



FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM



20  
22



ANNUAL  
REPORT



You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.

John 15:16



# The Reverend J.C. Austin

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian,

At the Annual Congregational Meeting in January of 2022, I said that I believed the new year would be “2020, too!” for us. What I meant by that was that at the beginning of 2020, this congregation was poised to move forward with energy and determination into the future to which God was calling us, and for which we had spent much of the previous 18 months preparing.

The Reverend J.C. Austin  
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff



We had established a whole series of ministry programs and systems; we had reexamined and rearticulated our sense of the mission for this congregation, as well as the core values that make us who we are; and we had determined several missional priorities to guide our work together over the next few years. We had even decided to establish a new full-time associate pastor position and were moving towards fulfilling that.

And so I said in the congregational meeting in January 2020 that I believed the coming year was going to be the year in which our preparations came to fruition and drove us into a new era of ministry. And I was right: but in a very different way than I anticipated! Because, of course, 2020 ended up being a season of quarantine with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and all our energy and creativity went into addressing the challenges it presented. So, last January, I said that I believed 2022 would be 2020, too, meaning a new chance for moving definitively into our future together.

I am pleased to say that came true in many ways, as you will see in this report. A series of exciting and fruitful experiments in our worship life and our discipleship and formation opportunities opened up new and impactful ministries in the life of our church. The Session’s ministry program committees facilitated that work by shifting their work from individual siloes into collaborative approaches. The Preschool expanded and continued to flourish under the leadership of new Director Tracy Leszcynski. And the Session and Trustees began a new level of strategic imagination and discernment regarding our church’s long-term mission, which I will talk more about in the 2023 Annual Meeting.

Those stories and so many more can be found in this annual report, and I encourage you to spend time reading it, savoring it, and being inspired by it. And I want to thank each and every one of you for your support of this church and our mission through the generosity of your time, your spirit, your financial gifts, your kind words, your patience, and your partnership. I am thrilled by the possibilities that are before us, and I am delighted to share in a new year of life and ministry with you in 2023!

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.C. Austin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail.

The Rev. J.C. Austin

# Worship

With Covid diminishing somewhat over the year, we were able to both resume familiar practices for in-person worship and explore new opportunities.

The choir resumed their presentation of live anthems in February, and the wearing of masks for everyone became optional in March. As an experimental church with wise and creative pastors, we tried a different type of service for Ash Wednesday, suggested by Jan Bickford. We convened in Fellowship Hall for an informal intimate service with communion passed from person to person. The feedback was positive from attendees, and we will occasionally continue this type of service in the future.

The Sanctuary Guild, consisting of Dan Magocs, Wendy Magocs, Froy Thompson, and Fran Spicer, continued faithfully helping to keep the Sanctuary in good shape for our services and to collect Friendship pad information. Also, the greeter and usher functions were combined to be more efficient. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped us maintain our goal of being a church that is welcoming to all!

While we have official greeters at the back of the church, *all* in our FPCB community are really greeters. We hope you carefully look for new faces and make a point to greet people before or after the service, as well as during the Passing of the Peace, so that we can build on our reputation as a friendly church.

In March, J.C. conducted a well-attended greeter training session that explored ways to help new people feel more included. Indeed, we have had a steady stream of new people checking out our services! Many have said that they discovered us online first and then decided to come in person.

We are indebted to Carol Burns, our Communications Manager, and the tech team of Aaron Kapes and Kyle Steele, along with Director of Music Ministries David Macbeth, for creating and maintaining our strong online presence.

In April, Bob Hunsicker arranged for some of our volunteer ushers to be trained in CPR by member, nurse, and instructor extraordinaire, Kathy Halkins.

In June, Cindy Simmons finished her long service of preparing scriptural introductions and Prayers for Illumination that have greatly enhanced our worship, and we are deeply grateful. She carefully cataloged all of the introductions which, since she completed more than one three-year cycle, can be used again and again in the future.

Rich Hjorth

*Chair*

Lindsey Chadbourn

*Co-chair*

Members:

The Rev. J.C. Austin (staff)

The Rev. Lindsey Altvater  
Clifton (staff)

David Macbeth (staff)

Amanda Gerrity

Beth Peters

Cynthia Simmons

Judy Smullen

Both Lindsey Chadbourn and Marie Rosenthal continued their ministry of arranging for lectors each week, and Glenn Rosetti and Darla Rosetti continued their ministry of communion preparation, both ministries being integral to the depth and meaning of our worship. However, their back-up, Chris Moravek, who filled in so well when Glenn and Darla were in Florida, has had to move, and we are seeking someone to fill that position. If you are available, please let us know! Also, we thank Jennifer Cole who has been coordinating the flower ministry for us. *(Pictured: Intergenerational faith formation hour)*



On Memorial Day, we moved to having one combined service at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary for the summer season, necessitated by the renovations in the Kirk Center. These services included a variety of music styles, some of them playful, as well as traditional hymns, some of which were suggested in our “favorite hymns” survey. We continued these services until October 16, when the work reached a stopping point and when it was cool enough to worship in the un-air-conditioned Fellowship Hall.

In September, we conducted another poll to assess the impact of the combined services, to which 97 people offered responses. Many people appreciated the chance to worship together as one body and to get to know people from the other service. However, a slight majority favored returning to two services, one Traditional and one Contemporary. We intend to have occasional combined services such as for the annual Congregational meeting and for the hanging of the greens, and we will again have one service throughout next summer. With the return to two services, the Traditional service start time was moved from 11:15 to 11:00 a.m., in response to congregational feedback.



On September 25, we offered a special service dedicating a memorial tree and plaque, arranged by Bob Hunsicker, for all of our community who died from Covid since the beginning of the pandemic. After the moving service, we shared a potluck lunch. *(service pictured on the left)*

In accordance with the worship survey last year, the Kirk Center was returned to use as a gym, and the moving to Fellowship Hall facilitated the launch of a new type of service. This coffee house style “Holy Ground” service, designed by Pastor Lindsey, involves “unplugged” music by our band, communion every week, sitting in groups around tables with coffee, and a 10-minute reflection time after the sermon, during which people can discuss the sermon, create an artistic expression, or reflect quietly on the sermon.

The feedback has been very positive, and in-person attendance has increased over the former Kirk Center services. We thank JoAnne Turcotte and Rich Hjorth, who have reliably prepared communion and helped wherever needed.

Thanksgiving decorations were arranged by Joanne Kelhart, Deb Philpotts and Al Philpotts, who harnessed choir labor to help after a rehearsal. Volunteers are welcome to arrange decorations for specific future special services.

For the year, all of the usual services continued except for Christmas Eve where we dropped the 11:00 p.m. service due to low attendance and the fact that Sunday was Christmas Day. Nationwide, attendance on Christmas Eve has been trending earlier, and indeed, our 4:00 p.m. family service had 190 attending in person, with 172 for the 7:00 p.m. service.

“It takes a village” to offer quality worship experiences whether Traditional, Contemporary, or combined, both online or in person. We are blessed by our paid staff, our many volunteers, and in particular our great pastors, J.C. and Lindsey, who make it all happen.

# Music

Even in these unique times, I am incredibly proud of our congregation's sense of commitment to rich worship arts programming! The following paragraphs outline the highlights of the FPCB program for 2022:

Music is one of the primary forms of worship, and stands as a vital element of our congregational life and community outreach. The Presbyterian(PCUSA) *Directory for Worship* states the following: "Artistic expressions should evoke, edify, enhance, and expand worshipers' consciousness of the reality and grace of God". Whether it be through hymn, anthem, exuberant song of praise, ringing bell, thundering organ, or intimate strum of guitar, may we continually strive to raise our hearts with one voice....*Soli Deo Gloria!* (Glory to God alone!)

David Macbeth  
Director of Music



## **Our Congregation's Digital Voice**

As a congregation we have made the bold choice to maintain our voice in the community regardless of the distance which separates us. Developing "digital worship fluency" has allowed that voice to be heard far beyond our beautiful campus, reaching guests from the community, our region, and indeed the world. They are listening!

Without the incredibly dedicated and creative work of our technology team, Kyle Steele and Aaron Kapes, none of this would be possible. Facebook Live has provided an excellent platform for hybrid live and pre-recorded worship streaming as well as archiving, while the Zoom platform provides a space for interactive worship and the work of staff and committees. The new year brings with it creative upgrades to our audio/video technology which will provide a refreshed look and more reliable transmission of our content.

## **Traditional Worship and Chancel Choir**

The FPCB Chancel Choir continues its tradition of providing exceptional choral leadership in worship. Beyond our regular Sunday morning worship there have been numerous opportunities this year for worship focusing on reflection, healing, and quiet contemplation of faith. Our Longest Night service, the Tuesday evening Advent series, the Lenten Compline service, and our service for national hope and healing are just a few examples.

A brief word of thanks to our former Chancel Choir Soprano section leader Rebecca Erhardt is in order. Rebecca supported our ensembles for more than two years, much of which during the fully virtual days of 2020-2021.

For 2022 I'm very happy to report the addition of Madison Zahorsky to our music staff as Soprano section leader and choir coordinator. Madison hails from Moscow, PA, and comes to us having recently completed her M.M. in Vocal Performance at the New School, Mannes Conservatory, in New York City.

In addition to our regular complement of participating members and roster of staff musicians, our Chancel Choir has again hosted five high school students from the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts seeking to fulfill their community service requirement in an environment which supports their artistic goals.

Guests from the professional music community during 2022:

St. Tikhon Choir

The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts Touring Choir

Concord Chamber Singers

Hill to Hill Brass Quintet

Elysium String Quartet

Emmet Cahill, Irish Tenor

Eric Fennell, Lyric Tenor



*(Pictured: A positively joyful noise was made with the FPCB Chancel Choir, Concord Chamber Singers, and Charter Arts Touring Choir backing up our dear friend Emmet Cahill)*

## **Contemporary Worship**

Whether “plugged in”, “unplugged”, online, within the walls of the Kirk, or outside on one of the church’s greenways, our contemporary ensemble continues to enliven our worship experience. The band has matured greatly this year, and continues to exercise amazing resilience as the nature of our worship has evolved in recent months.

## **Chancel Ringers**

The ensemble has experienced considerable growth in participation and ability, providing exciting and engaging performances for both the Easter and Christmas seasons.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

I would like to take this opportunity to very enthusiastically thank all those who continue to support our worship arts ministry! Tune in, invite others to share in the experience, continue to support those around you, and in all things rejoice! For in sharing we lift to God the very hearts of all whom our notes and words touch.

*Soli Deo Gloria*



# Community Life Program Committee

## Some Big Changes!

Since starting her call at FPCB in March 2021, Pastor Lindsey has been the primary staff support person to the Program Committees - Congregational Life, Discipleship, Engagement, and Mission.

Over time, she began to realize that the individual committees might benefit from working together more closely on a regular basis. In the spring of 2022, instead of four separate monthly committee meetings, these teams began meeting together once a month to collaborate on their planning efforts. This experiment continued through the summer, and the committees agreed this was an energizing new way to work.

As the fall began, Session approved a proposal to restructure in support of maintaining this collaborative planning model long-term; there will be four - six active elders who serve this large Community Life Program Committee - some will be liaisons to the four distinct ministry areas, while others will help facilitate the collaborative planning process.

We are still tweaking that collaborative planning process and working to clarify leadership roles so that this large team can really hit its stride, but we have already experienced more creativity and connectedness, bigger picture thinking, and more efficient planning by working together!

## Afghan Family Support Team

One of the most important and transformative ministries of 2022 was our church's commitment to co-sponsoring the resettlement of our Afghan refugee family! Baz, Mursal, Taib, and Bahar arrived in late January, and we were with them from their very first day in the Lehigh Valley.

Church members have spent hundreds of volunteer hours helping the family with all kinds of needs, and the congregation and local community partners have donated over \$30,000 toward these efforts. As a result, we've been able to help our friends buy a car, apply and interview for asylum, and begin saving up to help find a permanent place to call home.

### Staff:

Carol Burns  
The Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton

### Elders:

Jan Bickford  
Jennifer Cole  
Kari Keyock  
Donna Taggart  
JoAnne Turcotte  
Gail Watts

### Members:

Polly Beste  
Jackie Byrnes  
Kathy Csatari  
Norma Ferguson  
Jeanne Hunsicker  
Donna Knepp  
Jane Mackie  
Jane Masters  
Deb Philpotts  
Leslie Pohl  
Don Robertson  
Ginny Shunk  
The Rev. Steve Simmons  
Froy Thompson  
Anne Taylor  
Phyllis Walker



This deep relationship has also invited our congregation to learn more about the challenges facing neighbors who are refugees and immigrants, and invited us to put our faith into action through advocacy and public witness. We wrote 105 letters that were sent to our Congressional representatives urging the passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act.

Our refugee support efforts and community-centered justice-seeking work was even featured in the national *Presbyterians Today* publication! [bit.ly/3ZVZ3Ma](https://bit.ly/3ZVZ3Ma)



Here are some of the other meaningful opportunities for relationship building, faith formation, and community impact organized by the Community Life Program Committee in 2022:

**Public Witness and Community Presence**

- Lehigh Valley Pride Festival with First Presbyterian Church of Allentown
- Bans Off Our Bodies Decision Day Rally
- Fall and Spring Faith Crawls with Bethlehem Interfaith Group
- Community Menorah Lighting *(pictured, right)*



**Intergenerational Relationship Building**

- Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Festival with the FPCB Preschool
- Chimney Swift Event with the FPCB Preschool and Kirkland Village
- Intergenerational Advent Spirituality and Creativity Retreat

**Community Impact (Local, National, and International)**

- Donegan Elementary Mentoring Program
- Presbytery Helping Hands Disaster Relief Work in North Carolina
- Lehigh Conference of Churches: Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week
- Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering Partnership *(pictured, right)*
- Presbyterian Mission Agency Support through Advent/Christmas Giving Tree
- Founding member of the Bethlehem Food Co-Op



Each week during the 9:00 a.m. intergenerational Holy Ground worship service, we use these words during our embodied Prayer of Confession:

You love us wider than the ocean, God.  
But sometimes we forget.  
Your peace is calmer than the most quiet night, God.  
But sometimes our minds are noisy.  
You want us to love our neighbors taller than the trees, God.  
But sometimes we only love them an itsy bit.  
Forgive us, God. Help us to love like you—tall and wide.  
And help us share your peace in the world.  
In Jesus' name, amen.

In 2023, the collaborative Community Life Program Committee will continue to cultivate opportunities and connections that enable us to do just that - love our neighbors taller than the trees and share God's peace with the world! We hope you'll join us.



## Hearts N Minds

Hearts N Minds is the Sunday morning adult education class that explored spiritual issues in 2022.

We started discussing *The Case for the Psalms: Why They are Essential* by the Anglican theologian N. T. Wright. “Psalms look beyond the present time to the coming time... they look to the great moments of the past in order to frame the puzzlement of the present within the hope that God will one day do again, in the future, what he did long ago.” Discussion focused on the universality of the psalms in both emotion and language, and encouraged reading the psalms daily as a form of worship.

A four-part study titled “A Christian America?” explored the United States’ historical grounding, the founding of America, pilgrim fathers, American exceptionalism, and the influence of Christianity on politics (Winthrop, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards). The decade of the 1950s brought the motto ‘In God We Trust’ – a deliberate movement by conservative business leaders, using national aspirational language as detailed in Kevin Kruse’s *In God We Trust: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. We examined the rise of Christian nationalism and contrasted it with the Reverend William Barber and the Poor Peoples’ Campaign - a constructive, healthy way of moving forward. Progressives do not need to be defensive; we are a family; we will not walk away from the table when there are differences.

For Lent we used contemporary magazine and news articles to compare differing world views on the purpose of this holy season.

Gail Watts, Betsy Simpson, and Don Robertson led a study of ‘empathy’ - the highest form of human knowledge. What does it mean to listen empathetically while allowing for silence?

The fall study, “What are You Hungry For?” examined what makes a quality of life? We contrasted Native American and European attitudes about Nature and food production. We viewed the gripping documentary ‘A Place at The Table’ and some of us took the Food Stamp Diet Challenge for a week. Carol Burns explained the new Bethlehem Food Co-Op; Bob Rapp and Amy Goldfarb gave us a portrait of homelessness and hunger in the Lehigh Valley. Steve Simmons asked if the ‘table’ might replace the ‘cross’ as the central symbol of Christian community.

We then read *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Christ’s Teachings About Love, Compassion and Forgiveness* by Wendell Berry. Gail Watts led our Advent study, incorporating the spiritual practices of waiting, making room, and waking.

# Deacons

*Deacons are ordained lay members of the congregation who are best described as the church's "ministers of mercy." We work in concert with The Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton and are under the supervision and authority of the Session. The deacon team meets at noon one Monday each month to catch up and discuss plans for serving the congregation for the coming month.*

These were some of our activities for 2022:

- Continued our Meal Ministry by providing meals to those needing them and making grocery runs for those unable to shop.
- Continued with our "Prayer List Ministry" led by Deacon Phil Fair.
- Assisted several members of our church who needed funds for rent and car repairs.
- Provided rides to doctor appointments for congregants.
- Called and visited members who cannot attend church services.
- Sent cards and thoughtful notes to members and non-members of our congregation.
- Baked cookies and provided "goodie bags" at Easter and Christmas for more than 35 members of our church family, some of whom live at home and others in long-term care facilities.
- Visited hospitalized members of our congregation in coordination with First Presbyterian Church hospital ministrants, who are led by Deacon Melody Engel.
- Enjoyed a Christmas lunch with our hospital ministrants during our goodie bag prep.

Jeff Csatari  
Moderator  
Barbara Hjorth  
Secretary

The Rev. Lindsey Altvater  
Clifton (staff)  
Melody Engel  
Phil Fair  
Yvonne Green  
Jane Mackie  
Jane Masters

In 2023, we look forward to serving communion to our congregation members who cannot travel to the church.

# Preschool & Extended Care

The goals of our program are:

- To provide a safe, loving place for children to explore, play, and learn.
- To encourage each child in social skills, large and small motor skills, verbal and communication skills, and cognitive growth in age-appropriate ways.
- To encourage and support families in parenting and other life issues.
- To have each child know that he or she is a special child of God and loved by him.

Tracy Leszcynski  
Director



Our 2021-2022 school year was much like a roller coaster ride. There were moments of laughter and fun that tickled our bellies, there were moments of unknown with Covid, but at the end of the ride we had smiles on our faces and memories to cherish.

- We began our 2022 year with about 115 children. It was so nice to see the families filling our Preschool with excitement, chatter, and anticipation for the new school year.
- While still in pandemic mode the staff did a wonderful job keeping everyone safe while still creating a nurturing learning environment.
- Unlike the previous year, we were able to bring back many of the activities that connected the home and school together such as Family Fun Night, our Halloween Parade and our three big chapels.
- During the school year we were blessed to receive a grant from the state that we are in the process of using to make updates in the Preschool as well as possible future expansions.
- As we coasted into the final days of the 2021-2022 school year, we said farewell to two of our beloved staff members who decided to retire: Danette Michalgyk, who served the Preschool for over 34 years, and Bernice Slowitsky who was with us for 15 years. Both of these special people brought so much joy, love, and creativity to the school. We wish them nothing but the best as they started this next chapter together.
- Our Summer Splash was a huge success, with over 50 families participating. We were able to offer 13 weeks of programming, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. of fun in the sun with our eight staff members.
- Prior to the start of the school year, we needed to hire five new staff members, one of whom became our new director, Tracy Leszcynski. Tracy came to us with 23 years of previous experience as a director and has brought new energy and so many ideas to the school. We are so blessed to have her on board with us.

- By the end of September, we had a full staff of 16 with Laura Hawk stepping in as the Administrative Assistant, a new role for the school.
- We kicked off our 2022-2023 school year with 120 students and full staff ready for our Parents Night and Family Fun Night, and thankful to have it look more like it used to, pre-Covid.



- We celebrated our Halloween Parades outdoors, along with a mini pumpkin patch and pumpkin decorating.
- Together as a Preschool community we celebrated both our Thanksgiving and Christmas Chapels (*above, right*), in addition to our gingerbread house making. It was so gratifying to hear the voices of the children singing their hearts out for everyone. Their love of life filled the Sanctuary and warmed the hearts of all who were there.

- Together the church and Preschool collected donations for New Bethany at Thanksgiving, along with the Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering and Kindness Project at Christmas. The number of items donated was incredible, and greatly appreciated by those who received them.



Our goal is to continue to stay the course recognizing how important this time of growth, development, and socialization is for the children.

We've been blessed to have so many support systems around us: it takes a village to run a Preschool. Thank you to all those who have helped us over this past year - teamwork makes the dream work, and it shows in all that we were able to accomplish with you by our side.

**Staff Members:**

Tracy Leszcynski – Preschool Director  
Jennifer Aschenbrenner  
Becky Beller  
Amy Burkhart  
Laurie Fatebene  
Susan Givone  
Kristina Grum  
Laura Hawk – Administrative Assistant  
Heather Kraihanzel  
Marcy Liddick  
Danette Michalgyk – retired June 30  
Lauren O’Keefe-Burian  
Joann Reed  
Kelly Sales  
Bernice Slowitsky – retired August 5  
Marcy Sporka  
Lisa Todd  
Diane Willans

**Board Members:**

Megan Firman – President  
Jennifer Black – Secretary  
Lori Cahill  
Elizabeth Conard  
Amanda Evans  
Becky Gorton  
Cara Lacerna  
Joanne Turcotte  
Jenna Zsilavec  
Tracy Leszcynski – Preschool Director





# Personnel

*The Personnel Committee is a standing committee of the Session that serves as the human resource department for our church's paid staff. This includes oversight of employment processes; talent management; compensation; benefits, and the policies and procedures that guide and direct our paid staff and that ensure our church and campus is a safe space for all ministries conducted here.*

Two of our members serve on Presbytery committees. Our team includes members with backgrounds in:

- Tech-based economic development and Human Resources (HR) roles, following a full military career
- Experience in mental health counseling, executive and management coaching, and conflict resolution
- Senior HR positions with major US corporations and deep HR expertise
- Strong knowledge of current best practices as Vice President of HR at Moravian University
- A career in leadership and management development theory and practice
- Deep experience in pastor coaching, learning communities and spiritual practice to take our staff to the next level of effectiveness

Alvin Philpotts  
Chair  
The Rev. J.C. Austin  
(ex officio)

Members:  
Jon Conrad  
Kim Miner  
Don Robertson  
Gail Watts

Individuals who began key leadership positions in 2022 include:

- Tracy Leszcynski as Director of our church's Preschool and Extended Care program, replacing Laura Hawk who remains on the Preschool staff as Administrative Assistant
- Marianne Zarillo, in a temporary contractor role as finance director, replacing former Director of Business Administration, Oscar Mendoza

For 2022, we continued offering all employees a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) option. A FSA gives participating employees the ability to set aside pre-tax salary dollars for health expenses not otherwise covered by a health plan or for dependent care expenses.

And we continue to give all employees the option to enroll in employee-paid dental and vision plans as well as the option to set aside a portion of their pay in a 403(b)-retirement fund. All benefits are made available to our employees through the Presbyterian Board of Pensions.

## Property

*The Property Committee maintains the integrity and functionality of our church facilities and grounds, exercising faithful stewardship of one of our primary assets and resources for mission.*

This has been a productive year. We upgraded and refinished the Kirk Center floor, as well as correcting leakage issues with the roof. Stairway, skylight, and window repairs have been completed in the Children's Center.

Memorial Garden tree pruning has been finished, and a memorial tree has been planted to remember Covid victims. A second tree has been placed in the Garden in memory of our beloved Don Masters (longtime member of this committee). Two white pines have been placed in the driveway in memory of John May by his parents.

We hired additional part-time Facilities staff, so our team includes Tom Bartholomew, Leonardo Torres, Brandon Berezna and Kyle Willans.

Challenges for the coming year will be upgrading our electrical system and possibly carrying out major improvements to Fellowship Hall.

Bob Hunsicker  
Chair

*Members:*

George Bickford  
Susan Farber  
Rich Gorton  
Kristina Grum  
(Preschool rep)  
Wayne Kelly  
Kevin Konczyk (staff)  
Dan Magocs  
Bud Newton

## Engagement

*The Engagement Committee is a Committee of Session that was formed in 2020. Its purpose is to focus on attracting and connecting new families to FPCB, and providing opportunities for engagement with the various ministries of our church.*

This past year the Engagement Committee focused on connecting with Preschool families and Kirkland residents in a continued effort to build relationships and offer fellowship.

The Engagement Committee collaborated with the Community Life Committee, encompassing the Congregational Life, Mission, and Discipleship committees to streamline planning and spark conversations and ideas. This format has proven to be more collaborative, creative, and efficient when planning events. In coordination with this committee, we helped facilitate events such as the Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Festival, Lehigh Valley Pride Festival, Chimney Swift Night, Covid memorial tree dedication, and the Stewardship Campaign.

Working closely with Carol Burns, the Committee communicated church events, including those for Easter and Advent, across multiple platforms, including postcards, flyers, email blasts, newsletters, social media, website postings, and advertising in local outlets.

Kari Keyock, Chair

Polly Beste  
Carol Burns (staff)  
The Rev. Lindsey Altwater  
Clifton (staff)  
Kathy Csatari  
Gail Watts

## Trustees

*The Trustees oversee financial and property matters of the church including budgets, property maintenance and improvements, stewardship and planned giving, and endowment funds and investments. Trustees meet monthly and members also serve on at least one committee, which also meet monthly or quarterly, and may also be part of Task Forces which are created for limited duration as needed to address specific issues. Standing Committees that are under the purview of Trustees include: Property\*, Endowment\*, Investment, Stewardship, and Finance\*, a joint committee with Session. (\*see these committee reports that are included in this Annual Report)*

Mark Swank,  
President  
Belle Marks,  
Vice-President

Members:  
George Bickford  
Bob Hunsicker  
Joanne Kelhart  
Susan Mower-Benda  
Bud Newton  
Melinda Stitt

Trustees approved the purchase of Aplos, a cloud-based accounting and financial management system which will allow more comprehensive, coordinated function of all church and Preschool functions. Installation of the software package and staff training has begun in stages and will be completed in 2023.

Trustees created and approved a policy permitting and regulating serving of alcohol at events on the church premises. A Keith Brown Memorial Fund was created and VistaCom, Inc. was contracted to provide professional evaluation and recommendations for upgrading audiovisual equipment and other aspects of Fellowship Hall for multipurpose use.

The Building Reopening Task Force has provided recommendations and policy regarding the pandemic for the staff, congregation, and groups using the facility, on a continuous and frequently updated basis.

The Facility Usage Task Force had rental agreements with the Bach Choir and Bel Canto Youth Chorus for rehearsals and concerts, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley for office space, and Bethlehem Township Athletic Association for youth basketball in the Kirk Center gym. Negotiations are ongoing with Kirkland (PSL) regarding the renewal of parking and snow removal contracts, and discussions continue with multiple educational and nonprofit organizations regarding potential rental or lease agreements.

## Nominating

*The Nominating Committee is responsible for recommending candidates for all leadership positions in the church, excepting paid staff. The committee presents nominations to the congregation for Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and the Nominating Committee itself. The committee also presents nominations for pastoral search committees, when needed. Members of the congregation have an opportunity to submit names for consideration, as well, and all recommendations are approved by the congregation at a congregational meeting.*

JoAnne Turcotte\*, Chair  
Steve Samuelson\*  
The Rev. J.C. Austin  
(ex officio)  
Jacqueline Byrnes  
Jeanette Claessens  
Sue Jones  
Wendy Magocs  
Judy Smullen  
Froy Thompson  
Phyllis Walker

\*Session representative

In 2022 the Nominating Committee was thankfully faced with few challenges identifying people to take on leadership positions within the church. We were fortunate that members were willing to stand up to serve in these capacities.

# Endowment

*The Endowment Committee: 1) reviews and revises the endowment governing document and the guidelines on use of individual funds; 2) accepts and encourages bequests and planned gifts; and 3) awards grants from the endowment funds to creatively further the Kingdom through exciting and unique mission and ministry opportunities, locally, nationally, and globally.*

Susan Mowrer Benda  
Chair (through October)  
Rich Hooper, Chair

Members:  
Phil Clauser  
Jim Halkins  
Belle Marks  
Linda Robertson  
Glenn Rossetti  
Mark Swank

These grant awards were made in 2022:

- Fifteen students from Lafayette College and Chaplain Alexandra Hendrickson received \$8,900 from the McKnight Mission Scholarship Fund for a field trip to Washington, D.C., to engage with elected officials and experts in refugee relocation, to better assist the Afghan family they sponsor and to share learnings with our congregation.
- From the Louise W. Dimmick International Scholarship Fund: \$10,050 in continuing support for Jaasiel, a pre-med student in Colombia, South America.
- From the Barry Brandt Memorial Scholarship Fund: \$15,000 in continuing support for student Blaine Shepperd (Susquehanna University) and \$20,000 to student Michael Henriquez (Pratt Institute of Art). Beth Peters received an award of \$1,815 to continue studies at Grand Canyon University.
- From the St. Andrews Fund: Pastor Lindsey Altvater Clifton requested \$15,000 to help purchase a used vehicle for our Afghan Refugee Family.
- 'Hi Neighbors' received a grant of \$801.70 for its programming for ministry to senior adults.

## Bequests and Gifts

The church received \$600,000 – an initial distribution (the value of his IRA) from the estate of Philip M. Chambers, who died at age 58. Trustees established a Task Force to study appropriate uses of this money as well as the final estate distribution.

In May 2022 a gift from her children David and Mary Robson established the Eugenia “Genie” Y. Robson Fund, a permanent, endowed fund to provide income for the maintenance and beautification of the church’s buildings and campus.

An unrestricted bequest of \$20,000 came from the Estate of Corrine Rose Crook.

The \$54,000 remainder of an unrestricted Trust arrived, following the death of Enid (and earlier Stan) Jones.

An unrestricted bequest of \$10,000 came from the Estate of Anna Schillings.

Several unrestricted, permanent endowed funds (the Better Fund, the Permanent General Fund and the Endow Your Pledge Fund) continue to provide operating funds for the FPCB general operating budget.

*Thoughtful, committed members made gifts to the endowment to grow God's Kingdom on earth. Contact any member of the committee about making your gift.*

Expended in 2022 from Endowment Fund earnings for the above stated purposes:  
\$259,583.96.

Total market value of the FPCB Endowment Fund as of December 31, 2022: \$4,280,584.28.

## Finance

*The Finance Committee oversees the financial transactions of the church's budget.*

The year 2022 was a challenging one for the Finance Committee. With the continued impact of COVID on our congregation and finances, adjustments were necessitated to accommodate cash flow. The committee has been diligent in monitoring this throughout the year.

The PPP loan forgiveness was accomplished. Proceeds were received from an insurance claim that facilitated the completion of the gym restoration. The Preschool identified and spent funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Care grants for equipment, training, and approved repairs.

The Finance Office continues to work on completion of the audits for last year as well as monitoring cash flow and income.

The Finance Committee continues to provide input into the need to generate income from the use of the available building space. This past year saw continued receipt of financial gifts with more available funds from the interest on those endowments for utilization in the operation budget. The budget process for the 2023 budget was started in August with the Finance Committee gathering information, meeting and reviewing numbers with members of the Trustees.

Joanne Kelhart, *Chair*  
George Campbell,  
*Treasurer*

George Bickford  
Phil Clausser  
Sue Farber  
James Halkins  
Bob Ross  
Mark Swank  
Phyllis Walker

# Statistics

## *Baptisms*

Calla Bono  
Sadie Chadbourn  
Mina Masthay  
Marko Masthay  
Julia Mountain



*Pastors J.C. and Lindsey  
with new members Ralph and Pam Morgan,  
and Cynthia Hahn*

## *New Members*

Chris Bono  
Laura Bono  
Cynthia Hahn  
Bekah Masthay  
Ted Masthay  
Pam Morgan  
Ralph Morgan

## *Necrology*

Elizabeth "Betty" Cooper  
Renee Dragotta  
Vince Dragotta  
Evelyn Fischer  
Bruce Fritchman  
Elaine Gable  
Carolyn Hensel  
Donald Masters  
Kay Moran  
Nancy Roller  
Anna Schillings  
Yvonne Segreaves  
Lee Wei



*In September we dedicated a tree to the  
memory of those lost to Covid*



## Session Members

Susan Farber, *Clerk of Session*  
The Rev. J.C. Austin, *Moderator*

### *Class of 2022:*

Richard Hjorth, Gail Watts

*Class of 2023:* Kari Keyock,  
Kim Miner, Alvin Philpotts,  
Steve Samuelson, JoAnne Turcott

*Class of 2024:* Jan Bickford,  
Jennifer Cole, Jim Halkins,  
Chris Moravek, Donna Taggart

## Trustees

Mark Swank '22, *President*

*Class of 2022:* Susan Mower-Benda,  
Bud Newton

*Class of 2023:* George Bickford,  
Robert Hunsicker, Maurice Kasmiroski

*Class of 2024:* Joanne Kelhart,  
Belle Marks, Melinda Stitt

## Staff

The Rev. J.C. Austin  
*Senior Pastor/Head of Staff*

The Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton  
*Associate Pastor of Faith and Formation*

David Macbeth  
*Director of Music Ministries*

Kevin Konczyk  
*Facilities Maintenance Manager*

Pam Marth  
*Administrative Operations Manager*

Cindy Matthews – *Bookkeeper*  
Carol Burns - *Communications Manager*

*Preschool Director*  
Laura Hawk (January – September)  
Tracy Lesczynski (October – December)

First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem  
2344 Center Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18017



FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

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