tracy Burke*

*"Seeing one of Pascals original calculators at the Museum of Physics and Mathematics in Dresden." – Art Zadrozny*

*"Performing in two amazing churches and making music with friends. The reverb of Peterskirche in Vienna blew my mind as it seemed sound echoed forever. I was very fortunate to also play two wonderful organs that were both over 150 years old! Nolan, Peyton and I also had a great time practicing in Calvin Square Reform Church. It was a wonderful experience sharing Music Ministry with ourselves and with the world." – Reid Simmons*

*"Riding an electric scooter through Budapest along the river." – Julie Claeys*

## Upcoming Music Ministry Events

Concert of the Chester County Choral Society  
Chamber Ensemble on October 15 at 3 pm

Annual Candlelight Christmas Concert on  
December 3 at 4 pm

ChesCo Pops Orchestra on December 8 at 4 pm

# Stephen Ministry Training Class

Do you feel called to make a difference in another person's life ~ those in our congregation or in our community? Stephen Ministers are trained to do just that ~ by being matched with someone going through a hard time, showing up consistently, listening without judgement and serving as a steady reminder of God's presence. Through regular visits, Stephen Ministers are an anchor for those whose lives feel unsettled, offering them space and support to focus on their needs. Stephen Ministers go through a training class that builds up caregiving skills and prepares them to provide confidential, one-to-one, emotional and spiritual support to others who are struggling.

The current SM team is hoping to extend its reach by training a few more Stephen Ministers ~ both men and women. If you or someone you know would serve well in this capacity, you can learn more by talking to one of the First Pres SM team members: Anna Bentley, Karen Franks, Cheryl Hoyt, Becky Gamble, Mary Pellack, Jen Singley and Esther Smith.

If you are interested in applying to be part of the training class scheduled for January through early June 2024, please contact Becky Gamble, [sandbgamble@comcast.net](mailto:sandbgamble@comcast.net) or Rev. Caroline Cupp, [ccupp@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ccupp@firstpreswc.com). We welcome the opportunity to talk with you!

For videos that will deepen your understanding of this ministry, and possibly open your heart to serving or being served through Stephen Ministry, go to the website <https://www.stephenministries.org/stephenministry/default.cfm/1596>

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the right side, there are several stylized hands of different skin tones (orange, yellow, and light brown) reaching upwards. The text is in white and light blue. At the bottom, there is a white cloud-like shape containing more text and a list of opportunities.

**Wednesday  
Lunch Program  
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

**Looking to make connections in the community this Fall?  
Join the Wednesday Lunch program!**

**Opportunities include:**

- Cooking and baking
- Greeters
- Food servers
- Inventory management
- Lunch participants

*Contact Pastor Caroline for more information  
[ccupp@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ccupp@firstpreswc.com)*



# Blanket Bowl Sunday

## November 5, 2023

Let us help you cater the big rivalry game on November 5th, Eagles vs Dallas game!

Presbyterian Women chefs are preparing gourmet soups and baked goods to make your football game plan a success. The chefs have chosen three delicious soups - Spinach Tortellini, Chicken Mulligatawny and Chili - for you to take home for the big game.

Help us support the Blanket the World with Love program of Church World Service's mission, with all proceeds going to raise money to purchase blankets for victims of natural disaster in the USA and around the world. Every \$10 raised by us goes to purchase a blanket which can serve to make a bed, a tote, or a partition in a refugee camp.

Fly Eagles Fly!

Let's soar to victory with a big win for Church World Service!

If you have any questions, contact Linda Haake at 610 952-7057.



The Frances Kettenring Clothing Closet is in need of fall and winter clothing for school-aged boys and girls. If you have shirts, pants and jackets, please consider donating to our mission outreach. You will find a donation bin in Fellowship Hall.

Thank you

*The Clothing Closet Committee*





# Membership

## **In Memoriam:**

Carole Barraclough Klein, member from 1978-2023

Howard Evans, active from 2022-2023

Gary Frizzell, member from 2012-2023

### **The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to:**

Scott Barraclough and Holly Barraclough Mitchell, Jennifer Tuori and Paul Klein and their families in the death of Scott and Holly's mother and Jennifer and Paul's stepmother, Carol Barraclough Klein.

Whitney Frizzell, Craig and Kristen Brown, and Paul and Raegan Maychak and families in the death of Whitney, Kristen and Raegan's father, Gary.

Bob and Eileen Smith and family in the death of Bob's mother.

Ken Blanchard and Margaret Caldwell and Courtney and Ryan Gengler in the death of Courtney and Ryan's son and Ken and Margaret's grandson.

The family and friends of Howard Evans.

Barb Snyder and family in the death of her cousin.

Wendy McSwain and family in the death of her mother.

## **Baptisms**

July 16 - James Richard, son of J. Troy and Kathryn Stepan

## **Births**

Cooper William, born June 9, son of Philip and Meredith Heaver, grandson of Phil and Gwyn Heaver.

Joseph Andrew, born July 3, son of Tara and Joseph Cooper, great-grandson of Nancy Ninos.

Mae Elizabeth, born July 30, daughter of Raegan and Alex Oraschewsky and granddaughter of Claire and Scott Kramer.

Amelia Claire and Caroline June, born August 12, daughters of Brian and Andrea Robinson, granddaughters of Carl and Mary Ann Robinson.