



"I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says God, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." Jeremiah 29:10-11

On Sunday, November 14, 1875, twenty-one people gathered in the parlor of the Bethlehem YMCA for an inaugural worship service. Four elders were elected and ordained, the group celebrated the Lord's Supper together, and First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem was born. While they couldn't have known what might unfold going forward, their dream for the fledgling congregation was surely *A Future with Hope*.

We, too, share that hope-filled vision for this congregation's future even if we can't yet imagine exactly what it looks like. As we reflect on FPCB's past and present, we can't help but see the pattern of God's faithfulness and guidance even through the most difficult seasons of life and ministry together! We have every reason to trust that *A Future with Hope* is still before us.

Like the Israelites wandering through the wilderness in Exodus, we are seeking God's promises of resources and guidance, trusting that Spirit will continue to unfold our path forward as long as we keep walking faithfully, doing the next right thing, one step at a time. *A Future with Hope* isn't just the theme for our Stewardship season, but rather *A Future with Hope* is what God promises to us and other wilderness wanderers trying to navigate change, even in the liminal, in-between space of the complicated, uncertain now and the sure-and-certain future that is to come.

These ancient stories also remind us that on the other side of God's promise, there is always, always enough. More than enough! As we reflect on our collective calling as a congregation, we are inspired anew to fulfill our mission: *To welcome an inclusive and joyful community of Christ's followers into actively exploring how God's gracious love gives meaning to our lives and faith and inspires us to address the needs of our changing world. Through our learning, service, and grateful worship, God fills us with purpose, compassion, courage, and love.*

If there were ever a time to deepen and expand our stewardship practices in response to God's gracious love, it is now, friends! May our generosity be Spirit-led and mission-driven as we seek to chart a new path forward toward *A Future with Hope*. Your ongoing financial support of God's ministry through this congregation is deeply appreciated, and we remain steadfast in our call to follow Jesus and to be Christ's hands and feet in our community and the world. Thank you in advance for pledging so generously to that faithful work in 2025!

Grace and gratitude for the journey,

Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton

Associate Pastor for Justice & Community Impact



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM