

Summer 2023

# FIRST PRESS



## Remember, Imagine

BY REV. CAROLINE CUPP

During our Legacy Sunday weekend, Pastor Tara preached on the dual invitation to remember the past and imagine the future. As followers of Christ, we gather each Sunday around font and table to remember Christ's call upon our lives. In the Scriptures read and proclaimed, this remembrance is transformed into holy imagination, as we begin to grasp what our lives and the world might become if we allowed ourselves to be entirely shaped by the Holy Spirit.

This May marks three years since Greg Stovell announced his departure. When we line those three years up against the billions of years that God has been spinning life into being on our planet, the five thousand years that have elapsed since Scripture was first composed, the two thousand years that the church has been at work in the world, and the nearly two hundred that First Pres has sat on the corner of Miner and Darlington, a mere three seem like nothing at all. And yet, for all of us who have been part of this church over the past thirty-six months, we know that this time has been profoundly meaningful, and, I have long suspected, a deeply holy season in the life of our congregation.

You might remember that during the beginning of this transition the congregation took a survey. The results revealed a congregation that was weary, dispirited, and longing for strong pastoral leadership; not surprising for an era when the pandemic was at its height, and divisions were raging in every sphere of life. While it would have been understandable to sink under the headwinds we faced, instead you all welcomed the Holy Spirit into our midst and set sail. The results were a church as strong and energized as I have ever seen.

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At every corner there were folks who were using their talents and energies in service to the congregation and wider community. On any given day, the church building is a hive of activity as dozens of you, and many others, fill it with your music, hammers, baked goods, study, fellowship, and laughter. You have gathered in groups small and large, welcomed new faces, changed families' lives through the 122 W. Miner St properties, and established connections with dozens of our neighbors on Wednesdays. As one person remarked during a recent coffee hour, "Our church is full of joy."

As we embark upon this next, wonderfully exciting season in the life of the church, and our imaginations burst with all that is to come, I hope that you hold tight to the learnings of these years. In our wanderings, we came to recognize that the church is far more than the pulpit of a powerful leader or the sum of our human energies. Rather, it is the garden in which God's blessings, in their own time, emerge, beckoning us all to take part, to come, eat, and be filled. And when we are filled, that wholeness spills out and becomes a source of light and life to all around us. Thank you for being a congregation that reminds me of this truth each and every day. I cannot wait for our new minister to meet you and share my delight at getting to serve alongside you.

## WELCOMING NEW STAFF



This spring we welcomed longtime church member and Clerk of Session **Peter Galloway** to the role of Office Administrator. He is sharing the position with Claire Kramer, and can be contacted at [pgalloway@firstpreswc.com](mailto:pgalloway@firstpreswc.com).

On June 5 **Emily Tang** will join our staff as Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries. She will be facilitating faith formation for those in grades 6-12, college students, and emerging adults. Emily and her husband Joe are looking forward to getting involved in the life of the congregation. She can be reached at [etang@firstpreswc.com](mailto:etang@firstpreswc.com).

# JOYFUL NEWS FROM THE PASTORAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE

During the search process, our Pastor Nominating Committee met many impressive candidates. With each interview and candidate, we grew more confident in our discernment. We applied the qualities that you discussed during our congregational meetings as being the most valued and made them a central part of the interview process. We are thrilled to announce that this search has led us unanimously to an incredible candidate whom we believe is remarkably suited to lead our congregation. After prayerful consideration, our committee and our candidate have both come to this decision, and this call was affirmed by our presbytery. We feel blessed that our journey has led us to a strong, qualified, deeply faithful, and loving candidate who will bring much to our congregation.

The next step of the hiring process is Candidacy Sunday, which is planned for August 6th. During that weekend you will have opportunities to meet the candidate prior to his preaching on Sunday, and we will share more information about that in the weeks ahead.

Our candidate has not yet shared his call to our church with his congregation, therefore, to respect him and his family, we will not reveal any details of our new pastor until the week prior to Candidacy Sunday. At that time, you will all receive more details about him in a written brochure via mail. We are confident you will be just as excited about him as we are, and cannot wait to introduce you.

We ask that you pray for this pastor and his family. With exciting changes also comes a time of reflection. We lift his family in prayer as they prepare to come to our church and as we prepare to welcome them with love and open arms.

We are energized for the exciting time in the life of our church that will come with new leadership. We thank you for your patience as we have taken our time to truly find the best leader who will guide our congregation into this next chapter of our rich history. Between our updates has been deep, prayerful consideration, and many hours spent as a committee working to find our next Head Pastor. We are thrilled about our candidate and know that he will bring his energy, experience and deep love of Christ to our congregation.

*P. J. Dakes*      *Chris Menan*  
*Molly Dolan*    *Carmelo Ortiz*  
*Ellen Endslow*   *Deb Shryock*  
*Beth Farcht*      *George Zumbano*  
*Brooke Gamble*

# CHILDRENS MUSICAL

The Children's Choir did a wonderful job sharing the musical "The Lost Boy" at the 9 am service on April 23. They rehearsed for three months under the leadership of Children's Choir Director Marci Major, and had a lot of fun during the learning process. Special thanks to Julie Claeys and PJ Dakes for all of their help with the production, Janet Thompson and Kristy Stevens for costume design, along with stage builders Charlie Myhre and Myron Grubaugh.



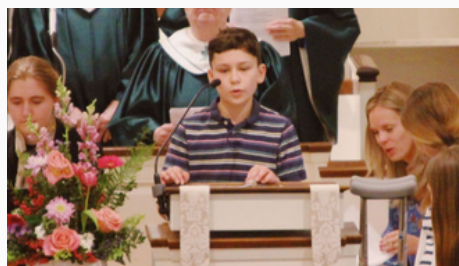
# YOUTH SUNDAY

On Sunday, May 7, middle and high school students led the congregation in worship. From leading us in prayers to proclaiming God's Word to serving communion, it was a beautiful morning of glorifying God together. Thank you Youth!



**I wanted to be the proof that when you show up we come back.** And for me I'm forever grateful that you showed up because without this church I would have missed out on some of my favorite people and missed out on getting to know Christ. So, next time a baby is baptized up here, make that promise to them, because they are already more blessed than they could ever imagine.

*—Ella Hambleton*



# LEGACY SUNDAY

We gathered on May 21 for an old-fashioned church picnic. A slideshow showing First Pres historical pictures played throughout the picnic, reminding us of the First Pres ties that have been strong throughout the years. Favorite dishes were shared, and conversations and laughter made for a fun afternoon!



In addition, we also highlighted Legacy Giving in worship services that morning. We celebrated the legacy of First Pres over the years and discussed the impact and importance of giving as part of our personal legacies. Sometimes people assume that they need to be wealthy to make a bequest or legacy gift. While large gifts certainly help, they are the exception, rather than the rule. The Widow's Offering in Luke 21 reminds us that it's not the size of the gift, but the measure of faith it represents. Even smaller amounts will be invested so they will grow over the years to come. Additional information about Legacy Giving at First Pres can be found at [www.firstpreswc.com/legacy-giving](http://www.firstpreswc.com/legacy-giving), or by reaching out to Jim Serum at [jwserum@gmail.com](mailto:jwserum@gmail.com) or 610-793-1920.

# VBS IS BACK!

This summer's VBS program, Hero Hotline, will lead kids on an adventure through the Bible as we learn about how to love our neighbor through God's grace and love. VBS will be offered as the Summer Sunday School program on Sunday mornings from 9 – 10 am, June 18 – July 30. The program is designed for children ages 4 years old through rising 6th graders. There is no pressure for children to attend every single Sunday (although we hope some will!). They are welcome to attend as their summer schedules allow.

VBS can't happen without many helping hands. We need people to help lead and play with the kids, as well as people to prepare and serve snacks. If you are willing to spend a Sunday morning or two having some VBS fun with Ms. Sara and the First Pres kids, please sign-up to help by going to the Sign Up tab of the church's website.



## SUMMER BOOK STUDY

This summer, the Justice Ministry Team is offering a congregation-wide book study of *How To Be a Patriotic Christian* by Richard J. Mouw. The publisher summarizes the book this way:

*Some Christians see loyalty to America as central to our faith and identity. Other Christians are skeptical that our nation warrants such devotion or attachment. But Richard Mouw encourages Christians to have a healthy sense of national peoplehood that promotes civic kinship and responsible citizenship. He navigates between Christian nationalism on one hand and cynicism about country on the other to avoid the perils of both idolatry and disengagement.*

The Justice Ministry Team will host a one-time event to discuss the book in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, June 25 from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm. In acknowledging how his own understanding of how to be patriotic as a Christian is a work in progress, the author writes, “The closest I can come to giving how-to advice about relating faith to patriotism is this: keep wrestling with the questions.” We look forward to a thought provoking, grace filled conversation with one another as we faithfully wrestle with our thoughts about the intersection of our faith and civic identities.

# SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

## Speakeasy Summer Series



*Sundays at 7pm*

### DATES & THEMES

June 4th - REST  
June 18th - LIGHT  
July 2nd - CHANGE  
July 16th - HOPE

### WHAT?

OPEN MIC GATHERINGS WHERE FOLKS REFLECT ON THE WEEK'S THEME WITH SONG, POETRY, SPOKEN WORD, OR OTHER CREATIVE FORMS! EXPRESSIONS CAN BE SACRED, SECULAR, ORIGINAL, SOURCED, CLASSICAL, AVANT-GARDE, YOU NAME IT!

### WHERE?

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
130 W MINER ST  
WEST CHESTER, PA 19382

### WHO?

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

QUESTIONS? CONTACT PASTOR TARA  
[TARA@FIRSTPRESWC.COM](mailto:TARA@FIRSTPRESWC.COM)

## SAVE THE DATE

# PIE SING

Bring a Pie - Sing Favorite Hymns  
Wednesday, August 23 | 7pm | Fellowship Hall





# NEW MEMBERS CLASS

We'll be holding a New Members Class in early summer for those who are interested in joining First Presbyterian, or if you'd like to know more about the church and what membership means. If you're interested in attending, please contact Elizabeth Hess ([ehess@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehess@firstpreswc.com)). The class will be held Wednesday, June 21 at 6:30 p.m. in the Chapel.



## STRING ENSEMBLE BEGINS

A new string ensemble called Miner Street Stringers will start rehearsing in September under the direction of Adriana Park. This intergenerational group will be made up of church members and members of the community with the goal of playing at church services a few times per year. The registration is open to all ages and technical levels. The first rehearsal will be at 3 pm on Sunday, September 17 at First Pres. For more details, please contact Adriana Park at [teachvln@aol.com](mailto:teachvln@aol.com).

## GARDEN TOUR



Our outgoing Office Administrator, David Teager, and his husband have an extraordinary garden at their home, featuring over two hundred species of hostas and a variety of other flowering trees and shrubs. David and his husband often welcome gardeners to tour their Glen Mills property, and have offered to host a group of people from First Pres on Sunday, June 18 at 2:30pm.

Those who are interested in attending can email Pastor Caroline at [ccupp@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ccupp@firstpreswc.com).

# CLOTHING CLOSET HAS NEW HOME

In 1971, First Pres member Frances Kettenring saw a need in the community which she wanted to help fill, so she founded a clothing warehouse for which she was given space within the church. This ministry has continued to grow over the decades, and with the support of our congregation and the community, it continues to thrive.

The Clothing Warehouse now has a new name and a new home within the church! To better reflect the size of the space and still honor the founder, the new name is *The Frances Kettenring Clothing Closet*. It is now located on the second floor of the church in Room 215. Please take a peek!

We would like to thank all those involved from start to finish who made this transition as smooth as possible: Rev. Caroline Cupp, Sara Pantazes, and David Teager for getting the ball rolling with initial coordination; Willy Oliveras for doing the heavy lifting in clearing out space for the new closet; Charlie Myhre for the many hours spent in configuration of the new space; John and Mary Pellack for donation of the shelving—a great savings to the cause; Rick Mars, Dan Ohms and Myron Grubaugh for installation of the shelving; and the Youth Group for delivering the many clothing bins and other items from the old closet to the new closet.

We are very excited going forward to continue this wonderful ministry which began with one woman's desire to help others. We appreciate the support that our congregation continues to offer. Thank you!

*The Frances Kettenring Clothing Closet Committee:  
Suzanne Cresswell, Nancy Ferdik, Linda Haake, Kathie Myhre, Nancy Ohms, Vicki Schroeder, Esther Smith, Gail Turner, Lynn Wildrick*



# MUSIC MINISTRY TRAVELS TO EUROPE



This summer an intergenerational group of forty-six West Chester University students, First Pres members, and friends will be traveling to Central Europe on a trip led by Sándor Kádár and Caroline Cupp. Between June 1 and 12 we will visit Dresden, Leipzig, Prague, Vienna, and Budapest, and present concerts at historic churches in Austria and Hungary. In between we will explore cathedrals, castles, monasteries, and taste-test every strudel across four nations. We will share pictures on the church's Facebook page and at #fpceurope, so follow along!

# Our choral scholars reflect...



"First Pres has been my home away from home for the past four years. Throughout my time at First Pres, the members of the Chancel Choir and JuBellation Ringers have supported me in all my endeavors whether it be through wishing me a happy birthday, coming to all my recitals and concerts, or asking me for life updates every week. I am so lucky to have had the opportunity to be a Choral Scholar at First Pres."

"I really appreciate my time at First Pres because it's a community of people who just really love to sing and celebrate Jesus through their love of singing. The choir is so friendly, and I feel like they really care about how I'm doing in my life, which is so cool and means a lot. Attending services at First Pres also brought me back to religious life and to my Presbyterian roots."

"Singing in this choir has made me realize I'm not alone. Going to a secular college can make you question God and feel like no one else cares for you. Singing in this choir helps me feel God's love again because of all the wonderful people who truly care and take time out of their day to help those around them."

"Working with the Chancel Choir is great because it doesn't feel like work at all. This group brings the joy of music back into singing for me after a long day and inspires me as a choir member and future choral educator."

"Throughout these last two years, this choir and the members within it have given me more love and support than I could have ever wished for. When I auditioned for the scholarship, one of the questions I was asked was if I was religious. I lied and said yes. I grew up religious, going to Catholic school, CCD, and mass on Sundays, but when I joined First Pres I was grieving the loss of the most important role model in my life, my grandmother. I was filled with so much anger and resentment toward God and religion because I felt as though he failed me. This was the first time in my life where I truly did not know if believing in God was worth it. You all have helped silence that anger and fill the piece of me that was ripped away from my grandmother's death through your kind words, positivity, and caring actions. Coming to church every week and spending time with you all are the reason I was able to start healing, so from the bottom of my heart I thank you."

***Submitted by Kiley Aikey, Amanda Erno, Miranda Nilan, and Evelyn Stohlman (Music Education majors) and Ryan Zickafoose (Pre-Med major)***

# *Congratulations!* **2023 GRADUATES**

## **High School**

Brendon Caccio	<i>Rustin</i>
Abby DeMaioribus	<i>Rustin</i>
Kai Hallenbeck	<i>Coatesville</i>
Ella Hambleton	<i>Rustin</i>
Josiah Moore	<i>Westtown School</i>
Jude Raws	<i>Downingtown West</i>
Courtney Seeger	<i>Henderson</i>
Daniel Single	<i>Rustin</i>
Ella Sokurenko	<i>Henderson</i>
Harry Stovell	<i>Humanities Preparatory Academy</i>
Sommer Vasant	<i>Rustin</i>

## **College**

Mollie Blessing	<i>Drexel</i>
Colin Corrigan	<i>UVA McIntire School of Commerce</i>
Liz D'Ginto	<i>Widener</i>
Matthew Phillips Kellermann	<i>Penn State</i>
Debra Kellermann Smith	<i>Immaculata</i>

## **Graduate School**

Olivia Jean Campbell	<i>Seattle School of Theology &amp; Psychology</i>
Liz D'Ginto	<i>Widener University</i>
Stephen Franks	<i>West Chester University</i>
Kelsey Wallace	<i>Drew University</i>



# *Membership*

## **In Memoriam**

Margery Johnson, member from 1952-2021  
Harold Freeman, member from 1991-2023.  
L. Davis Burchette, member from 1988-2023

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

*Karl and Vicki Schroeder* and family in the death of Vicki's aunt  
*Anne and David Morris* and family in the death of Anne's grandfather  
*Chuck and Karen Gaffney* and family in the death of Chuck's father  
*Kathy, Dennis and Ryan Westhafer* and family in the death of Kathy's father and Ryan's grandfather

## **Baptisms:**

*Bailey Courtney Guerriero*, born April 1, 2016, daughter of Mike and Tara Guerriero  
*Aiden Parker McClure*, born May 9, 2022, son of Justin and Mandy Jo McClure