NOMINATION BIOGRAPHIES – FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Elders

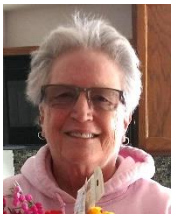
Elders *comprise the Session of the Presbyterian Church which is, in essence, the decision-making body of the church. They recommend and approve all program and policy implementation and modifications in the church. Elders serve a three year term and the Session meets monthly; Elders generally serve on one or more committees, which also usually meet on a monthly basis.*

Jennifer Cole (second term)



Writes Jennifer, "I felt at home at FPCB from the very first time I visited, in January 2020. I joined the church in July 2021, by transfer of church letter from Woodside Presbyterian Church, in Yardley, PA. I live in Hellertown, and have two grown sons, two granddaughters, and two grandsons. I'm a retired registered nurse and I currently serve as Clerk of Session. This church has been a very meaningful part of my life, and I feel that it's important to give back. If we are to be Jesus' hands and feet, then service matters."

Melody Engel



Melody writes: "I have attended FPC since 1979 and became a member in the early 2000's. I was a deacon for six years and thoroughly enjoyed the front line work. I am a mental health professional and ran a weekly group for two years in the church for anyone dealing with depression, loss or ongoing challenges in life. I am looking forward to being on Session as we make decisions about the church focus and future. I have one son in the area who also attended FPC for many years. He is currently an emergency room doctor at St. Luke's. I have been blessed and comforted by the wonderful friends I have made at FPC and count myself as lucky to be in the company of dedicated and devout people."

Allison Masters



Allison is the daughter of Jane and Don Masters, who were married at FPCB. She was baptized here in 1985, and became a member in the early 2000s through the Inquirers High School class. Her father Don was Facilities Manager for 16 years, and served on the Property Committee until his passing in 2022. She joined as a Property Committee member to help continue his legacy as the building has always been a second home. Her mother Jane is currently serving as a Deacon, and volunteers as a receptionist (you can usually find her in the kitchen helping or baking when not behind the desk). Allison, who was recently married to her husband William Kabrich, currently works for Pfizer. She writes, "This church has been a part of my family for as long as I can go back, and I am happy to be in a position where I can serve my family and help it grow."

Donna Taggart (second term)



Donna is a lifelong resident of Bethlehem and is blessed to have five adult children and eight beautiful grandchildren. She joined the church about 13 years ago. Serving her community has always been very important to her. This is Donna's second term on Session. She serves on the Strategic Mission Steering Committee and has found the work of this Committee over the past two years to be very challenging yet exciting as we work together

to discern what God intends for the future of our Church. She serves on the Boards of several local organizations including Community Action Development Bethlehem and the SouthSide Arts District Advisory Committee, is co-chair of the Bethlehem-Patillas Sister City Committee and is part of the Leadership Team at Donegan Elementary School. Says Donna, "I am very humbled by this call to serve my church in this capacity and look forward to using my God-given talents to further its mission in our community."

Aileen Williams (one year term)



Aileen is new to Pennsylvania and the Presbyterian Church, but not new to church participation. A 45-year member of a United Methodist Church in California, Aileen served as chair of their memorial committee, was head shopper and bagger for the food pantry, director of handbell choirs, and a church school teacher. She retired from teaching grades K - 8 in the California public schools, and then she and her husband, Barry, moved across country to be near children and grandchildren. FPCB's mission focus that seeks to help meet housing needs in Bethlehem, along with meaningful sermons and an expansively welcoming congregation, all added to Aileen's desire to become a member of the church, start a new K group, join the handbell choir, check out the Hearts N Minds class, and serve where asked to serve.

Deacons

*The **Deacons** are the caregivers of the church. They minister to the individual members through home communion and visits, hospital and prayer ministries, and providing support to those in difficult situations. Deacons serve a three year term and typically meet monthly.*

Sue Jones



Sue is a resident of Stockertown and has been a member of FPCB for over 40 years. She has taken on a number of roles at church over the years, including going on mission trips, cooking for youth groups, ushering, and participating in a K group, Hearts N Minds, and prayer group. The parent of a grown son and daughter and grandparent of three young adults, she is retired from managing a stove and fireplace business. She enjoys volunteering, gardening and reading. She tells us, "Since our Church family has been so graciously supportive of me, I look forward to serving others in the 'family' when and where needed with a listening ear and open heart."

Jane Mackie (second term)



Jane moved to Hanover Township in 2014 to be near her family, and joined FPCB in late 2019. She is a widow and has two adult daughters and three grandchildren. She worked in a hospital lab and later at Johnson & Johnson, taking early retirement to care for her parents. Jane has a long history of volunteering, including with the Girl Scouts, and various committees at her Quaker Meeting in California. She has served as a Deacon for the past three years, handling the weekly Prayer List. She writes, "FPCB has provided so much support for me, like Hearts N Minds and my K group. I feel it's time for me to give back to this community."

Bette Maiatico



Bette has been a member since 2003. She and her husband, Mike, attend church regularly and especially enjoy the Holy Ground service. They are busy with their three children and 10 grandchildren who all live in Bethlehem, but find time to enjoy the many activities in their retirement community of TOA Hanover. They are very happy here and admire the mission of First Presbyterian Church, where they foresee a bright future in the years ahead. Bette, who also volunteers at Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering, is looking forward to giving back in appreciation of her many blessings.

Susan Oeschle



Susan lives in Center Valley with her husband Ed. She's been attending First Presbyterian Church for 20 years. At a former church in New Hampshire, she taught Sunday school and served on the Mission and Action Committee. After joining First Pres, she served on the new member committee for several years. Susan is currently serving as a volunteer at the reception desk. She is a graduate of Kutztown University where she majored in art education; she taught at the elementary school level in NH. Ed and Susan have one granddaughter, Katelyn. Susan belongs to a supportive and loving K group which has helped her grow her faith.

Debbie Castellano (for a one year term)



Writes Debbie: "I was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith, which has been a source of strength and guidance through all the phases of my life. Before starting a family, I dedicated 18 years to Macy's West, where I served in multiple roles including manager, buyer (for 40 stores), in-house teacher, and college recruiter. In 1998, our family settled in the Lehigh Valley. I am blessed with two children, Kristian and Alex. Before retiring at 62, I worked as an office manager for two companies (at different times). Since settling here, I have actively taken part in the community. I have served as a PTO treasurer and fundraiser, and I have also volunteered my time with New Bethany Ministries as office staff and fund raiser for Souper-day, in addition to Luminaria captain for my neighborhood. This past February, I lost my mother. Seeking solace and a sense of belonging, I began attending FPCB last April. The warmth and welcome I received from the congregation were truly awe-inspiring. Since then, I have become involved in the mentoring program and a K group. I am deeply grateful for the faith and community that FPCB provides. It is an honor to be a part of this caring and supportive environment, and I look forward to continuing my involvement and contributing to the church's mission."

Nominating Committee

*The **Nominating Committee members** are charged with identifying candidates for Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and the Nominating Committee itself. This committee usually meets three or four times each year; the term of service is one year, and a member may serve no more than two consecutive terms.*

Phillip Clauser



Phil is a lifelong resident of Bethlehem, and an FPCB member since 1973. He has served as an elder, deacon, youth leader and Sunday School teacher, Stephen Minister, and a volunteer on multiple Helping Hands mission trips. He currently serves as the assistant treasurer, and volunteers with the Finance Committee and the Endowment Committee. Phil has two grown sons who grew up in this church, and a daughter-in-law, who all live in the Boston area. He is a "twice retired" university administrator, and writes, "I believe in our mission and what God has called us to be and do."

Belle Marks

Belle and her family, who live in Bethlehem, have attended FPCB for over 30 years, and she joined the church in 2001. She and her husband John have three daughters who attended Sunday School and participated in the Choir at FPCB. Belle served as a Sunday School teacher for over 15 years, and is completing her term as a Trustee, where she was on the Endowment Committee and Mission Strategy Steering Committee. She is a nurse and works in public health administration at the Allentown Health Bureau. Among other things, she volunteers with the local chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and other international health organizations. She writes: "I am enthusiastic about the direction the church is taking and want to contribute."

Pam Phillippe



Pam has been a member of FPCB for more than 30 years, but has become more joyfully connected since the schism. She has enjoyed greeting and ushering, getting to know and supporting our Afghan family, mentoring at Donegan Elementary School, and participating in the intergenerational Body N Soul class. She lives in Bethlehem and is retired from teaching in Southern Lehigh School District. Pam has two children and four grandchildren, and looks forward to contributing to the community of faith and mission that is FPCB.

Steve Samuelson



Steve has been a member of First Presbyterian Church since 1995, was a Sunday School teacher for 24 years, and was a member of Session from 2021 to 2023. In a prior life, he was youth director at the former St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. A member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, he serves the 135th District (Bethlehem and Hanover Township) and is Chair of the House Finance Committee.

Sharon Smith



Sharon is a lifelong resident of Bethlehem and has been a member of FPCB for 40 years. She has served in Hospitality and Food Ministry and is the proud mother of two grown children and four grandchildren. She has been deeply involved in the Junior League of the Lehigh Valley (JLLV), which played a key role in establishing the first Turning Point in Bethlehem. Sharon has also contributed to initiatives such as Kids in the Kitchen, a program focused on teaching proper nutrition, and Kids on the Block, which promotes awareness of disabilities. Her dedication extends to many other community projects throughout the Lehigh Valley. In recognition of her commitment to service, Sharon received the United Way Voluntary Action Award for Outstanding Community Service in both 1990 and 1991. "My heart has always been in helping others."

Judith Smullen



Judy has been singing in the Chancel Choir since 1976 and became an FPCB member in 2018. She has been involved in the Crafters and Prayers & Squares groups, and the Hearts N Minds adult education classes. She is also a volunteer receptionist. Judy, a retired teacher, and her husband David live in Bethlehem. She writes, "Helping to identify members for leadership positions is a privilege and an honor. It also gives me a chance to get to know more people intimately – always a pleasure!"

Trustees

Trustees *oversee all financial and property matters in the church including the budget, building renovations and repairs, planned giving, and investment funds. Trustees will meet monthly and members will also serve on one additional committee, such as the property or finance committee, which also generally meet monthly. The term for Trustees is three years.*

Janet Luther



Janet has been a member of First Presbyterian Church since about 1990, although she had never been a particularly active member. She has four children, several grandchildren and a third great-grandchild on the way. Last year she moved to Kirkland Village, after her husband had died in 2021, and she has become more focused on church issues since then. She particularly enjoys engaging with others through Hearts N Minds. Although trained in chemistry, she retired after serving for 20 years as Treasurer of the Rippel Foundation, a New Jersey-based private foundation focused on health issues. She looks forward to serving in whatever ways she can.

Ginger Seifried

Ginger lives in Bethlehem Township and has been a member of First Pres for over 30 years. She is retired from the Bethlehem Area Public Library, after many years in the children's room. She serves as an usher, volunteers for the soup kitchen, was a Sunday School teacher, receptionist, and served on the Endowment Committee. She writes, "I feel that there are many ways to serve God and have a strong and active church, and I hope to continue to contribute to First Pres as a trustee."