



The CHIMES

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights

April 2024



Choose love.



Be the light.



Change the world.

From the Pastor

All-Church Mission Study – Next Phase of the Journey

by Pastor Laura “PL” Sherwood, Interim Head of Staff



Easter blessings to all of you! Easter Sunday was so early this year that April 1 is already the beginning of a new season. I hope and pray that your journey through Lent brought you spiritual gifts of renewal and reflection. I hope and pray the same for the whole congregation.

During Lent, we embarked on the journey of the All-Church Mission Study which is meant to include a full representation of voices and to help reflect **Who** this congregation has been and continues to be, **How** you feel called by God in this time and place and **Where** you envision God is leading you next, **So That** you may live into the future God has for you.

These may seem like simple questions on the surface, but they require a depth of reflection and engagement to bring forth a faithful and helpful picture of this congregation to share with potential candidates for your next pastoral leadership. I have appreciated the level of participation in the Mission Study conversation sessions thus far and your willingness to share your stories, thoughts and hopes for the Church. Pastor Rebekah is working with youth, children and college students to include their voices in an adapted version of the Mission Study sessions.

Pastor Barbara and I will work with a Mission Study Team to prayerfully read all the stories and responses shared throughout the three conversation sessions, feedback from the initial Connection Group gatherings in the fall and key findings from 2022 Focus Groups. Our goal will be to shape a set of descriptions, hopes, visions and considerations for the Church’s future and next pastoral leadership that will be shared with the congregation for a final process of clarification in May.

In the responses to the Annual Meeting presentation about the Mission Study, we heard a strong expression of hope that however the Pastor Search process unfolds and the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is formed, that it will be truly representative of the whole congregation. That is the intent of the Session and taking our time to listen deeply to all the voices in the Mission Study and other recent forums is essential to fulfilling that goal. This is a process that takes time and I appreciate the patience and fortitude it requires of everyone.

I implore all who are connected to this congregation to hold the process along with all who are leading and participating, in your prayers. Please know that I am praying for all of you.



Journey
LISTENING FOR GOD IN TRANSITIONS

Last Mission Study Session

Sessions 1 and 2 in-person groups concluded in March. The **third and final Session in-person groups** are scheduled **Sunday, April 7, at 9:00 and 10:30 am in Fellowship Hall** (during a worship service) and **Thursday April 11, in the Parlor at 9:30 am, 3:00 pm and 7:00 pm**. We will still have all three Sessions available in an at-home version on our website through April 21 and will gladly work with anyone who would like to schedule an alternative location.

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April Worship



April 7 | *Are Presbyterians Allowed to Laugh?*

Rev. Laura Sherwood

Scriptures: John 16:16-24

9:00 am – Compass Praise Band, 10:30 am – Chancel Choir and Chancel Handbell Choir

April 14 | *Zooming Out*

Rev. Rebekah Anderson, Candidating Sunday

Scriptures: Romans 12:3-17

9:00 am – Compass Praise Band, 10:30 am – Chancel Choir

April 21 | *To Be Known*

Rev. Barbara Gorsky

Scriptures: John 10:11-18

9:00 am – Compass Praise Band, 10:30 am – Chancel Choir

April 28 | *That Love May Overflow*

Rev. Rebekah Anderson

Confirmation Sunday & Holy Communion

Scriptures: Philippians 1:3-11

9:00 am – Compass Praise Band, 10:30 am – Chancel Choir

Confirmation Sunday

Confirmation Sunday is April 28! Join us to celebrate important milestones in the lives of our youth. For 8th graders currently finishing Confirmation, we'll celebrate their hard work and dedication to learning about their faith as they enter a period of discernment before choosing whether or not they'd like to join the church. For 10th graders, we'll celebrate the culmination of their discernment following their time in Confirmation in 8th grade by welcoming them as members of the church. This is such a special Sunday. We hope you'll join us!



Holy Humor and Joy-in-the-Lord Sunday – April 7

A Centuries-old Church Tradition

On the Sunday after Easter, also known as “Bright Sunday,” we will take part in an old church tradition that celebrates the joy of our faith in a risen Christ. For centuries in Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant countries, the week following Easter Sunday was observed by the faithful as “days of joy and laughter” with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection. Church goers and pastors played practical jokes on each other, drenched each other with water, told jokes, sang and danced. The custom was rooted in the musings of early church theologians (like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom) that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. “Risus Paschalis - the Easter laugh,” the early theologians called it.



BRIGHT SUNDAY

Our services this day will include a fun message with a joke or two and light-hearted liturgy along with music and prayers that help us to truly lift our hearts together toward the God who raised Jesus from the dead and let joy reign again on the earth and in our lives.

As Jesus promised his disciples at the Last Supper:

“So you have pain now; but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you.” (John 16:22)

First Pres Children’s Choir at The Moorings

Members of our Children’s Choir spent their day off of school on Monday, February 19, singing to a packed chapel at The Moorings. They bravely and beautifully sang four pieces and were warmly received. It is great to see our music ministry extending into the community. If you have a child that would like to join Children’s Choir it is never too late. Rehearsals for our spring musical start Wednesday, April 3, at 7:00 pm. Contact Nick Pulikowski for more information or to register. See page 7 for more info and registration web link.



Concert Series

Wednesdays @ Noon

Elijah: An Oratorio

SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 4:00 PM

Choir, soloists and orchestra present Mendelssohn's dramatic oratorio *Elijah*, which chronicles many episodes of the prophet Elijah's life, including his challenge to Ahab and the contest of the gods, the miracle of raising the dead and his ascension into heaven.



This piece was composed in the spirit of Mendelssohn's Baroque predecessors Bach and Handel, whose music he greatly admired. *Elijah* is modeled on the oratorios of these two Baroque masters; however, in its lyricism and use of orchestral and choral color, the style clearly reflects Mendelssohn's own skill as an early Romantic composer and it often feels operatic. The oratorio was first performed on August 26, 1846, at Birmingham Town Hall in England.

The choir will be made up of voices from the First Pres Chancel Choir, Southminster Presbyterian, Faith Lutheran, St. John UCC, Christian Church of Wood Dale, Sounds Good Choir, Elgin Master Chorale and Apollo Chorus. An inspirational afternoon of music you will not want to miss!

May 1, 12:10 pm

Christopher Urban, organ

Our final noontime recital of the 2023-2024 season. Chris will focus on music of spring and rebirth from the hymn tune *All Things Bright and Beautiful* to Edvard Grieg's *The Last Spring*. A celebration of the new life and rebirth the season offers.



Child care is provided for 4:00 pm concerts by calling the office for a reservation (no later than four days in advance).

All concerts livestreamed at firstpresah.org

Community Life

Please Pardon Our Dust

We are continually looking for opportunities to be welcoming and inclusive to all. Recently the Board of Trustees approved a project that will result in the creation of two restrooms adjacent to Fellowship Hall that will be gender neutral and accessible for those with wheelchairs, walkers or needing a personal attendant.

Currently, work has been completed to allow use of the former men's rest room on the lower level of the CE Wing to be used by anyone. The stall was removed and a lock and grab bars installed. Work is underway to convert the women's restroom to a similar use restroom. This work is expected to be completed late spring or early summer.

The Facilities Team and Board of Trustees welcome your feedback and ideas on ways that we can continue to work to be an inclusive community. Please contact Michele Holifield or Tony Scheurich with ideas or questions.

April 2024

SYMPATHY TO

Coleen Anzalone, on the death of her father,
Larry McKone

The family of Dorothy Ball

Bill and Arlene Borthwick on the death of
Arlene's brother, Alan

Dawn Bruce on the death of her sister, Viancia Jones

The family of Margaret Estey

Gale Myers, on the death of his wife, Joyce Myers

Steve and Lisa Olszewski & family, on the death
of Lisa's father, Martin Sunwoo

Nick and Daniella Pulikowski & family, on the death
of Nick's grandmother, "Nana" Lucille Ponte

Pathways:
Couples & Singles
mid-30s to late 40s
kids 7+

Pathways Life Stage Group Event

Friday, April 5, 6:00 pm

Golf and dinner event for couples and singles mid-30s to late 40s. Details on page 5.

Savvy Seniors:
Couples and Singles
69+

Savvy Seniors Life Stage Group Event

Friday, April 12, 5:00 pm

Food and games at Arlington Ale House for couples and singles 69+. Details on page 5.



Candidate Sermon by Rev. Rebekah Anderson

Sunday, April 14 at both worship services

Join us to hear Rev. Rebekah Anderson preach for the position of Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Families. Congregational meeting at 11:30 am.



Elijah: An Oratorio

Sunday, April 21, 4:00 pm

Choir, soloists and orchestra present Mendelssohn's dramatic oratorio *Elijah*. A dynamic afternoon of music you will not want to miss. Details on page 3.



Confirmation Sunday

Sunday, April 28, 10:30 am

Celebrate with our 8th and 10th graders as they mark a major milestone in their faith journeys



Wednesdays@Noon

Wednesday, May 1, 12:10 pm

Christopher Urban presents an organ recital of springtime music.



God's Honest Truth

Wednesday, May 8, 7:00 pm

Our next God's Honest Truth will be on the theme **Untold: Hidden Stories from Our Past**. We are looking for your own personal untold stories that have had a significant impact on your life. Please contact Rev. Rebekah Anderson with your story or talk to her at church. If you aren't telling a story, plan to attend to support and hear the amazing stories from our congregation.



April Restaurant Walk

**SIGN-UP SUNDAY
MORNING OR ONLINE**

Our popular Restaurant Walk fellowship program returns for another session in April! This is a great way to connect with other members of the congregation and support a local restaurant. Details to come. Watch Church Life and Weekly Highlights for how you can sign-up. Questions contact Barbara Gorsky.

DATES: APRIL 16, 21, 28 & 30.

Looking For A New Way To Serve Our Church Community?

The Community Life and Education Committee needs your help.

Do you like planning parties and social events or do you have a passion for adult education and spiritual growth? Maybe you are looking for a new way to serve our church community? Then we have a place for you: the Community Life and Education Committee! We develop activities, events and opportunities to bind our church members together as a family. We also provide input and support to our pastoral staff as they develop adult education opportunities to help our congregants grow in their faith.

Our programing includes:

- Sunday School Classes
- Engage & Encounter Classes
- God's Honest Truth Presentations
- The Annual Speaker Series
- Retreats
- The Fall Kick-Off
- Fellowship Hour
- Life Stage Groups
- Restaurant Walks

We are looking for additional committee members to help us diversify our programing and provide support when needed. We meet the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at church. Our major work is done in the spring so that all of our programing is set for the fall.

For those new to the church, this group is a wonderful way to get to know other members and the functions of the church as a whole. If you would like to serve in this capacity, please contact Rev. Laura Sherwood or Lori Chandler at 330-212-9460 or chandlori@gmail.com.

God's Honest Truth



Untold: Hidden Stories from Our Past Wednesday, May 8, 7:00 pm

Our next God's Honest Truth will be on the theme *Untold: Hidden Stories from Our Past*. We are looking for your own personal untold stories that have had a significant impact on your life. Please contact Rev. Rebekah Anderson with your story or talk to her at church.

If you aren't telling a story, plan to attend to support and hear the amazing stories from our congregation.

Join the First Pres Golf League

We are organizing teams for the 2024 season at **Palatine Hills Golf Course**. May through August, we will have Tuesday evening tee-times for 9-hole rounds. Whether you are already a great golfer or just learning how to play, you are welcome to join the league. We also need substitutes! For additional information, please contact Arlene Bullerman at abullerman@earthlink.net or 847-670-0319.



Join a Life Stage Group

These groups offer a great opportunity for fellowship (and often food) with other members of the congregation in a similar life stage. First Pres is a large, busy and active congregation and these groups offer the opportunity to slow down and meet other members to deepen relationships.

Pathways: Couples & Singles mid-30s to late-40s

Friday, April 5, from 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Golf Factory in Mount Prospect

We will order food and drinks during our rounds of golf.

NOTE: this is an adult only event.

Cost: \$65 per hour for the bay divided by how many people attend.

Contact Laura Grochocki: lgrochocki@paylocity.com



Scan the QR code
to sign up for Golf

Savvy Seniors: Couples & Singles | 69+

Friday, April 12, 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Arlington Ale House

Put on your "Finally It's Spring" glad rags and join us for two hours of fun, conversation, games and good food as we gather at the Arlington Ale House, 111 West Campbell Street, Arlington Heights, on April 12. Should you have board games (or any other kinds of games) you'd like to play, please bring them along.

Food: If your last name starts with the letters A-P, please bring an appetizer to share. Those whose last names start with the letters Q-Z, please bring a dessert.

RSVP: Please contact Lori Chandler at chandlori@gmail.com or 303-212-9460 to let us know you will attend. When you respond, be prepared to tell us the MONTH of YOUR BIRTH. No need to mention the year!!

Bookmarks to Support Produce Market



From April to June, our Sunday morning bookmark donations will go to support our Wednesday Produce Market. The market runs from July 10 through September 4. This was a very successful community outreach last year and we'd like to keep it going. The money collected will go towards the purchase of food for the community dinner we offer each week (grilled hotdogs, hamburgers, chips, watermelon, soda/water) and supplies for pickles and pesto made from garden produce that are given away.

For more information about the Wednesday Produce Market or to volunteer to serve at the market, contact Kim Hogan at k_hogan2003@yahoo.com.

Honor God's Creation on Earth Day

God calls us to be good stewards of the Earth and all its creatures. Earth Day, an annual event on April 22, calls on us to demonstrate our support for environmental protection. First hosted on April 22, 1970, it now includes a wide range of events coordinated globally by Earthday.org including 1 billion people in more than 193 countries.



We are planning a number of ways our congregation can honor Earth Day. On Sunday, April 21, look for a table in the Narthex with biodegradable vegetable bags and suggestions for other activities.

Mark Your Calendars: Pride Parade 2024, Sunday, June 2

First Pres will join other community and religious organizations marching in the Buffalo Grove Pride Parade. Watch for more details on how you can participate. This is a family friendly event. If you would like to learn more about the Buffalo Grove Pride Parade and the Pinta Project, go to www.buffalogrovepride.com. For more information on the First Pres parade entry, contact Kim Hogan at k_hogan2003@yahoo.com.



Hearts of Compassion Needed!

The Deacons are looking for individuals who have a heart for reaching out to those who experience isolation and loneliness.



If you get energy from visiting people, connecting with those who are not able to come to church, we NEED YOU! Please contact Deacon Bill Hellyer, at mbillhellyer@gmail.com or Rev. Barbara Gorsky.

Welcoming & Hospitality Team

Do you like to bake cookies? Do you have a heart for welcoming strangers? We are in the process of forming a **new** "Welcoming & Hospitality Team" to provide receptions for our various programs and events, as well as having a welcoming presence to anyone who comes through our doors. The goal is to have a team of 10-15 people so each person will not be burdened with too much work. Interested? Contact Rev. Barbara Gorsky.

NEW!

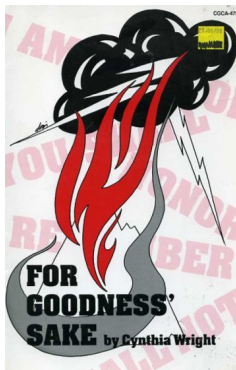
Chalice House Housewarming

Together with Chalice House we hosted a very successful housewarming party on February 24, for Marlon, Berlin, Vicki and Angel. They have settled in an apartment in Palatine and are doing well. Chalice House has scheduled a workday on Saturday, April 13, from 1:00-4:00 pm to get the house ready for a new family, which they anticipate welcoming by May 1. If you are interested in helping with the workday or volunteering in any other way please email chalicehouse@ccuu.org.



Spring Musical – K-5th Graders

Presenting “For Goodness’ Sake” with words and music by Cynthia Wright. This sweet, fun children's musical retells the familiar lessons of the Ten Commandments through music and drama. The show is set on a typical Sunday morning with a family rushing to get to church. During their car trip to church, they listen to a radio program interpreting each commandment as a song performed by choir.



Registration is currently open for our kindergarten-5th grade children to present the musical during worship on Sunday, May 5. Spring musical rehearsals will coincide with Family Night on Wednesday nights, beginning on April 3. Families are invited to enjoy Family Night dinner in Fellowship Hall from 6:00-7:00 pm, followed by musical rehearsal from 7:00-8:00 pm. Children can opt in for the cast for singing and acting roles or for the crew for set design and art projects. Spring musical programming will take the place of Kids Connect during these five weeks, April 3 through May 1. Participation in at least four Wednesday evenings is encouraged so children can learn their music and parts. The musical will be open, free of charge, to First Pres family, friends and the community. For more information contact Nick Pulikowski or visit the registration website at www.firstpresab.org/musical.

Vacation Bible School and MissionFactory

Mark your calendars! Vacation Bible School for children in Preschool through 4th grade and MissionFactory for children in 5th and 6th grade will take place from July 8 to July 12. Registration will open on May 22. We cannot wait for this incredible week of music, stories, faith and fun! Please email Rev. Rebekah Anderson with any questions.

Sunday School Highlight

Our children have had an amazing year learning about what it means to live out our faith. They’ve loved getting to know one another on a deeper level by doing “Show and Tell” during our check in time every week. We’re learning so much about one another!



First Pres PDO & Preschool

PDO Starts its 46th Year!

Registration is in full swing this spring at PDO & Preschool, kicking off our 46th year. We continue to fill the classrooms with children from First Pres and the community. Children are learning about all that will bloom in the coming weeks ahead and learned about Jesus during Lent and Easter.



We will begin practicing for our annual year-end singing performance that now takes place in the Sanctuary. Children get the opportunity to have parents hear the songs they sing during the school year and gather for refreshments after. Looking ahead for playground days, caterpillars and butterflies!



Confirmation

Confirmation Retreat: On Sunday, April 21, our students currently enrolled in Confirmation will gather at the church for a retreat from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm. During this time, they'll take part in an important part of Confirmation—writing their Statements of Faith. Please hold our Confirmands in prayer as they take this important step in their journey of faith.

Celebration Sunday: Sunday, April 28, is a special day in the life of our church. Not only will we celebrate 8th graders who have completed Confirmation and will begin a journey of discernment before joining the church, but we'll also celebrate Confirmands who completed Confirmation and have chosen to join the church after a period of discernment. It is a gift to walk alongside youth on their journey of faith and we'll celebrate a major milestone in this journey. We hope you'll join us!

Baccalaureate Sunday: Is your child graduating from high school this year? We want to recognize them in worship on May 19, as part of Baccalaureate Sunday. Please email information about your graduate to Rev. Rebekah Anderson

Middle School Retreat Highlight

Middle Schoolers had an amazing experience on the Middle School Retreat at the Daycholah Center in Ripon, Wisconsin, March 1-3. They participated in workshops on Communion, Baptism and Spirituality, and got to lead a worship service! See photos from the retreat below.



Youth Mission Trips

Mark your calendars! Summer Mission Trips for middle and high school are quickly approaching! We're so excited. Mission trips are one of the most meaningful aspects of our youth program and open the eyes and hearts of our students in a powerful way. We hope your child can join us. **Registration for these trips opens on April 1.** Keep an eye out for an email with the registration link or find it on the church website.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION TRIP

This year, **middle schoolers will go to Indianapolis, Indiana**, where we'll work with homeless shelters, food banks and community centers to support people working on the front lines of organizations that alleviate poverty, hunger and homelessness in central Indiana. **This trip will take place from June 16 - June 21. The cost is \$450 per person.** Scholarships are available.

HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP

High Schoolers will go to Logan County, West Virginia where we'll develop relationships with the community and serve alongside local organizations that serve the elderly and offer children's programming. We'll also aid in construction and repairs needed in their community such as painting, cleaning, yardwork and work projects. **This trip will take place from July 28 - August 2. The cost is \$450 per person.** Scholarships are available.

Friends are always welcome to join us on mission trips. If you're interested in joining or have any questions, please contact Rev. Rebekah Anderson.

Middle School Retreat at the Daycholah Center in Ripon, WI



Engage & ENCOUNTER

Wednesday Evenings
Adult Education Class

MAHLER 2, "RESURRECTION" SYMPHONY

Wednesdays, April 3 – May 1
7:00 pm / Chapel / Adam Hendrickson

Gustav Mahler is one of the greatest and most prophetic composers of all time, having lived and composed during the incredible transition from the 19th to the 20th century. Join Adam Hendrickson for an in-depth discussion and analysis of one of his most celebrated works, *Symphony No. 2, the Resurrection Symphony*.



The symphony was written between 1888 and 1894 and was first performed in 1895. It was one of Mahler's most popular and successful works during his lifetime. It was his first major work that established his lifelong view of the beauty of afterlife and resurrection. It was voted the fifth-greatest symphony of all time in a survey of conductors carried out by the BBC Music Magazine.

The Postlude on Easter Sunday, March 31, will feature the Finale to the Symphony scored for brass and organ. A great preview for the class!

Scan the QR Code to hear a recording of the symphony by the Boston Philharmonic on YouTube.



Scan the QR code to watch

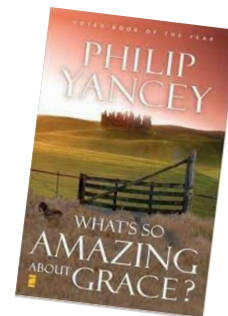
Coffee: Grounds for Discussion & Service



Sundays, April 14 – May 5

10:30 am / Room 110 / 4-week study

What's so Amazing about Grace, (conclusion of study started in January) *While this is the conclusion of this study, each week focuses on a different aspect of grace. Feel free to come when you are able. Participants do not need to attend every week or session.



Discover grace as you've never known it before: the most powerful force in the universe and our only hope for love and forgiveness.

Grace is the church's great distinctive. It's the one thing the world cannot duplicate, and the one thing it craves above all else – for only grace can bring hope and transformation to a jaded world.

In *What's So Amazing About Grace?* award-winning author Philip Yancey explores grace at street level. If grace is God's love for the undeserving, he asks, then what does it look like in action? And if Christians are its sole dispensers, then how are we doing at lavishing grace on a world that knows far more of cruelty and unforgiveness than it does of mercy?

Yancey sets grace in the midst of life's stark images, tests its mettle against horrific "ungrace":

- Can grace survive in the midst of such atrocities as the Nazi holocaust?
- Can it triumph over the brutality of the Ku Klux Klan?
- Should any grace at all be shown to the likes of Jeffrey Dahmer, who killed and cannibalized seventeen young men?

Grace does not excuse sin, says Yancey, but it treasures the sinner. True grace is shocking, scandalous. It shakes our conventions with its insistence on getting close to sinners and touching them with mercy and hope. It forgives the unfaithful spouse, the racist, the child abuser. It loves today's AIDS-ridden addict as much as the tax collector of Jesus' day.

In his most personal and provocative book ever, Yancey offers compelling, true portraits of grace's life-changing power. He searches for its presence in his own life and in the church. He asks, "How can Christians contend graciously with moral issues that threaten all they hold dear?" And he challenges us to become living answers to a world that desperately wants to know, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Presbyterian Women

Circle 7 will meet April 16, at 7:00 pm in the Parlor. Our lesson will be Chapter 7 "An Ethiopian Eunuch Encounters the Good News of Jesus".

Candidating Sunday

April 14, 9:00 & 10:30 am Worship
Congregational Meeting 11:30 am



Purpose: To vote on the Call of Rev. Rebekah Anderson as Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Families.

Rebekah has been serving as our Director for Children's and Youth Ministries since August of 2023. The

search process that led to Rebekah began in 2022 with an APNC (Associate Pastor Nominating Committee) tasked with finding a new Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Families after the departure of Rev. T.C. Anderson. The process changed several times, an additional search for a new Children's Ministries Director also began and both searches eventually merged to focus on finding one full-time person to lead our Children's and Youth Ministries. The top goal was finding the right person, regardless of ordination status. Rebekah, already an ordained Presbyterian minister, was the clear choice and accepted the position of Director with the hope that it could be an installed pastoral position in the near future.

Leaders of both the original APNC and subsequent Children's Ministries Search Committee presented the story of this search at the Annual Meeting on February 11. Elder Laura Grochocki, who served on Session in 2023, presented the Session's letter to our Presbytery requesting special permission to make this role an installed pastor position since the original APNC had been dissolved in January, 2023.

Join the Revenue Working Group

Hello, congregation! We are looking for creative or entrepreneurial minds or those with experience in event planning to join a Revenue Working Group. The goal of the working group would be to discuss revenue potential of the Church, including potential events or fundraisers, and review notes from recent brainstorming sessions. The proceeds could be used to support the General Fund or a special mission as recommended by the working group to Session. Please contact Garrett Childs garett_childs@hotmail.com or 312-502-6551 if you are interested in joining the group. Let's raise some money!

Presbytery's Commission on Ministry (COM) wrote to the Session in January that they had unanimously approved moving forward toward the pastoral call and installation of Rebekah.

The next step was to share all of this with the congregation and get your feedback. Your responses to this part of the Annual Meeting presentations were clear and overwhelmingly positive. The session voted unanimously on Sunday, March 10, to call a congregational meeting as part of a Candidating Sunday on April 14.

We hope everyone will join us for Rebekah's Candidating Sunday on April 14. She will preach at both services, 9:00 am in the Chapel and 10:30 am in the Sanctuary and will be livestreamed. A congregational meeting to vote on accepting her call as our Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Families, along with Terms of Call, will follow the 10:30 am service in the Sanctuary. Members from the combined search committees will present her Terms of Call and host a simple reception following the meeting.

On behalf of your Session,

Pastor Laura Sherwood, Moderator and Bill Lyon, Clerk

The parents (in our focus groups) sought a "Unicorn" - (someone that was) open and inclusive, a supportive role model with relatability/energy/charisma, who was well organized, structured and mature. **The youth wanted:** what they called a "Sherpa" to help guide them on their faith journey. (They didn't) feel strongly (about whether the candidate was ordained) but wanted the right person for the job, dedicated/flexible. Rebekah rose to the top. She was the unicorn-sherpa that we had been seeking, with gifts and passion for ministry with both age groups of children and youth, and their families. (Mark Smith – original APNC – Annual Meeting presentation February 11)

PNC (Pastor Nominating Committee) Formation steps

The Session has begun discussions on what may be needed for the process of nominating members to serve on the PNC with guidance from our Presbytery's Commission on Ministry. We must complete a number of steps, including the Mission Study, before we proceed with the PNC formation. At an appropriate time, all members will have an opportunity to express their interest in being involved with the PNC. Our hope is that we will have a PNC formed and working over the summer at the earliest or beginning of fall at the latest.

Financial Update

Thank you for your attendance at the Annual Meeting and for your thoughtful questions and comments on the subsequent survey. We will be drafting a Q&A pertaining to those questions later this month. For those of you that were not able to view the financial update or would like to review the presentation, it can be found at firstpresab.org/2024-financial-update/ or in the literature racks at the back of the Sanctuary.

As discussed at the Annual Meeting, General Fund giving and operating expenses both totaled approximately \$1.3 million for 2023, leading to a break-even year. We landed on solid ground for 2023 due to your generosity at the end of the year. In addition, total reserves increased by \$200,000 due to investment income in quarter four (which may be temporary depending on the financial markets).

However, we are not out of the woods! Pledges for 2024

are far lower than our expected expenses by over \$200,000. The Session and Administration and Finance Committee will continue to assess options to increase revenue or decrease expenses. If you have not turned in a pledge, we encourage you to do so. We believe it is quite possible that the Church will need to spend from its reserves in order to pay for its operating expenses in 2024.

Below is a summary of reserve balances (net of loans outstanding) and net operating income through December 2023. We have provided historical information for the past four years to help demonstrate the current financial condition of the Church. The loan outstanding to the Presbytery Investment & Loan Program (that helped pay for all the recent construction work on the Chapel and hallway) totals \$438,216 and carries an interest rate of 2.40%. This rate of interest is lower than what the Church earns on its excess cash and is fixed until 2027.

Send any questions to Garrett Childs, at garrett_childs@hotmail.com or to Bill Lyon, Clerk of Session. Thank you for your generosity!

Church Reserves		12/31/23	12/31/22	12/31/21	12/31/20
Operating cash & investments		\$ 1,430,895	\$ 1,225,438	\$ 2,007,103	\$ 1,066,450
Less Loan		(438,216)	(450,000)	-	(139,941)
Endowment Fund		1,391,091	1,263,589	1,500,652	1,412,604
Total reserves		\$ 2,383,770	\$ 2,039,027	\$ 3,507,755	\$ 2,339,113
Operating Income	Budget 2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Contributions	\$ 1,147,035	\$ 1,301,663	\$ 1,369,617	\$ 1,193,776	\$ 1,269,941
Operating Expenses	(1,365,000)	(1,299,934)	(1,399,795)	(1,313,028)	(1,243,238)
Net Surplus (Deficit)	\$ (217,965)	\$ 1,729	\$ (30,178)	\$ (119,252)	\$ 26,703

Session Highlights



From the approved minutes of the February 4, 2024, Session meeting.

Admin and Finance presented a budget for 2024 which was approved by Session.

This will be presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting on February 11.

Session reviewed and discussed content for the Annual Meeting. It was agreed to have three areas of focus:

1. The state of the church and expectations during our interim period.
2. The process that led to hiring Rev. Rebekah Anderson and steps to install her as an associate pastor.
3. The financial condition of the church and potential actions for 2024.

Staff Role Study

In conjunction with the Mission Study, the Personnel Committee and Pastor Laura have begun an all-staff Role Study that will run through June 30th. This study has several components, including talking with staff about their

role & job functions and asking them to step away from any church volunteer work for the duration of the study. This plan will help the church validate job descriptions, help verify the church is paying our staff correctly, and that the church is in compliance with labor law. We will also gain insight about volunteering needed to

accomplish church work and hope that the study will help church membership understand how much we need broad support for all that our church does. Please reach out to Jennifer Fick, personnelchair@firstpresab.org or anyone on the Personnel Committee with questions. Thank you!

THANK YOU! ANNUAL MEETING RESPONSES!

From the Pastors and Session

A big thank you to everyone who filled out a response forms regarding the Annual Congregational Meeting. We received a total of 48 responses, very impressive! Every word has been transcribed and summarized and the Session is now reading over your responses. We deeply appreciate your willingness to engage in the future life of our Church. Your voice counts!

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April 2024

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