



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
WEST CHESTER, PA

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



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FROM PASTOR ANDREW ESQUEDA



What an incredible year it has been First Pres! I have just embarked on my second year as your Senior Pastor and it has been a true gift. When a new pastor comes to any church there is usually a period of time people like to call the “honeymoon” period. It’s a season in which things are good and simple, and expectations are kept low. For some time I was waiting for that period to end, but then I realized that it never actually started. There were no expectations (at least not explicit ones) that I would be perfect in my ministry, administration, or leadership, there was simply a desire that I use the gifts God has given me to the best of my abilities to help lead our church into the future God is calling us to. I felt this in my conversations with the PNC, with the staff, and with all of you. That together, we would seek God, and together we would chart a path forward.

Now, this is no small endeavor. For a large church that is almost 200 years old, it’s a huge undertaking, but the undertaking seems manageable when the responsibility is not left to one person. This is not a senior pastor centric church, this is a church filled with a diverse group of people seeking to love God, to love one another, to care for the least of these in our community, to use our human and financial resources to serve God in West Chester and beyond, and to share the work and weight of our Christian lives together.

And what a gift it is to have an incredible staff to serve alongside. Even with the departure of our longtime custodian, Willy Oliveras, who was an integral part of this church for many years, our trustees and others stepped up to cover his responsibilities until a replacement could be found. And, that replacement is Sara Ford who started right at the beginning of Advent and has embarked on a huge undertaking of learning our building and the rhythms of our church. Our staff continues to thrive in our shared ministry and I am grateful for every single one of them. We truly are a ministry team.

Of course, there are all of you, who take seriously your call to serve God and one another at First Pres. You step up, you take on responsibilities from volunteering, caring for our children and youth, serving our mission partners, leading us in worship with your musical gifts,

FROM PASTOR ANDREW ESQUEDA

serving as elders, and visiting and bringing communion to those who are hospitalized or homebound.

There would be no ministry of First Pres if it weren't for our collective "YES" to God's call on our lives. This doesn't mean that our ministry and lives together are always easy, but it does mean that they are good. Together we have not strayed from talking about challenging issues from politics to theology, we have not wavered in our collective care for each other even amidst overly busy schedules, and we have answered the call where there is need, from more Sunday school teachers for our growing Children's ministry and stocking our clothing pantry to Wednesday lunch volunteers and the Giving Tree, and so much more.

When we talk about the family of faith here at First Pres it is more than descriptive words, but rather is a lived and realized reality. We have new members and visitors every Sunday who are attracted and intrigued by the welcome, care, and worship that First Pres offers, and this is something for all of us to be excited about.

As we conclude 2024 and continue into 2025 I am excited for the ways in which we will be transformed for the sake of Christ's Kingdom, and how our transformation will be used to serve Christ and others.

What a gift it is to be your pastor and to partner with all of you in ministry!

With Hope and Thanksgiving,



Rev.
Andrew Esqueda
Senior Pastor

FROM PASTOR CAROLINE CUPP



It has been another full and joyful year serving alongside you. When Andrew Esqueda arrived I thought things might slow down here a little (famous last words). Rather than a gentle return to associate pastor duties, instead I've been riding the wave of energy and excitement that's taken hold of our congregation over the past year. It's a busy, full, and delightful season of ministry: each day I am reminded what a privilege it is to serve in a congregation full of such wise and energetic people.

One of the gifts of 2024 was having time to spend with you. Whether it was a coffee, a hospital visit, or chartering a school bus to the city to watch a Phillies game with a few dozen church members, one of the gifts of ministry is getting time to talk with you, to hear about your lives and build connections rooted in our shared faith. I also have the privilege of seeing these strong bonds between our members be a support in times of grief and struggle. This is a community that knows well how to care for one another.

Another gift of this year was supporting First Pres' robust Missions programs. While our church has always had a strong emphasis on local missions, the depth of connection to our neighbors seems to increase more each year. The Wednesday Lunch program is supported by a committed and growing number of volunteers who take turns setting up, serving, and eating with those who count on First Pres for a hot meal and hospitality. We've seen people move from homelessness to having jobs and apartments in no small part due to their connections with First Pres. Church member Chrisetta Nyepan caters the lunch each week (along with renting our kitchen for her business). This allows the positive economic impact of the lunch to stretch even farther.

We have also had the chance to think creatively about how to expand our mission commitments. This year church member Emily McClure helped us apply for grants to support Wednesday lunches and we were able to bring on a Social Work graduate student from WCU to meet with people looking for aid. One of my favorite parts of ministry is figuring out how support ancient church traditions like care and hospitality by using contemporary tools, and thankfully that drive to think creatively about how to expand ministries is one that's shared by our church as a whole.

Caroline Cupp

Rev.

Caroline Cupp

Sr. Assoc. Pastor

A SEASON OF GROWTH

At First Pres we are seeing growth. Not only in number, but in so many ways. Growing new members and visitors, a growing budget, growth in our relationships with one another, growth in our youth group and ministry to children, growth in age and stage ministries from parent support to care for our homebound, growth in our impact on the lives of people in need of housing and food assistance, and most importantly growth in our relationship with Christ.



OUR SESSION

Members of Session

Moderator

Rev. Andrew Esqueda

Minister Member

Rev. Caroline Cupp

Clerk

Peter Galloway

The Session is made up of Elders who serve a three-year term with no more than two consecutive terms and are representatives elected by the congregation. Elders are responsible for all areas of church life and governance, they approve the annual budget, oversee the sacraments, and support specific ministry areas and staff.

Class of 2024

Peter Guman
Mary Hambleton
Lori McDermott
Tricia Minicozzi
Jean Russell
Holly Reigner
Bob Smith
Frank Skomorucha

Class of 2025

Anna Bentley
Beth Congdon-
Martin
Taryn Gross
Jim Haughton
Gail Rader
Karl Schroeder
Dick Seiwel

Class of 2026

Glenn Burkland
Gail Coxe
Esther Smith
David Stone
George Zumbano

Our Membership

Our membership is composed of a diverse group of people. While First Pres stands in the heart of West Chester, it lives on the edge of the residential area of the borough and the business district. There are families, young adults, empty nesters, and retirees who either walk to church or drive in from the surrounding townships, and at the same time we have folks living within the borough who are experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity. While First Pres is largely homogenous with its ethnic makeup, we are socioeconomically diverse, politically diverse, theologically diverse, and diverse in our faith backgrounds. The unique part of our membership lies in a commitment to The Table that Christ sets for us where all people are welcome. This does not mean that we ignore challenging issues of the day or our diversities, commitments, and beliefs, but it does mean that we seek to love God and one another well, and to have the gospel be the driver of our lives both inside and outside of the church.

26

New Members

In 2024 we welcomed 26 new members and we look forward to their participation in the life of our church

380

Average Weekly Worship Attendance

First Pres averages 380 people in worship in-person and online. This year we did not include holiday or special worship services in order to give us the most accurate weekly account.

7

Baptisms

In 2024 we baptized 7 children, and look forward to watching them grow in stature, and most of all, in faith.

15

Deaths

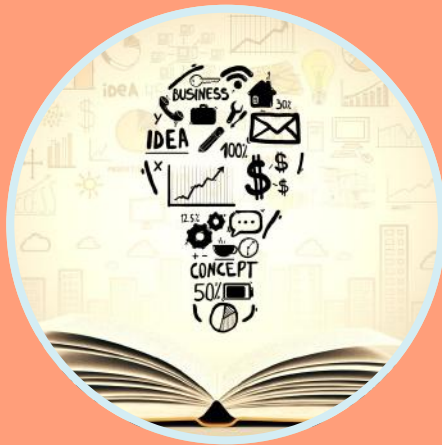
In 2024, 15 church members entered the church triumphant. We are grateful for these saints and their witness of faith.

957

Membership

Our church membership remained steady in 2024, with members passing away and moving, and new members joining, and we're on good track to grow leading into the future.

2024 Highlights



2024 Kicked-Off Our Work Toward a Strategic Plan

Our Session spent much of 2024 thinking through and praying about what we believe our strategic priorities should be. Now that our Session has accomplished that work, a Strategic Planning Team has been formed to create a Strategic Plan that will be both actionable and timely.

We're Using Our Space Creatively

Wednesday lunches at First Pres are going strong. The program is led by volunteers and Rev. Caroline Cupp to support people in need of food, care, and community resources. We're also renting our commercial kitchen to Chrissetta's Kitchen a Liberian take-out restaurant and are continuing to imagine how we might use our space to support our community and ministries of the church.



We Launched A New Website

We launched a new website in 2024! Our website domain has stayed the same, but we got a big upgrade in both functionality and design. We're still working out some kinks here and there, but we're excited for our website to be a connection tool for our members and those in the community.

A Gathering Church is a Growing Church

Our church has spent a lot of time together this year! We kicked-off our year with a well-attended church-wide picnic that was great fun for all ages. We have continued to support various fellowship and faith formation groups, and we have new ones forming.



Community Easter Egg Hunt Returned with a Bang!

Our community Easter Egg Hunt was a huge success! Roughly 350 people from First Pres and the community descended upon Everhart Park to be in fellowship and enjoy searching for eggs with our little ones. We had tons of First Pres volunteers support this effort, and it was a wonderful outreach event for our church!

PERSONNEL



George Zumbano
Chairperson

Staff Support: Rev. Andrew Esqueda

The staff of First Presbyterian Church continues to thrive in their areas of ministry.

Rev. Andrew Esqueda completed his first full year as our Senior Pastor and Head of Staff. Alongside his direct leadership responsibilities at First Pres, Andrew is active in our broader community through his work with the West Chester Chamber of Commerce's Professional Development Committee and as a new board member of Friends Association.

Rev. Caroline Cupp continues in her important work of pastoral care and mission and welcomed Jake Lindsay, a WCU MSW graduate student to support her efforts in caring for those in need of housing and food assistance.

Sándor Kádár continues to offer us and our community incredible worship and music experiences. Our music ministry would not

be complete without the leadership of Amanda Erno who serves as both a Conducting Scholar and Children's Music Director, Kiana Rivera who leads our Contemporary Worship band, and Greg Ondo who not only plays drums for us but ensures that our audio visual needs are taken care of at both of our services. And, this year we welcomed a new music staff member, choir accompanist Ann Ellis who helps to lead us in worship.

Sara Pantazes continues in her support of adult faith formation groups and studies, and our growing children's ministry which has brought about the need for more Sunday school classes.

Emily Tang continues in her diligent work of ministering to a growing number of youth and young adults who call First Pres their home.

Elizabeth Hess supports our welcoming and engagement efforts and has revitalized our community Easter Egg Hunt.

Jen Rosenberg continues to support the meaningful education of our little ones down at the beloved Bucket School along with her team of warm, caring, and energetic teachers.

PERSONNEL

The functions of our office could never happen without the diligent efforts of Pete Galloway who wears a multitude of hats to support our physical plant and the operations of our church. Claire Kramer ensures that our finances are in order in her work alongside Missional Business Services, and Karen Goldstein continues to be a wealth of knowledge for our care of and connection with church members.

With a number of funerals and upcoming weddings, Gretchen Heubner continues to work alongside our pastoral staff to ensure diligent care and support of those in their time of grief and celebration.

This past year after 18 years our beloved custodian, Willy Oliveras, retired. It is challenging to fill those shoes, so rather than fill them we searched for a new pair, and found that new pair in Sara Ford. Sara joined us in the heart of our busiest season, Advent, and she didn't skip a beat. She has jumped right in, is continue to learn, and is excited about being a part of our staff and the First Pres family.

Rev. Anderson Porter can be found praying and caring for our neighborhood friends at every Wednesday lunch in the fellowship hall. Rev. Ann Dickey continues to be a great support, guest liturgist and preacher when she's not singing in the choir.

We have an incredible staff and we look forward to our continued support of them into 2025 and beyond.

OUR STAFF

Pastoral Staff



Senior Pastor
Rev. Andrew Esqueda



Senior Assoc. Pastor
Rev. Caroline Cupp



Parish Associate
Rev. Ann Dickey



Parish Associate
Rev. Anderson Porter

Program Staff



Children's Music Director
Amanda Erno



Office Administrator
Pete Galloway



Office Manager
Karen Goldstein



Director of Engagement
Elizabeth Hess



Wedding and
Funeral Coordinator
Gretchen Huebner



Director of Music
Sándor Kádár

OUR STAFF

Program Staff



Office Administrator
Claire Kramer



Facilities Manager
Sara Ford



Director of Faith Formation
Sara Pantazes



Technical Support
Coordinator
Greg Ondo



Contemporary Band Leader
Kiana Rivera



Bucket School Director
Jen Rosenberg



Accompanist
Ann Ellis



Director of Youth and Young
Adult Ministries
Emily Tang

TRUSTEES



Dan Ohms
President

Staff Support: Pete Galloway

The Trustees were active again in 2024. In addition to the committee responsibilities shared jointly with Session (Finance and Personnel), Building & Maintenance was busy with various projects including painting inside and outside the building (the front half of the building with the remaining section to be completed in 2025), the Preschool Director's office and the storage room behind the kitchen. We replaced numerous windows primarily in the offices and other rooms on the first and second floors, the chest freezer in the kitchen, and conducted roof repairs and painting.

We completed numerous plumbing projects including repairing water leaks and the replacement of the main water line valve. Working with First Crew, we removed the privacy wall in front of the first row of pews in the sanctuary and other projects.

The Insurance Safety and Security Committee installed emergency door stops in the Bucket School, negotiated and oversaw installation of new security system including cameras, and an intercom system including panic alarm system for the reception office. We updated the church floor plans and placed the plans on a flash drive that was installed in a secure location outside the church that is accessible to fire and police responders. We also performed a walk-through with the local fire department to review the layout of the church properties.

The Trustees also assisted with the training of and transition to the new Facilities Manager by performing opening and closing duties, primarily on Sunday mornings, after Willie's retirement.

Our Rental Properties committee continues to maintain 122 and 126 W. Miner Street to ensure that our tenants have suitable living and working conditions. Financials for our rental properties can be found on pg. 34.

The Trustees would like to thank all church members and at-large committee members for their assistance this year. We also look forward to our transition to the Properties Committee of Session.

DEACONS



Meg Bauer
Chairperson

Staff Support: Rev. Caroline Cupp

The Deacon Ministry at First Presbyterian plays a crucial role in building community, nurturing faith, and meeting the needs of our congregation with love. This past year, we have implemented various initiatives aimed at serving and uplifting our church family.

Each Sunday, our deacon team fosters a welcoming environment by serving coffee and refreshments after the 9 AM worship service, promoting fellowship among members and helping new attendees feel at home.

During Youth Sunday, we honored our high school seniors who shared their reflections with the congregation. In support of their transition to higher education, we sent each senior a freshman care package, along with a care package for a new member's daughter, ensuring she feels welcomed in our community.

During the Christmas season, we delivered poinsettias to members unable to regularly attend services, brightening their holidays and reminding them they are cherished.

This year, we celebrated the baptisms of seven infants, providing each with a handmade quilt and a book for their parents, coupled with a personal note from the deacon team to welcome them into our church family.

We welcomed 26 new members through three classes, each receiving a handwritten note to ensure they feel valued and recognized.

Additionally, we coordinated home communion three times this year for members who cannot attend services, reinforcing our values of inclusiveness and compassion.

As we reflect on this year's accomplishments, we remain committed to serving our congregation with dedication and love. We look forward to continuing our initiatives and finding new ways to support our members and the wider community in the coming year.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE



Lori McDermott
Co-Chair



Tom Pantazes
Co-Chair

Staff Support: Rev. Andrew Esqueda

The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to serve First Presbyterian Church in nominating and electing church officers, members of a Pastor Nominating Committee, and the church universal in faithfully discerning the call and gifts of members of the congregation.

After receiving nominations from the congregation, the nominating committee spent the course of the fall reviewing nominations, having conversations, and making phone calls to numerous individuals within the church to fill 11 elder positions and 14 deacon positions, and we look forward to presenting the new slate of officers to the congregation. Additionally, with the new change of unifying the elders and the trustees, two of our elder candidates will be serving as elders for the newly formed property committee.

The 2024 nominating committee was co-chaired by Lori McDermott and Tom Pantazes, and includes Scott Gamble, Charlie Myhre, Dan Ohms, Adriana Park, and Kelly Pruden. Lori, Tom, Scott, Charlie, Adriana, and Kelly will continue in service for the 2025 church year.

Our committee will be looking forward to reaching out to those individuals who declined this past year, but expressed an interest in being considered in the future, and to those nominated for our next class of elders and deacons.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC



Jim Haughton
2024 Chairperson

Staff Support: Sándor Kádár

The year 2024 was particularly special for the Music Ministry, with highlights including a successful "Weekend with the Arts" event featuring over 30 local artists and a performance of Mozart's famous "Coronation Mass for Soloists, Choir, and Orchestra." The children's choir did a fantastic job presenting the musical *Jonah* under the exceptional leadership of Amanda Erno in the spring.

The Miner Street Stringers, led by Adriana Park, started their second season and performed at several Sunday morning services and concerts. This intergenerational ensemble demonstrates the power of community outreach and collaboration in fostering a sense of unity and a shared passion for music.

In September, David Dickey retired from the Contemporary Band after playing with the band for six years. We are thankful to David for all his contributions to the contemporary service and are happy to see him as an attendee at the 9 a.m. service each Sunday. In the fall, Haley Phares, who is also a choral scholar, joined the band as a singer and rhythm guitarist.

The Candlelight Christmas Concert offered a captivating blend of musical performances, showcasing diverse ensembles like the Chancel Choir, Miner Street Brass, Children's Choir, along with talented soloists from the Chancel Choir. The variety of styles, complemented by a hymn singalong, created an engaging and dynamic atmosphere that truly delighted the audience, making it an unforgettable celebration of the Christmas season.

The Worship Committee is responsible for support of our worship services throughout the year, including communion preparation and distribution, ushering coverage, visual enhancements for the liturgical seasons and for special services. As the center of our life together, our worship this year has grounded us more deeply in our faith and affirmed the sense of community we share.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Through the sacraments, sermon series offered by our pastors, music leadership in multiple forms from all ages of our community, and special messages for our increased numbers of children, we are encouraged in our faith and in our commitment to serve Christ.

This year over last, we have experienced an increase of in-person participation at the traditional and contemporary services while we continue to provide the opportunity for worship through our Facebook and YouTube streaming platforms. The palpable spirit of welcome in our congregation has contributed to attracting members of the wider community to our services of worship and to church membership. New this year to our worship offerings is the devotional experience of Lectio Divina led by Sara Pantazes.

A new platform constructed by Myron Grubaugh and Charlie Myhre has extended the chancel area, giving us more space for our contemporary worship band, creative worship opportunities, including children's performances and a variety of musical ensembles. Augmenting the visual presentation for our worshipping experience is an area where we continue to make progress.

We made strides in this area for World Communion Sunday, during Holy Week and in the Advent/Christmas season with the help of many gifted and enthusiastic volunteers from the congregation. We are also grateful to Elizabeth Hess who coordinates the ushers at our services and to those who faithfully respond to this need. We thank Greg Ondo who coordinates our technology needs in worship which seem to increase year by year.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND MEMBERSHIP



Trisha Minicozzi
Chairperson

Staff Support: Elizabeth Hess

Congregational Life and Membership had a busy and fun year in 2024! Our committee is responsible for church-wide activities and events, as well as New Member classes and Sunday morning hospitality. We repeated some traditional events, like the Community Trick or Treat and the Wreath Workshop, brought back some favorites like the Easter Egg Hunt and the Church Picnic, and tried some new things, like a movie night uptown.

Church Fellowship

We helped the Pastor Nominating Committee host a reception for Rev. Esqueda's installation – what a fun day of celebration! In the past, we've had our church picnic at different parks around West Chester. This year we decided to have it in the backyard/alleyway of the church and it worked out perfectly! Over 100 attendees enjoyed a fried chicken lunch on a sunny fall day, and the children bounced on an inflatable and got their faces painted.

The annual wreath workshop took place the first Sunday in Advent, as 45 wreaths were decorated. We partnered with Music Ministry to host a Pie & Hymn Sing in the spring, and a Cookie & Carol Sing in December. A new group to form this year was our Moms' Group, which meets monthly and is led by Mary Hambleton and Liz Single. We also have a Parents Group which meets at members' homes every other month. We had about a dozen church members open their homes to host a dinner in October; people could sign up for a dinner to attend and everyone who attended loved the opportunity to fellowship with old friends as well as new faces.

Community Outreach Events

Our church hadn't hosted our community Easter Egg Hunt since the pandemic, and in 2024 we brought it back! We had dozens of volunteers hide 12,000 eggs in Everhart Park the day before Easter, and an estimated 300-400 people attended. We shared a handout that highlighted Easter services at First Pres, and children/family activities available. Our second large outreach event is the Community Trick or Treat. We opened our doors to 360 trick or treaters, a 20% increase from the previous year.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND MEMBERSHIP

Community Connection

We partnered with Uptown Theatre to attend a summer movie in late June – over 50 people signed up to attend! We worked with the Chamber of Commerce as they put up Christmas decorations in town, with a group of First Pres members hanging bows and garland in store windows. West Chester's Green Team hosted "Porchfest" for the third year in our quadrant of the borough, and the church hosted five different musical groups throughout the afternoon on our front portico, opened our building for community restroom access, and handed out cookies to attendees. First Pres is a polling place, so in April and November, we put out trays of cookies and some other sweet treats (including some First Pres cookbooks!) for our neighbors to enjoy when they come to vote.

Membership

We hosted three New Member Classes this year and welcomed 26 new members. Valentine's cards were sent to 65 church members who are homebound or in need of caring note, and each card was signed by many church members! A church-wide "check-in" campaign was held over the summer – over 50 callers from Session, Deacons, and Stephen Ministry made phone calls to each church member to check in and say hello.

This committee likes to call ourselves "the fun committee" and we are always open to anyone who would like to join our team to think up new activities and carry out the plans. It's a blessing to have fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ.



FAITH FORMATION



Taryn Gross
Chairperson

Staff Support: Sara Pantazes

The Faith Formation Committee is pleased to share highlights from the past year, showcasing the ways in which we have nurtured faith across generations, deepened engagement in spiritual learning, and expanded our programs to meet the growing needs of our congregation.

Intergenerational Activities

Our commitment to fostering faith across generations was evident in our intergenerational programming. We hosted two Grand Camp Days, providing fun opportunities for grandparents and grandchildren to play together. Additionally, our Summer Sunday School VBS brought all ages together to celebrate God's creation and our responsibility to care for it, engaging children in meaningful lessons about stewardship and environmental care.

Adult Education Programs

We continued to offer programs aimed at helping adults connect their faith to contemporary challenges. Our study of **How to Know a Person** by David Brooks encouraged reflection on meaningful relationships, while our **Christian Nationalism class** led by Manfred Brauch sparked thoughtful discussions on faith and civic life. The **Can I Ask That?** series provided a safe space for wrestling with challenging political questions through a theological lens. Additionally, we hosted four **Lunch & Learns**, one-time Bible studies focused on lesser known people in the Bible to engage members in focused scriptural exploration.

Recognizing the importance of communal prayer, we introduced regular **Lectio Divina** sessions, offering six sessions in 2024 as an opportunity for contemplative Scripture reading and prayer.

Kids & Stewardship

Our youngest members actively participated in stewardship through special initiatives. In June they met with the head of **Lifetime Wells** to present their offering gift and learn about the impact of their generosity. We also introduced the **Pay It Forward** program, encouraging children to practice faith-inspired generosity in tangible ways.

FAITH FORMATION

Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women consists of five circles who meet monthly. In 2024, we gave financial support to 16 organizations, our sister church in Guatemala, and a First Pres individual through a student scholarship. We sponsored the Church World Service Blanket Sunday which provided 100 blankets to those in need. Our monthly collections supported the Leprosy Program, Fellowship of the Least Coin and our quarterly pledge to PW Donegal. We sponsored the spring Birthday Offering and the fall Thank Offering, each generously supported by our congregation. Total mission giving was \$6,000. We honored those women who have passed the previous year with books for our church and preschool libraries.



Updates on Regular Programs

Throughout the year, we sustained and enhanced our core faith formation programs:

- **Advent & Christmas:** We hosted a **Kids Advent Party**, provided a **take-home devotion book**, and crafted a **family-focused Christmas Eve service** to bring households together in worship.
- **Bible Distribution:** We celebrated a milestone in faith formation by gifting Bibles to **10 third graders**.
- **Young Justice Builders Club:** This program continued to inspire young minds by exploring themes of **environmental and disability justice**.
- **Sunday School Growth:** To accommodate increasing participation, **we opened a third Sunday School class in September**, ensuring high-quality learning environments for all children.
- **Growing Attendance:** From January to June 2024, our Sunday morning children's programs (Nursery, Sunday School, and Kids Connect) averaged 25 kids per Sunday. This number grew to 31 kids per Sunday from September to December, reflecting the vibrancy of our programs and the growing engagement of our families.



YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS



Holly Reigner
Co-Chair



Frank Skomorucha
Co-Chair

Staff Support: Emily Tang

The Youth and Young Adult Ministry had a fruitful and exciting year in 2024. Our goal remains to provide a safe, welcoming space for youth and young adults to deepen their faith, and this year we saw remarkable growth of over 50% compared to 2023 in our engagement. Through Bible studies, youth groups, small groups, retreats, and various events, we are proud to have created an engaging environment to minister to youth and young adults.

One significant success in 2024 was the introduction of seasonal service projects. In the Spring, Summer, and Fall, the youth group partnered with Rags2Riches Pet Rescue in Glen Mills, PA. They began by collecting donations and making blankets for the animals at the shelter. In the Summer, the group raised funds, went shopping for supplies, and volunteered at the shelter. In the Fall we also participated in co-hosting a dog adoption event in the borough!

Another impactful service project involved creating and distributing free flower bouquets in the community, a gesture that was met with overwhelming gratitude by borough residents. This service project program will continue in 2025, as we plan to partner with the Philadelphia Project for additional service opportunities, including a week-long service/mission trip.

2024 also saw the launches of our first Youth Summer Refresh Retreat and Young Adult Summer Retreat, both of which were incredibly successful and will be continued as annual traditions. In addition to these retreats, we created the "Girls Group" and "Guys Group", where youth gathered weekly during the summer for devotions, discussions, and fellowship. These small groups were a huge success and will also return in 2025.

Throughout the year, youth participated in weekly Bible studies that alternated between studying Old and New Testament scriptures. They participated in topical studies during Sunday afternoon youth group. These discussions covered a wide variety of topics such as "How to Pray," "Mental Health and Faith," and "Significant Names in the Bible," helping to guide the youth in both their spiritual journeys and their daily lives.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

In addition to these core activities, there were a variety of monthly events, including Arts and Crafts Nights, Christmas and Halloween Parties, Cupcake Decorating Competitions, several day trips, and much more. These events not only provided fellowship opportunities but also introduced new members to our faith community. Lastly, the youth loved being a part of the intergenerational aspects of our church (e.g., such as Youth Sunday, Bells, Choir, etc.)

The Young Adult ministry also experienced significant growth and engagement. The Young Adult Summer Retreat was a powerful experience, and throughout the Fall, we met every Monday for a devotional series. On the first Monday of each month, young adults gathered for themed fellowship events, such as paint nights, game nights, restaurant nights, all of which began with a Bible verse and devotion connected to the event's theme. These monthly gatherings have fostered a vibrant and supportive community, and we plan to continue this ministry in 2025.

We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to help lead and support of Emily Tang and the Youth and Young Adult Ministries of First Pres.

We are also grateful for our exceptional youth leaders, Sophia Guerriero, Brooke Gamble, Howard Lebold, Elizabeth Guman, Steph McFillin, and Emily Lewis. They have been instrumental in nurturing the spiritual growth of our youth. Their dedication, week after week, has had a lasting impact on our ministry.

Overall, the year has been a wonderful one with a plethora of faith formation, service, leadership, fellowship, discipleship, and community opportunities for our youth and young adults. As we look ahead to 2025, we are excited for the continued growth and impact of our Youth and Young Adult Ministries. The foundations we've built this year gives us great hope for even higher engagement, deeper faith, and broader service opportunities. Thank you for your continued prayers and support as we move forward in faith.



THE BUCKET SCHOOL



Jen Rosenberg
Director

Staff Support: Rev. Andrew Esqueda

At the beginning of 2024, The Bucket School had 69 students in the school. This broke down to 27 PreK students, 24 three-year-olds, and 18 two-year-olds. The Bucket School was able to secure a grant to enable three students to receive a scholarship which covered their tuition which their families would not be able to afford.

In September of 2024, The Bucket School had 78 students registered. We began offering a 5-day option for the twos and threes, and 7 parents took advantage of this option. The total number of student spaces for the school is 90 and with the number of 5-day students, we had only 5 open spaces at the end of 2024. We also started the 2-day twos class in September instead of January. Enrollment has begun and we are moving forward with registering and filling up for the 2025-2026 school year. Next year, we are adding a 2-day PreK class which will run from 9am-2pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

This class will better emulate the full day kindergarten classes that WCASD offers while creating room for more students. The Bucket School employed 12 part time teachers and 5 substitute teachers in 2024. During the year, the students met monthly with Sara Pantazes, Director of Faith Formation, for a chat about their relationship with God. The students love having Mini Worship and look forward to Miss Sara's stories and songs. The Bucket School also has a music class once a month, during which someone comes in to demonstrate their instrument, and many of those who volunteered have been members of the church including Sándor, Charlie Myhre, Andrew Esqueda and Adriana Park. Although it is not a requirement to be a member of First Presbyterian for a child to attend the school, several new families have joined the church because of being involved with The Bucket School.



MISSION



Peter Guman
Chairperson

Staff Support: Rev. Caroline Cupp

Our Missions committee continues to serve our neighbors in Chester County and people in need throughout the world with an emphasis on hunger and housing support.

Our 2024 Lenten Matthew 25 campaign raised \$32,436 to assist with urgent housing, hunger, and transportation needs in Chester County. These funds were combined with other donations, so that over the course of the year 76 individuals received \$41,971 in emergency aid. In addition, many others were connected with local nonprofits and veterans' service organizations who could meet their needs.

Following custodian Willy Oliveras' retirement and move to North Carolina, his apartment at 122 W Miner was converted to affordable housing. We now operate five apartments rented to families with young children or affected by disability.

Friends Association continues to provide case management services and support for this project; Joe Schorn and Craig Single manage the the building. The program is running smoothly and has provide safe, stable housing for vulnerable individuals in an extremely challenging West Chester housing market.

The Wednesday Lunch program continues to thrive, welcoming dozens of people each week for a warm, nourishing meal. The lunch has brought new members to the church and drawn a wide number of volunteers who donate side dishes, serve, and help with set-up; many have formed deep connections with our regular guests. Church member Chrisetta Nyepan is a professional chef and provides delicious food each week, along with renting our kitchen for her West African food business.

The Missions committee hosted a visit from leaders of the Presbyterian Education Board, an organization which provides high-quality education to low-income girls and boys in Pakistan. Funds that First Pres members give support residential schools that prepare children for college and decrease infant and maternal mortality. Offerings donated to Living Waters International, raised in part by our Sunday School classes, financed a well bringing clean water to a remote village in the Oti region of Ghana.

MISSION

In November the Guatemala Partnership committee sponsored a visit to our sister church in Villa Nueva. Four members visited Iglesia Getsemani and continued the fellowship and commitment of this 21-year covenant relationship.

Migrant Ministry ran a number of events supporting recent immigrants, including an Easter Basket event which supplied much-needed groceries and a Christmas gift program. Our Giving Tree ministry raised over \$11,000 to support neighbors in need through organizations like Friends Association, MCHC, North Star, and Pocopson Home.

2024 was again a busy year for First Crew. They provided countless volunteer hours preparing the new Act in Faith facility for occupancy. First Crew's other largest mission partner is The Barn at Spring Brook Farm where over the past year volunteers painted in the barn, repaired and surfaced ramps and resurfaced the driveway. Additional projects were undertaken at Fame Fire House, Community Partners, Andrew Esqueda's home, and the rental apartments next to the church. A team once again traveled to Kentucky for our 21st national disaster relief trip. Numerous projects at church included repair of the front steps and work on sanctuary pews. First Crew frequently takes on smaller projects throughout the greater West Chester community to assist persons in need.

Each year our church budget supports a number of local, national, and international mission partners with financial gifts and, where possible, volunteers and board members. In 2024 First Pres financially supported the following mission organizations:

- Act in Faith
- Friends Association
- Safe Harbor of West Chester
- West Chester Food Cupboard
- North Star of Chester County
- Good Samaritan
- Meals on Wheels
- Habitat for Humanity
- Kennett Area Community Services
- Chester County Migrant Ministry
- Domestic Violence Center
- West Chester Area Senior Center
- Chester County OIC
- Melton Center
- The Barn at Spring Brook Farm
- Getsemani Partnership (Guatemala)
- Presbyterian Education Board (Pakistan)
- Lifetime Wells (West Africa)
- Bev and Michael Harrar (Wycliff Bible Translators – Papua New Guinea)
- Naphtali (Lakota Sioux)
- Mission Co-Workers in the Congo, Haiti, Peru, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi

FINANCE



Bob Smith
Chairperson

Staff Support: Rev. Andrew Esqueda

This year's financial report includes a summary of our results in 2024 and our budget for 2025. There are important updates on how our finances will be managed going forward. The 2024 budget was \$1,163,268 and the 2025 budget is \$1,272,951, an increase of \$109,683 (9.4%).

We are on a firm financial foundation, thanks to your generosity in supporting First Presbyterian Church, West Chester, the faithful stewardship of the staff and your elected Elders, Trustees and Deacons. 2024 Budget Results had a small deficit of expenses over income of slightly over \$44,000 because of small decreases in income and an increase in our church programs. The personnel budget for 2025 is higher than 2024 to add a staff person to help Andrew Esqueda and Caroline Cupp in their administrative duties. For 2025 we are using four percent of the income and three percent of the investment fund income to help balance the budget. Both funds were earning more than the interest being withdrawn so the amount in the funds is not decreasing.

This year we begin the year fully staffed, unlike recent years. The Finance Committee has been evaluating the potential to outsource elements of our financial management for nearly two years. During that time, we looked at several potential candidates, as well as the pros and cons of outsourcing. During 2023 we made the decision to engage Missional Business Services (MBS) to support our financial reporting needs. MBS specializes in servicing the fiscal management needs of churches. In addition to handling day-to-day financial operations and reports, they also provide support for contract negotiations with insurance and other service providers, as well as insights into best practices. The transition to MBS began in December 2023 and was completed during the first quarter of 2024.

We are also looking at a variety of new financial systems that are widely used by other churches to help with our current process and have more efficient systems. We anticipate deciding and implementing a new system in the first half of 2025.

The church is growing and adding new members of all ages. We are also expanding our opportunities to participate in various church activities. The budget is increased for 2025 to reflect the cost of innovative programs along with our continued support of the established ministries of our Church.

INVESTMENTS



Jim Serum
Chairperson

Staff Support: Rev. Andrew Esqueda

In 2024 our Investment Team transferred our Legacy Endowment Fund and Mission Endowment Fund assets to Texas Presbyterian Foundation (TPF) to assure investment management oversight by a proven organization. TPF has a long and successful track record of nearly 100 years supporting the mission and ministries of their partners. They have a well-defined investment management process and an at-cost business model that keeps their asset management fees very low.

TPF also provides extensive tools and resources to assist their clients with establishing and sustaining Legacy Giving programs. The Investment Committee also established a Reserve Fund in 2023 to be used for larger, unanticipated, and non-budgeted needs of the church. That fund remains with Vanguard for immediate access when needed.

Our Legacy Endowment Fund and Mission Endowment Fund are invested in the TPF Balanced Fund which has a consistent investment philosophy as our investment team. Their published statement: The TPF Balanced Fund is appropriate for churches and institutions seeking a fully managed, diversified portfolio for the long term investment of endowment and other permanent funds.

The combined Funds listed on pg. 33 below shows a healthy 18.8% growth for FY2024 ending in a balance of \$2,695,202. Other investment funds such as the Morgan Music Scholarship fund, Thompson Memorial Fund, Presbyterian Foundation invested at various places grew on average about 7%. We're thankful our total investments grew by 12.9% to \$3,128,677.

2024 & 2025 FINANCIALS

Income	2024 Budget	2024 Actuals	2025 Budget
Pledge	\$916,185	\$922,775	\$970,000
Non-Pledge	\$133,083	\$113,309	\$120,000
Other Giving	\$23,000	\$23,130	\$17,200
Empl. Tax Credit	\$0	\$0	\$0
Preschool	\$7,000	\$0	\$0
Investment Transfer	\$0	\$1,143	\$81,751
Property Rentals	\$84,000	\$84,000	\$84,000
Total Income	\$1,163,268	\$1,144,357	\$1,272,951

2024 & 2025 FINANCIALS

Expenses	2024 Budget	2024 Actuals	2025 Budget
Personnel	\$770,474	\$759,364	\$842,274
Programs	\$70,561	\$78,493	\$84,945
Administration	\$77,482	\$74,691	\$77,482
Communications	\$20,750	\$28,695	\$20,750
Building & Grounds	\$102,001	\$124,214	\$125,000
Mission	\$122,000	\$123,255	\$122,500
Total Expenses	\$1,163,268	\$1,188,712	\$1,272,951
Income vs. Expense	\$0	(\$44,354)	\$0

INVESTMENT BALANCE

Fund	Dec. 31, 2024	June 30, 2024	Dec. 31, 2023	2024 Change
Legacy Endowment	\$1,892,792	\$1,826,301	\$1,645,953	\$246,839
Mission Endowment	\$115,256	\$111,208	\$103,872	\$11,384
Total Endowment	\$2,008,048	\$1,937,509	\$1,749,825	\$258,223
Reserves	\$687,154	\$743,158	\$518,873	\$168,281
Total Endowment/Reserves	\$2,695,202	\$2,680,667	\$2,268,698	\$426,504
Presbyterian Foundation				
Morgan Music Scholarship	\$20,984	\$20,024	\$19,583	\$1,400
McCardle Music	\$4,238	\$3,847	\$3,763	\$475
MacIver Music Scholarship	\$5,448	\$5,199	\$5,084	\$364
Thompson Memorial	\$15,902	\$15,175	\$14,841	\$1,061
Eelles Scholarship	\$10,896	\$10,398	\$10,169	\$727
Total Presbyterian Foundation	\$57,468	\$54,644	\$53,440	\$4,028
Whiteley - BNYM	-	-	\$61,591	-\$61,591
Bogle - Wells Fargo	\$141,007	\$138,410	\$135,456	\$5,551
Shared Equity Mortgages	\$235,000	\$247,000	\$252,000	-\$17,000
Total Investments	\$3,128,677	\$3,120,722	\$2,771,185	\$357,491

RENTAL PROPERTIES

Financial Activity	2024	2023
Total Income	\$141,254	\$142,780
Operating Expenses	\$42,695	\$ 36,087
Transfer to GoF	\$84,000	84,000
Margin	\$14,559	\$ 22,693
Balance Sheet		
Total Cash	\$251,616	\$ 237,056
Total Investments (Bldg)	\$1,656,937	\$1,656,937
Total Assets	\$1, 908,553	\$1,893,993
Liabilities		
Security Deposits	\$10,855	\$ 10,855
Fund Balance		
Unrestricted	\$1,883,139	\$1,860,445
Current Yr. UFB	\$14,559	\$ 22,693
Total Fund Balance	\$1,897,698	\$1,883,139
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$1,908,553	\$1,893,993



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