



**March 29**

Operation Easter Basket  
11:45 a.m.

**April 9 & 10**

April 9: Maundy Thursday  
April 10: Good Friday  
Both services at 7:00 p.m.

**April 12**

Easter Services  
6:30, 9:00, and 10:42 a.m.

# FIRST PRESS

First Presbyterian Church, West Chester, PA

March/April 2020

*"Whatever we do for the least of these, we do for Christ."*

## MATTHEW 25: WHAT'S NEXT?

God is leading First Pres through a very special and important time. It began almost a year ago when the Session went through a process of discernment asking God, "What's next for the ministry of First Pres?". After three months of prayer and study, the answer became very clear. Based on Jesus' words in Matthew 25, the next stage of our church's ministry was to center on God's work toward those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity in Chester County.

We quickly discovered we didn't know enough about our calling and the issue we were going to tackle. For this reason, our next step was to research, study and educate ourselves. A Matthew 25 leadership team was formed as we all engaged in a study of two outstanding books: Alan Graham's *Welcome Homeless: One Man's Journey of Discovering the Meaning of Home* and Matthew Desmond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. In our study and discussions we found ourselves overwhelmed with the scope of the problem of homelessness. In the same breath, we found ourselves encouraged by Desmond's

encouragement to not wait until a plan to tackle the entirety of the problem was developed. Instead, we are called to simply do something, begin where we are, and let God lead us in the journey.

After a couple of sermons including one by author Shane Claiborne, and a few small but significant projects, we launched the Matthew 25 campaign for the congregation on January 1st, 2020. This included a church-wide invitation to study and discuss Graham's book. To date, we know of seven groups and a total of 65+ church members who have read the book and are praying for God to lead us in our next steps.

Simultaneously, our congregation has been listening to a total of eight Matthew 25 podcasts featuring church members, staff, local and national leaders doing some amazing work in this area. Even our children are part of this initiative through their own Young Justice Builders Club.

*continued inside...*



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## **MATTHEW 25: 2020 LENT CAMPAIGN**

Many have obviously asked, "What's next?" As you know, any new ministry initiative will require funding, but we want to not just raise money, but to be fully involved and establish relationships with those doing ministry with, for and among those experiencing homelessness. This leads us to this year's Matthew 25: 2020 Lent Campaign.

Replacing our mission-focused Summer campaigns, Session unanimously voted to hold a Matthew 25 Lent campaign with the goal of raising - you guessed it - \$25,000 to fund homelessness-related initiatives.

To best use the gifts of the congregation, we are partnering with two amazing organizations: Friends Association and the West Chester University Promise program.

We have a long-standing relationship with Friends Association. They are an important organization which runs a family emergency shelter, as well as several homeless prevention programs. These funds will allow them to directly provide temporary shelter and support for families in need. To find out more about their mission, go to [friendsassoc.org](http://friendsassoc.org)

We will also partner with West Chester University through their Promise Program. Each year, this program supports 30+ students facing homelessness or housing insecurity. These are students who have been part of the foster care system, international students lacking the necessary resources, and LGBTQ students without the support of their families among others. The Promise Program helps provide housing over breaks, goods and supplies from the Resource Pantry, monthly dinners, and mentorship. There is a key need for many of these students to have access to the necessary resources upon graduation. First Pres is excited about this new partnership.

Most importantly, we believe God has already been stirring the heart of many of our church members and groups with dreams and ideas to put into practice. For this reason, part of the Matthew 25 Lent funds will go to finance your own God-inspired ministry. This is a new relationship-based, direct involvement initiative. Look for more information on this initiative toward the end of the campaign..

Additionally, the pastors are regularly approached by community members with specific housing related needs. When a referral to a local mission partner is not possible, the pastors have been able to find limited funds to help. This need averages close to \$5,000 a year. The Matthew 25 campaign will provide these much needed funds.

## **LENT: WE GO WITHOUT FOR THOSE WHO ARE WITHOUT**

\$25,000 seems like a very large number. Recognizing that everyone has different abilities to contribute, we are recommending the following thought process as a Lent spiritual exercise:

Most of us give up something for the season in recognition of the practice of self-denial. Some give up chocolate. Others give up soda, or eating out, etc. What if we could give up something to help others in need? In other words, would we be able to go without this season for those who are without? Here is my very particular scenario: If I give up coffee for the season (except for Sunday mornings), plus one family night out during Lent, and instead of eating in town, I bring lunch from home once a week, my Lent discipline will add up to \$250, which is what I will donate to the Matthew 25 Lent campaign this year. Now we just need 99 more of us to do this.

This is only one example. Some may be able to give more, some less. Some may not want to give up anything at all, but will contribute as they have done in past mission campaigns. Whatever your involvement, join us in prayer and let God guide you.

To give to the campaign, just contact the church office (610-696-0554) or go online to **[firstpreswc.com/give](http://firstpreswc.com/give)** What are you willing to give up this Lent to provide shelter for a family who is starting again or for a graduating student facing housing insecurity? Join us this Lent. Dream of new homelessness-related initiatives, and be amazed at what God can do.

- Pastor Greg Stovell

# YOUNG JUSTICE BUILDERS CLUB

## i.e. Matthew 25 for Kids

*Justice building: helping restore the world to the way God intended it to be*

In our first two sessions this year, the Young Justice Builders of First Pres learned about the many factors that contribute to whether and how a person experiences poverty. We wondered about why some people have so much and others so little and considered how God empowers us to pay attention and respond to those in need.

This spring we will continue learning and begin working together to decide how we want to specifically respond to the needs in our community.

The Young Justice Builders Club is for at elementary-aged children (Kindergarten- 5th grade) and we request that a parent or other caring adult attend with their children. We meet once a month on Sundays after church from noon - 1 pm.



### Upcoming dates:

March 22: Building a Sense of "Us"

April 26: So What Do We Do?

Families are encouraged to join us anytime; attendance of previous meetings is not required. Lunch is provided as part of the program so RSVPs are requested. Please contact Director of Christian Education, Sara Pantazes, to RSVP and discuss any questions - (610) 696-0554 or [spantazes@firstpreswc.com](mailto:spantazes@firstpreswc.com)

## BLANKET SUNDAY - APRIL 19 - BAKE SALE

Want to make an impact? You can make a difference in someone's life by helping Presbyterian Women raise funds for blankets distributed to people in need. Last year, Church World Service gave away 59,173 blankets in the United States alone. For as little as \$20 you can buy a blanket for a homeless individual.

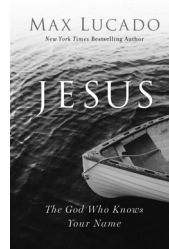
When you are homeless, a blanket can be a coat, and a cover. It can provide warmth and comfort. When you need privacy, a blanket can be a wall, a curtain and also provide shade. When you need to carry things it can be a tote, a bag and a way to carry books for children.

So please help Presbyterian Women by stopping by our bakery shop during coffee hour on Sunday, April 19. You can also make a donation by using the Church World envelopes located in the pews. Please make your checks payable to First Presbyterian Church so we can record the donations. Make your impact on the world. Make a difference in someone's life. Thank you for your support.

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." - Psalm 46:1 NRSV*

## WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Do you ever feel like Jesus couldn't possibly know what you are going through? He's the God of the universe after all! Does he really know your daily struggles? The good news is: he does. Learn more about this by joining the Women's Bible Study on **Wednesday evenings** from 6:15-7:30 p.m. from **March 18 - April 29**. We'll be studying Max Lucado's newest book, *Jesus: The God Who Knows Your Name*. The cost is \$10 for the workbook (scholarships available). Sign up at [firstpreswc.com](http://firstpreswc.com) or contact Elizabeth Hess ([ebhess801@gmail.com](mailto:ebhess801@gmail.com)) or Sandy Lebold ([hs.lebold@verizon.net](mailto:hs.lebold@verizon.net)) with questions.



# VBS (June 21-25, 2020)



Registration is now open for this summer's Knights of North Castle Vacation Bible School program. Participants will spend the week as Knights in search of the King's Armor, based on the "Armor of God" passage found in Ephesians 6: 10-20.

We hope lots of kids, youth and adults are excited to join the fun! More information for participants and volunteers is available at [www.firstpreswc.com/vbs](http://www.firstpreswc.com/vbs) or contact Director of Christian Education Sara Pantazes by calling the church office or emailing [spantazes@firstpreswc.com](mailto:spantazes@firstpreswc.com).

## THANK YOU! - BOOK DRIVE

Last summer, we ran a book drive for two schools. One of the schools was in Cameroon, Africa and we just recently received this note and picture from them:

"We are so excited to say that we have received the books that you sent!! THANK YOU SO MUCH!!! They are all so shiny and new—our kids can't wait to read them! Please pass on our thanks to the many people in your church who donated."

— Director of the Greenhouse School in Yaounde, Cameroon

As always, thank you for your extravagant generosity and your heart for children!



## WELCOME (BACK) ELIZABETH!

Elizabeth Hess has joined the First Pres staff as Director of Engagement. This part-time position is new for our church, and two of its main components are visitor outreach and volunteer connection. It includes overseeing the congregation's Sunday morning hospitality, reaching out to visitors and guiding people from their first-time visit through membership and full engagement in the life of the church. In addition, Elizabeth hopes to engage the First Pres congregation's volunteer ministry within the church and the community at large, working towards having every member involved in regular service inside and/or outside First Pres.

While she's not brand-new to working at the church (she served as Director of Marketing from 2004-2014), Elizabeth is very excited to join the staff again. "I loved my time working at First Pres and I'm thrilled to be back. I'm looking forward to serving in this new role and I'm genuinely excited about 'meeting and greeting' our church members and guests each Sunday morning, and connecting people with meaningful ways to get involved at First Pres."

Elizabeth and her husband, Wade, live in West Chester with their two daughters, Natalie and Lauren. She loves all things West Chester and also enjoys reading, walking in town, and baking.





# YOUTH RETREAT

Over Valentine's Day weekend, our youth group took 28 students up to Gretna Glen Camp and Retreat Center for our 3rd annual Winter Refresh retreat. This year's theme, "For the Love of...", focused on strengthening three specific relationships: each student to each other in our group, each student to God, each student and the group to the mission of God.

Our students created strong bonds throughout the weekend, and many of the students felt an urge to take next steps in their faith. They also spent some time on Saturday serving the local and global community. Through connections with Immanuel United Methodist church, students packed over 150 birthing kits that will be sent to midwives in Kenya. The hosts from the church encouraged our students to not only pack the kits, but to be in prayer for the lives that would be preserved through the making of these kits.

Every year, we see students grasp faith with more and more clarity. This year was another great step toward our church-wide value of intentional faith development. We ask you to pray for our students as the year continues. We still have a busy schedule this year, featuring: Confirmation and Youth Sundays, our annual lock-in, summer mission and faith development trips, and more. We thank each of you for your donations, support of the spaghetti dinners, and support throughout the year!



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**14th Annual**

# Weekend with the Arts

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**March 6-8, 2020**

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

# JUST KEEP PRAYING

## FOR CAREGIVING AND WORSHIP

*"Let hope keep you joyful; in trouble stand fast; persist in prayer." - Romans 12:12*

This past year, groups of church members met to pray for ministries of the church. You are invited to KEEP PRAYING! To help you with this challenge, each newsletter will contain an article highlighting two ministries. Each ministry will be described along with suggested prayer items. Hope you are up to the challenge!

### Caregiving – Reflecting Risk-Taking Service

Many individuals in our church are committed to providing loving support to congregants who are experiencing difficulty such as illness, death, uncertainty, or fractured relationships. They provide support through a variety of programs: Deacons; Agape; Stephen Ministries; Prayer Band; and Transitioning Members. Pray that they will:

- Communicate God's comfort and love
- Find wisdom, faith and strength for each unique situation
- Be tuned to God's pointing them toward individuals in need of care, equipping them to provide it, and opening their eyes to broader issues affecting our congregation and community
- And that others will feel called to join them in some aspect of Caregiving Ministries

### Worship – Engaging in Passionate Worship

We come together each week to be reminded of who God is, and to bring our thanks and praise to God. Worship is expressed and supported through Sunday Morning worship (chapel, traditional and contemporary); Sacraments and Confirmation; Hospitality; Music Ministry; and Tech Team. We are thankful for the successful launch of Contemporary Worship with average weekly attendance of 70+.

Pray that through worship:

- People will feel welcomed and find their own best fit for worship
- People will be drawn closer to God in their lives through the liturgies and services
- Young people will confirm the faith that was begun through their baptism, and adults will be baptized who have never experienced that commitment to faith in God
- Church members will feel called to join in singing, playing instruments, helping with technology, and/or being part of hospitality

# FIRST PRES TRAVELERS - NASHVILLE

## NASHVILLE TRIP - APRIL 24-29

The First Pres Travelers group is planning a six-day trip to Nashville, TN and stops along the way and return. On our way, we will stop overnight at Bedford, VA and visit the National D-Day Memorial. On Saturday we will check into the Gaylord Opryland in Nashville and begin our personal exploration of this unique hotel and surroundings. On Sunday we will tour The Grand Ole Opry, and afterwards we will board the General Jackson Showboat for a show and luncheon cruise on the Cumberland River where we can view natural and historical sights. We will have a guided backstage tour of the Ryman Auditorium which was the home of the Grand Ole Opry from 1943-1974, and is considered the "Soul of Nashville." In 1892, the Ryman was established as the Union Gospel Tabernacle.

On Monday, we will tour the RCA Studio B and the Country Music Hall of Fame. At the Country Music Hall of Fame we will enjoy the Stories behind the Songs package. The evening will be capped with a relaxing performance at the Grand Ole Opry. On Tuesday we will arrive at Natural Bridge, VA where we will enjoy dinner and the "Drama of the Creation" light show. On Wednesday before checking out and heading home, we will have time to walk the famous Natural Bridge and visit the Indian Village and gift shop.

**Single - \$1685pp | Double - \$1335pp | Triple - \$1235 | Quad - \$1185**

For more info, contact Thom & Irene Clapper at [psuthom@verizon.net](mailto:psuthom@verizon.net) or 610-436-5667.

# GINNY BAUDER ORGAN

The Ginny Bauder Memorial Organ is currently being built by Pecs Organ Manufactory in Hungary. To see pictures of the building process, please go to [firstpreswc.com/organ](http://firstpreswc.com/organ). Mark your calendars for the **Box Organ Dedication Concert** on **May 3** at 4:00 p.m. It will be a big celebration with orchestra, soloists, choir, chancel organ, and, of course, the new box organ.

## COMING UP @ FIRST PRES

- March 6-8: Weekend with the Arts
- March 8: Organ-Trumpet-Voice Concert - 3:00 p.m.
- March 13: Movie Night - Frozen 2 - 6:00 p.m.
- March 22: Young Justice Builders Club - 12:00 p.m.
- March 29: Operation Easter Basket - 11:45 a.m.
- April 5: Palm Sunday - 8:00, 9:00, and 10:42 a.m.
- April 9: Maundy Thursday Service - 7:00 p.m.
- April 10: Good Friday Service - 7:00 p.m.
- April 12: Easter Services - 6:30, 9:00, and 10:42 a.m.
- April 19: Newsletter Submission Cutoff
- April 24: Youth Lock-in - 7:00 p.m.

**For a full calendar of events, visit  
[www.firstpreswc.com](http://www.firstpreswc.com) or contact the church office.**

### In Memoriam

- William F. Gilchrist, Jr., member from June 6, 1965 to February 14, 2020
- Russell LaVigne, member from February 26, 1990 to January 4, 2020
- June E. Reedy, former member from February 28, 1979 to February 27, 2012

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

- Elizabeth Gilchrist and family in the death of her husband, William
- Wanda LaVigne and family in the death of her husband, Russell
- Kevin and Mary Ann Fretz and family in the death of Mary Ann's mother, June Reedy

### Baptisms

- Joseph Howard Calderaro, born July 17, 2019, son of Joseph and Rainna Calderaro

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	January Actual	January Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Full Year Budget
Income	\$112,169	\$92,557	\$112,169	\$92,557	\$1,192,099
Expenses	\$102,298	\$117,968	\$102,298	\$117,968	\$1,192,099
Difference	\$9,871	(\$25,411)	\$9,871	(\$25,411)	\$0

# FIRST PRES CONTACT

## Senior Pastor

Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell  
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## Associate Pastor

Rev. Caroline Cupp  
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## Program

Music Director: Sándor Kádár  
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Children's Music/Accompanist: Kira Boros  
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Youth Ministry: Cole Seaman  
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Director of Christian Education: Sara Pantazes  
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Creative Arts Director: Eric Hankins  
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Nursery Coordinator: Maurisa Warren  
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Bucket School Director: Jen Drap  
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## Church Office

Finance and Operations: Jeff Somers  
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Administrative Assistant: Claire Kramer  
[ckramer@firstpreswc.com](mailto:ckramer@firstpreswc.com)

# HOLY WEEK



**Easter Sunday**

April 12 // 6:30, 9:00, & 10:42 a.m.

**Good Friday**

April 10 // 7:00 p.m.

**Maundy Thursday**

April 9 // 7:00 p.m.

**Palm Sunday**

April 5 // 8:00, 9:00, & 10:42 a.m.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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