



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

2020 Annual Report



Associate Pastor Nominating Committee

The APNC began its work in April 2020. We had great support from Marsha Heimann as the Committee on Ministry representative from Lehigh Presbytery. Her guidance, knowledge and advice was priceless through this process. Presbytery Transitional Leader Rhonda Kruse was also available to us as needed.

We give wholehearted thanks to these wonderful people for their hard work, faithfulness, and support. Our time together has been uplifting and inspiring. Through both times of joy and challenge, the APNC came together in faith, love, and commitment.

With God's hand guiding our journey, the APNC navigated the obstacles and challenges that Covid brought to the call process. The committee met almost every Sunday evening up until Advent. We were blessed to receive and review about 80 applications and had the pleasure to speak with and meet many outstanding candidates. On November 22 we voted unanimously and joyfully to extend a call to our candidate, The Reverend Lindsey Altvater Clifton. The Lehigh Presbytery's Committee on Ministry interviewed and resoundingly approved Lindsey.



As per the tradition of the call process and with respect to the candidate's current congregation, we are unable to share identifying information until just prior to the congregational meeting. At that time, a full bio will be provided. In addition, members will have the opportunity to hear from Lindsey and several other individuals speaking about her through technology.

Our candidate is an exciting and creative individual with vision to create a church environment truly welcoming to all. She has an entrepreneurial spirit that will certainly lead to exciting new ideas and programming at the church. The candidate holds a deep faith and emotional maturity. Her warmth and relatability led us to wonderful, inspiring conversation.

The new Associate Pastor for Formation and Justice position will enable First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem to expand and deepen its commitment to growing and developing our members in their life-long faith journey.

We are looking forward to presenting Lindsey to the congregation in early January 2021.

Kristen Benway
Chairperson

Rich Gorton
George Maunz
Don Robertson
Blaine Sheppard
Froy Thompson
Gail Watts

The Reverend J.C. Austin

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian,

If there was a template for these sorts of cover letters for annual reports about the year 2020, it would begin with something like, "Everything changed in 2020, and we had to adjust accordingly."

But I'm not going to do that, because I don't think it's true. I don't mean to understate that it was a year of great disruption for us as a congregation, a country, and a world. If you had asked me what I expected 2020 would have in store for us, whatever I would have said would have been completely wrong.

But everything did **not** change for us in 2020. Sure, our circumstances changed in all kinds of ways, many of which would have been unimaginable when I was writing this letter for last year's report at this time.

But we responded just as we have to all kinds of unexpected changes over the last three years as we have lived into this new era in the life and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem. We have responded to these challenges with resilience and grace and gratitude; with boldness and imagination and creativity; with flexibility and compassion and good humor; with deep faithfulness and love and hope.

We have continued to offer dynamic and rich worship experiences in multiple styles every Sunday. We have continued to probe the edges and the depths of Christian life and faith and thought and practice through our adult education ministries. We have continued to nurture and care for the faith of our children through Sunday School. We have continued to reach out in compassion and concern to care for those in need in our community and our congregation.

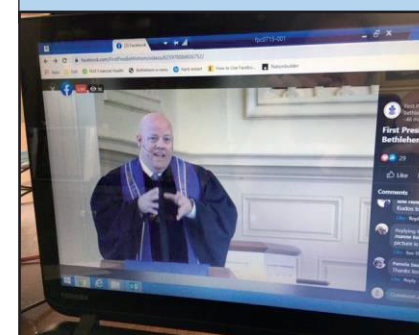
And we have not simply held on to what we were already doing. We transformed the ways in which we were doing it in light of the restrictions on gathering during the pandemic. And we have not simply "continued" things, hanging on in the midst of these challenges. We responded to these challenges by experimenting with new ministries of worship, faith formation, compassion, and justice. In the midst of this pandemic, we did not simply hunker down; we reached out to expand our impact in being ministers and witnesses for the gospel of Christ in a world that is so in need of it.

So, I want to commend this report to you to consider and celebrate all the ways in which we have served God as a congregation this year. 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 look forward to a new year of life and ministry with you in 2021!

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.C. Austin".

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



Worship

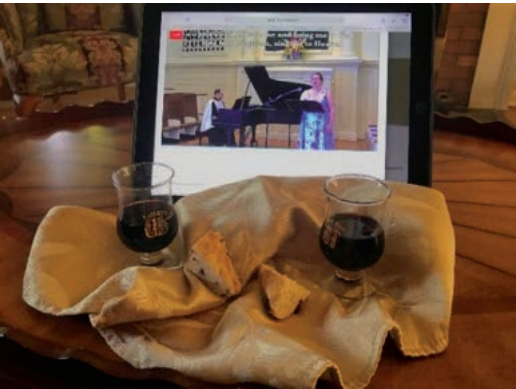
This has been a year of challenge and opportunity for the worship life of First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem.

We began the year with indoor worship as usual. However, it became apparent in March that because of Covid-19, we needed to transition to an all virtual format as an act of love to our members and friends.

We were blessed that our audiovisual (AV) team of David Macbeth, Kyle Steele and Aaron Kapes had already been preparing to provide Facebook livestreamed services to reach those who weren’t able to attend in person. Little did they know at the time that all of us would soon be unable to attend in person.

- Rich Hjorth
Chair
Lindsey Chadbourn
Co-chair
Members:
J.C. Austin (staff)
David Macbeth (staff)
Beth Peters
Deb Philpotts
Judy Smullen
Mike Stasak
Jack Walker

Because of this readiness, we were able to provide online services immediately after the closing of our building for regular worship service, unlike many other Presbytery churches. While there were a few hiccups in the beginning, the AV team worked tirelessly to adjust and provide reliable online worship to the gratitude of all of us who needed to stay connected to our church family.



An early challenge was how to offer communion as part of the services. Members responded enthusiastically to the instructions to prepare their own elements at home, and also to the request to share photos of their individual communion tables (*just one example, left*).

In the fall, our new Contemporary service singer, Rebecca Ripley, joined the AV team to provide much-needed relief to the over-worked crew.

The Worship Committee worked with the Reopening Task Force, headed by Belle Marks, to develop protocols for safe indoor worship leading and filming of musicians. It was important to many that the pastors be present in our sanctuary and Kirk Center during the actual times of worship. The use of Facebook’s “comments” function helped viewers to feel some sense of community.

The move to go to online services yielded some benefits. It extended our reach to not only our own members, but also to members and friends in different parts of the country as well as interested newcomers in our own community. Word of mouth and social media helped us reach these new audiences. Some of our services had over 1000 views within a couple weeks of the actual service, through live and archived viewings.



Some of our new viewers said they would visit our church in person once we opened again. We plan to continue online services indefinitely.

As the year progressed, we explored ways to enhance our connectedness with each other in worship. In August, we began monthly Combined Worship outdoor services for those who felt comfortable attending, while still providing the service online. This chance to actually see and visit with each other was received warmly by the 60-70 people who attended. People all followed the Covid protocols joyfully. We continued these services into November despite the cold, and would have had a Christmas Eve service outdoors if not for severe rain.



As we became more comfortable with our situation, we began adding pre-taped liturgists and Advent candle lighters to the service in December. In the meantime, the Chancel Choir had been meeting on Zoom at their regular rehearsal time in order to stay connected. While they couldn’t sing together online for technical reasons, David Macbeth taught them all how to record their individual voices, and send them to him to be blended into anthems. While this took tremendous time and effort on his part, the re-connection of the choir to the church services was much appreciated by all.



We were even able to add additional services. For the month of November after the election, we offered short weekly outside prayer services for unity and healing. While it gradually became colder, those who attended with blankets and heavy coats felt warmed spiritually by the quiet reflective nature of the poetry, readings, and music.

Other virtual highlights were the Longest Night service and Christmas Eve services that included a saxophone soloist and the Hill to Hill Brass ensemble. For Thanksgiving and Maundy Thursday, we used Zoom communion services to enable sharing and to see each other face to face.

Overall, our emphasis on being an experimental church has enabled us to continue to worship together in meaningful ways. We look forward to being able to worship together in person again next year.

Music

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* tells us: “Artistic expressions should evoke, edify, enhance, and expand worshipers’ consciousness of the reality and grace of God”. This is my goal for all aspects of our worship arts program. Whether it be through hymn, psalm, 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!)

Even in these uncertain 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 program for 2020.

Our Congregation’s Digital Voice

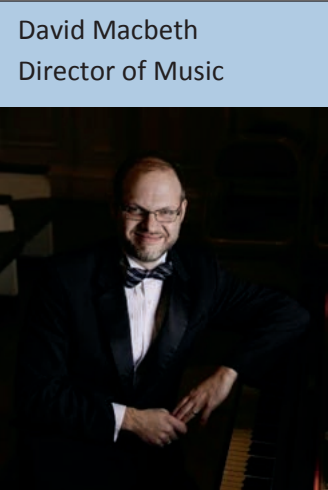
As a congregation we have made the bold choice to maintain our voice in the community regardless of the distance which separates us. Developing “digital worship fluency” has allowed that voice to be heard far beyond our beautiful campus, reaching guests from the community, and in fact many states and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



Without the incredibly dedicated and creative work of our technology team, Kyle Steele and Aaron Kapes (*left*), our communications team of Carol Burns and Cristy Mette, the facilities team headed by Rebecca Angione, and the work of the technology committee, none of this would be possible!

Since March of 2020 we have successfully transitioned our entire worship life to a digital context. Facebook Live provides an excellent

platform for hybrid live and pre-recorded worship as well as archiving; Zoom provides a space for interactive worship and the work of staff and committees; and most recently we’ve experimented with live, short-range FM radio transmission.



David Macbeth
Director of Music

Traditional Worship and Chancel Choir

“Alright everyone, let’s get rehearsal started... turn on your cameras and microphones...” I must admit those are words that I never imagined I would have to say! There are few words sufficient to share my gratitude for the dedication and fearlessness of our Chancel Choir. In the fall they willingly joined me in the “virtual choir” experiment, all the while supporting each other from afar. Offering virtual anthems and hymns in the fall months, the choir continues its mission to bring the gift of song to the congregation.



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 11 p.m. service of communion on Christmas Eve, the Tuesday evening Advent series, the Lenten Compline service, and our service for national hope and healing are just a few examples.

One unexpected “ministry” of our worship arts program this year has been that of providing a venue for professional musicians to share their gifts in safety. All artists have suffered greatly in recent months, and in providing a means of sharing we have also fed their need to be heard.

Guests from the professional music community during 2020:

- Dr. Kelsey Kish, Soprano, faculty – Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts
- Dr. Lauren Curnow-Madigan, Mezzo-soprano, faculty – Muhlenberg College
- Dr. Christopher Jackson, Baritone, faculty - Muhlenberg College
- Dr. Aaron Patterson, Saxophone, faculty - Charter Arts
- Chet Brown, Baritone, faculty (retired) - Charter Arts
- Madison Zahorsky, Soprano (pursuing M.M. Vocal Performance, The New School)
- Bryan McClary, Baritone (pursuing M.M. Vocal Performance, Jacobs School of Music)
- Evan Nelson, Baritone (pursuing M.M. Vocal Performance, Peabody Conservatory)
- Hannah Steele, Soprano
- Emily McManaman, Soprano
- Bridget Warner, Soprano
- Donald Hughes, Trumpet
- Luke DiGiacinto, Organ
- Johanna Pearson, Organ
- The Hill to Hill Brass Quintet

Contemporary Worship

Whether “plugged in”, “unplugged”, online, within the walls of the Kirk Center, 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. We thanked Jimmy Pedone for his two years of faithful service to the ensemble, and welcomed new lead singer Rebecca Ripley.

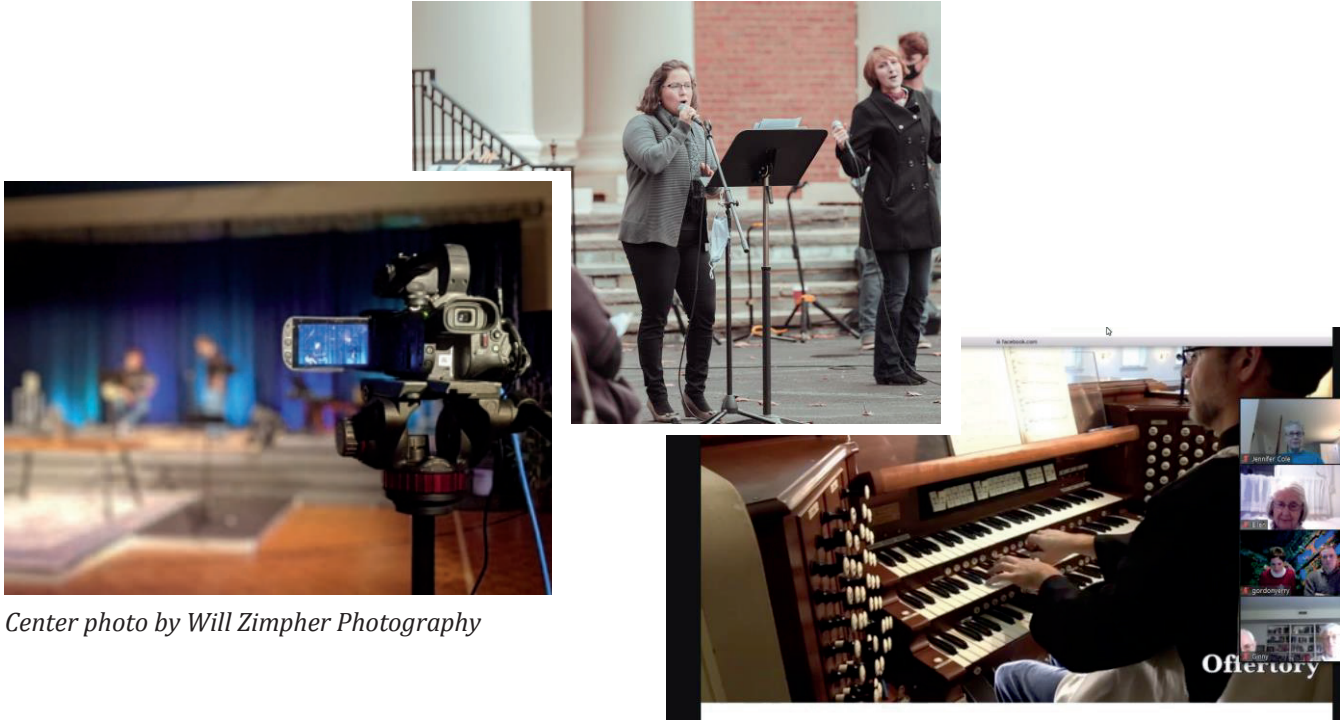
Extracurricular use of our campus for music

Even as our campus waits patiently for the congregation’s return, our spaces and greenways have yet provided a safe place for our partners in the musical community to work. Our dear friends, The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, have successfully used the parking lot as a socially distanced rehearsal space. Students from the community and our own music staff have used the worship spaces to safely record audition materials as they pursue the next chapter in their education. And we have also hosted virtual senior recitals and juries for students from Moravian College, Westminster Choir College, and the New School Conservatory.

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 words and notes touch.

Soli Deo Gloria



Center photo by Will Zimpher Photography

Discipleship

The Discipleship Committee is focused on the spiritual development and growth of our members, deepening our faith and equipping us to be like Christ in the world. We understand this as a lifelong process, guided by the Holy Spirit and supported by Christian community, or Koinonia. We offer experiential and educational opportunities for all ages that support FPBC’s core values.

Adult Discipleship Events and Studies

Throughout the year, the Discipleship Committee offered a variety of meaningful and faith-enhancing and faith-deepening opportunities, mainly online for adults, children, and youth.

Participation in Hearts N Minds, the Sunday morning adult education class, remained high when it transitioned to Zoom meetings in mid-March.

We spent the winter/spring term discussing *For Everything a Season* by Sister Joan Chittister, which we had begun in late 2019. For ten weeks, this slender volume led participants into a deep dive study of the Book of Ecclesiastes. During this time, a subcommittee continued to explore immigration issues with in-person visits to the offices of U.S. Senators Toomey and Casey. Our work was curtailed by the pandemic, but we hope to resume later in 2021.

For our Lenten study we chose *The Last Week* by John Crosson and Marcus Borg. The authors use the Book of Mark to illustrate parallels between the Romans’ warrior presence in Jerusalem during Passover and Jesus’ entry into the city. Our class discussions always returned to the question of how we live each day.

For eleven weeks in the fall, Rachel Held Evans’ *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again* emphasized that the bible is a compilation of stories by writers who often contradicted one another. There was vigorous discussion about how we read the bible and the need to not fall into the trap of thinking that our individual interpretation of scripture doesn’t make us look down on another group’s interpretation. We agreed that the best part of the bible was the stories that resonate with our own stories.

During Advent we tried something new - podcasts - titled “Advent and the Spirit”. Outside of class, members listened to hour-long lectures/soliloquies by theologian/philosopher Richard O’Donnell of Allentown. Topics included spirituality, willfulness versus willingness, and the “walls” that cause life to be difficult: nuisance, prejudice, indifference, fear(s), resentment, rigidity and self-righteousness.

The Hearts N Minds class will continue to challenge each other to expand our intellects and deepen our spirits through study, discussion, and. prayer.

Gail Watts
Chair
Elizabeth Conard
Chair -
Children & Youth

Members:
J.C. Austin (staff)
Jan Bickford
Sue Oechsle
Don Robertson
Linda Robertson
Cynthia Simmons
Steve Simmons
Anne Taylor

In addition, the Discipleship Committee, in light of and in response to the polarizing political and social discourse and racial discrimination, conducted a half day community workshop, “Constructive Conversations: Faith and Public Life”, facilitated by Pastor Austin, offering tools and connection for people of faith as active citizens and good neighbors during a divisive time. This was followed by a Zoom gathering, “Why Are People So Complicated?” exploring the six stages of change, how we change our behavior and how we help others change theirs.

In the spring, “Constructive Conversations in Difficult Situations” was a three session online community series with the focus on staying in relationship, even as we discuss differences in belief. Opportunities to practice open dialogue and non-inflammatory speech were included during the sessions.

We continued our popular Lenten series online, offering a five-week study on “Having the Mind of Christ”, considering Jesus as prophet, teacher, reformer, and healer. A point of discussion was how we can follow Jesus in a multi-faith and increasingly secular culture.

The FPCB Book Club featured a different type of midday experience, using a collection of Mary Oliver’s poems from her book, *Devotions*, The group spent time looking at life, God, nature, faith and relationships through the lens of her simple yet profound poetry.

“Listening for God”, a one-session gathering, introduced the prayer form of Lectio Divina, which the class practiced using sacred reading, meditation and prayer to promote communion with God.

Two Bibles studies were offered on the book of Galatians, focused on the early church in conflict, good news of the gospel vs. fake news, and being intentional about being a good neighbor and citizen. The book of Philemon during the summer, presented in a storytelling style, was nudging us to give attention to the voices of the marginalized, who often work for our comfort.

In alignment with our commitment to an active faith, “The Social Gospel and Hymns” and “Slave Quilts and Their Symbols” sessions held in the spring set the stage for an in-depth 21-day Racial Justice Immersion Project offered in the summer. It was formatted as a self-study, with numerous resources such as books, articles, podcasts, documentaries and films. These resources focused on the historical and current harm and hurt of racial injustice,



often unrecognized by people more privileged. As part of our commitment to social justice, this will be an ongoing ministry focus.

Discipleship wrapped up the year with a four-week illuminated Advent Spiral Walk, an outdoor, candlelit contemplative walk through the Memorial Garden, offering scripture, sacred readings and reflection questions to enrich the season of preparation for the birth of Christ.

Children and Youth Education and Activities

The year 2020 was a year of planning, pivoting, and partnering in programs for children and youth.

The Sunday school program for Pre-K to grade 5 continued during both the Contemporary and the Traditional services until the middle of March, when all in-person activities transitioned to online platforms. Beginning in April, the Sunday school teachers started offering “Driveway Sunday School” (so named because it was recorded outdoors using safe protocols), providing weekly videos of Bible stories and familiar songs, which were posted on the church website. In May, we added a Zoom Sunday School program, which was held between the two Facebook Livestream services on Sunday mornings.



A new curriculum was introduced in September that offers premade videos of Bible stories, along with introductory videos, follow-up discussions, music and dance videos, and downloadable family activity sheets, so that those children who did not participate in the Sunday morning Zoom sessions would also have the opportunity to learn more about the Bible and our faith.

Until mid-March, our four employed childcare staff continued to provide a safe and caring environment for our infants and toddlers, so that their families were able to take part in worship and other church activities and meetings. Overall, we continue to seek opportunities to encourage children to learn about and experience the foundational messages of God’s love for all, some for the first time.

Our work with youth continued during the first quarter of the year, with a cookie-decorating event and pizza party in early February. The cookies, along with handmade valentines, were then delivered by our youth to the residents of the assisted living area of Kirkland Village.

In the first week of March, the first session of a Youth Inquirers program was held, with the intention of offering two additional sessions later in the month. This program was put on hold until a later date.

Youth leaders maintained contact with our youth throughout the year through text messages, just to check in and, in December, they had a virtual pizza party over Zoom with some of the youth. They made arrangements to have pizzas delivered to their homes so they could share a virtual meal.

Deacons

Deacons are ordained lay members of the congregation who are best described as the church’s ‘ministers of mercy.’ Deacons work in concert with The Reverend Sue Bennetch, Pastoral Care Associate, and are under the supervision and authority of the Session.

The Deacons began 2020 providing and managing hospital visitations, prayer requests, blood pressure screenings and home communion for members.

By March our focus changed due to the pandemic, when we began to gather via Zoom for our meetings.

Deacons were asked to call all members monthly to check on them, and confirm that they were receiving the church newsletters and had the ability to listen to our Sunday Services via phone or to participate on Facebook.

- Jeanne Hunsicker
Moderator
Sue Bennetch
Pastoral Care Associate
- Deacons:
Jeff Csatari
Melody Engel
Phil Fair
Rich Gorton
Elena Helmuth
Barbara Hjorth
Wayne Kelly
Pam Swank



In March we began a Meal Ministry to bring meals and occasionally to shop for members who were quarantining, had health issues, or were homebound. We also drove several members to medical appointments.

The Deacons, along with volunteers Kate Arrington and Lizzie Arrington, sent cards and notes to members and friends of our church.

In December our Deacons along with other volunteers made up “Christmas

Goodie Bags” with treats and greetings, and delivered them to about 40 members of our church family.

Even though it was a challenging year in the life of our church, the Deacons were able to fulfill their calling of caring for our church family.

Mission

The purpose of our commitment to Mission is to provide ongoing opportunities within our own congregation, our local community, and with and through our national and global partnerships to gain a personal understanding of how too many people must live their lives every day; help those in need; and be a resource for those struggling to change their lives.

- Members:
Jackie Byrnes
Norma Ferguson
Leslie Pohl
Vince Stravino
Froy Thompson

As part of our national initiatives, we contributed to Helping Hands, which ultimately did not go on any mission trip and will not be going on one in spring 2021. We also contributed to PCUSA Disaster Assistance Program.

On the international level, we contributed to Hearts for Honduras, a school for children who cannot afford to go to public school. We supported Bev and Michael Harrar, who work for Wycliffe Bible Translators; their home church is First Presbyterian Church in Lancaster.

Our largest category of support was local. Although some of our local partners were not active for the year, those involving food were very much on our minds. Northeast Community Center received a food bank donation after Souper Bowl Sunday. Their need and loss of traditional donors prompted us to contribute again during Thanksgiving. New Bethany Ministries and Safe Harbor received 2000 pounds of produce from our CommUNITY garden (right).



Although it is not primarily food oriented, Northampton Community College Homeless Student Initiative also received support.



The Mission Committee also “blessed” a project of the newly-formed Earth Care sub-committee, to partner with the Trex Company to solicit plastic bags and other plastic materials not typically recycled. Under the leadership of Sally Ross (left, with a small portion of the collection), this group educated our membership about appropriate materials and then collected them through the year.

The goal of 500 pounds was reached in October, and the Property Committee will now select a bench, manufactured by Trex, to be placed on our grounds.

Congregational Life

The Congregational Life Committee is a Committee of Session to encourage fellowship among our members. It was established in 2018 to invite the congregation to gather to relax, have fun and spend time with each other.

The year 2020 presented us with the opportunity to come up with creative ways of keeping our congregation engaged.

We utilized our outdoor space and took advantage of several pleasant summer evenings to offer “Parking Lot Trivia”.

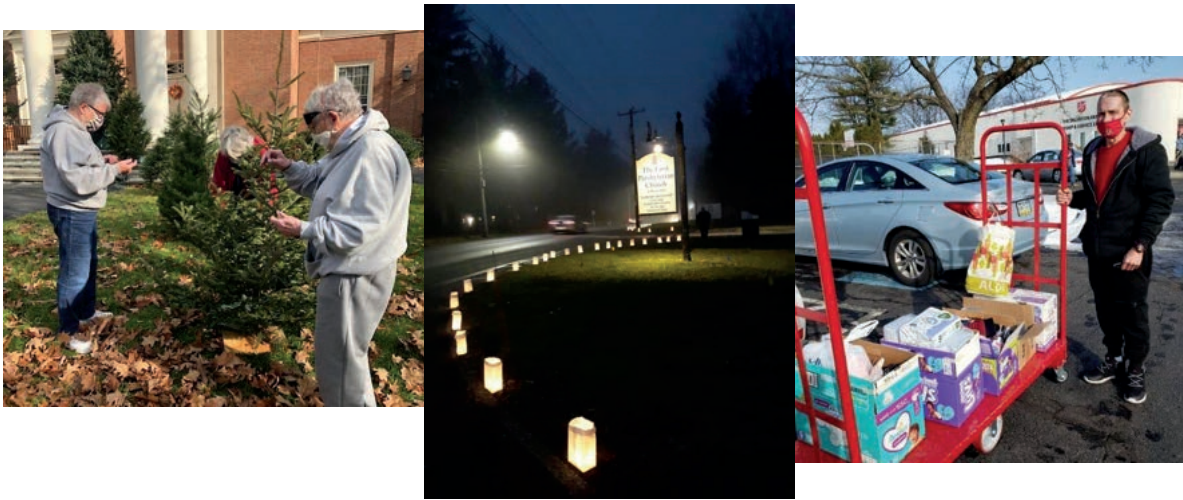
As Halloween approached, we accepted the City of Bethlehem’s invitation to participate ‘. We then offered the larger community our annual “Blessings of the Animals” – it was held on a beautiful fall afternoon, and we had a great turnout. As part of this event, we solicited donations of pet supplies that were shared with Meals on Wheels, so their participants can better care for their own pets (right: Jane Masters bless Jennifer Coles’ dogs, Bruno, Melody and Deacon; photo courtesy of Express-Times)

Next we set our sights on supporting our neighbors by collecting personal hygiene items for the community. They were donated to Northeast Community Center and the Salvation Army. In preparation of Advent, we helped put lights on the Christmas trees decorating the portico and made bows for the door wreaths. A group also gathered so First Pres could participate in the city’s annual Luminaria Night.

As the year came to a close, we sponsored four weeks of giving opportunities for our Community Christmas Giving Tree. Our membership generously donated much needed items for our partners at Northeast Community Center, the Salvation Army and New Bethany Ministries.

Phyllis Walker
Chair

Members:
Sue Bennetch (staff)
Ginny Shunk, Secretary
Jean Hunsicker
Joanne Kelhart
Jane Masters



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.

After spending over a year on rebranding efforts for the church, the Branding Task Force presented a strategic marketing plan and a new logo, which were approved by the Session in the spring of 2020.

Members:

J.C. Austin (staff)
Kristen Benway
Polly Beste
Carol Burns (staff)
Dan Wells
Susan Yee



During the Combined outdoor worship service on Sunday, August 25, the Committee unveiled the new logo on a banner which was placed at the driveway entrance on Center Street. The new logo was designed by Imagevolution, a marketing and design firm in Bethlehem.

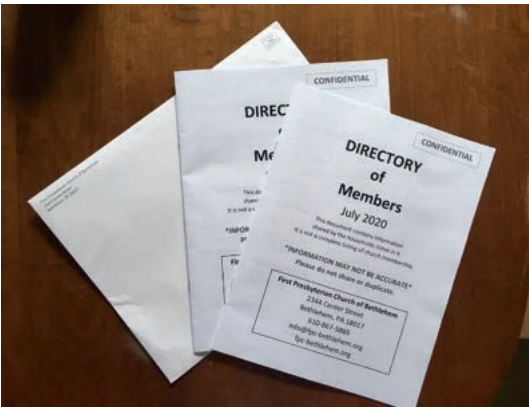
Late in 2019 the Engagement Committee was formed to take the recommendations of the Branding Task Force and, along with the Communications Manager, develop initiatives and events designed to engage our congregation and potential new members.

These initiatives include a redesign of the web site, letterhead, newsletters and all internal and external communications, as well as coordinated efforts with the other church committees to make sure that congregation members and visitors are aware of the many mission-driven activities of the church.

DIRECTORY TASK FORCE

They’re admittedly not “pretty” but we created and provided a Directory of our members and regular attendees, that was shared with everyone during the summer.

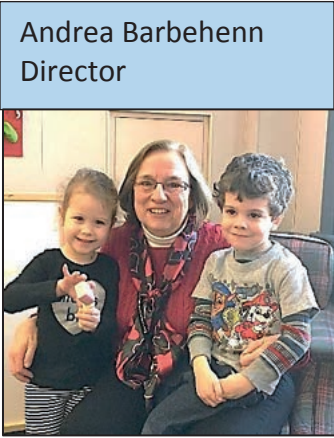
Many thanks to the team led by Jackie Byrnes: Sue Farber, Linda Filipovits, Louise French, Irene Maunz, Tom Miller, Cheri Newton and Anita Shannahan, and staff members Carol Burns and Cristy Mette.



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.



This was certainly not the year we had anticipated! However, we continued to teach and nurture our children. Here’s what happened in 2020:

- We began our year with about 120 children.
- In March we were shut down due to the pandemic. After the initial two weeks, we resumed teaching and interacting with our children, virtually through videos, Class Dojo (an online platform), drive-throughs to pick up packets of materials, emails, and Zoom. If you’ve never Zoomed with little ones, you haven’t lived! Our staff certainly learned new skills and met the task head on.
- We had our last staff meeting in person in June, gathered in a back yard.
- One teacher retired at the end of the school year, and one resigned in July. We hired a wonderful new teacher to cover both jobs in August.
- At the end of June we were able to re-open with Covid-safe protocols in place, for Summer Splash. We had about ten children daily, for themed weeks and lots of outdoor fun.
- We started fall with far fewer children than we had originally registered, but with fewer children it was easier to space them around the room. Masks are our new normal, as well as temperature taking at the door. These children leave their masks on better than most adults!
- We did a revised version of Parent Night, a revised version of Father’s Night for our four year olds, and a video representation of Christmas Chapel.
- We collected donations for New Bethany at Thanksgiving and Northeast Community Center at Christmas. Families were very generous and I had my trunk filled to capacity both times.



- During all this time, many professional organizations offered free online trainings, which many of the staff attended.
- We’ve remained healthy, have had NO Covid spread in the school, and families are slowly returning as they feel safe.

Our goal through this whole time was to keep things as normal as possible for the children, recognizing they need the socialization and in-person teaching and nurturing. We’ve been successful in that.

We’ve had so many blessings in the midst of an upside-down year - God has been good!

Thank you to the church staff and the Re-Opening Task Force, who supported us to safely re-open and staying open.



Staff Members:

Andrea Barbehenn – Preschool Director
Becky Beller
Ginny Dagnall
Kathy D’Entrone (retired June 30)
Susan Givone
Laura Hawk
Heather Kraihanzel
Marcy Liddick
Penny Luse
Danette Michalgyk
Lauren O’Keefe-Burian
Joann Reed
Bernice Slowitsky
Jessica Spak (resigned July 31)
Marcy Sporka
Diane Willans

Board Members:

Sarah Baer – President
Kendahl DeFelice
Amy Keeler
Brian Kephart
Peter McGeary
Jenna Zsilavec
Elizabeth Conard – Session Rep
Becky Gorton – Preschool Task Force Rep
Andrea Barbehenn – 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.

The current committee includes members with backgrounds in:

- Tech-based economic development and Human Resources (HR) roles following a full military career
- Senior HR positions with major US corporations and deep HR expertise
- Strong knowledge of current best practices as Vice President of HR at Moravian College
- 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

Members:
Jon Conrad
Kim Miner
Don Robertson
J.C. Austin (ex officio)

In 2020, the committee further revised our Employee Handbook to stipulate that its policies will be applied equitably for all employees. The committee also updated parental leave policies. Both actions were approved by the Session.

In the summer of 2020, Marianne Zarillo joined First Presbyterian Church as our Business Manager, and Cynthia Matthews as our bookkeeper. These two very talented and experienced financial team members are working well under the direction of the Senior Pastor/Head of Staff and the guidance of the Finance Committee.

In September, our committee had the honor of presenting to the congregation our Session’s request that the members of First Presbyterian Church approve Rev. J.C. Austin’s new terms of call as our Senior Pastor and Head of Staff, thus eliminating a term limit. The congregation joyfully approved.

Also in September, our Senior Pastor nominated The Rev. Dr. Stephen Simmons and Rev. Cynthia L. Simmons, retired pastors within our worshipping community, as Parish Associates. Your personnel committee carried this nomination forward to the Session where it was approved. Parish Associates provide significant value to the congregation and the nominating pastor, and fulfillment to the pastors who fill this important, unpaid position.

For 2021, we again offer all employees the option to participate in a Flexible Spending Account (FSA). A healthcare FSA gives participating employees the ability to set aside pre-tax salary dollars for health expenses not otherwise covered by a health plan. And we continue to offer the option to enroll in employee-paid dental and vision plans. These benefits are available to our employees through the Presbyterian Board of Pensions.

Endowment

The Endowment Committee was established by Session in April, 2018, for several purposes: 1) to review and revise the existing endowment governing document to make it more streamlined; 2) to review and amend (as appropriate) guidelines on use of the endowment funds; 3) to accept, acknowledge and encourage bequests and other planned gifts; and 4) to use the endowment funds more creatively to further the Kingdom for exciting and unique mission and ministry opportunities, locally, nationally, and globally.

During 2020, the single most significant endowment item was that FPCB paid off its existing mortgage of \$466,300 from the Endow Your Pledge Fund, thereby by saving \$6000 per month.

FPCB also received bequests from the following estates: Lydia Beaumont, Eunice Mackie, and Clifton “Tip” Mowrer.

Several grants from endowment funds were recommended to Session for approval:

- From the Mission Fund for upgraded technology for livestreaming worship and music
- From the Dimmick International Scholarship Fund for a pre-med student in Colombia, SA
- From the Barry Brandt Scholarship Fund for two students; one studying at Susquehanna University and one graduate student at Temple

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

These funds, and all of our endowment funds, were established by thoughtful, committed and generous members of our congregation whose Christian witness is alive and well and helping to grow the Kingdom and will continue to do so for years to come.

Expended in 2020 from Endowment Fund earnings for the above stated purposes: \$130,236

Total market value of the FPCB Endowment Fund as of 12/31/17:	\$3.549 million
Total market value of the FPCB Endowment Fund as of 12/31/18:	\$3.969 million
Total market value of the FPBC Endowment Fund as of 12/31/19:	\$4.727 million
Total market value of the FPBC Endowment Fund as of 12/31/20:	\$4.845 million

Lisa Titus
Chair

Members:
Phil Clauser
Jim Halkins
Belle Marks
Susan Mowrer-Benda
(trustee)
Linda Robertson
(through March 2020)
Ginger Seifried
Melinda Stitt

Property

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

With the closing of our building early in the year, it became necessary to create and develop an ability to continue to function as best we could while supporting health and safety.

Thanks to the “Herculean” efforts of Rebecca Angione, FPCB Facility Manager, her dedicated staff, and other volunteers, the church remained functional, on an extremely limited basis.

Limited routine maintenance was performed, due to the minimal use of many areas of the building. Storm water damage was an exterior issue that continued to present itself.

Due to budget constraints, only items considered essential and in need of immediate attention were addressed. Cost savings are anticipated due to our partnership with our Kirkland Village neighbors, with whom we are now sharing snow removal expenses.

Nominating

The Nominating Committee is responsible for recommending candidates for all leadership positions in the church, with the exception of paid staff. The committee presents nominations to the congregation for members of the Session, the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees, and the Nominating Committee, itself. In addition, the committee presents nominations for pastoral search committees, when needed. Members of the congregation have an opportunity to submit names for consideration for all positions, as well, and all recommendations have to be approved by the congregation at a congregational meeting.

During 2020, the Nominating Committee took on an extra responsibility when we also sought nominees for an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC), charged with conducting a search for candidates for the newly-created position of Associate Pastor for Formation and Justice. *(See their report on the inside front cover.)*

Donald H. Masters*
Chair

Members:
Rebecca Angione (staff)
Roger Farber
Robert Hunsicker*
Wayne Kelly
Harold “Bud” Newton*
Lisa Titus*
Daniel Watts

*Trustees

Elizabeth Conard*
Chair

Kristen Benway*
Joanne Kelhart*
J.C. Austin (ex officio)

At Large Members:
Matt Cascioli
Nancy Cramer
Linda Filipovits
Irene Maunz
Peter McGeary
Sally Ross
Steve Samuelson
Mike Stasak
JoAnne Turcotte

*Session representative

Trustees

The Trustees oversee all financial and property matters in the church including the budget, building renovations and repairs, planned giving, and investment funds. Trustees meet monthly and members 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.

The FPCB Board of Trustees was re-established in 2020, with its first meeting in April. The following sub-committees were established:

- Endowment Committee (existing committee, now reporting to Trustees)
- Facilities/Property/Building Usage
- Finance Committee (joint committee with Session)
- Investment
- Technology Task Force

Issues which were addressed during the year include: Memorial Garden maintenance and upkeep, building maintenance, cash flow/PPP loan (both in conjunction with Finance Committee), endowment investment, building use and re-opening plan, office technology, and service contracts.

Lisa Titus, President
Mark Swank, Vice President

Members:
Bob Hunsicker
Belle Marks
Susan Mower-Benda
Bud Newton
Bob Ross
Melinda Stitt

Finance

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

The focus for 2020 has been on managing the church’s finances within the safe protocols prompted by Covid restrictions, as so much of our work involves hands-on processing of transactions.

George Campbell works closely with the Preschool to keep their expenditures in line with their budget. Phyllis Walker and Maurice Kasmaroski manage the weekly deposits, and Al Philpotts coordinates our staff benefits.

In the late fall, Marianne Zarillo was hired as our Business Manager and Cynthia Matthews as bookkeeper. They have been working alongside volunteers to get our systems fully operational with the ACS bookkeeping program, which included bringing records from 2018 and 2019 into that system.

Session committed to pay off our mortgages, which was accomplished, and to work to optimize cash flow, especially during the summer months. We encourage you to consider the monthly electronic deposit option so that your monthly pledge will be automatically paid to FPCB, ensuring funding coming in all year round.

Joanne Kelhart
Chair
Phil Clauser
Assistant Chair

Members:
George Campbell
Sue Farber
Jim Halkins
Russ Miserendino
Bob Ross
Lisa Titus
Phyllis Walker

Revenue	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Budget
2020 Cash Balance brought forward	\$ 120,000	\$ 145,394	\$ 70,000
Member pledges	\$ 725,000	\$ 626,494	\$ 690,000
Member non-pledges	\$ 65,000	\$ 465	\$ 50,000
Loose plate	\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ 5,500
Designated Giving			
Pass thru Offerings	\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ -
Connectional Church Support	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,393	\$ 5,800
Flowers	\$ 6,000	\$ 680	
Deacon Fund	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,415	
In Memoriam		\$ 826	
Event Contributions	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 33,000
Deposits for Memorial Garden		\$ (125)	
Other		\$ 5,050	\$ 100,000
Foundation Gifts	\$ 5,500		\$ 12,000
Facilities Use Fees	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,130	\$ 6,000
Parking Fees	\$ -	\$ 14,438	\$ 26,250
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,000	\$ 50,557	\$ 40,800
Interest		\$ 160	\$ 350
Endowment draw	\$ 130,235	\$ 141,960	\$ 137,000
Line of Credit		\$ -	
Total Revenue	<u>\$ 1,082,735</u>	<u>\$ 849,441</u>	<u>\$ 1,106,700</u>
Expenses			
Church Staff	\$ 618,382	\$ 432,542	\$ 597,180
Property	\$ 375,855	\$ 330,178	\$ 380,506
Administrative Operations	\$ 83,800	\$ 79,521	\$ 41,381
Worship and Music	\$ 42,345	\$ 25,000	\$ 27,150
Mission	\$ 41,140	\$ 6,118	\$ 1,667
Discipleship	\$ 4,000	\$ 2,945	\$ 4,000
Congregational Life	\$ 4,200	\$ 3,021	\$ 1,550
Engagement (Communications, etc.)	\$ 12,750	\$ 13,481	\$ 20,475
Board of Deacons	\$ 6,500	\$ 4,859	\$ 3,500
Scholarships	\$ -	\$ 9,733	\$ -
Audit Fees	\$ 10,000	\$ 6,625	\$ 10,000
Legal Fees	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,459	\$ 1,500
Engineering Fees	\$ -	\$ 12,422	\$ -
Bank Fees	\$ 1,900	\$ 2,350	\$ 2,400
Line of Credit payment	\$ -	\$ 3,604	\$ -
Misc	\$ -	\$ 70,511	\$ 17,430
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 1,202,372</u>	<u>\$ 1,004,370</u>	<u>\$ 1,108,739</u>
NET INCOME	<u><u>\$ (119,637) *</u></u>	<u><u>\$ (154,929) *</u></u>	<u><u>\$ (2,039)</u></u>

* Loss is offset by Cash Balance brought forward

Note: Church financial performance reporting includes beginning bank cash balances as part of revenue available to offset annual expenses.

Statistics

Baptisms

Alina Mae Cernobyl

Alaina Reagan Snyder

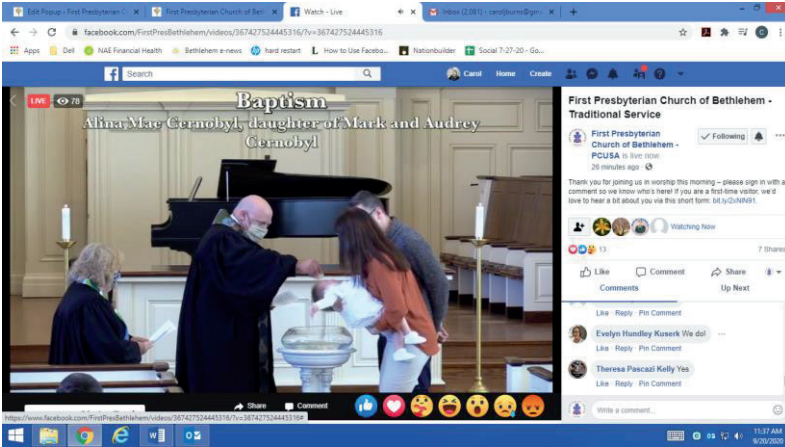
Stella Vincenza Warman

Delanie Raine Williams

Marriage

Elizabeth Stiles and

Alex Mountain



Pastor JC, Pastor Sue and the Cernobyl family

Necrology

Philip Breslin

Janice Castle

Jean Colsante

Phyllis Fisher

Marie Hagenbach

Carmela Hauze

William Horn

William Hubbard

Enid Jones

Carol Kinney

Robert Lefevre

Eunice Mackie

Polly McClure

Pamela Mies

Clifton “Tip” Mowrer

Dorothy Musselman

Evelyn Musselmann

Mary Oskin

Phillip Paulus

Joan Persing

Judith Reed

Irvin Segreaves

Berta T. Shupe

Kenneth Simmons

William Smith

John Smothers

William “Bill” Starnes

Louis Strubeck

Terri Uhler

Richard Wenger

Session Members

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

Class of 2020: Polly Beste, Elizabeth
Conard, Don Masters, Alvin Philpotts

Class of 2021: Kristen Benway,
Lindsey Chadbourn, Phil Clauser,
Terence DeFranco*, Joanne Kelhart,
Phyllis Walker

Class of 2022: Ben Coleman*,
Mark Ferguson, Richard Hjorth, Gail Watts

Trustees

Lisa Titus '22, *President*
Mark Swank '22, *Vice President*

Class of 2020: Alexander "Pat" Dyer*,
Bob Hunsicker, Bob Ross

Class of 2021: Belle Marks, Melinda Stitt

Class of 2022: Susan Mower-Benda,
Bud Newton

Staff

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

The Rev. Sue Bennetch
Pastoral Care Associate

David Macbeth
Director of Music/Choirmaster

Rebecca Angione - *Facilities Manager*

Cristy Mette
Administrative Operations Manager

Marianne Zarillo - *Business Manager*

Cindy Matthews – *Bookkeeper*

Carol Burns - *Communications Manager*

Andrea Barbehenn - *Preschool Director*

**resigned before term ended*

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



**Our building is closed
but our hearts are open!**

Join us online

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