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OCTOBER 2021

ISSUE 21-10

# The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

## AT A GLANCE

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# Leadership

## LOVE BY OBEDIENCE

From Pastor Mackay

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*

- 1 John 5:2-3

When we think back to our school days, we all remember who was “cool” and who wasn’t. While the “cool” crowd may have looked any number of ways, there’s one character from our memories that we can all agree was *not* cool: the “goody-goody,” the “goody two shoes,” the “holier than thou.”

We still have that hunger to be cool, don’t we? Even though Jesus expressly says we will not receive it (John 15:19), Christians still often hunger for the acceptance of the world. One of the most dangerous results of this desire is the temptation to believe that obedience to God and love for others can, at times, be in conflict. We can think that the way we love others is to *relax* our standards of holiness so we aren’t seen as threatening or judgmental. We fear that by obeying “too strictly,” we will push others away.

Christians should reflect the attitude of our Savior and strive against sinful judgement and harshness (Matthew 7:1-6, Titus 3:1-2). We are to be gentle and approachable, showing the same grace God has given us. Yet, John states clearly that obedience to God is the very essence of love not just for God, for one another. To “show grace” never means to disobey God. As we obey God, not only is it evidence of our love for God, but also for our neighbor. Why?

God defines the loving way to treat our neighbor in his law. Rom 13:10 states, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Paul continues to lay out God’s commandments that have a particularly neighborly focus: not committing adultery, not murdering, not stealing, not coveting. So, as we obey God’s law we will by definition treat our neighbor in a loving manner.

Obeying God’s law always helps our neighbor, as in doing so we testify to the truth. Imagine you’re in an army unit, and you speak to all your fellow soldiers about your wonderful commanding officer. You tell them all about his excellent qualities, his experience, his devotion, etc. Yet, though you speak this way, the way you act constantly disobeys and undercuts him. You cut corners when given orders. You undermine his authority by making decisions yourself that you

know should go to the CO. Your words speak of respect and obedience, but your actions show otherwise.

Obviously, you are untruthful, but think how will this will affect your unit! You have become a walking contradiction. While your words speak one way, your actions make them bankrupt and empty. John is encouraged about reports of those he loves, not because they are speaking truth, but because they “are walking in the truth” (3 John 3-4). Hebrews 10 commands us to spur one another on to love and good deeds. When we don’t obey God, we become not a spur to one another, but a stone. We destabilize our witness to others, causing our Christian neighbors to stumble, and our non-Christian neighbors to question the legitimacy of our testimony.

Obedience testifies to truth, but it also testifies to our unity in Jesus. We all know that misery loves company. Sin is misery. Thus, disobedience loves company! The bully at school is never alone but surrounded by minions that aid and abet him. We can feel that disobedience creates a bond among us. Tragically, some Christian “support groups” can become Christian “excuse groups” in which the shared sin becomes not an enemy to be fought against, but a common thread that is excused. We must be warned here that sin creates a false bond. We may feel a partnership in misdeeds, but the motivation for sin is always pride, and it will only be a matter of time before prideful people conflict with one another. Yet God has joined us together by his Spirit in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:5), thus to live in obedience to him is to testify to our true unity. Let our bond not be in falsehood, but in God’s grace.

Finally, obedience to God is loving to neighbor because it brings community blessing. We have seen in our study of Malachi, that if Israel were to return to God, they would together see the abundance of heaven opened to them. This is not a promise that individuals will be enriched by devotion to God, but that the whole nation will enjoy his blessing. So, it is in the church. 1 Cor 12 reminds us that all spiritual gifts are given for the *common* good. When we obey God by utilizing the graces he has given, he uses us to be a blessing to the entire community. Why would we withhold that by turning from God?

Ultimately, how do we know that obedience to God is a blessing to God’s people? We look to Jesus Christ. His death on the cross was God’s plan from all eternity for the salvation of sinners. In Jesus’ obedience, the

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church was blessed with an immeasurable blessing.

So, let us never think that we need to scale back our obedience to God in order to be loving to others. The false communion offered by sin is no communion at all, but an illusion that will lead to disruption, isolation, and death. May God unify us in his Son that we would obey Him, and in doing so, love one another. ■

## PRAYER FOCUS

**OCTOBER 3** - Pastor Search Committee  
**OCTOBER 10** - Stewardship  
**OCTOBER 17** - Ilyssa Harrington  
**OCTOBER 24** - Florida Presbytery Fall Meeting  
**OCTOBER 31** - Reformation Day

## PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

As last reported, a job description has been compiled with help and direction from the Session and reviewed by numerous current or retired ARP ministers. A link has been added to our website for applicants to view the job description and receive information regarding the position.

To date, the method of searching for candidates has been limited to “word of mouth” throughout the Synod, which has been well circulated. We have asked for and are receiving recommendations from trusted sources, as well. This is the preferred method of search and the same one used to bring Chad Reynolds and Matt Joldersma to us initially, and now to their current pastorates.

Currently we are reaching out to several senior pastors to seek further counsel in our search process and to ask for their prayer support. We have met personally with one candidate and are reviewing several other names that have been brought forward by this process. We appreciate your continued support, patience, and prayer for this committee and our work.

- Pastor Search Committee

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on September 28.

- Prayer was given for our the needs of our congregation and the ministries of our church. Elders prayed specifically for members with whom they had interacted in the days preceding our meeting.
- Larry and Pearl Oliszewski were received into church membership by transfer from First Presbyterian Church (ARP), Frostproof.
- The session discussed the current COVID situation and has removed its recommendations regarding face coverings.
- The Pastor Search Committee reported on their progress; please see the update below.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that through August, member contributions are at 61% of the annual budget and expenses from the general fund are at 58% year to date. Contributions to date are above the five-year average by 4 percentage points. The committee is considering a process to reorganize our monies held in reserve for various ministries. Thanksgiving was given for God’s provision.
- Each committee reported on their work. Highlights:
  - Discipleship Weekend is set for Nov 12-14 with Rev. Matt Miller
  - Anyone interested in nursery service is invited to a brief nursery interest meeting on Oct 10 at 12 pm in the Sanctuary.
  - Shane Miller, Director of Youth, is interested in finding families among the congregation willing to host our students in their home for a Sunday night meeting.
  - News was shared that Ilyssa Harrington is 90% funded towards her upcoming foreign mission service. Thanks was given to God.
  - The Nominations Committee reported that there are a number of members exploring service as church officers.
- The fall meeting of Florida Presbytery is Tuesday, October 26, at Hope Church in Lutz. ■

# Discipleship

November 12-14, 2021

## Discipleship Weekend

### In Times Like These, Pray Like This

with Rev. Matt Miller

The cultural turmoil of the last few years has raised questions for all of us about how we are to think and live as Christians. Our Discipleship Weekend is an opportunity for training together as we look to Jesus! How should we pray to God in the world today? How does God use our prayers to transform our thinking and living?

Rev. Matt Miller (Ph.D. Cand., University of Bristol) is our speaker for this year's Discipleship Weekend. Rev. Miller was born and raised in Knoxville, TN. Matt is a well-known pastor in the ARP, having served as the Senior Minister of Greenville ARP Church, the director of Family Bible Conference, and a conference speaker at Bonclarken many times. He is a graduate of Wake Forest, RTS, and holds a doctorate from Erskine Seminary. Matt currently serves as City Director for the C.S. Lewis Institute-Greenville and is working on his Ph.D. He is married to Lindsay, and they have three children, Elise, Davis, and Owen.

Registration begins on Wednesday, October 6. Register through our church website, contact the church office, or simply mark "Discipleship Weekend" on the friendship pad on Sunday morning. Childcare is available, and children in Pre-K4 through 5<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to attend a children's program. There is a suggested donation of \$15 per adult. ■



### Schedule

#### Friday, November 12

6:00 p.m. - **Supper** (Fellowship Hall)

7:20 p.m. - **Keynote 1** (Chapel)

8:10 p.m. - **Q&A** w/ Rev. Miller

8:30 p.m. - Dismissal

#### Saturday, November 13

9:00 a.m. - Coffee, and Welcome  
(Chapel/Parlor)

9:20 a.m. - **Keynote 2**

10:15 a.m. - Break w/ Refreshments

10:45 a.m. - **Keynote 3**

11:40 a.m. - **Q&A** w/ Rev. Miller

12:00 p.m. - Dismissal

#### Sunday, November 14

9:30 a.m. - **Morning Worship**

Rev. Miller Preaching

## ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

### Weekly Schedule

6:00 - Supper in Fellowship Hall

6:30 - Celebration of Community / Dismissal of Students

6:30-7:30 - Children's Program / Youth Program

6:45 - Program (See Below)

7:25 - Conclusion

### Program Rotation

**1st Wednesday** - Potluck and Family Fellowship  
(children and youth will participate  
in main program )

**2nd Wednesday** - Breakout Night

**3rd Wednesday** - Hymn Sing and Prayer Meeting

**4th Wednesday** - Bible Study

**5th Wednesday** - Rock on Wednesday will NOT meet on 5th Wednesdays.

**Dates R.O.W. will NOT meet this fall - Nov. 10 and 24, Dec. 22 and 29.**

## LARGE GROUP

### THE HUB

#### Adult Large Group Class

The Hub meets Sunday mornings in the fellowship hall following the worship service. If you do not currently have a small group and are interested in exploring our Sunday morning adult discipleship, join us at The Hub for a sermon discussion led by a pastor or elder, fellowship, and refreshments. All are welcome!



# Music Ministry

## ISAAC WATTS: LIBERATOR OF HYMNODY IN ENGLISH

### From Vince Treadway

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) has been called the *liberator of hymnody in English* and left an immense body of hymns that are widely used today. Watts was the son of an elder in the Independent Congregational Church (which had broken away from the Anglican Church) in Southampton, England. Watts was precociously literate and well educated.

One story that has become well known was that at age 16, Watts complained to his father that the hymnody in the church was dull and profitless, and his father replied, "Well then write something better!" Watts took that challenge seriously and penned approximately 700 hymns, 36 of which are in our *Trinity Hymnal*! Watts' goals in hymn writing included being uninhibited, with memorable phrases that packed immense amounts of meaning in a few words. Watts did not feel bound to the authorized version of the Bible at the time. In the preface to the 1720 edition of the *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* by Isaac Watts, he wrote:

"While we sing the praises of our God in his church, we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is the nearest a-kin to heaven; and it is a pity that this, of all others, should be performed the worst upon earth. . .to see the dull indifference, the negligent and the thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of the whole assembly, while the Psalm is still on their lips, might tempt even a charitable observer to suspect the fervency of inward religion, and it is much to be feared, that the minds of most of the worshippers are absent or unconcerned."

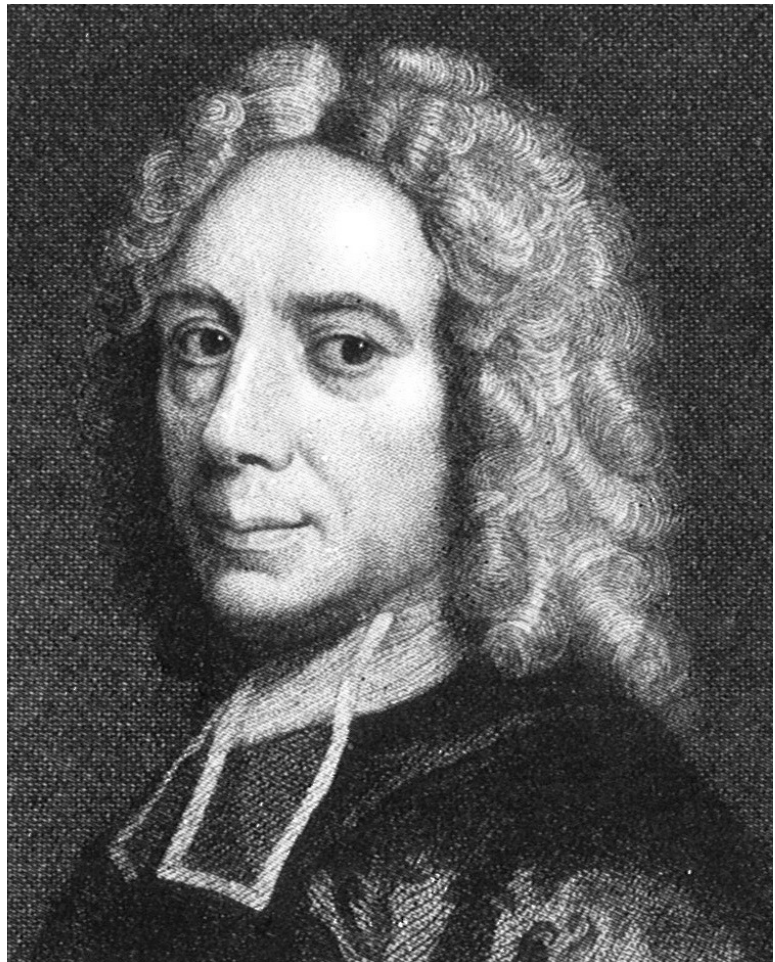
While we may chuckle at such an assessment of hymn singing, we can understand why Watts wanted to transform it. He wanted hymns to include "more of the story" of the Bible

and of faith, and not be bound entirely to the recitation of Scripture. One of my personal favorite hymns of Watts is *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*, originally titled, "Man Frail, and God Eternal." There are seven verses in the *Trinity Hymnal*, but the original verses 4 and 8 are deleted. The text for this hymn is taken from Psalm 90. Here are verses one and two:

Our God, our help in ages past, our hope  
for years to come, our shelter from the  
stormy blast, and our eternal home.

Under the shadow of your throne your  
saints have dwelt secure; sufficient is your  
arm alone, and our defense is sure.

I would encourage you to look at page 887 in the *Trinity Hymnal* where you will find a complete list of Watts' hymns to enjoy. Spend some time reading Watts' hymns, and you will find a rich depth of scripture and faith. ■





# High School & Middle School

## FPCLW YOUTH MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM

**From Shane Miller**

"The Youth Ministry, in submission to the plurality of elders at First Pres Lake Wales, is to build discipleship bridges between First Presbyterian Church in Lake Wales and the unreached young people of Lake Wales."

Early this year, I began a series of articles describing the big goals of the FPCLW youth ministry. As I was utilizing *The Diligent* to spread the word about our pancake breakfast, the yard sale, and the various summer camps for our youth (all of which went incredibly well, praise God!), I had to put a hiatus on this series of articles. Now that these events have passed, I am excited to make progress through the vision statement and goals of the youth ministry. I hope this informs you all in what we wish to accomplish as a ministry and how the Lord is working mightily in and through our students at First Pres.

I am frequently asked these questions about our youth ministry: what kind of students comprise our youth ministry? Are they students who attend our church? Are they students who attend other churches? Are the students who attend our youth ministry unchurched? I love receiving these questions as it shows curiosity about these students that we dearly love. And, I hope that the answer is eye-opening to those who ask!

The answer to these questions is (drumroll please): yes! Some of the students who attend our youth group are members of this church, some of them are part of families who attend other churches, and some of them have families who aren't connected to a church at all. A big goal of this youth ministry is, in fact, to reach out to that third group and to "build discipleship bridges between First Presbyterian Church in Lake Wales and the unreached young people of Lake Wales."

Perhaps you've asked another question to yourself: have we had a steady stream of new, unreached people becoming a part of First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales? Often, we look to the Sunday morning pews to gauge the answer to this question. This is a great place to look and I'm sure you've connected with new people who have strolled in to worship with us on a Sunday morning and have welcomed them as Christ has

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welcomed you. Another place to look to gauge the answer to this question, though, is the game room on a Wednesday night. I can certainly attest that there are new, unchurched peoples coming through the doors of our churches during that time, and they hear the gospel. They're even building relationships with other Christians (leaders and students) and responding to Jesus in faith.

There are several avenues by which we have reached out to unreached youth in our community. First of all, a big part of my ministry has been going to schools and building relationships with students there. I've done this in the past four years through FCA and other Christian clubs that are set up on school campuses. Secondly, middle school pick-up has been a valuable tool to reach those who don't have a church home. Giving middle schoolers a ride to church has been a great way to build relationships with unchurched students and gives them an avenue to actually get to church. Thirdly, by being a welcoming community our leaders and students have created an environment where new, unreached students might feel loved, cared for, and welcomed. Through all of these avenues, we've seen God bless our outreach to the community.

It has been incredible to see these new students enter our doors. Nevertheless, our big goal has not been to simply grow a youth ministry. We want to disciple them in the gospel of Jesus. The best way to do this is to plug them into the larger church body. In other words, we want them to build relationships with you, to be encouraged by the gospel from you, to learn what it means to love Jesus and others from you, to be welcomed by you. But how does that happen?

As a church body, a huge way to welcome and disciple unreached youth in Lake Wales is through house groups. 'House groups' is a small group ministry that has historically been held in my house or the house of another church member. We eat a meal together and, afterwards, we pray for one another and study the Scriptures together (right now we're going through a small group study on the *Sermon on the Mount* by John Stott). Welcoming students into our homes has been an incredible means to discipling our students, even unreached students.

It is my wish to extend this opportunity to you. House groups happen every second and fourth week of every month (not including summer months). It is my intention to host every second week of the month and it is my hope to have another church member host every fourth week of the month. Your ministry would simply be to host- not to lead a small group study. Other youth leaders accompany me to lead this task. The act of welcoming students into your home, though, is more impactful than you know and would be a great means to connect our member students to the larger church body and give that opportunity to unchurched students.

Please be in prayer, asking the Lord if he would have you participate in this awesome ministry. If you are interested in opening your house on that fourth week of the month, call me or email me and I will put you on the schedule! Also, pray that God would bless us as we seek to disciple the unreached young people of Lake Wales. Thank you all for supporting and praying for our ministry! ■



# Children's Ministry

## KEEP GROWING: DEPENDENCE AND INTERDEPENDENCE

From Kelly Harrington

*And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he commanded us.*

-1 John 3:23

Parenting is a constant and precarious endeavor of helping our children grow in appropriate increments at just the right time, from total dependence upon us to a healthy interdependence with us. From where Monty and I stand at this time, there are very few strands of total dependence left from us to our grown and almost-grown daughters. At the beginning of parenthood, when babies and toddlers are attached to you most of the time, it may seem like this is how it will always be; hang in there as this phase will fly by fast! For those who are much farther down the road with grown children who have families and homes of their own, you hold valuable perspectives for the rest of us of how you prepared and released your children to go and do the same for their own. My point is that as parents, we travel a long road with our children from the time we take care of their every need until we share a loving interdependence with them as adults.

So, what is *interdependence*? Aren't we going for *independence*? The truth is your child is hardwired for independence! It's a part of their natural self to begin pushing away from you as they grow, which shows up pretty quickly. Interdependence, however, has to be learned. Interdependence is when two or more people or things (like couples, families, countries, or animals, for example) are dependent on one another. When you look at your closest and best relationships, you should see interdependence in how you need and care for one another.

Marriages work best when couples equally depend on one another, both people giving and receiving love and support from the other. Forming a solid interdependent relationship allows both people to feel valued and needed. On the other hand, independence weakens emotional bonds, asserts too much power over others, shuts out and devalues the contributions of others, and breaks down relationships. Independence says, "I am in charge, and I got this on my own." So then, what is the purpose of the relationship?

When God created marriage, he spoke interdependence into the relationship. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him'" (Gen 2:18). With those words, he compelled a close dependence on one another for companionship and help. Created as image-bearers of God, we are created to help and depend on one another.

Now, let's apply this to raising our children. Our goal should be to raise our kids to be interdependent rather than independent. Remember, independence will come. If we do not overindulge our kids and encourage them to just stay put on the couch, most kids will assert their God-given drive to move forward toward their goals and become independent of us. A good and necessary amount of independence is needed to assert ourselves to work and accomplish tasks without the constant need of someone else directing our every thought or step. However, too much drive for independence can lead to an unhealthy place of self-sufficiency. If I can completely take care of myself, what need is there for a Savior or for others? This simply isn't in line with God's truth and plan for us (1 John 3:23).

Independence is not the goal. The deeper work of parenting is training and discipling our kids to be *interdependent*. This begins with us acknowledging that we, in fact, are not fully self-sufficient on our own. The truth for us, Christians, is that we know where our help comes from. "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2). We acknowledge that apart from Christ, we have nothing and can do nothing (John 15:5). We are dependent on God for all that we have (1 Tim 6:-7), on Jesus Christ for our redemption from our sin (John 14:6), and on the Holy Spirit for guidance in all that we say and do (John 14:26). "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Rom 8:5).

Our kids will see our dependence on the Holy Trinity in the way we work, serve, give, and care for others. Trusting the Father is a necessary mindset to grow into interdependence in our relationships with others. Interdependence gives and receives the love of Christ between spouses, parents, children, sisters, brothers, neighbors, church members, and coworkers. My prayer is that we will continually grow in our trust and dependence on our Heavenly Father and the interdependence of our love and care for one another. ■

## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

# Church Family

### **BIRTHDAYS**

October 1, Morgan Roe  
October 2, Sue Dolan  
October 5, Margaret Hunt  
October 7, Rob Thullbery  
October 7, David Ullman  
October 7, Carter Ullman  
October 7, Michael Berkau  
October 7, Tony Thomas  
October 10, Ashley Cockrell  
October 12, Rilee Bennett  
October 12, Sofia Moyer  
October 12, Annelise Smith  
October 13, Kaitlyn Nelson  
October 15, Joe Martin  
October 16, Maxcy Henry  
October 16, Brystal Rodriguez  
October 18, Teresa Bass  
October 18, Kathleen Krpata  
October 19, Catherine Ullman  
October 21, Harry Nelson  
October 21, Richard Fugate  
October 22, Bea Meeker  
October 22, John Yarbrough  
October 23, Sara Grace Freeland  
October 24, Jan Kahler  
October 24, Dana Lewis  
October 27, Milford Myhre  
October 31, Autumn Moyer  
October 31, Jeff Herman

### **ANNIVERSARIES**

October 7, Paul & Mary Benner  
October 18, Chuck & Kay Clegg  
October 21, David & Teresa Bass  
October 22, Bob & Bea Meeker







First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales  
 16 N 3rd St, Lake Wales, FL 33853  
 Phone: 863.676.0711  
[www.fpclw.org](http://www.fpclw.org)

## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

<b>2021</b>	<b>2023</b>
Mike Berkau	Scott Crews
Paul Benner	Doug Pace
Pat Frankenburger	
<b>2022</b>	<b>2024</b>
Frank Hunt III	Daniel Hunt
John Matteson	David Nelson
Vince Treadway	Andy Hunt

### DEACONS

<b>2021</b>	<b>2023</b>
David Caldwell	Susan Coyne
Michael Kahler	Bob Hulen
Carl McCollum	Michael Matteson
Tony Thomas	Karla Campbell
<b>2022</b>	
Bea Meeker	
Aaron Nelson	
Mary Youmans	
Laura Hunt	

**Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith  
**Clerk of Session:** Doug Pace  
**Chairman of Deacons:** Bob Hulen  
**Deacon Secretary:** Susan Coyne  
**Chm. of the Congregation:** Josh Behr  
**Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst (2020-2021)  
**Asst. Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt (2020-2021)