

FIRST PRESS

# *LIFE TOGETHER*

Lent and Easter 2025



## *Dear First Pres,*

It has been a wonderful beginning to 2025 here at First Pres! We began 2025 on the heels of an impactful and meaningful Advent and Christmas season where we worshipped and fellowshiped with familiar faces and new ones, and once again welcomed the entire community to participate with us as we awaited the celebration of Christ's birth. We kicked off 2025 with our Faith Forward series where we were challenged to live lives that lead with our faith as the foundation for all that we do in this world, and we now enter the season of Lent where we will focus on what it means and what it looks like for us to truly be a Christian community who shares its "life together".

The theme of "life together" for the season of Lent might seem a little different. We're often accustomed to themes about journeying, being in the desert/wilderness, repentance, temptation, and utter reliance upon God as we seek to reflect on Jesus' 40 days in the desert.      contd...

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## LIFE TOGETHER

People often give things up for the season of Lent as a modern day way of fasting like Jesus fasted in the desert. This year at First Pres we're going to "fast" from the busyness of our lives, and fill our spiritual plates and cups with the nourishment of Christian community. Slowing down, prioritizing your family of faith, and the faith of you and your family, can feel like a modern day desert where we fast from the routines of busyness and full schedules, the dopamine rush of technology, and the self-worth measuring of productivity. To help us understand our call in Lent, and as Christians, we're going to not only share our lives together, but we're going to read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic work *Life Together*. Through his thought provoking work and through our shared experience we will be illumined to the ways that our faiths and our reliance upon God are reinforced through our communal lives.

So, this Lent, I'm challenging you not to carve out time for shared experiences of life together at First Pres, but to prioritize our shared life together and carve out time for everything else. Take a look at all that is happening at First Pres beginning with Ash Wednesday all the way through Easter, and be sure to read about all of our Lenten groups in the Congregational Life section of this newsletter. I'm looking forward to our shared lives together this Lenten season and beyond.

Pastor Andrew



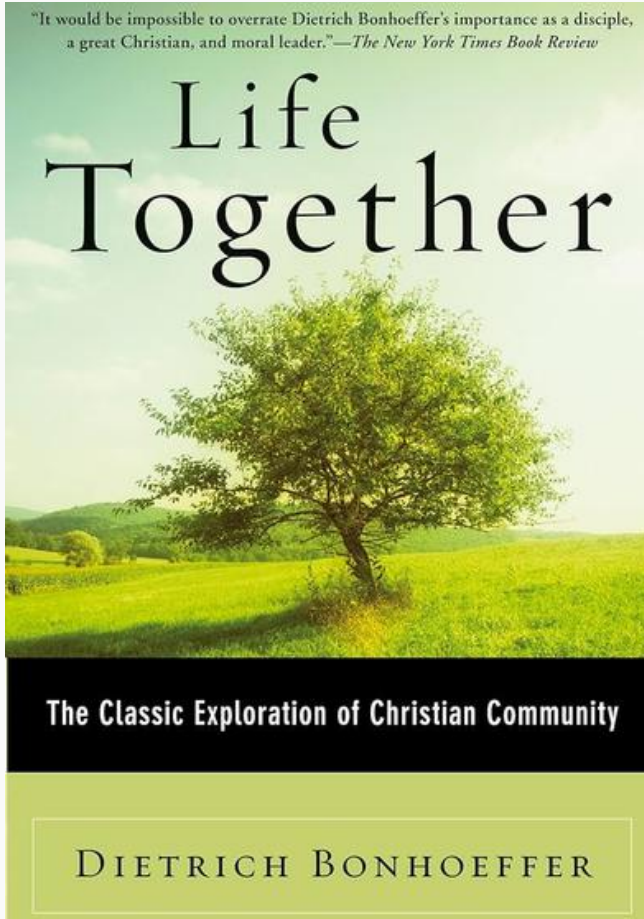
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*The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.*

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
"Life Together"



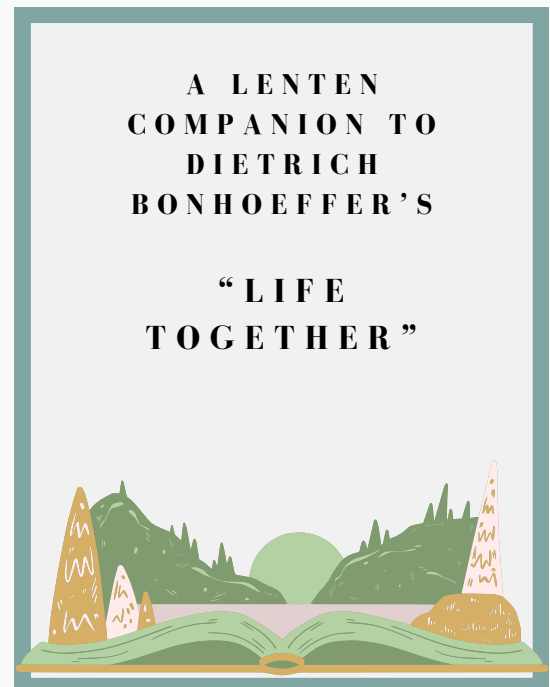
## LIFE TOGETHER



During the season of Lent, as a church we are going to be reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's highly regarded, *Life Together*. This might seem like an interesting book for the season of Lent, but in Lent we are called out of our comfort zones, we are reminded of our insufficiencies, and our utter reliance upon God. In *Life Together* Bonhoeffer calls us to action, to discipleship, and to communal living. In our fast-paced overly busy world, the call to communal life together is indeed a call out of our comfort zones, out of the busyness, the stress, and the deadlines we've become so accustomed to. So, together we are going to embrace the call for life, *Life Together*.

To help individuals, small groups, and bible studies, we have compiled a weekly companion to Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*.

This companion follows the chapters of the book and provides a description of the main ideas in each chapter, along with discussion questions to be used either in a group setting or for individual reflection. We hope this companion will bring about meaningful discussion and spiritual growth as we journey through Lent together.





# LENT & HOLY WEEK



Ash Wednesday  
March 5th  
6:30 pm  
Sanctuary



Palm Sunday  
April 13th  
9 am & 10:45 am  
Sanctuary



Maundy Thursday  
April 17th  
7 pm  
Sanctuary



Good Friday  
April 18th  
7 pm  
Sanctuary

First Presbyterian Church | West Chester, PA | 130 W. Miner Street | [www.firstpreswc.com](http://www.firstpreswc.com)

## **6:30 am Sunrise Service**

The Barn @ 315 N. Creek Rd

## **9 am Traditional Service**

## **10:45 am Contemporary Service**

First Pres, 130 W. Miner Street

*You're  
Invited!*

*Easter  
Sunday*



## *The 18th Weekend with the Arts*

March 7 - 9, 2025

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S 18TH

# weekend with the arts

gallery | concert

**Friday, March 7**

6:30 pm - 9 pm

Art Show Gala Opening

**Saturday, March 8**

Gallery Open

9:30 am - 8 pm

*Best of Schubert Concert*

6:30 pm

featuring

Vocal Soloists,  
First Pres Chancel Choir,  
Chamber Orchestra,  
Miner Street Stringers

**Sunday, March 9**

Gallery Open

8:30 am - 4 pm

*All events are free  
and open to the public*



130 W Miner St, West Chester  
610.696.0554

[www.firstpreswc.com](http://www.firstpreswc.com)



## *2025 Jazz Extravaganza*

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Join us May 4 at 4 pm featuring the Rosedale Jazz Sextet, a West Chester based ensemble of former WCU students. They will be performing arrangements of American popular songs, spirituals, and jazz standards.

Column Classics Presents

## JAZZ EXTRAVAGANZA

featuring the Rosedale Jazz Sextet

**Sunday, May 4, 2025**  
**4 pm**

Join us for a program featuring jazz arrangements of American popular songs, spirituals, and jazz standards

Admission is free; donations gratefully accepted

First Presbyterian Church  
130 W Miner St  
West Chester, PA  
[www.firstpreswc.com](http://www.firstpreswc.com)



## *So Long, Farewell Concert*

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Join us for the So Long, Farewell concert on June 21 at 6:30 pm, featuring the Europe Tour Choir and Brass. The two ensembles will present their concert program in West Chester before they go on a 12-day European tour through Slovenia and Croatia.

## Lenten Groups

Our theme for Lent this year is "Life Together," reflecting on Christian community. There are several opportunities during Lent to experience this "life together" through small groups. Some groups will meet once during the Lenten season, and some will meet each week. We hope you'll consider trying out a group, and growing your faith through Christian community.

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

-Hebrews 10:24-25

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For more information on each group and registration: [\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)

### Dads Group

**When:** Thursdays in Lent, 8 pm

**Where:** Artillery Brewing

**Who:** Dads of children ages 0 - College

### Games & Gelato

**When:** Mon. March 10, 7-8:30 pm

**Where:** Gemelli

**Who:** All are welcome

### Bonhoeffer's Life Together

**When:** Wednesdays in Lent, 6:30-8 pm

**Where:** Fellowship Hall

**Who:** All are welcome

### Craft Beer

**When:** Friday, March 21, 7 pm

**Where:** Artillery Brewing

**Who:** Ages 21 and older

## Coffee & Study

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**When:** Wed. March 12, 9-11 am

**Where:** The Chapel

**Who:** All are welcome

## Rock Climbing

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**When:** Saturday, March 22, 2-4 pm

**Where:** Philadelphia Rock Gym

**Who:** Ages 6 and older

## Walking Group

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**When:** Thursdays, Noon

**Where:** First Pres - out front

**Who:** All are welcome

## Caring for Creation

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**When:** Sunday March 30, 1-3 pm

**Where:** Stroud Water Research Center

**Who:** All are welcome

## Lunch at Guatemalan Restaurant

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**When:** Sun. March 23, 1pm

**Where:** Venado Restaurant, Malvern

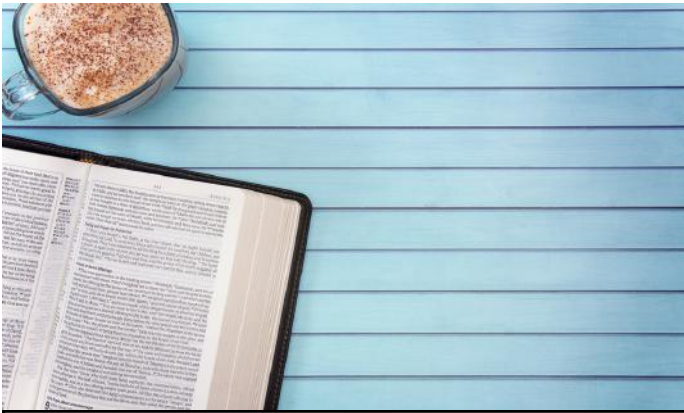
**Who:** All are welcome

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Questions...

Reach out to Elizabeth Hess, [ehesse@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehesse@firstpreswc.com)





## Women's Spring Bible Study

All women are invited to join a 7-week study beginning April 2. We'll meet on Wednesdays from 9:30-11 am in the Chapel and we'll do a Melissa Spoelstra video/workbook study on *The Gospel of John: Savoring the Peace of Jesus in a Chaotic World*. If you're able to join us, we'd love to have you. Please sign up through the website, or reach out to Elizabeth with more questions: [ehess@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehess@firstpreswc.com)



## All-Church Lenten Supper

All are invited to a church-wide dinner on Sunday, April 6 at 5:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. It will be a potluck soup and salad dinner; you can sign up through the website to bring something for the meal. Please join us in the Lenten season to enjoy fellowship over a meal!



## Community Easter Egg Hunt

Continuing a tradition that began in 2005, First Pres will again be offering a free Community Easter Egg Hunt this year! The Hunt will be Saturday, April 19 at 10 am in Everhart Park. Volunteers are needed to donate candy-filled eggs, and then on the day of the event to hide the eggs, hand out snacks/water, and assist with clean up. Please reach out to Elizabeth Hess ([ehess@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ehess@firstpreswc.com)) or see the sign up tab of the website if you'd like to help.

## *New Members*



**Joyce Chester**



**Bruce and Karla  
Cook**



**Chris, Emily, and  
Henry Hazley**



**Beth, Kevin, and  
Garrett Hysick**



**Jason Murphy and  
Marianne Murphy**



**Dana and Debbie  
Parker**



## Family Lent Activity Calendar

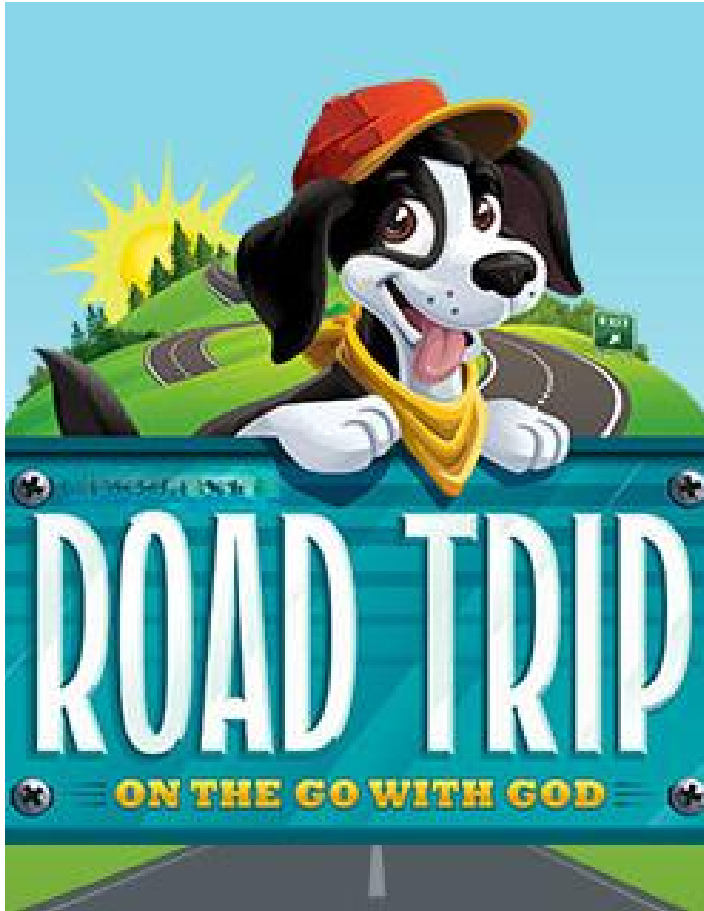
First Pres families are invited to observe Lent in the midst of everyday life through the activities of a Lenten Faith Practices Calendar. This specially designed calendar invites you to try something new each week as you journey through five themes—Notice, Pray, Help, Wonder, and Rest. Each week, you'll focus on a different theme to help you pay attention, pray for others, lend a hand, ask big questions, or take a break. The calendar will be available at the Welcome Center beginning Sunday, March 2. See how you grow closer to God through these practices and may all our families observe a holy Lent.



## March School's Off Day Camp

First Pres will again be offering a School's Off Day Camp for elementary aged children on Monday, March 31 from 9am – 3:30 pm. During this camp, we'll spend time playing games together along with exploring the Lenape Life Traveling Trunk from the Chester County History Center. Sign your child up now on the church's website for a day of fun, learning, and friends! Talk to Sara Pantazes with any questions.





## VBS 2025

First Pres has some fabulous plans for kids this summer. The week of August 11 - 15 we will have both Vacation Bible School and Music Camp! Elementary aged children can sign up to attend VBS in the morning (9-noon), Music Camp in the afternoon (noon - 4 pm), or both!

This year's VBS theme is Road Trip! Based on Joshua 1:9 - "The LORD your God is with you wherever you go," kids will have a blast learning Bible stories, playing with friends, and growing in faith. Through music, crafts, science experiments, games and snacks, kids will learn that God's presence is always near, no matter where the journey of life takes us.

## Music Camp

Get ready for a week of musical adventure August 11-15! Each day at Music Camp is themed and filled with exciting hands-on activities. Campers will explore elements of music through singing, dancing, and group activities. They'll get to create fun crafts, explore a variety of instruments, including pitched and non-pitched percussion, and discover multicultural instruments like the ukulele and didgeridoo! Along the way, kids will build teamwork skills, develop fine and gross motor skills, and learn essential skills in music literacy.



QUESTIONS? CONTACT:  
AERNO@FIRSTPRESWC.COM



## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

There is a lot going on in the lives of our youth and young adults! We can't wait for our Winter Refresh retreat with our youth, which will take place February 28-March 2 at Black Rock Retreat Center. It will be a weekend filled with worship, fun, and fellowship! Our Young Adults are looking forward to our second ever Young Adult Retreat, which will take place March 14-16 in Ocean City, Maryland. Lastly, we're looking forward to our summer Youth Trip with the Philadelphia Project, which will be full of fun, service to those in need, and growing closer to God and one another.

Mark your calendars for Confirmation Sunday on March 30 at the 9 am service where we'll celebrate and welcome our 2025 Confirmation Class! You also won't want to miss Youth Sunday on May 4 where our high school seniors will preach and the entire service will be crafted and led by our youth.

Looking back to this past Advent, we want to say a huge thank you to all who supported our Hot Cocoa Fundraiser. The proceeds will benefit the youth mission and service trip to Philadelphia this summer! Take a look at the next page for some pictures of our youth this past year.



# YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

**To join our Weekly Emails!**

Email [etang@firstpreswc.com](mailto:etang@firstpreswc.com)



@fpcwcyouth &  
@fpcwcyoungadults



First Presbyterian  
Church of West Chester  
Youth Ministry Group



## SUMMER TRIP 2025

### JULY 27TH-AUGUST 2ND

## PHILADELPHIA, PA

**ORGANIZATION:** THE PHILADELPHIA PROJECT

**TYPES OF PROJECTS:** HOME REPAIR, CHURCH REPAIR, THRIFT STORES/FOOD BANK HELP, POSSIBLE HELP WITH LOCAL SUMMER CAMP

**SIGN-UP NOW-FEBRUARY 1ST: \$475 PER PERSON**  
**SIGN-UP FEB 1ST- MAY 1ST: \$525 PER PERSON**

**SCHOLARSHIPS & FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE!**



**The Philadelphia Project**  
Helping Rebuild Churches, Homes, and Neighborhoods





## *When “Pull Yourself Together” Doesn't Work*

You've likely heard it time and time again: "Pull yourself together... cheer up ... tough it out ... it could be worse." Maybe people have said it to you. Maybe you keep saying it to yourself. But you're still hurting. Things still feel like they're falling apart.

You don't have to go through this alone. Our Stephen Ministers are trained caregivers who will faithfully walk alongside you through your struggles, listening to you and providing confidential, one-to-one care as you journey toward healing. To learn more about what Stephen Ministry can do for you, talk with Pastor Caroline Cupp or one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders, Mary Pellack. We are ready to care for you.



*Christ caring for people through people*

STEPHEN  
MINISTRY

### *Matthew 25 Lent Campaign*

Nearly every day of the year First Pres receives a call or visit from a neighbor in need. Many of these folks are working, some at multiple jobs, but still can't make ends meet given the high rents in our area. Some people call because they can't afford critical car repairs, or need help accessing a resource. Others are fleeing domestic violence or just need someone caring to speak with. When times are tough, our community knows that they can trust our church to live out Jesus' message of compassion and care.

Each year during Lent, First Pres members join together to serve the most vulnerable people in our community by raising \$25,000 or more to fund emergency housing, utility, and transportation needs that can't be met by an existing community program or agency. Despite the fact that we live in the wealthiest county in the state and there are robust non-profit programs designed to help, there are still many people who fall through the cracks and whose urgent need can't be met through existing programs.

Thanks to your generosity, in 2024 First Pres helped 197 people with over \$30,000 in emergency assistance. Those who received help included:

- A military couple experiencing homelessness who needed a brief hotel stay before their VA-supported apartment was available.
- A domestic violence survivor who was finally able to move into her own place thanks to a security deposit provided by First Pres.
- Grandparents raising young children who fell behind on rent or utilities.

We know that in 2025 the need for assistance will continue to grow as rents and inflation climb. And we are confident that there is no challenge too great for Christ: the one who calls us to worship him by serving the vulnerable will equip us for the work ahead.

This Lent, we ask that you consider giving toward our \$25,000 goal. Whether your budget allows for \$20, \$200, or \$2,000, the funds you give will make a profound difference in the life of one of our neighbors.

If you have any questions about First Pres's Matthew 25 program or would like additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out to Pastor Caroline.



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CHURCH

WEST CHESTER, PA