

Discover Joy

Christmas at First Pres

Dear Church Members and Friends,

What a wonderful six weeks it has been since arriving at First Pres! It has been busy around our church, from wonderful fellowship events like our community Trick-or-Treat, to welcoming our church partners from Guatemala, to rich and full worship services. It's wonderful to hear so many voices from all generations resounding around the halls of First Pres: little feet pattering across the floor of Fellowship Hall, small squeals and giggles from our young ones in the sanctuary, and the sound of voices conversing before and after our worship services, those steady voices that have undergirded our community of faith for years and also new voices of those whom we are thrilled to welcome. These are just some of the sounds of a church come to life – come to life because it is evident that the Spirit of God is at work here and in the lives of those who call First Pres their home.

We, as a staff, sat down a number of weeks ago to discuss all that is going on in the life of our church and to think through what an appropriate Advent theme might be this year. There was one word that continued to pop up: Joy. It's a word that I like a lot, and it's a word that I believe embodies what we all are currently experiencing and feeling: a deep sense of unity, call, and commitment between us, our community of faith, and most importantly, God. But, even amidst what feels like a wonderful and energetic time in the life of our church, it hasn't always been this way and it won't always be this way. And, this is why "joy" is so important for us, as people of faith, to constantly seek to discover. When we discover joy it is impossible for us to not feel a deep sense of unity between us and God because joy is not contingent upon how we feel, but rather contingent upon our utter reliance upon God, regardless of what we are experiencing. Sometimes joy is confused with happiness, but happiness is fleeting, joy is enduring – and not enduring based on how we feel, but on the reality that God is always with us and always acting in our lives and our world. Sometimes joy is hard to

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discover because there is so much noise in our world and in our lives that we become distracted and forget that God is always acting. God was acting when two frightened people, Joseph and Mary, took a trek through the desert and Mary birthed the Savior of the world in the back of a home where the animals lay. God was acting when the emperor sought to kill this potential threat to his crown. God was acting when this same small child grew up and came to his own people who did not know him. God was acting, God is acting, God will always be acting.

This Advent we are seeking to - together - Discover Joy. To Discover Joy through our Advent devotional, through beautiful music, through fellowship, through our Giving Tree, and through Christmas Eve worship. Not only can we discover joy this Advent, but we can help others by inviting them to discover joy.

This Advent I want to challenge you to look for all of the places in your lives and even in the world where you might find a glimmer of joy shining, and I want to challenge you to invite others into this journey of discovery. Invite your neighbors, invite your friends, invite your family, and participate in inviting our entire community to discover joy. We live in a world in need of good tidings of great joy. Let us invite them to discover joy with us.



With Hope and Great Joy,

Pastor Andrew



I join Andrew in wishing you glad tidings of great joy as we enter this Advent season. It has been a fall full of delightful beginnings, and witnessing how you all have embraced Andrew and his family, and he you, has been a wonderful thing to behold.

We are also aware that sorrow does not leave us during Christmas, and that this can be a challenging time for all who are grieving loved ones, relationships, and navigating illnesses. We trust you'll not hesitate to reach out to Andrew and me so that we can be of support as, together, we wait for that light that shines in the darkness. With abiding hope and Great Joy,

Pastor Caroline

Discover Joy in Music

We are excited to welcome Christmas through the magic of music. Start off the season with our traditional Candlelight Christmas concert, featuring choirs, brass, and performers of all ages. Then come back to hear the splendid sounds of the Chesco Pops' Holiday Show. Make sure to come to our first annual Cookies and Caroling for a chance to sing aloud to some of your favorite music, and then come back on Christmas Eve for a sacred celebration in a variety of music styles.

Sandor Kadar
Director of Music

A poster for the Candlelight Christmas Concert. The background is a dark blue night sky with golden stars and snowflakes. The text is in white and gold. A QR code is in the bottom right corner.

COLUMN CLASSICS PRESENTS

Candlelight

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Sunday, December 3 | 4 pm

FEATURING
CHANCEL CHOIR
CELEBRATION SINGERS
MINER STREET BRASS
BRANDYWINE STRING QUARTET
SOLOISTS FROM WCU

RESERVE YOUR SEAT AT
firstpreswc.com/christmas-concert

Youth Hot Chocolate Fundraiser

First Pres youth would love your support toward their Christmas fundraiser! Purchase delicious and adorable jars of hot chocolate at the Christmas Concert on December 3! These hot chocolate jars are the PERFECT gift for teachers, coaches, coworkers, friends, family, and more! The proceeds from this fundraiser will support our youth ministry's service projects, summer trips, retreats, and more.

Can't make it to the Christmas concert? Fill out this preorder form and you will still be able to support this fundraiser!

[Order Form](#)

A poster for the Hot Chocolate for Sale fundraiser. The background is dark blue with white stars and snowflakes. The text is in white and gold. There are images of hot chocolate jars and a hand holding a jar.

**DELICIOUS
HOT CHOCOLATE
FOR SALE**

\$10 Per Jar
Sold at the Christmas Concert on 12/3!

**SUPPORT
FIRST PRES
YOUTH!**

Cookies & Carol Singing

A Festive Gathering for All Ages

Thursday, December 7 | 7pm

Bring a plate of your favorite cookies to share

[RSVP here](#)



Holiday Pops

WWW.CHESCOPOPS.ORG

Friday, December 8, 2023 | 7:30pm

First Presbyterian Church of West Chester

FREE ADMISSION - SUGGESTED DONATION \$20



Chesco Pops Orchestra

Joseph Gehring, music director

Axe Throwing Event

On November 17 the Craft Beer Club hosted their second axe throwing event. Church members and friends showed off their bullseye skills and a good time was had by all. A future event is planned for the Spring!



Discover Joy in Community

Deck the Halls

On Sunday, November 26, First Pres will be a hive of holiday happiness! We have a fun morning planned for all ages. There will be one worship service at 10am that day, and then immediately following, there are several options for you to come enjoy the Christmas spirit!

Decorate the Church for Christmas

Help us deck the halls by hanging greens and decorating First Pres for Christmas. We are especially in need of a few people who are able to climb ladders to hang some items. If you're able to help, please reach out to [Tracy Burke](#)

Family Advent Party

Families will have the opportunity to assemble a Sensory Advent Kit. The kit will contain one item for each Sunday of Advent that engages the senses, giving families something to touch, taste, hear or smell as they share a short devotion together. Once your family's kit has been assembled, stay for some fun Christmas games and snacks! This will take place in the Social Hall.

Christmas Wreath Making

This will be our third year of the popular wreath making workshop. Adults are able to decorate a freshly made wreath from a tree farm in Elverson. We'll have plenty of decorations for you to make a one-of-a-kind wreath that will last the season. This will take place in Fellowship Hall. Registration and payment is required for this event; sign ups are on the church website.

Please reach out to [Elizabeth Hess](#) with any questions.

Tel Hai Train Room Open House



Tel Hai's Train Club welcomes you to their holiday display

11am-2pm | Nov 25 and Dec 9, 16, 28

The train room is located at the Tel Hai Community in Stonecroft, 4000 Tree Line Dr, Honey Brook (Tel Hai West Entrance); Follow signs for parking at the 2000 building.



Christmas Poinsettias

A beloved First Pres tradition, poinsettias bring the sanctuary to life as we approach the sacred night of Christmas Eve. Each year worshippers are invited to donate a flower in honor or memory of a loved one. The names of these loved ones will be included in the Christmas Eve bulletin. The cost this year is \$20, and the deadline is December 12.

To give, please visit the giving tab of the website and choose "Poinsettias" from the drop-down menu. You can also fill out one of the pew cards or email the church office at office@firstpreswc.com.

Trick or Treat

Our 16th Annual Community Trick or Treat was a huge success! We were able to welcome over 300 people to the event, and the majority of our attendees were visitors. Attendees could scan a QR code to register for a raffle prize of a Wawa gift card, and Pastor Andrew was then able to send a note, thanking those who came. On their form they indicated how they heard of the event – most were from friends, Bucket School, walking by, and Facebook. Over 50 people volunteered the night of the event by greeting, handing out candy, helping with games, crafts and snacks, and playing the organ! In addition, there were dozens who donated candy and inflatables to the event – every single person involved made this event a success, and the Ministry Team is very appreciative.

Elizabeth Hess



20th Anniversary of our Partnership with Iglesia Getsemani, Guatemala



This fall, First Pres and Iglesia Getsemani observed the 20th anniversary of our covenant partnership. Amanda, Herbert, and Josué visited from Villa Nueva, Guatemala and led worship, spent time with the Youth Group, Presbyterian Women, Men's Ministry, and visited our mission partners. Former participants and pastors traveled back to West Chester for a celebratory banquet on Saturday night. We reaffirmed our covenant for another three years..



Youth Winter Retreat

This Fall our middle and high school students each had wonderful retreat getaway experiences. Most recently, our high school youth enjoyed a unique and revitalizing weekend at Black Rock Retreat center with two other churches in our area. Our youth were overjoyed to experience God's love and grace through worship sessions about gratitude. They also most notably enjoyed becoming very close with new friends, and having fun opportunities such as a zip-line, archery, glow in the dark dodgeball, friendship bracelets, and much more! Our youth described this retreat as the one of the most genuinely refreshing weekends they have ever had. This season our youth are so grateful for the opportunity to deepen their relationship to God while in fellowship with their church family.

Emily Tang
Director of Youth &
Young Adult Ministries



Discover Joy in Service

Christmas for Migrant Families

This Christmas we are all looking forward to being with our families and friends again, sharing the traditions along with wonderful food and special gifts. And along with these plans we think of how to share our abundance. Chester County Migrant Ministry provides an opportunity to share our Christmas spirit and gifts with families in need this season. The Migrant Ministry has been a steady resource for the immigrant community in Chester County for more than thirty years. They share the love of Jesus by helping with immigration procedures, English tutoring, citizenship classes, blankets, coats, health kits, donated furniture and appliances, distribution of food baskets and other services. First Pres has long been a partner in serving the spiritual and physical needs of the poorest members of our community through our Christmas gifts program.

First Pres is looking for sponsors to provide Christmas gifts for the migrant families most 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 more convenient for our family sponsors and has the added advantage of giving the parents the joy of shopping for their children.

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 too. 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.

With your amazing generosity we plan to share our gifts and our faith with as many families as possible. Contact Anna Bentley (annagbentley@gmail.com, 484-432-0742) or Nancy Haughton (nancy.k.haughton@gmail.com, 484-883-0297) for more information.



Giving Tree



Congratulations to the congregation for supporting the Pocopson Home!
100% of the tags were taken the first day.

Now the trees hold the wish lists of the seven other organizations we support at Christmas:
Naphtali, North Star, MCHC, West Chester Food Cupboard, Domestic Violence,
and Migrant Ministry.

Two trees hold gift card/financial donations only.
The tree on the left has specific gift requests.

Here is all you have to do:
Choose an ornament and give from the heart.
PLEASE sign the tracker before you depart.
Thank you for spreading Christmas Cheer
To the ministry partners we work with here!

Gifts (please wrap/bag), gift cards, and financial donations are due December 10.

Stewardship

Thank you so much to all who have pledged to financially support First Pres in our 2024 “A New Day” stewardship campaign. When we began this 2024 stewardship journey I challenged you to consider three things:

1. What “A New Day” means not simply for our church and for your important leadership, but for you as a beloved child of God?
2. Where are the places within the life of our church where God may have been doing something and it was simply hard to perceive, and where are you prayerfully hoping for God to do something new at First Pres?
3. And lastly, prayerfully consider what new thing God is inviting you into with both your time and your finances.

First Pres members, in so many ways, and not only financially, have taken to heart these challenges, and are living into them. Your commitment to our church has been tremendous and it shows in the generosity of your time, skills, and giving. As of now we have received a total of \$673,676 in pledges for 2024 with an overall increase in giving of roughly 20%, and a significant amount of first time pledges. We still have a ways to go, but we are incredibly hopeful. Thank you again to all those who have already pledged, and if you have not pledged yet for 2024, please prayerfully consider doing so. Please contact the church (610-696-0554) if you are in need of guidance or have questions about fulfilling your 2023 pledge or pledging for 2024.

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”
Isaiah 43:19

Discover Joy in Learning

Advent Devotional

This Advent, you are invited to draw near to the holy while acknowledging all that is hard and all that is good about this season. Written by Kate Bowler and The Everything Happens Project, *Bless the Advent We Actually Have: A Daily Devotion for the Christmas Season* is a deeply faithful and deeply realistic approach to finding God in the midst of the hustle and bustle of this time of year. Each day's devotion includes a short reflection, Scripture, and reflection questions. Throughout the devotion there are also suggestions for going deeper through podcast episodes, hands-on activities, videos, and an Advent playlist. Use as little or as much of the suggested content as you would like.



There are three ways for you to access this devotion:

- Download a PDF of the entire devotion at the author's website.
- Printed copies of the devotion will be available at the Welcome Center starting the First Sunday of Advent, December 3. If you cannot make it to church but would like a printed copy, call the church office and we will mail one to you.
- We will send an email each Sunday morning of Advent with links to the daily devotions for the coming week.

May God's presence dwell deeply within us and bless the Advent we each actually have.

Sara Pantazes

Director of Faith Formation

Children's Christmas Pageant

"What's a pageant," your child might ask? Tell them to get ready to find out! We are excited to bring back a beloved tradition of inviting children to participate in a pageant, or short play, that tells the Christmas story. This year's Christmas pageant will be presented during the 10 am worship service on Christmas Eve. Some parts will be pre-assigned, but there will also be roles for children who show up that morning and want to participate to join in the fun. We will be using Sunday School times during the month of December to prepare the pageant, a fun and engaging way to play with this familiar Bible story.

We need a couple of adult hands to help behind the scenes during the pageant on Christmas Eve morning. Talk to Sara Pantazes (spantazes@firstpreswc.com) if you are willing to help.

Children's Choir Spring Musical

Our dynamic children's choir will begin work on their spring musical in January. If your child has taken a break from choir, or never participated but is interested, this is a great point to jump in! Rehearsals take place every Wednesday from 5:15 – 6:15 pm. Talk to Amanda Erno (aerno@firstpreswc.com), Children's Choir Director, or Sara Pantazes (spantazes@firstpreswc.com) for more information.



HAPPY ADVENT, FIRST PRES!

Our youth at First Pres have had a wonderful year so far with weekly youth group and Bible study, two fun Fall Retreats, and many wonderful fellowship events like our Halloween Party! We are so grateful for the support from all our church members and friends as we continue to help our young people grow in their faith in Jesus. Please continue to pray for us as we look forward to many fun faith formation and fellowship events this winter. Thank you for your constant love and support for our middle and high school students!



Blessings,
Emily Tang
Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries



YOUNG ADULT CHRISTMAS PARTY

Friday, December 15th 7-9pm

All college students and young adults are welcome to join us for a fun and festive evening at our Christmas Party! Contact Emily Tang at etang@firstpreswc.com with any questions. See you then!



WINTER SCHEDULE 2023-2024 FIRST PRES YOUTH MINISTRIES

WEEKLY PROGRAMS

Middle School Bible Study

Every Sunday 9-10am

High School Bible Study

Every Wednesday 7-8:30pm
@ Panera

Youth Group

Every Sunday 4-5:30pm

**Winter Refresh Retreat:
2/9-2/11**



SPECIAL EVENTS

all events are for 6th-12th grade

Hot Cocoa Fundraiser

Thursday, 11/29 6-8:30pm
Sunday 12/3 4-6pm

Youth Christmas Party

Sunday, 12/17 4-6pm

Winter Break Movie Night

Wed. 12/27 6-8:30pm

Youth Paint Party

Sunday, 1/14 4-6pm



Membership

In Memoriam

Isabell Trerotola, member from 1979-2023

Virginia Clinton, member from 1967-2023

The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to:

Larry Trerotola and family in the death of his wife, Isabell

Dan Campbell and his daughters Olivia, Emily, and Julia
in the death of Dan's mother

Gail Coxe in the death of her aunt

Carmelo and Julia Ortiz and family
in the death of Carmelo's father

Rick and Tracy Burke
in the death of Rick's mother

Baptisms

September 17 - Adelyn Bea, daughter of
Corey and Erinn McMillan

Births

Woods Richard, September 29, son of Tres and Rachel Abbott,
grandson of Franny and Franny Abbott

Owen Edward and Ellis Anne Mussenden-Seiwell, September 27,
son and daughter of Julie Seiwell and Sean Mussenden,
grandchildren of Dick and Linda Seiwell

Isabella Rose, November 8, daughter of Christie and Steve Sessa,
granddaughter of Joe and Lorrie Fabrizio

New Members

Dwight and Laurie Davis

Karin Khan

Kevin and Julie Quain

Kristy Stevens



Discover Joy in Worship

Join us for candlelight

Christmas Eve Services

10am Family Service
Christmas Pageant

5pm Contemporary
Worship Band

7pm Traditional
Choir and Brass

10pm Vespers
Communion

The Nursery will be open for the 10am, 5pm, and 7pm services