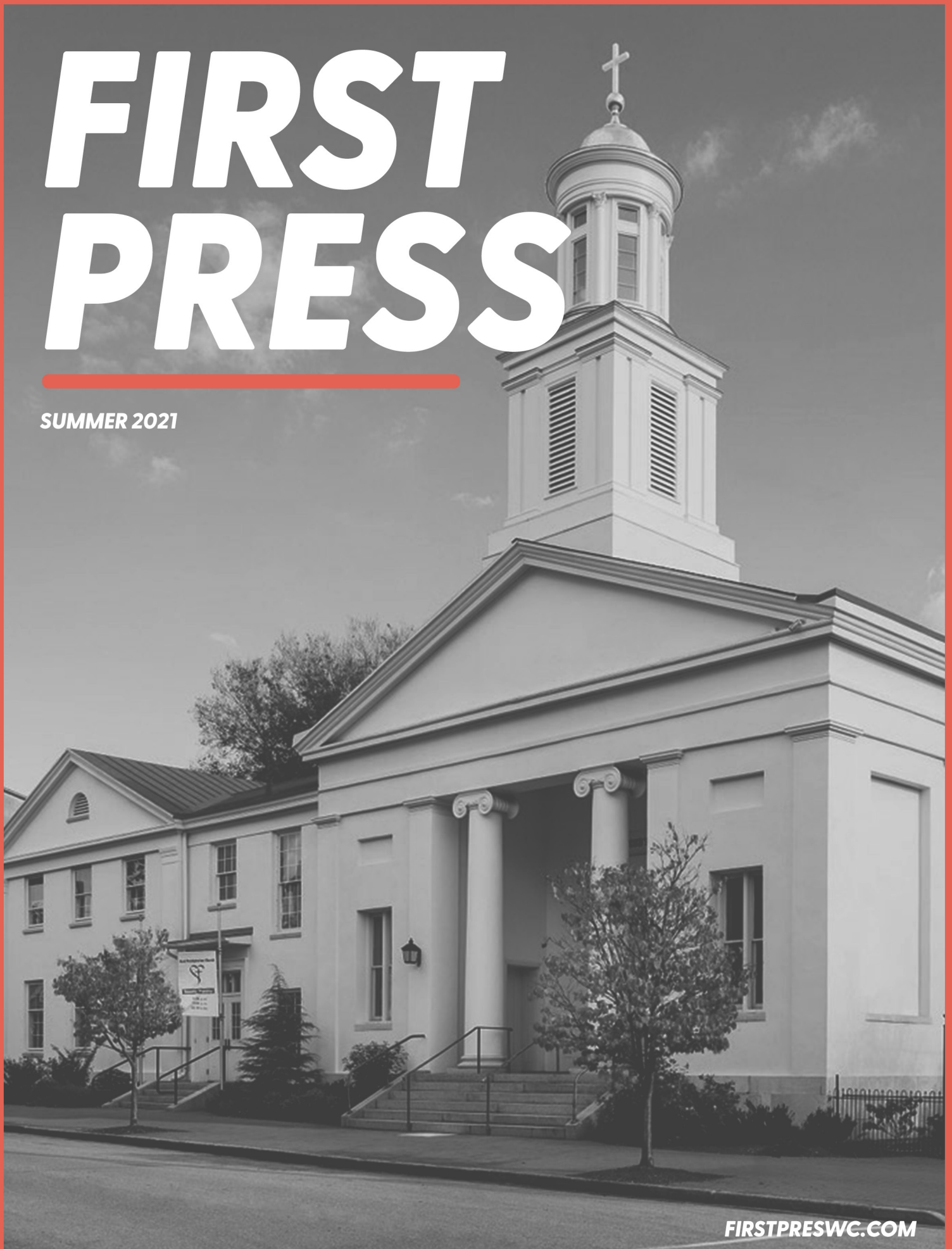


FIRST PRESS

SUMMER 2021



FIRSTPRESWC.COM

Have an *Interesting* Summer

Life is such an interesting experience. After the year we have shared, this summer promises many new adventures. While they may be different from the adventures of earlier years, this year holds something special for each of us. We can go again! We may not go as far or as often—but we can go!

Life is something that unfolds in very unexpected ways. It's not as though we haven't had plans or don't make them; it's just we have found that plans have a way of veering off onto paths we never anticipated. And so, we have found that it's best to make plans—but know that things will happen and opportunities will arise.

Focus can make life even more interesting. I think that the basic building block in living an interesting life is to keep our focus on the One who calls us into life in the first place. That's what faith is about: trusting in God, as the breeze of the Spirit blows through our lives and the place where we are. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and mystic, wrote a prayer in his journal, *Thoughts in Solitude*, that can easily be our guide through this interesting life. I love the way it expresses this sort of trust in God:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me. and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

The church has many interesting opportunities available this summer. I hope you will read the rest of this newsletter and take advantage of these many opportunities. We will continue to celebrate indoor, in-person worship this summer, as more and more people are feeling comfortable enough to join together. There are many groups and smaller gatherings to enjoy interests and each other's company. If you have anything else in mind, don't hesitate to give us a call and share your idea. We are open!

Many of our friends are heading onto summer adventures now. Some are going to other homes and families; some are going on adventures to see other parts of our country. Some are going somewhere—but there are many exciting places right near home. Wherever you go and whatever you do, live an interesting life this summer, in which you can acknowledge both the adventure and the risk of living fully and completely in the trust of an all-knowing and all-loving God. See you Sunday...or in September...see you soon. Have an “interesting” summer!



We're all in this together,

BB Sheldon

Summer Activities

If you're looking for something fun to do this summer as we collectively ease back into adding things to our calendars, First Pres is offering summer activities for all ages. At the time of printing, we have seven groups planned, but there is always room for more! If there is something you'd like to see that is not on this list, please reach out to Elizabeth at ehess@firstpreswc.com. Some groups will meet weekly and some monthly; some are outdoors in person and some are over zoom; the comfort levels of those who sign up will determine whether it's in-person or online. More details can be found at firstpreswc.com/summeractivities.

Summer Book Club will read *The Book of Longings*, by Sue Monk Kidd

Craft Beer Group will meet monthly over Zoom and in-person

Baking Group will meet monthly over Zoom

Mini Golf Group will meet monthly

Holy Rascals Book Study will meet weekly for five weeks

Playground Group will meet on Thursdays at East Bradford Park

Wine Tasting Group will meet once, in person (outdoors)

Lenten Groups 2021

This spring, in the interest of finding new ways to connect before we were able to see each other in person, the church offered a variety of groups led by congregation members. There was everything from baking and photography to gardening, wine tasting, and Mario Kart. Groups like this may seem to have had nothing to do with a season that's supposed to be all about repentance. But...the word repentance means to turn, to see something differently, and in doing so we see God more clearly. Each of the groups offered an invitation to see something differently, to fill our mind, body, or spirit with something that might be life-giving for the year to come. Some of us needed intellectual stimulation, others an invitation to get outside, and still others the chance to laugh and enjoy fellowship with their church family. We had 14 groups with over 90 participants. It was a joy to connect, grow and laugh together.



Matthew 25

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of First Pres members, 2021's Matthew 25 campaign was a great success. To date \$45,035 has been raised for neighbors experiencing housing insecurity, blowing away our \$25,000 Lenten goal. These gifts have allowed us to give much-needed funding to Friends Association and Kennett Area Community Services, two agencies on the front lines of the housing crisis. It will also enable First Pres to expand our Graduation Grant program for West Chester University students served by the Promise Program, which supports those who are homeless or who have aged out of foster care. Remaining funds will be distributed to neighbors with urgent housing or transportation needs who cannot be served by existing agencies.

At Friends Association, your gifts were directed toward the Eviction Prevention program, assisting families at risk of eviction with emergency housing payments, mediation, and crafting solutions that protect both renters and landlords. Kennett Area Community Services provides support to those experiencing homelessness and other housing-related struggles, in addition to operating a food pantry that serves many Southern Chester County families. Graduating Promise Program students work with WCU staff on a grant application for essentials they will need after leaving undergrad, including first month's rent and security deposits, transportation, and moving expenses.

Last year's Matthew 25 funding helped First Pres to offer support to dozens of local families struggling with lack of housing, back utility bills, and healthcare concerns. While Chester County boasts excellent nonprofit agencies, there are many who fall through the cracks because their situations do not fall into the exact criteria needed to receive agency support. First Pres members were able to move a young mother from a motel into an apartment, helped with transportation costs so that families could make it to work, and provided emergency utility supports.



Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ in our community.

Per Capita Giving

What is Per Capita Giving and What Does it do?

"Per Capita" is a Latin term that translates to "by head." Our Per Capita is \$35.38 per "head" or member. All Presbyterian churches contribute to Per Capita because it supports our denomination regionally, nationally, and internationally. Locally, Donegal Presbytery uses Per Capita funds to support mission projects in our area, around the country, and world-wide. The Presbytery also provides programs of national interest by respected authorities on various topics. In addition, Per Capita allows our Presbytery to provide legal and advisory support to Donegal Presbytery churches with challenges they face, pandemic issues, and difficult situations that require additional support. We respectfully ask you to contribute \$35.38 for each church member in your house to cover your portion of this shared ministry. First Pres pays the full per capita amount of about \$40k to Donegal Presbytery regardless of amounts contributed by our members. Any shortfall then reduces amounts available for mission and ministry. While \$35.38 may seem like a small amount, it can be cost-prohibitive for some of our members. If you are able to provide a per capita payment for a member unable to do so, it will help the church allocate more of our general operating funds for local mission. Thank you for your support.

Anti-Racism Photo Project

Last summer, members of First Pres participated in three book studies to learn about the presence of racism in our country. One church member was inspired by the conversations to create a Racial Justice Journeys photo essay. He invited members of the book groups to write their “aha” moments, to share when and how they came to recognize racism more fully around them and how they responded. These photo essays are now posted on the church’s website at firstpreswc.com/racial-justice-journeys. The participants shared them with the public in hopes that those who look at them will know that there is plenty of grace-filled space in our church community for self-reflection, learning and repentance. As individuals share their learnings and the ways they are growing with others, we hope to collectively become a force that more effectively advocates for God’s love and justice in our community, our country and our world.



Deacons

In 2021 the First Pres Deacons moved to a new ministry model, taking back up the parish ministry structure that the church previously used. The groups of households, or parishes, are each served by a deacon who serves as an ongoing source of care and connection with the church. Parishes are organized not only by geography but also by life stage (for example, families with young children, or neighbors in a particular retirement community) and interest (music ministry). While this model is still only a few months old, the benefits are already clear as relationships between members are strengthened and new friendships are formed. Thank you to our deacons for your care and enthusiasm in this ministry, and to all our members who have so warmly received their calls, letters, and emails.

Music Ministry Plans

The program year 2020/2021 was like no other year before. I like to use the description “the year of tentative planing in an ever changing world.” However, I am still grateful for this past program year because it showed me the dedication level of those involved in the music ministry. First Pres would not have been able to have a versatile and high level musical offerings on Sunday mornings or a fully prerecorded Candlelight Christmas Concert without the 50 plus volunteers who were willing to attend weekly rehearsals even during pandemic times. Together we made possible what other churches could not dream about this past season. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Special thanks to Eric Hankins, Creative Arts Director, who was in charge of the recordings. Because of his service and commitment he was granted a honorary membership from all of the instrumental groups.

The summer months are around the corner and summer is traditionally the time of making plans for the new season. Trust me, I am never short of plans. The question is whether we will be able to execute the plans. I believe that with God’s help we will.

Sandor Kadar

Women's Bible Study

This spring, 18 women joined together over Zoom for six weeks as we discussed the book, "In His Image: 10 Ways God Calls Us to Reflect His Character." Our group isn't limited to First Pres members or even people who live locally – we've had participants from other churches and other states! We learned more about each other, learned how to become more Christ-like, and spent lots of time in laughter and conversation. We hope to have a women's get-together this summer; stay tuned for more info.



Congratulations Graduates

The following names of high school, college and grad school graduates were submitted. Our congratulations and best wishes to all 2021 graduates. We pray for God's blessings on them and wish them God's love and peace in all their future endeavors.

High School

Zeke Lieberman	Henderson High School
Mack Moore	Westtown School
Nolan Prochnau	Henderson High School
Emily Shearn	Henderson High School
Kate Shryock	Downingtown STEM Academy
Susie Stovell	Henderson High School
Brandon White	East High School
Garrett Ziss	PA Leadership Charter School's University Scholars Program

College

Kevin Aksu	St. Joseph's University
Hannah Atchinson	Regent University
Kevin Diestelow	The College of William & Mary
Jennifer Gaffney	West Chester University
Megan Gamble	University of Pittsburgh
Kayleigh Shearn	Penn State University

Grad School

Tom Pantazes	West Chester University
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A Summer Prayer

We pray this summer is a time for refreshment, a time for hope, and a time for joy. May we be a church and a people whose love shines brightly in our community and in our world. Amen.

In Memoriam

- Dr. Earl T. Lewis, member from October 28, 1991 to February 22, 2021
- Alice Swan, member from June 26, 1995 to March 2, 2021
- Penelope J. McIlmoyle, member from February 21, 1971 to March 2, 2021
- Herbert O. Sperry, member from December 16, 2001 to March 5, 2021
- Mary C. Miller, member from September 24, 1972 to March 22, 2021
- Nadia S. Rosengarten, member from May 4, 2008 to April 3, 2021
- Mary E. Hendricks, member from January 27, 1982 to December 2018

The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to:

- Jon and Jennifer Ray Beckman and family in the death of Jon’s dad
- Phil and Gwyn Heaver and family in the death of Phil’s sister
- Elle Lewis and family in the death of her husband, Earl, and son-in-law
- Ed and Peggy Ebright and family in the death of Ed’s mother, Edna Jane
- The family of Alice Swan
- Gary McIlmoyle and Pam Stathopoulos and families in the death of their mother, Penny
- Chris, Cynthia and Carolyn Menan and family in the death of Cynthia’s father and Carolyn’s grandfather, Herbert Sperry
- George and Gerri Zumbano and family in the death of George’s mother
- Jeff and Becky Johnson and family in the death of Jeff’s mother
- The family of Mary Miller
- Ellen Endsloew and family in the death of her father, James Endsloew
- Gene, Gail, Samantha and John Rader and family in the death of Gail’s mother, Nadia Rosengarten
- Dick, Linda, Andy and Julie Seiwel and family in the death of Linda’s sister and Andy and Julie’s aunt
- David Sommers and Sallie Yoder and family in the death of Sallie’s grandmother
- Terry and Janice Engle and family in the death of Janice’s father
- The family of Mary Hendricks
- Adriana Visscher and family in the death of her grandson

We celebrate the baptism of:

- Connor Jack Skinner, born June 10, 2019, son of Benjamin and Leanne Skinner
- Mila Lynn Rowan, born April 1, 2020, daughter of Brandon and Priscilla Rowan
- Eleanor Lee Ohms, born July 31, 2020, daughter of Stephen and Elyse Ohms

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	April Actual	April Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Full Year Budget
Income	\$103,684	\$103,919	\$540,601	\$515,062	\$1,260,105
Expenses	\$77,616	\$91,021	\$411,476	\$459,063	\$1,260,105
Difference	\$26,068	\$12,898	\$129,125	\$55,999	\$0

FIRST PRES
CONTACT

Interim Pastor

Rev. Bob Sheldon
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Executive Pastor

Rev. Caroline Cupp
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Program Staff

Director of Music: Sándor Kádár
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Children’s Music/Accompanist: Kira Boros
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Director of Engagement: Elizabeth Hess
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Director of Christian Education: Sara Pantazes
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Creative Arts Director: Eric Hankins
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Church Office

Director of Operations: Jeff Somers
jsomers@firstpreswc.com

Office Manager: Karen Goldstein
kgoldstein@firstpreswc.com

Administrative Assistant: Claire Kramer
ckramer@firstpreswc.com

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Location: church backyard, sanctuary, social hall, choir room
Classes: percussion, piano, guitar and singing for kids age 7+,
and percussion and singing for kids ages 4-6, plus fun group games
Registration will be required.

MUSIC CAMP

SUMMER
AUGUST 16 - 18

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

130 West Miner Street
West Chester, PA 19382

