



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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# A TRAGIC AND SURREAL YEAR

BY MATT MATTHEWS

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*"No longer forward nor behind  
I look in hope or fear;  
But, grateful, take the good I find,  
The best of now and here."*

— John Greenleaf Whittier  
from "My Psalm"

This has been a tragic and surreal year. We've needed faithful people to hold the course, and often to blaze the trail. You are among that number. The phrase "Front Line Workers" still applies to police and firefighters, but has expanded to include medical personnel, delivery drivers for Grub Hub, and checkers at Harvest Foods. When we have opted to do good for our neighbor, we are on the front lines.

The word "Zoom" meant something entirely different to us nine months ago. So many odd things have become ordinary since Covid. Wearing masks to the grocery and traipsing around like grade school bank robbers is one. Routine quarantining, grounded travel, conducting invitation-only funerals, exclusive online worship and school are among the long list of others. Not too long ago, Corona was a beer, contact tracing had to do with art, flattening the curve was weight-loss lingo, and the phrase air-gasm (the feeling you have when you remove your face mask) didn't exist. While I'll be glad for the season of Pandemic to pass, there are lessons still to be discerned. I'm taking notes. The New Normal, I pray, will be kinder and saner. I hope to take less for granted.

The cantankerous election cycle, the jagged fractures between people, and



Face to face gatherings were limited to gatherings in the park complete with masks and social distancing.

racial upheaval around the country have surprised some and shaken all. With you, I have attempted to be attentive to and active in the conversations this unrest has led us to explore. Together as a church we studied the book *White Fragility* with a few dozen church friends and had rich conversations about things we either would prefer to avoid or had never thought about. I was challenged to take a fresh look at the world having gained greater insight into my white privilege. I am hopeful that we will continue to build and nurture a more perfect union among our wide, beautiful family around the nation and world. Bruce Springsteen calls us the 're-united states.' I like that.

We've missed a lot as a congregation. We've missed seeing each other in Sunday, face-to-face worship. I haven't had a donut hole since March! The combination of a donut hole, a cup of tea, and bumping into you for conver-

sation is a holy memory and one of the vital things to which I look forward.

Covid cancelled a visit from **Jeff Kellam**, our congregation's guest theologian-in-residence, called to unpack films at the Ebert Film Festival. I was looking forward to introducing Jeff to you and hearing his take on the Ebert-Fest films. He was going to preach and give a lecture after worship as prelude to a congregation-wide lunch. I had hoped we'd meet new friends in our community at the Virginia Theatre and that they would find welcome in our congregation.

The Boneyard Arts Festival was canceled this year. We had invited the CIA to attend. Yes! The CIA: Comrades In Art. Westminster Hall was going to be filled with locally created fine art and sculpture, namely a motorcycle tricked-out by our very own **Rob Vermillion**. I had hoped on Friday

night and Sunday afternoon our church would have been filled with neighbors eager to see good art and meeting interesting artists. They would have found warm welcome within our walls.

We lost a lot.

What's on your loss list? As far as I know, we lost none of our flock to Covid, but some have had it and remain diminished. And some of us have lost loved ones to the disease.

We've lost a lot. I was in NYC after 9-11 and all the fire trucks had this sticker on their bumpers: *All gave some, some gave all.*

Our personal losses add a sharp point to the hundreds of thousands of pandemic deaths that remind us daily of life's beauty and fragility. These losses kindle both sadness and deeper trust in God's sustaining grace.

I'm more excited than ever to "be the church" of Jesus Christ in this part of God's world. I remain grateful that we get to share the journey.

PEACE to you all.

Matt Matthews  
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David Gonzalez, Belinda Crespo and Katerine Diaz in the sanctuary of our sister church.

We had a small but vital delegation going to Cuba last year to celebrate our partnership with the Luyano Presbyterian Church in Havana. That trip was cancelled. So was our annual Cuba Salsa Dance (and fundraiser). Dancing with you is always a highlight—and I'm a terrible dancer!

Our Annual Carpet Sale by Ten Thousand Village was to draw both local and Pakistani friends to Westminster Hall. It never got off the ground. Pandemic claimed lots of calendar casualties. The International Taste of First Pres, the ESL Thanksgiving Feast, our Trunk-or-Treat Halloween celebration was cancelled. Sholem Fest. Music Sunday. Faith-In-The-Real-World Sunday School didn't make in person.

What did we gain? How did we grow? In what ways might we better appreciate God's daily graces? These are good questions. I'd like to say I'm a more patient person. I'd like to say Pandemic has somehow made me more spiritual. I can't say those things. I pray I value our community more profoundly.

When I ponder our losses, I'm mindful that the losses are among the very things I look forward to when we emerge from Pandemic. We won't return to the way things were. We'll step into a whole new day. Some things will look and feel familiar. Other things might be brand new. There's a lot that is unknown. I'm hopeful and excited, but I'm aware not all losses can be retrieved.



# ADMINISTRATION

## COVID 19 Response Team

BY RUTH CRADDOCK, CHAIR

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The Covid 19 committee was formed in the spring of 2020, following a state wide shelter in place order from Governor Pritzker related to the world-wide coronavirus pandemic, with the purpose of guiding the church through this unprecedented event. The committee was composed of nine members with **Peter Yau** serving as chairman, along with members **Ken Chapman, Ruth Craddock, Ron Deering, Judi Geistlinger, Mark Schoeffmann** and **Tim Young**. Both **Matt Matthews** and **Eric Corbin** also participated.

The committee met via Zoom on May 19, May 29, June 5, 19 and 25, August

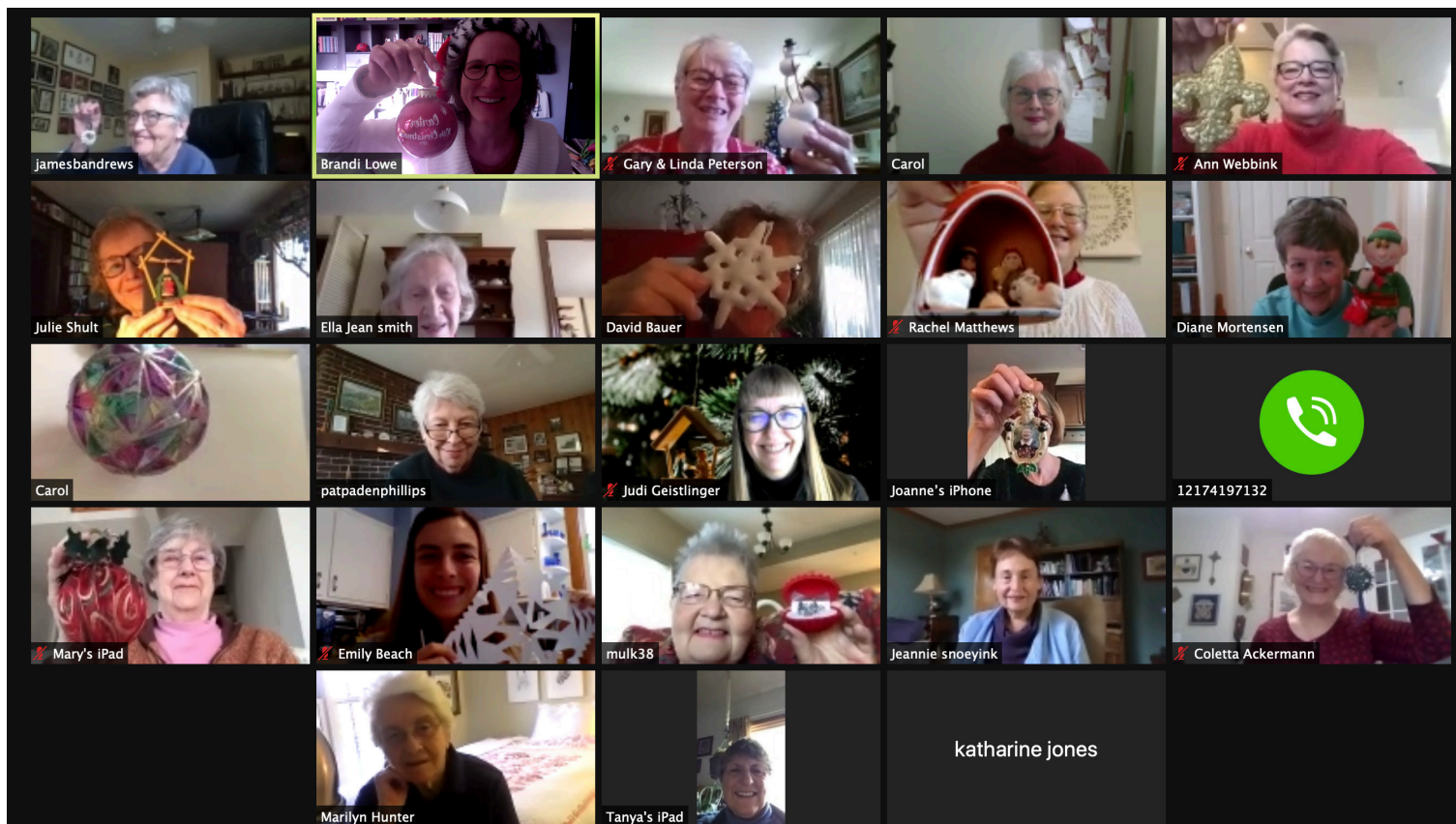
6, September 15, October 6 and 24 and November 4. The May meetings produced a proposed outline of safety guidelines for the church, including recommendations from the CDC and included review of facts about the virus, various ways to monitor for illness and the necessity of wearing a mask, distancing at least 6 feet apart whenever possible, the use of hand sanitizer, the use of plexiglass shields when necessary and the role of cleaning of areas and maintaining adequate ventilation indoors etc.

There was no face to face worship, with the Sunday morning worship now a streamed feed over several platforms. The safety guidelines were put in place to help protect staff who had to come to the office for various issues/tasks, and for a few small groups

who were using the church facilities for their activities.

After the initial state wide shutdown, the state further divided into regions and refined the restrictions into a series of Phases, and the 3 June meetings produced a letter to the congregation from Matt outlining the church's concerns about keeping our congregation safe, reemphasizing the need for prevention, isolation if infected, and that there were (at that time) no effective treatments nor vaccines available.

A second announcement in late June raised the possibility of resuming face to face worship after September 1. The committee reviewed, with input from Worship Committee, what that might look like, and reviewed the need for wearing masks at all times, being



Meetings and social gatherings took on a new form during the pandemic. Pictured is a screen shot of the Presbyterian Women's virtual Christmas Gathering in December.

seated apart at appropriate distances, no communal hymnals nor Bibles to avoid touching possible contaminated surfaces, registration prior to worship and providing contact info for follow up contact tracing should the need arise. It was agreed that there would be no congregational singing or group spoken liturgy; whoever was preaching the sermon would do so behind a plexiglas shield and whoever would sing a solo would do so from behind a shield as well to help safeguard from aerosolized particles that might infect those around them.

Ushers would help guide people into and out of the sanctuary, helping to avoid people congregating too closely for conversation etc. The CDC criteria as to who fell into the 'high risk' category for both contracting Covid 19 as well as for suffering a worse outcome with infection were reviewed. As many members of our staff and congregation fell into those high risk categories, we felt it was very important to be cautious in terms of our recommendations for the safety of all concerned.

After the August meeting, it was decided to wait to recommend resumption of face to face worship until the University of IL students had returned to campus, as the influx of students might well change the number of cases of Covid 19 in the community.

At the mid September meeting, we reviewed a request to allow the DREAAM ministry participants to use the education building during school hours to access the wifi to help with remote learning. We agreed to this with the help of **Mindy Watts-Ellis** to guide the implementation. We also agreed to a trial of opening the sanctuary for prayer services on a limited basis, again asking that participants

follow the safety guidelines already outlined.

At the October 6 meeting, we agreed to NOT have an in person Christmas Eve service, but did agree to try a limited face to face worship service on Sunday mornings, keeping the streaming option as the 'flagship' service. It was noted that we were only making recommendations to Session and that Session would have to make the call to return to face to face worship.

On October 24, 2020, **Peter Yau** messaged that with the number of cases rising in the state, he now opposed recommending a return to face to face worship. Committee members weighed in with various comments. A joint meeting, via Zoom, was held with Session on October 26, 2020. Session later voted to allow face to face worship, and this did occur on 11/1/2020.

Shortly thereafter, Region 6 in the state, which included Champaign and surrounding counties, went into Tier I mitigations due to rising numbers of Covid 19 cases; the Covid Committee



Masks became the new normal in 2020 even when meeting JIP in the park.

met again November 4 and agreed to recommend that First Presbyterian Church of Champaign not offer face to face worship again until the Tier mitigations were removed. At the time of this writing, this had not yet occurred.

The committee will continue to meet as needed to provide guidance as indicated in an ever changing environment related to the pandemic.



## Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

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### Operating Funds

In 2020, total revenues for the operating fund were \$1,102,649, about 6.7% above the budgeted amount and \$100,977 more than in 2019. Revenue for 2020 included \$875,288 in contributions compared to \$896,597 in 2019. Total Expenses for 2020 were \$1,012,432, about 4.7% below budget and \$10,626 less than in 2019. The net result was a positive balance of \$90,217 compared with a deficit of \$21,836 in 2019. Contributions in 2020 were about 86.4% of church expenses with other funds accounting for 22.5% resulting in the 8.9% surplus. Other revenues include payments from the Cannon Trust which amounted to \$60,747 in 2020 and \$17,750 in transfers from other funds. The significant end of year surplus in the Operating Fund is due to the receipt of \$134,200 from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program.

### Other Donations

In addition to the generous commitments to our operating fund through pledges and plate donations our members have donated to a variety of special offerings and designated purposes during the year. A total of \$111,728 has been donated by our congregation for missions and programs beyond the annual operating budget.

### Endowment/Strategic Reserves

Total invested funds at the end of the year were \$2,980,956 compared to \$2,934,078 at the end of 2019. The

invested funds include \$1,778,518 in strategic reserves and \$580,753 in permanent endowment funds. Investment returns were 5.3% for 2020 compared to 18% in 2019.

### 2021 Budget

For 2021, projected total revenues are \$979,800. Pledges of \$820,000 are anticipated for 2021 which is 2.4% less than pledges budgeted for 2020 but only 0.5% more than actual pledged contributions received in 2020. Expenses are budgeted at \$1,020,348 which is about 0.8% more than the actual expenses in 2020 but 4.0% below the 2020 budget. This results in a projected deficit of \$40,548, compared to a budgeted surplus in 2020

of \$90,217. The projected deficit represents 2.3% of our strategic reserves. The budgeted level of spending allows for the continuation of our programs and current staffing levels.

### Thank You

God has entrusted much to our care; in fact all we have comes from God. Being faithful stewards of all our gifts is an essential part of our grateful response to God's amazing grace. Thank you for all the ways you contribute to the financial strength and vitality of God's church through the ministry of this congregation.

## Summary of Budgets for 2020 and 2021

| Revenues                | 2020 Budget | 2020 Actual | 2021 Budget |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Pledges                 | \$840,000   | \$815,849   | \$820,000   |
| Plate                   | 90,000      | 59,439      | 57,000      |
| Cannon Trust            | 80,000      | 60,747*     | 81,000      |
| Restricted Funds        | 17,750      | 17,750.     | 15,750      |
| Other                   | 6,050       | 148,864**   | 6,050       |
| Total Revenues          | \$1,033,800 | \$1,102,649 | \$979,800   |
| Expenses                |             |             |             |
| Clergy                  | \$265,658   | 269,856     | 265,658     |
| GA Per Capita           | 25,000      | 23,982      | 24,000      |
| Staff Miscellaneous     | 10,900      | 6,477       | 5,800       |
| Music                   | 76,770      | 62,931      | 62,550      |
| Contemporary Worship    | 19,000      | 14,007      | 16,000      |
| Worship                 | 7,900       | 3,741       | 3,700       |
| Mission                 | 129,640     | 127,845     | 128,140     |
| Children/Youth          | 112,402     | 97,514      | 108,102     |
| Adult Education         | 3,950       | 384         | 2,450       |
| Office (Administration) | 183,596     | 187,276     | 177,096     |
| Building & Grounds      | 228,552     | 219,473     | 217,852     |
| Congregational Care     | 1,000       | 245         | 1,000       |
| Hospitality             | 8,000       | (299)       | 8000        |
| Total Expenses          | \$1,062,666 | \$1,012,432 | \$1,020,348 |
| Revenue-Expenses        | (\$38,568)  | \$90,217    | (\$40,548)  |

\*Only three of four quarterly contributions received in 2020.

\*\*Includes \$134,200 from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program

## Human Relations (aka Human Resources)

BY ANN STOUT, CHAIR  
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In spite of the ravages of Covid 19, the FPCC staff has continued to work diligently to keep our ministries running smoothly. Through the miracle of technology, we have continued our worship services, our mission ministries, as well as all of our various committee meetings and ministries. Our buildings have been maintained with the same high standards as before the pandemic and staff members have worked tirelessly (sometimes from home) to maintain excellence in our ESL and CYF ministries. Our entire staff is truly a blessing to our congregation.

As in previous years, your HR Team has been working quietly behind the scenes to ensure that all things related to our wonderful staff are working

smoothly. These things may include (but not limited to) overseeing the hiring process when necessary, evaluating the policy manual and making changes when necessary, checking in with staff to determine if there are needs or if there are improvements that need to be made, and offering support and appreciation to all of our employees.

There have been some changes and this is to be expected. **Lizz Pippin** left us to accept a job in her chosen field (library science) and we wish her the very best in her new adventure. We recently welcomed **Samantha Nichols** to the CYF staff to continue in the position that Lizz held. **Richard Rossi** left for a position out of state and he will be missed. **Brendan Barker** joined us in September and we have been enjoying his musical talents since that time. Also, **Rachel Matthews** has transitioned from our Temporary Mission Coordinator to permanent Mission Coordinator.

A big “thanks!” goes to the people who serve on the HR Team – they very quietly, cheerfully, and thoughtfully invest time and energy into ensuring that things are working smoothly for our staff. They are: **Bill Marble, Jeannie Snoeyink, Ann Stout, Ann Webbink, and Dave Whitford.**

## 2021 Church Staff

### Pastors:

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff  
Eric Corbin .....Associate Pastor

### Staff:

George Almasi ..... Facility Assistant  
Brendan Barker..... Organist  
Ritchie Drennen .....Facility Manager  
Patty Farthing..... Receptionist  
Robert Ferrer .....Audio-visual Technician  
Marcia Franks..... Administrative Assistant  
Joe Grant..... Director of Music

Rachel Matthews ..... Missions Coordinator  
Samantha Nichols..... Sunday School Coordinator  
Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant  
Ann Petry.....Accounting  
Jason Pope ..... Contemporary Worship  
Jeanette Pyne..... ESL Coordinator  
Mindy Watts-Ellis..... Director, Children, Youth & Family



# CONNECT

## Children, Youth, Family

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN,

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES,

MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH;

LIZZ PIPPIN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, YOUTH

AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

BLAISE PASCAL, CONNECTIONS ASSISTANT

BLAISE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

### Personnel changes

**Lizz Pippin** resigned as the Associate CYF Director and her last day was June 26, 2020. A search committee was formed to fill the new position of Sunday School Coordinator. Candidates were reviewed and **Samantha Nichols** was hired to begin employment in 2021.

### Sunday School Winter/Spring

The schedule of having the 9am and 11:15 AM worship services fully include all ages continued through March 8. The education hour took place from 10:15-11:05 AM. Sunday school curriculum for January continued with Power Express, We Believe, and Deep Blue curriculum units for the elementary students. Bible subjects taught were *Jesus Calling the Disciples*, *the Woman at the Well*, *the parable of the two houses*, *Priscilla, Lydia and Dorcas*, *the Easter story*, *the fruits of the spirit*, and *Pentecost*.

The preschool class used the 'Bible Learning Folders' curriculum by Karyn Henley with the topics; *I grow*, *God Made all Kinds of Friends*, *I Pray*, *Jesus is my Friend*, *Jesus is Alive*, *I am Kind to my Friends*, and *I Help*.

The Third Grade Bible class began March 8 and held one meeting before having to stop due to the coronavirus outbreak. The Bible class was scheduled to be taught by **Julie Young** and

**Laura Walston**. The CYF committee chose not to resume this class by Zoom hoping to have in-person learning as an option in the fall.

The Middle School class continued units of study with the Faith Questions curriculum until March 8. They studied the following questions: *Why do we say we believe in the "holy catholic church" if we're not Catholic? Why should I follow Jesus, can't I just say I believe in him? Why should I pray when God doesn't answer my prayers? Why should I pray the Lord's prayer when it feels like I'm just going through the motions? Can someone lose their salvation? Can I be a Christian without going to church? Was Jesus of Nazareth God? Did Jesus know he was God? If Jesus was God, why did he have to die?*

The confirmation class continued for interested students led by **Eric Corbin**, **Judi Geistlinger** and **Kathy Schoeffmann** using the co\*lab\*orate curriculum Presbyterian History and Doctrine. There was a break in studies during the first public health stay at home order, but class resumed by way of Zoom through the summer to complete the content. Those that completed the course were **Cecilia Vermillion**, **Heather Lowe**, **Plamedi Lembelembe**, **Goelle**

**Mboyo**, **Ellie Laufenberg**, **Monique Masengu**, and **Emily Young**. There was a luncheon held August 16 consisting of only the class members and teachers to celebrate the completion of the course and welcome those that chose to join the church outside on the church lawn with social distancing and pandemic precautions in place.

The high school class studied the books of the Bible through the co\*lab\*orate curriculum Old Testament and New Testament resources until March 8. They studied the summaries of the following: Wisdom scriptures, Ruth, Job, Esther, New Testament as a collection of books about Jesus, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

### Summer

Mindy created a 'stay at home' Vacation Bible School curriculum. This involved creating a website that featured Bible story videos, sing along songs by **Connor Stout**, games, crafts, and virtual visits to four different countries and information about Ministry missions affiliated with our church in



The weather cooperated for this year's Confirmation Celebration to be held outdoors.

each of the countries. The title was "Destination Disciples." The curriculum was based on four countries of the church's world mission partners; Peru, Ukraine, Ghana, and Haiti. The website and boxes of supplies were available in June and involved delivery of materials to many households. The DREAM program also had 50 children participate in the VBS program. The website and curriculum was shared with the Presbytery and the wider church for use by other congregations seeking alternatives during the pandemic gathering restrictions.

### Sunday School Fall/Winter

We began the fall semester on September 13 with a special Rally Day Drive-through for the distribution of drawstring backpacks full of back-to-school treats, a prayer note, curriculum supplies for remote Sunday school, face masks, and a blank card to send to someone to lift their spirits during the pandemic. Blaise and Mindy delivered the bags to those who did not participate in the drive-through. Sunday school began through Zoom software on September 20. The elementary ages met at 10:15-11:15 AM on Sundays and the Middle school and High school youth met 1-2 PM on Sunday afternoons.

The elementary ages were taught Bible stories from the Growing in God's Love Story Bible curriculum. Stories featured were Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Esau, Miriam and Moses, Samuel, a brave young girl during the reign of David, the Fiery Furnace, and the story of Jesus' birth. The youth continued the use of materials supplied by Memphis Youth Mission and discussed institutional racism. This unit was followed by INformed and Simple Sundays curriculum units on stewardship, justice, and an advent focus on God's promises to Mary, Simeon, and Anna.

### Sunday School Mission

See Family Events below for the February mission option.

The children collected coins in fish banks for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering which was received by the church by way of dropping the fish banks off at the church office by appointment or in the church office mail slot in labeled ziplock bags. Blank cards with stamped envelopes were distributed twice during the fall semester to send to others to spread comfort and kind words.

### Children's Choir

Children's choir did not sing in worship during 2020.

The children's choir met regularly for rehearsal on Sunday mornings 11-11:30 AM until March 8. They were scheduled to sing in worship on March 15, but then the pandemic restrictions caused the worship service to be online only. There was no choir offered in the summer.

Children's sing-along time was offered during the elementary Zoom time every other Sunday by Mr. Connor in the fall semester. An attempt was made to have a virtual choir, but not enough children made recordings of themselves singing to make this feasible.

### Family Events

All ages were invited to Westminster Hall on February 9 to create Valentine cards and fill gift bags for the care recipients of the Faith in Action partner agency in town that serves homebound senior citizens. We had good participation and all bags were filled. An email invitation

was sent November 4 to meet at the Hardy's Reindeer Ranch on November 8 for outdoor masked fun in the corn maze but did not get any replies.

Families were also invited to take part in the Urbana and Champaign Park Districts' Halloween parade in the Market Place Mall parking lot October 28th in lieu of our cancelled Trunk or Treat event. Mindy volunteered at the event, but no church families were present.

Special Advent gift bags were assembled by Mindy and delivered to the homes of Sunday school families by Mindy and Blaise. Each bag contained a votive candle and weekly devotion poem, a muffin mix, hot cocoa packets, family game suggestions, a little treat bag of candy, a candy cane with a poem about its symbolism, paper chain components for a prayer chain decoration, and a Christmas card with a stamped envelope to send to someone else to spread Christmas love. Additional components varied by the ages of young people within the household.

Eleven families participated in the virtual Christmas pageant. The complete



Our virtual Christmas pageant was shown on December 20.



video was titled WFPC NEWS Christmas Special and premiered as part of online worship on December 20.

### Special Youth Events

Unfortunately the youth 'Go and Serve' trip planned for the summer to attend the Memphis Youth Mission program was canceled due to the pandemic. We were unable to get a refund on our deposit, but were compensated by Memphis Youth Mission with a curriculum titled *This and Faith* for use to discuss the topics that would have been part of the trip in their program. We were also invited to their Zoom sessions with special guest speakers. Some of the youth participated in in-depth discussions about racism in our society in a series of Sunday Zoom meetings.

### Professional Development

**Mindy Watts-Ellis**, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry attended the national conference for the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators January 28-February 1 in Little Rock, AR. Mindy also attended the Next Church Conference March 2-4 in Cincinnati, OH.

### From Lizz Pippin, Associate Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries

The 2020 youth group started by meeting every other week. In January we also had our third annual MLK weekend retreat. We spent the evening doing activities to grow closer together as a group and to talk about service and why we as Christians take time to serve our brothers and sisters near and far. On Monday we then volunteered with Salt and Light and learned about their work and helped in sorting items donated.

In March we switched from our in-person meetings to meeting once a week virtually. We used our time

online as a way to connect together in the early days of the pandemic. There were times where we would do devotions together, times where we would get together to play online games and times that we simply socialized with one another.

### From Blaise Pascal Zamena, Connections Assistant

We did our best to contact the families and to let them know about the church activities. Every Sunday, we were taking care of children's attendance and working as a team to carry out the Sunday school secondary school teaching plans.

On January 19, 2020, we had our annual youth retreat and the following day we went to celebrate Martin Luther King's legacy by giving back to the community. We went to serve the Champaign County community through Salt and Light. We were excited to work with Salt and Light employees.

In March we moved from in person to online activities due to Coronavirus. Most of our activities were done online. We were able to be in touch with the French learner's parents and we explained to them the necessity for their kids to complete the confirmation classes online.

Unfortunately, in person Vacation Bible School was cancelled due to the coronavirus then we were able to drop off the VBS packages to our learner's homes.

We still conducted online Sunday School in the Fall and before it started we made sure to drop off all the required documents at the learner's places.

Since March 2020, I am also actively involved in online worship services by

reading Bible scriptures in French.

**Many thanks to the CYF Team**  
CYF Committee: **Sabrina Hwu, Karin Vermillion, Cathy Schoweng-erdt, and Claudia Kirby.**

Sunday School Volunteers: **Celeste Kim, Sabrina Hwu, Jay Geistlinger, Thethe Kidimbu, Noni Ledford, Sarah Laufenberg, Naomi Rempe, Nancy Pippin and Karin and Rob Vermillion, Jan Wittler, Judy Hendrickson, Nancy Pippin, Sean Miller, Jason Lowe, Kathy Schoefmann, Judi Geistlinger, and Mary Lou Bauer.** Subs: **Rachel Matthews, Jeannie Snoeyink, and Pam Hadley.**

### ChristCare Groups

BY RITTCHELL YAU

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ChristCare small groups are among the many opportunities First Presbyterian Church offers adults to support spiritual formation and growth. Our ChristCare groups are based on a model developed by the Stephen Ministry. The Stephen Ministry, based in St. Louis, is a one-on-one support ministry which has been implemented in our church and other churches. The ChristCare ministry at First Pres began in 2009.

Seven small groups at First Pres participated in the ChristCare ministry in 2020. The groups began meeting online via Zoom in March. Some groups met for as few as 8 weeks, some met for the school year with holiday and winter or summer breaks. Some are ongoing, meeting year-round. Groups choose their own Bible study curriculum, meeting times and locations, and their own particular focus. While each group is unique, each intentionally aims to incorporate four elements:

- Growing spiritually through prayer & worship
- Developing stronger caring relationships with others in the group
- Seeking a stronger relationship with God through Biblical Equipping
- Serving God in the community through missional service

The ChristCare ministry at First Pres is committed to providing solid preparation and ongoing support to ChristCare leader/facilitators and the groups. Those who serve as leader/facilitators have participated in workshops using materials designed by the Stephen Ministry and adapted for use at First Pres to meet the needs, interests and schedules of our church family. As part of the ongoing support, a monthly small group called SEA group is offered.

### SEA Groups

Ongoing support for ChristCare leader/facilitators is provided in part through a monthly small group called a SEA Group. SEA groups aim to provide ongoing Support, Education/encouragement and Accountability for one another; hence the name SEA group. Like other ChristCare groups, the SEA group incorporates prayer and worship, care for one another and biblical equipping. The SEA group builds on the content and processes of the ChristCare workshops to explore concepts more thoroughly and introduce additional topics based on the interests of those in the group.

In 2020, the SEA group met the 2nd Thursday morning of the month. Each meeting included time in Scripture, prayer, sharing, and discussion of readings and topics related to small group leadership training based on the ChristCare education materials. **Pastor Matt Matthews** led the group

with **Rittchell Yau** providing logistical support for the SEA group and for the ChristCare ministry. All who are interested in exploring and applying the ChristCare approach in small group settings are welcome to participate.

## Compassion, Peace and Justice

BY RITTCHELL YAU

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### Statement of Faith and Purpose

“The Presbyterian Church commitment to justice is core to its identity and understanding as followers of Jesus Christ. Beginning with the ancient texts of the faith, God’s people have given both voice and witness to the prophet Micah’s calling to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.”

The Confessions of the church, especially the Confession of 1967 and A Brief Statement of Faith, challenge the church to follow Christ into a broken and fearful world:

- to pray without ceasing,
  - to witness among all peoples
  - to unmask idolatries in church and culture,
  - to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
  - and to work with others for justice, freedom and peace.
- A Brief Statement of Faith 10.4

The Book of Order also makes it clear that “the whole church gathers in worship and its corporate life for the purpose of being sent out into the world to engage in the reconciling, healing work of God through Jesus Christ. God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to share with Christ in establishing God’s just, peaceable and loving rule in the world”. (W-7.4000)

## Organization

The Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team (CPJ) is a ChristCare small group guided by Micah 6:8 and Isaiah 6:8. Meeting dates and times are decided by the group and change depending on the needs and interests of the group. Our time together includes prayer, Bible study, fellowship, topical book discussion, information sharing and planning service and community activities of interest to the group. Our principal mission partner is DREAM House. We partner with other groups as we have opportunity.

We work with the leadership of the denomination in the PCUSA’s Presbyterian Mission Agency Compassion Peace and Justice Ministry. We support First Presbyterian Church’s efforts as a Matthew 25 church. Within our congregation, we report to the Adult Spiritual Formation Committee. Our work is education of ourselves, our congregation and community and includes taking thoughtful action when we believe we are called to act where we can make a practical difference.

### 2020

CPJ met weekly during 2020 except during the Advent season. In-person meetings and activities shifted to online in March. We continued to focus our efforts on understanding and addressing systemic racism and immigration issues while learning to navigate online platforms and sharing what we learned with one another.

During spring and early summer, we read and discussed the book *He Calls Me Friend* by John M. Perkins. Throughout the year we were able to attend online talks and events sponsored by local community organizations, such as, the YMCA and the Education Justice Project. Some of the group also participated in online activities



hosted by the PCUSA Peace Committee and Frontera de Cristo. In the fall, CPJ served as host when **Pastor Matt Matthews** led a 6-week Zoom-based discussion of the book *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo for the congregation. Thirty people attended either daytime or evening sessions. With the Zoom format, friends and family living outside the C-U area joined the study, too. In December, CPJ members joyfully met via Zoom to prepare an Advent candle lighting video for the First Sunday in Advent worship service.

Moving online provided abundant opportunities for learning and inspiration. But it also meant postponing some activities. It proved to be an ongoing challenge for CPJ members involved in prison ministry. When in-person visits were suspended during the pandemic, letters by mail and occasional phone calls remained the only viable means to continue supportive friendships with two incarcerated individuals who did not have internet access readily available.

CPJ plans to continue meeting in 2021. We plan to host another book study in February 2021 inviting the congregation and friends of the church to participate. We also plan to support the Self-Development of People Sunday worship service in March.

All interested persons are welcome to participate in any and all of our meetings, book studies and activities.

Respectfully submitted by CPJ Members **Sandy Carr, Miriam Chenault, Tracy Dace, Mary Gritten, Bob Kirby, Claudia Kirby** and **Rittchell Yau** (Moderator)

## Courageous Conversations

BY RITTCHELL YAU  
RYCONNECTSEND@GMAIL.COM

The Courageous Conversations Ministry Team met and developed programs and events for the church and community over the course of several years on a variety of topics and issues requiring thoughtful courage to address. Past topics included racism, immigration and sexual identity. The programs usually included a daytime workshop and an evening event with a speaker and/or panel. Sometimes these were held on weekdays and other times on weekends. The events provided education and opportunities for dialogue and relationship building among the congregation and community. The interactions generated some classes and small groups within the church and brought together some in the church and community for more sustained action to address local and national issues.

Due to the COVID pandemic, plans for 2020 were tabled until large groups can meet safely in person. If you would like to participate in planning Courageous Conversations in 2021, contact the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry.

## Nurture (Hospitality, Fellowship & Membership)

BY GREG COZAD, CHAIR,  
GREG@COZADASSETMGMT.COM

The Nurture Committee has stayed active during the pandemic with a variety of activities. In the fall we hosted a number of "Sundays in the Park" after Church where the congregation could meet at Hessel Park and visit socially distanced with masks. The fellowship was nice since we could not be together inside. The events were so well received we plan to continue them even post pandemic.

We also hosted a number of Virtual Desserts via Zoom which had between 8 and 20 participants who could have fellowship on Tuesday evenings. These continue as we move into 2021.

Letter writing for the Prison Ministry continues with **Bob Kirby, Jane Tock** and **Diane Mortensen**. We thank them for remembering and serving those who need hope in their lives.



A glimpse of the newly renovated kitchen in Centennial Hall.

We also started reaching out on a systematic basis to the congregation each month to see how they were doing the pandemic and offering encouraging words from the Church.

Perhaps the most exciting matter the Nurture Committee has discussed is the completion of the kitchen remodel which will allow for greater fellowship at the Church with meals once the pandemic is over. The remodel has gotten rave reviews and we look forward to utilizing the new kitchen.

Thanks to the Nurture Committee members for their service: **Gary and Linda Peterson, Ginny Waller, Bob Kirby, Jane Tock, Diane Mortensen and Tom Gilmore.**

## Prayer Team

BY LACY PICKERING

LACY.PICKERING@ICLOUD.COM

The Prayer Ministry Team meets the second Monday of each month to give thanks and pray for the joys and concerns of the people in the congregation.

Each person is prayed for individually over the course of the year. We pray for our church, our staff, our community and country. We try to keep in mind the words of Paul in *Colossians 4:2* "Don't be weary in prayer; keep at it. Watch for God's answers. Remember to be thankful when they come."

At this time we are meeting on zoom but hope in the near future, to return to meet in the library in Westminster Hall at 1 PM. Our door is always open for anyone who would like to pray with us.

## Ramp/Lift Committee

BY BILL STOUT, CHAIR

W-STOUT1@ILLINOIS.EDU

**Members: Bill Stout (chair), Gary Peterson, Mark Schoeffmann, Bill Gamble, Richie Drennen.**

The committee completed its work in January 2021 by recommending the approval of a bid from Felmley-Dickerson for the construction of a small lift (fits a wheelchair and another standing person comfortably) from the back of Centennial Hall to the hallway adjacent to Westminster Hall at a cost of slightly less than \$100K. This was approved by Session and will be completed in roughly 3-4 months from end of January.

The Committee's original charge was to recommend whether to construct a ramp or not, but this evolved to considering an elevator, which evolved to recommending the lift (which is really a small elevator). This results in a savings of over \$100K compared with the cost of either a ramp or elevator, while meeting our needs nicely, especially by allowing handicap access to Centennial and the new kitchen. It should be noted that fellow member **Gary Burgett**, wearing his architect hat, was very helpful to the committee. Also, the broad technical expertise of the committee members helped us to analyze very carefully the various options available.

## Stephen Ministry

BY LINDA SANDQUIST

RLSAND2@COMCAST.NET

Stephen Ministry is a ministry in which trained and supervised lay persons, called Stephen Ministers, provide one on one Christian care to individuals facing life challenges or difficulties. It has enrolled over 30,000 congregations from more than 180 Christian

denominations across the US and Canada and in 130 other countries. It was founded in 1975 in St. Louis and maintains its headquarters there.

Since becoming a Stephen Ministry Congregation in 2007, we have had 40 individuals complete 50 hours of training to become Stephen Ministers (including 3 from other churches). Of the 24 who remain members of First Pres, 15 are active in the program. 7 are currently serving a care receiver.

Stephen Ministers are requested to make a 2 year commitment to serve after their training. However, most have gone way beyond that original commitment. Also, some who have been inactive would return to serve if the need arose.

2020 has been difficult to say the least, due to the COVID pandemic. We have not met as a group for supervision and continuing education since March. Supervision is a process where the Stephen Minister confidentially presents a brief or in-depth summary of their relationship with their care receiver and any difficulties they may be experiencing. Their peers may then give guidance and support that can improve the quality of caregiving the Stephen Minister can provide. In spite of COVID restrictions, individual care givers/receivers have continued their relationships by phone or virtual means.

**Pastor Matt Matthews** became the Stephen Ministry clergy liaison in the fall of 2019. **Linda Sandquist** has been the lay Stephen Leader 2007-present, having attended Leadership Training in 2007. Linda is the coordinator of referrals, continuing education and supervision.



## Web Site Redesign

BY BILL STOUT, CHAIR

W-STOUT1@ILLINOIS.EDU

**Members:** Bill Stout (chair), Ann Stout, Nancy Whitford, Kathy Schoeffmann, Betty Hollister; much tech support and advice from Eric Corbin.

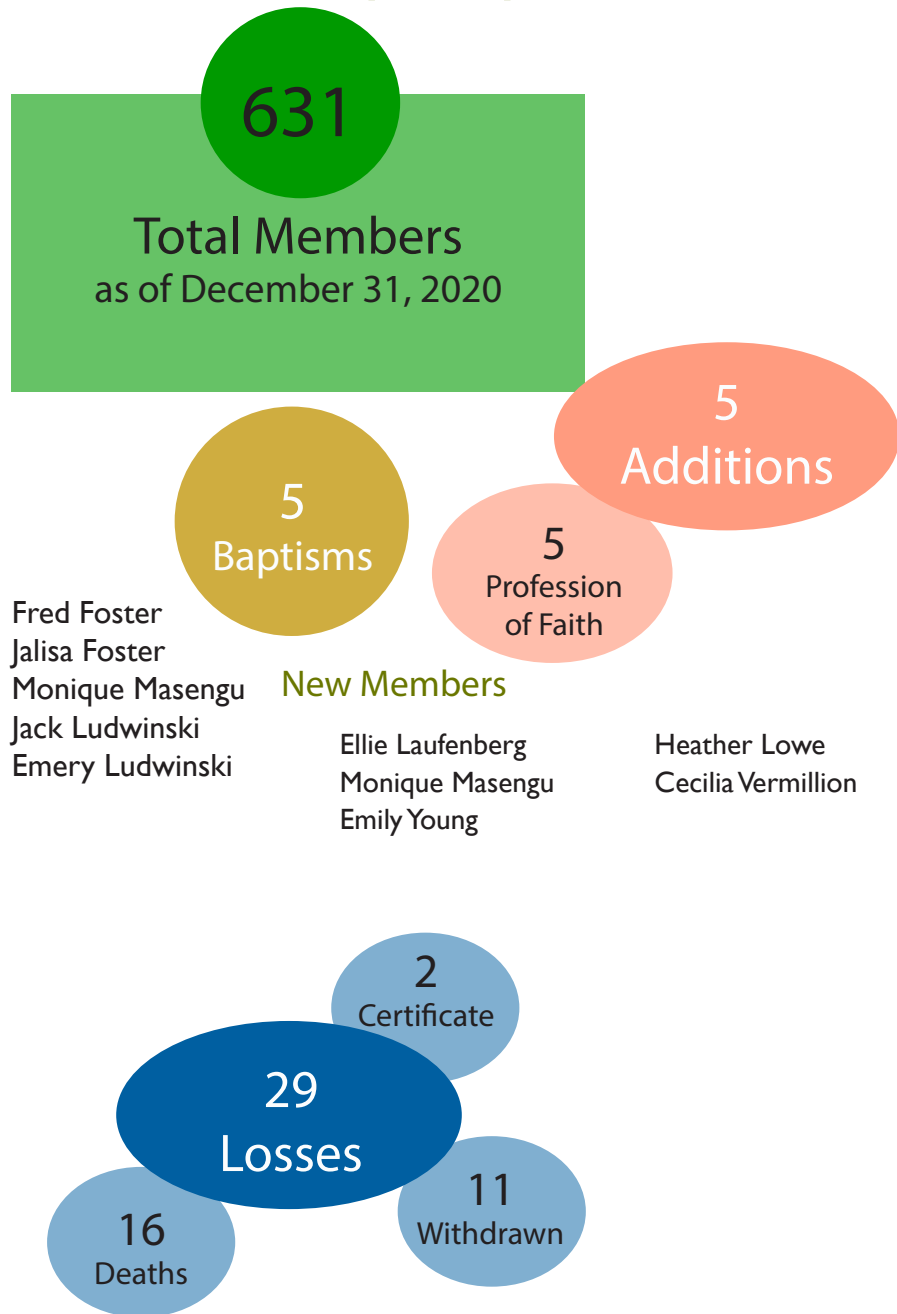
The committee completed its work, which involved hours of very detailed writing and editorial decisions as well as lots of photo-choosing, in addition to overall web design decisions. Nancy took the lead in the rewriting with much editorial help from other committee members. Also, various church members/staff provided drafts for their particular foci.

The charge was to develop a revised website designed to appeal to and communicate well to potential visitors and those interested in information about and activities at First Pres. This involved essentially creating a visitor side of the web site from scratch. A secondary, but important, goal was to streamline (far less words) and update the member side of the website.

Recalling the saying that a picture is worth a 1000 words (essential for web site design!), the committee worked hard to provide a rich and evocative photo experience for web site visitors and users. The website redesign was accomplished via employing web designer Troy Courson and with strong support from Eric (our very own web guru). We invite all to use our new website and to suggest it to potential visitors.

Importantly, there is a new committee to keep our website up to date throughout the year. So, any suggestions, concerns, or feedback of any kind should go to Marcia, except any photo suggestions/ideas can go directly to **Linda Peterson**. Your active role in this website maintenance will be very helpful and much appreciated.

# Membership Report



## Members Who Joined the Church Triumphant

Marian Babbs  
Kevin Chapman  
Betty Eisner  
Barbara Hoover  
Beverlie Meeker  
Jean Murray  
Vivian Terrill  
Roy Van Buskirk

Bertha Berger  
Joan Dobrovolny  
Fran Haughey  
Gordon Johnson  
Chuck Milazzo  
Jerry Phillips  
Bill Thompson  
Mary Wood

# SERVE

## Mission Team

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS, MISSION COORDINATOR

RACHEL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The Mission Team is a group of church staff and lay leadership who do mission work in some form through our church. The group meets monthly to communicate, plan, and organize. Members of the team include:

- Mission Team Session Elder, **Michael Hogue**
  - Amateur Preachers, **John Muirhead**
  - Community Mission Deacons, **Sandy Carr**
  - Cuba Partners Steering, **Ritchell Yau** and now **Bob Kirby**
  - Children Youth and Family, **Mindy Watts-Ellis**
  - ESL, **Jeanette Pyne**
  - Environmental Stewardship, **Clemmie Ackermann**
  - Mission Possible (and Go and Serve), **Gene Morgan**
  - Presbyterian Women, **Clemmie Ackermann**
  - Transportation Ministry, **John Muirhead**
  - World Mission, co-moderators, **Jeannie Snoeyink** and **Sallie Hutton**
  - Mission Coordinator, **Rachel Matthews**, who reports for the Benevolence Committee.
- Pastor Eric Corbin**

The main tasks and responsibilities of the Mission Team are to:

- Establish a thoughtful mission vision and develop the ministry in accordance with that vision
- Decide what mission projects to support and how to support it (fund-raisers, designated funds, budget funds, requests to congregation for donations)
- Elevate the church's awareness of

the biblical basis for missions, the need for community and world evangelism

- Increase congregational participation in missions
- Stimulate prayer for missionaries and world missions including correspondence with missionaries
- Ensure that pastors, staff and church leaders are empowered to participate in mission projects
- Develop policy and procedures related to missions

Mission opportunities are promoted through the church newsletter, Sunday bulletin, social media, minute for mission during worship service, the Heart of Missions and the Missions Kiosk in Westminster Hall. Any church member is welcome to join a mission committee, volunteer, or experience the power of Christian service.

During 2020 amid the pandemic the Mission Team members were hard at work through the committees they represented. **John Muirhead** was acting chair until **Michael Hogue** was elected as elder and could chair the Mission Team. Amateur Preachers took a break because of the Covid 19 risk. The van was not used but was maintained during this time.

## Benevolence Fund

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS, MISSION COORDINATOR

RACHEL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The Benevolence Committee was formed to act on financial requests to the church for emergency assistance. Benevolence Committee members include **Sandy Carr, Mike Havey, Matt Matthews, Rachel Matthews** and **Naomi Rempe**. It provides help only to those who have a significant

relationship with First Pres. That includes members, regular guests at worship, employees, members of our small groups or regular participants in church activities.

Normally, no gift may exceed \$500 and no family may receive more than one gift per calendar year. Applications are submitted and reviewed by the Benevolence Committee. Assistance is only available for what the committee sees as emergency relief that meets a basic need. This past year four families received assistance for a total of \$2420. Three other requests were made but did not qualify. There were other requests made that were helped through the pastor's discretionary fund. Individual donations support the Benevolence Fund.

Donations are always welcome and at times very much needed. Simply mark your check/contribution "Benevolence Fund."

## Community Mission Deacons

BY SANDY CARR, MODERATOR

SCAR60@MSN.COM

Like life in general, this year has been difficult for our local agencies assisting their clients during a pandemic. Our deacons had to keep in touch more by phone and internet than personal contact.

We like to have at least one deacon (or more) to represent each local agency. So In January when some of our deacons retire and new deacons join us we often change agency assignments. This helps all of us become more familiar with all our agencies.



Once again we had the Angel Tree but with a difference. No one could take a request from the tree in person so we asked members and friends to contribute \$25.00 gift cards so they could be distributed by each agency to their clients.

From a concern by members about hunger here in Champaign-Urbana we gave over \$12,000 to Eastern Illinois Food Bank for local use; \$4000 came from the deacons and the rest from the congregation.

One of our deacons and **Rachel Matthews** are developing a program to reach out to young girls on our community. We are looking forward to a “roll-out” in the spring.

We give our grateful thanks to **Michael Hogue, Barbara Clark, Steve Gritten** and **Carol Arnould** (ex officio) for their service and welcome **Kathy Schoeffmann** and **Nancy Pippin** who are joining us.

## Cuba Partners

BY BOB KIRBY, INTERIM MODERATOR

RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

*1 Corinthians 1: 4- 6 (CEB)*

*I thank my God always for you, because of God's grace that was given to you in Christ Jesus. That is, you were made rich through Him in everything; in all your communication and every kind of knowledge, in the same way that the testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.*

Champaign First Cuba Partners (Cuba Partners) is the sister relationship between the congregations of First Presbyterian Church, Champaign and The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba at Luyanó [loo-ya-NO]. This is a session to session covenant relation-

ship. We strive to enrich the spiritual lives of the people of both congregations.

### Purpose

The purpose of our relationship is:

1. To create a partnership between our two churches embodying our Unity in Christ.

2. To strive to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ in our families, our communities, our countries and the world.

3. To sensitize both church families to critical situations in our societies, and cooperate in the projects to which the Church, as part of the Body of Christ, can make a substantial contribution.

4. To explore various areas for joint mission.

### Organization

Champaign Cuba Partners includes 66 people who have completed a study of Cuba. Most have traveled to our sister church. A meeting of the Cuba Partners is held when needed but at least yearly at which time a business meeting and election of steering committee members occurs combined with the Annual Cuba Forum. The Forum is an informational congregation-wide meeting. The Cuba Partners adopted by-laws calling for election of a seven-member rotating steering committee which then elects four officers. The steering committee meets monthly.

At an international level, our congregation is a member of the Presbyterian Cuba Partners Network (CPN). This group works closely with PC(USA) World Mission and mission coworkers to stand with the Presbyterian entities in both the U.S.A. and Cuba.

Champaign First Cuba Partners also maintains an informal relationship

with the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX. We share responsibilities for vacation bible school with Covenant which has a longer standing sister church relationship with Luyanó.

### History

Twelve congregants made our first trip to Cuba October 14-22, 2010 to explore the possibility of partnership. This resulted in a partnership (hermanamiento) agreement between the sessions of our two churches signed in 2012 and renewed in 2015 and 2018. Since then we have completed thirteen trips, including two trips to support the Vacation Bible School, a youth focused trip and several smaller trips to honor celebrations of our Cuban congregation. We hosted Cubans on eight occasions.

### 2020

Hurricanes, a viral pandemic, intensified travel restrictions and economic insecurity forced creativity to maintain our relationships this year.

The Cuba Steering Committee hosted a “baby shower.” The congregation at First Pres was invited to sign greeting cards and donate baby supplies to be sent to Luyanó to celebrate the birth of son Isaac to parents **Pastor Daniel Izquierdo** and spouse **Anatiza Sánchez**.

Presbyterian Women donated Spanish language editions of their 2020-2021 Bible Study Guide to the Luyanó women's group. Prayers for Cuba were offered in our worship services and some favorite hymns of the Cuban church were included in music offerings. In October, **Rachel Matthews**, Mission Coordinator, hosted a Zoom meeting about Cuba. Individuals in our congregation made generous financial donations to support our work. And in December, as the year concluded,

the World Mission Committee designated the church of Luyanó as one of two recipients for the 2020 Advent Offering. Our sisters and brothers in Cuba and the Steering Committee are especially thankful for all these efforts and the generosity of our congregation and ministry teams in a year that brought hardship in many forms.

### PCUSA Cuba Partners Network

Our contact with, and appreciation for, the Cuba Partners Network (CPN) expanded in practical and meaningful ways during 2020. CPN provides information to and facilitates communication among PCUSA congregations through annual meetings, regular newsletters and individual advice and problem solving via phone and email. CPN increased these efforts in 2020. In September CPN hosted a virtual celebration of the 130th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Cuba. The event allowed people from both countries to participate in combined worship and planning for a new time.

### Moving Forward

We plan to continue our focus on building relationships, deepening our understanding of the Cuban experience and growing together in our faith with our Cuban sisters and brothers. We recognize that circumstances of daily living and travel have become more challenging for the Cubans.

We desire to learn and respond in a manner that is practical and sensitive to the evolving conditions. We aim to maintain regular effective communication with the congregation at Luyanó and with other partners. Also, we will seek ways to broaden and deepen our communication within our congregation.

We are thankful for the ways our Cuban brothers and sisters embrace us as family, as brothers and sisters

(hermanos/as). We appreciate their example of open-hearted hospitality to us in all circumstances, their mutuality in care for one another, and their joyful, daily and practical expressions of confidence in God's goodness.

Tentative plans are to host The Cuba Forum on Saturday, May 1. A Cuba Sunday followed by Cuba Two Step will be offered on May 2. By fall we hope to return in-person with a Cuba Study in preparation for a congregational spiritual enrichment trip in the spring of 2022.

### Champaign First Cuba Steering Committee

**Mary Lou Bauer** (moderator elect), **Tracy Dace**, **Carol Miles** (treasurer), **Bob Kirby** (interim moderator), **Claudia Kirby** (interim member), **Rachel Matthews** (staff), **Nancy Pippin** (secretary), **Rittchell Yau** (interim moderator). Also serving in 2020 were **Liz Pippin** (moderator and secretary) and **Peter Yau**.

### Environmental (Green Team)

BY KATHY SCHOEFFMANN, MODERATOR  
KSCHOEFFMANN@YAHOO.COM

### Committee Members

**Clemmie Ackermann**, **Tim Bartlett** (Jan. - June), **Dave Bauer**, **Nancy Brombaugh**, **Tanya Deckert**, **Ron Deering**, **Barb Fuller-Curry**, **Rachel Matthews**, **Liz**



The drive-thru styrofoam collection hosted by the Environmental Stewardship Committee netted several bags that will not be added to the landfill.

**Miley, Pat Phillips, Ginny Waaler and Kathy Schoeffmann** (committee chair)

### Committee Meetings

The committee meets each month from 3:30-4:30pm in the church library (pre-COVID-19) and via Zoom.

### Committee Purpose

Responding to a call from PCUSA to make environmental stewardship of God's creation a central mission of our congregation.

### Budget \$250/year

Although this is a committee that thrives on active projects and mission, during 2020 the committee's focus became more virtual in nature due to COVID-19.

### On-going Activities included:

- Adopt-a-Highway - One cleanup took place on Saturday, October 6th with seven members participating.
- Virtual Earth Day Celebration - Coordinated with our pastors to offer a virtual Earth Sunday service on April

**26. Rev. Cindy Shepherd** delivered the message, a slide show of nature and Earth related photos was shown, and music included "Morning Has Broken" and "For the Beauty of the Earth."

- Earth Care Congregation recertification - Renewed annually since 2012
- Education - Provide informational articles for the monthly church newsletter

- Garden Beds upkeep - Plant, weed and maintain the Story Garden, and other pollinator flower beds

- Advocacy -

Attended the virtual Green Team Summit sponsored by Faith in Place September 13-17. Virtual workshop topics included Climate Change, COVID-19, Clean Energy, Local Food Economy and Impacts on Flooding on Farming in Illinois. Attended the virtual Advocacy Day sponsored by Faith in Place - Met with Senator Rose and other advocates to discuss alternative sources of energy on 11/11

- Peace Garden - Planted and maintained the "Peace Garden" on the north side of Doxology Lane.
- Faith in Place Fundraiser - Attended the Faith in Place virtual fundraiser on December 8, 2020 and donated our \$250 budget to them.

### New Activities and Initiatives included:

- Styrofoam (polystyrene) Collection and Recycling - We held the first collection of styrofoam on Styrofoam Sunday, January 5, 2020. Five large bags were collected and taken to the DART recycling center in Urbana. A second collection of 6 large bags took place on Saturday, October 31.
- Eyeglasses and cases collection - Obtained a Lions Club International eyeglasses recycling box and began

collecting eyeglasses. We also started an eyeglass case collection, with those going to Goodwill. We'll resume this activity after COVID-19.

- Designated "Wildlife Cafe" - Designed and installed a "Wildlife Cafe" sign in the South garden bed containing prairie flowers and grasses. The bed will be kept natural, a bit scruffy looking, with seed heads left on plants through the winter to provide food for wildlife. The beds will be cleaned up in the spring to allow for new growth.

- Awarded the Central Illinois Green Team Award at the September summit sponsored by Faith in Place. Received a beautiful glass award that is displayed in the church office.

- Eco Ambassador Youth Program - Invited **Sam Laufenberg** spoke at our October 19<sup>th</sup> meeting about his week long Eco Ambassador experience.

- Attended a Geothermal Power Hour webinar to learn about geothermal heating/cooling for the church. Sent information to Ritchie and Building and Grounds to consider for our church when a replacement is needed for our church's system.

### 2021 Goals:

- Explore additional ways to educate the congregation and help the environment
- Encourage greater congregational participation in environmental activities
- Continue to enhance the church landscape design with native wildflowers and grasses
- Waste Audit - Complete a waste audit at the church once we return to normal activities using the Faith

in Place Waste Clean-up Toolkit as a guide

- Revisit installing a water cooler/bottle filler to replace the drinking fountain on the second floor of the Ed building to provide clean, filtered drinking water

Please note: Kathy encouraged a change in leadership for the ESC to keep the ideas and activities fresh and the enthusiasm up. A volunteer is needed.

## English as a Second Language (ESL)

BY JEANETTE PYNE, COORDINATOR

JEANETTE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

### I. Volunteer/Committee Activity

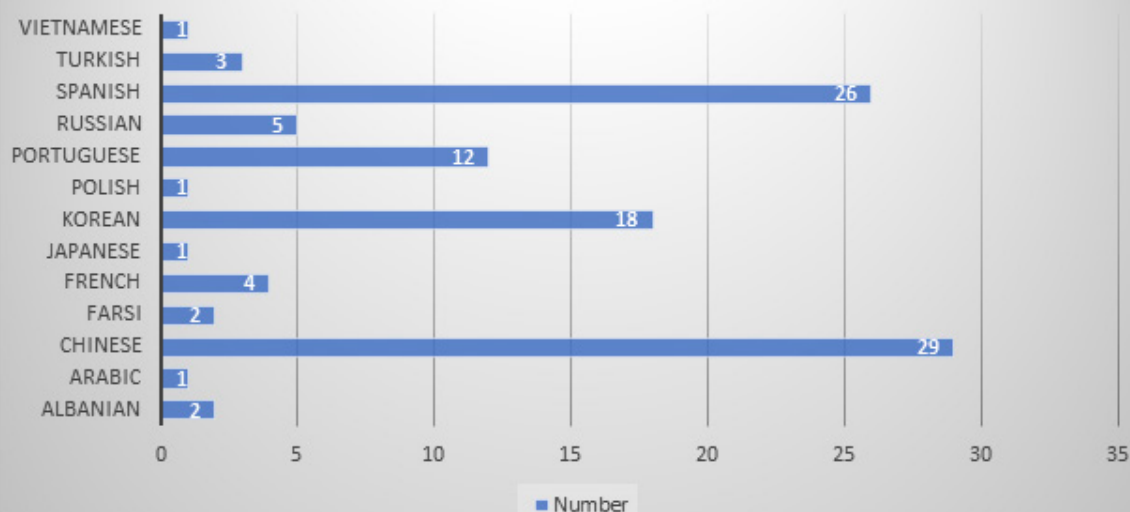
The First Pres ESL Program is sustained by and thrives on the hard work and dedication of volunteers. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the ESL Program had experienced some tutor attrition. We only had 16 tutors for 2020 instead of our usual 20+ volunteers. The volunteer tutors provide English instruction to immigrants, refugees, and international visitors.

About one third of the tutors are associated with First Presbyterian Church; the remaining tutors have other (or no) church affiliation. Six new tutors joined our ESL tutor team this year; some have left already and others have continued. In addition, we had two other volunteers who helped with administration work.

All of our classes were moved online via Zoom starting in March 2020. Most tutors volunteer for two 1-hour class sessions per week. Vern Snoeyink teaches 3 days a week and Mike Havey teaches 4 days per week. These very dedicated tutors consistently model friendship, hospitality, openness,



## Languages Represented in ESL Program



patience, enthusiasm, and flexibility. To facilitate communication with the tutors, **Jeanette Pyne**, ESL Coordinator, sends a weekly email update, and regularly privately emails tutors.

### 2. Significant Accomplishments/ Highlights in 2020

- The ESL Program moved entirely online starting in March 2020. Tutors learned how to use Zoom and teach on Zoom. Jeanette purchased more Zoom accounts so the program could continue to have concurrent classes.

The program retained most of its students and tutors. Each tutor taught at least 1 class, which met twice a week at various times of the day. A significant advantage of offering online classes is that the program can better meet the needs of English language learners by meeting them when they are free to learn English, so we have some classes at night and in the afternoons.

- The ESL Director enrolled and completed a course on Instructional Design for Online Course Development through ION Professional eLearning Programs at UIS, which was very timely. She hopes to use this

information to finish the long-running curriculum development project.

- The program intentionally reached out to the Spanish-speaking community. After looking at the roster for the ESL Program, the ESL Advisory Committee and Jeanette decided that it needed to make a greater effort to reach out to the underserved communities in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, specifically, the immigrant, low-income Spanish-speaking community. All the promotional material was translated into Spanish. Chrome Books and Wi-Fi hotspots were offered for students to borrow to attend class. A total of 16 Spanish-speaking students from Mexico and Guatemala began attending class in November 2020. To meet the demand, the ESL Director began teaching two beginning-level English classes.

- The ESL Director started cataloging and creating an ESL Program Library. There are over 500 different books available for classroom use or teacher training at the church. However, there has never been a catalog created, so it was not easy for tutors to search through the books to pick out re-

sources most useful for their classes.

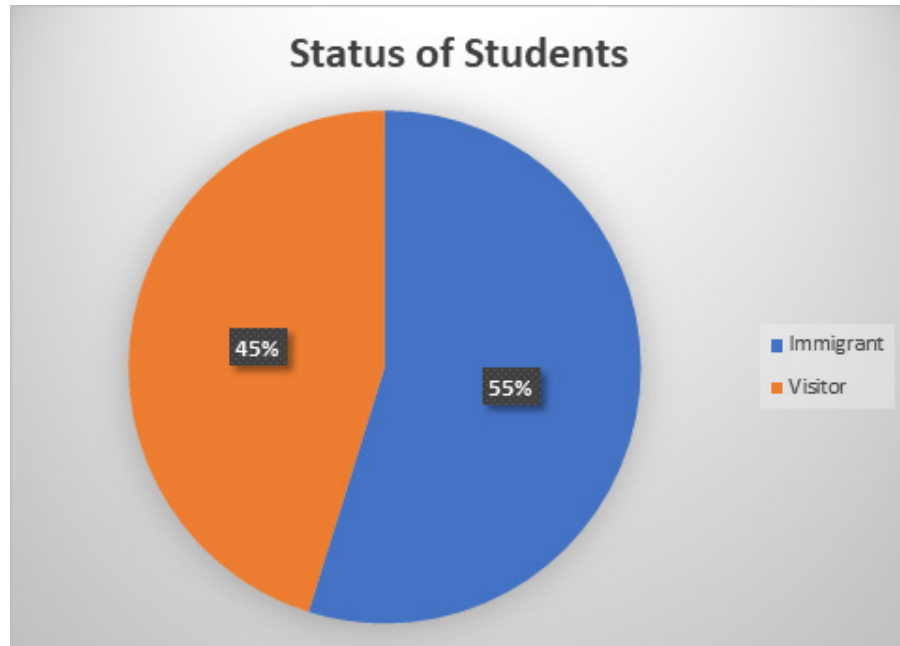
Subsequently, starting in the fall semester, Jeanette began searching for an online library for cataloging the books and technology equipment that can be borrowed from the program. She landed on libib.com as the online catalog for hosting this library. To make it easier to organize, find and return the books, the Jeanette also created a unique library call

system for all the materials, workbook, textbooks, resources, and equipment.

- The ESL Director started a monthly Zoom Café Time. Since March 2020, many people have been isolated and disconnected from other people. This is especially true for English language learners, immigrants and international visitors, who may not have the typical social outlets that Americans would have. They can no longer attend social events to meet other people. Truthfully, the students were feeling lonely. They missed their classmates and tutors. Thus, some of the students began requesting a Café Time like the program used to have when in-person. So, Jeanette created a virtual Café Time that First Pres members are invited to attend. It started in December 2020 and occurs once a month, every second Thursday at 10 AM. Jeanette facilitates small group discussion through providing questions and activities for the groups to do. The small groups are led by an experienced tutor.

- ESL Director trained volunteer tutors.
  - o Six new tutors were added and trained: **Tatiana Kashina**,

## Demographic Data



**Sebastian Rocheleau, Alexandra Butler-Auld, Dr. Harry Bremer, Alice Houston, and Xin (Dee) Chen.**

- Maintained communication with First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. Jeanette sent out a monthly update on the ESL Program in the church newsletter to keep the congregation abreast of what has happened at the ESL Program. She also continues to present a Minute for Mission once a semester.

- Maintained full classes at all levels. Our enrollment numbers continue to be high. We had a total of 104 registered students last year. This does not mean they were all being served at the same time, but, throughout the course of the year, each student attended at least one class.

- o Enrollment data from January 2020 – December 2020

- Number of students enrolled throughout the course of the year—104

- Number of countries

represented this past year: 21 (Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, China, Colombia, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Vietnam, Yemen)

### 3. 2020 Budget Expenditures

The bulk of the ESL Program expenditures included such things as instructional resources (workbooks, instructional texts, teaching idea books, dictionaries), Chrome Books and other technology equipment needed for online class. We spent all of our budget on items and materials necessary for the ESL Program to continue and to help students overcome barriers to attending class.

### 4. 2021 Goals

Looking ahead, we would like to:

- Work to insure continued funding for this amazing program!
- Continue to provide a supportive environment where students can learn English and feel part of a caring com-

munity, and where volunteers can help others while learning just as much as they teach!

- Curriculum Development.
  - o Based on the student needs assessment, it became clear that a curriculum needed to be developed to improve the instruction at the ESL Program. The Director will continue to work on creating curriculum for all five levels based on research and input from the appropriate stakeholders. This is a long-term project.
- Teacher/Tutor Training.
  - o From the tutor needs assessment, **Jeanette Pyne** intends to continue to develop workshops for the current tutors to give them further support in instruction in various skills and cross-cultural teaching.
- Continue to make the ESL Program accessible to the communities who most need it.
- Continue to communicate with FPCC on a regular basis by submitting a monthly entry to church newsletter

and presenting a Minute for Mission once a semester during church services.

- Continue to problem-solve and improve the ESL Program.

## Presbyterian Women

BY BRANDI LOWE, MODERATOR

BRANDISCRAPBOOK@YAHOO.COM

Every woman in the church is part of Presbyterian Women and invited to participate in our monthly circles held on most 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the month. We continue to have 3 circles this year (morning, afternoon, and evening) to accommodate a variety of schedules. Circles meet September through May (except in December) for Bible study and fellowship.

In February, we honored our church staff with a luncheon. PWV members donated a delicious meal to feed our staff with a Valentine's Day theme.

Our new leadership team was installed in June over Zoom, where we dedicated our Birthday Offering. We held a fall gathering on October 1, over Zoom, with a program on *Knitting Through Life* by **Brandi Lowe** and a dedication of our least coin offering. On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, we held our annual Christmas Tea, over Zoom, shared our favorite Christmas ornaments with one another, listened to music from **Brandi Lowe** and **Karin Vermillion**, and made our Thank Offering dedication.

Many of our normal activities were put on hold or canceled due to meeting restrictions during Covid-19. Fortunately, we were still able to continue many of our missions as usual. Knifty Knitters donated 26 hat and scarf sets to Kemmerer Village for the middle and high school students who live and attend school there. We were lucky enough to have many sets

left and were able to donate them to DREAM. We continued our deliveries of cribs and layettes to *empty tomb*. A total of 60 cribs were delivered this year! Helping Hands continued to call and deliver meals to members of the congregation as did Meals on Wheels. We delivered Christmas cookies to those who the Care Deacons visit regularly. This year, we chose to work with Kemmerer Village for our Mission Project. At Christmastime, we were able to deliver 8 comforter/sheet sets,



Fleece blankets were delivered to Kemmerer Village by PW in 2020.

five soft shag rugs, 20 fleece blankets (Circle of Peace), and many craft items (Circle of Joy). Circle of Faith purchased a sewing machine and donated it to *Educate a Child*.

A newsletter was published every month that we met.

## World Mission

BY JEANNIE SNOEYINK, CO-CHAIR

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Committee members: **Sallie Hutton/Jeannie Snoeyink**, co chairs, **Jim Berger, Steve Gritten, Lizz Pippin** (part of year), **Ann Stout**, and **Marvin Brombaugh** became a member in May.

Committee advisors: **Rachel Matthews, Eric Corbin**

The World Mission Committee was able to achieve a fair amount during our 2020 COVID year. We were unable to see our mission workers in person but did make contacts via zoom, etc.. The committee was able to use funds normally designated for personal visits by mission workers and other meetings to support crisis situations.

In August we donated \$500 to Presbyterian Disaster Aid to the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Beirut that was hit by the explosion in Lebanon. In September, we sent \$1500 to PDA for fire relief in our own country's west coast areas. We advertised the Presbyterian Disaster Aid website so people in our congregation could make individual contributions for fire relief if they so desired.

This year's Raindrop Project in July went to aid the Frontera de Cristo border ministry of Adams/Escobar in Mexico. Our congregation generously provided \$5010 for this binational ministry affected both by COVID and immigration issues this year.

This year's Advent money is being used in two ways by Presbyterian Disaster Aid. Two-thirds is being used to support Presbyterian Disaster relief projects in our country and around the world while the other one-third will go to aid our own sister Luyano Church in Cuba.

We are so grateful for the generosity of our church members. One of our goals this year is to increase communication with the congregation and therefore our missionaries and mission agencies are often listed in the Tuesday "Heart of Missions" First Presbyterian Weekday emails.

We welcome any interested church members to our committee.



# WORSHIP

## Worship

BY JUDI GEISTLINGER, CHAIR

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In no way, did I ever think we would be where we are today compared to January 2020. Worship has truly been a labor of love this strange, strange year.

The Worship Committee and all its parts worked to keep the congregation worshipping despite the pandemic.

Blessed with the foresight to have been streaming on Facebook Live for years, we did not miss a beat when the nation went into lockdown. A few minor technological bumps in the road occurred as everyone seemed to join with congregations across the nation on Facebook on Sunday mornings.

In our quest to make sure people could indeed worship on Sunday mornings at 9 AM, we moved to a pre-recorded worship service premiering simultaneously on multiple online platforms. This allowed us to continue to bring worship to not only our greater Champaign neighborhood, but now to the world. We have worshippers joining us from many, many states and our brothers and sisters in the Luyano congregation, especially when they were hampered by their own lockdowns in Cuba. An online community has joined in commenting on worship through the Facebook feed. Our broadcast service premieres on Sunday at 9 AM Central time.

We moved from 3 in-person worship services to one which incorporates a variety of musical genres and musicians. Recording sessions occur in the sanctuary with fewer than 10 people

who run the technology and to lead worship, maintaining social distance as recommended by the public health officials. Technology was boosted, adding two remote controlled cameras to add flexibility in visual options for worship recording sessions while at the same time limiting the number of people required.

While online worship is not the ideal, the creativity of the staff and volunteers brought meaningful worship to our flock. **Mindy Watts-Ellis** introduced us to JIP who helped our children (and adults) express feelings about the changes and how to respond in faithful ways. Music leaders recorded a variety of hymns for us, allowing the congregation to sing at home. Bread recipes were shared when we offered communion in a virtual format.

In March, we began a weekly gathering time at 7 PM Wednesdays via Zoom. We grew from just gathering online and checking in with each other, to programmed sessions that still allow for interaction. Worship Committee plans 2 of the 4: Prayer service on the first Wednesday of the month, and the third Wednesday is worship (which is often a service of worship music from a variety of church musicians from within our church.) Many of the Worship weeks are music our musicians have recorded, either in their own homes or by using the facilities at the church.

From the time of shut down, we learned a variety of ways to lead worship as safely as possible in recording sessions and plan for the time when we could begin to worship in person once again. We learned to our deep disappointment that congregational

responses and especially singing were just not safe during this pandemic. Social distancing, mask wearing, sanitizing, temp checks, registration all became part of the plan. Because of the nature of the pandemic, we had clear plastic shields installed at the pulpit and as stand-alone cubicles for any musicians.

Pandemic worship was set to begin November 1, and November 1 was the last time 6 congregation members and 4 volunteers plus staff (totaling 12 people in the sanctuary) were able to gather for in-person worship before regional Public Health restrictions tightened and Session suspended in-person worship until numbers lowered and we “flattened the curve.”

When all this began in March, we never dreamt we would not be able to gather for Easter. Yet we worshipped online together. We planned a Holy Week like none other. Christmas was a milestone that led us to plan carefully to bring a beautiful and meaningful service of candlelight and the Christmas story. So many people participated in the planning, the decorating, the gathering of poinsettias, the recording of special music, and leading the service itself.

I would be remiss if I did not thank some of the people behind the scenes who made it all happen. From the worship committee who offered their wisdom, their desire to sing some old favorites and see the choir from the days masks were not needed, and shared their desire to be together leading to opportunities for connection outside of the church building. The tech crew who have put in hundreds of hours planning, recording, editing, and producing the high-quality worship we share weekly. And our

pastors, oh my what would we have done without Eric's technical abilities and Matt's vision for worship and sharing God's word to us in intimate fashion from the front pew? We are blessed to be walking with these, our pastoral leaders, in such a time as this.

News of the vaccine deployment gives us such hope that we will soon return to in-person worship and eventually be able to do together some of what makes worship so meaningful: extending the right hand of fellowship, singing loudly so all can hear, speaking what we believe aloud, and feeling God's presence in that upper room when we all gather together.

Until that day, I'll see you online Sunday morning.

## The Gathering Worship

BY BILL STOUT, CHAIR

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP TEAM (CWT)

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Just as with the traditional service, The Gathering service discontinued worship in Spring 2020. We eagerly look forward to resuming the Gathering (contemporary) service sometime in 2021.

We are pleased that the Gathering band continues to record hymns and songs, which are often part of our current Sunday virtual worship and sometimes our Wednesday night worship. Hence the band will be primed to go when we go live again!

It continues to be the Team's belief that having both a traditional and a "contemporary" service is valuable for Outreach success. Last, we were saddened to lose **Don Dixon**, an active fellow member of our team.

## Traditional Music

BY JOE GRANT, CONDUCTOR/DIRECTOR

JOEGRANT@ILLINOIS.EDU

It seems like it was ten years ago that we could participate in "traditional" music here at First Presbyterian. Even though we had three months of pre-covid services, rehearsals and congregational singing, the rest of the year seems to have lasted a decade.

The last rehearsal of Chancel Choir and Upper Room Ringers took place on March 11. Since that time, we have improvised, experimented and found new ways to provide music for worship. We have experimented with live streaming via youtube/facebook, recorded services with all elements present and done in sequence, and finally evolved into a pattern of recording the spoken portions of the service on Wednesdays and the musical elements in separate sessions.

From March until the UI students returned in late summer, I recorded the hymns alone with the organist/pianist. Since that time the quartet has rehearsed on Wednesdays and subsequently recorded a series of hymns and anthems to be edited into the worship services by Pastor Eric. We typically record preludes, postludes, hymns and anthems in 3-4 week blocks rather than week by week. For safety's sake we have been rehearsing and recording in the sanctuary where we can spread out adequately and we purchased specially designed "singers masks" to help contain any extensive spread of our breath while singing.

During the Christmas season we were able to produce an evening of "Musical Treats and Family Carol Sing" that was shared via zoom. This consisted of three previously recorded pieces from our Christmas Music Sundays.

These included organ, orchestra and full choir. Following these numbers, a recording of the quartet leading familiar carols was aired for the attendees to sing along with.

In addition to the paid quartet, we have engaged **Jean René Balekita**, **Leslie Thomas** and other soloists to provide a more varied approach to our music. These individuals and I also provided music for some of the Wednesday night zoom services/meetings that are being offered.

A significant change in our personnel took place across the opening weeks of the pandemic. **Richard Rossi** announced that he had taken a position as organist at a cathedral in Erie, Pennsylvania. A detailed search for his replacement followed. We were very fortunate to have three well qualified candidates interview for the position. We chose **Brendan Barker**, a current doctoral candidate in Choral Music at UI. He is originally from the Philadelphia area and had held several organist positions in the past. Since that hiring we have found him to be an excellent addition to our music staff. During the interim between Richard and Brendan, **Leslie Thomas** very capably filled the role of pianist/organist. She continues to fill in for recordings and services as needed.

We hope and pray that by next fall we can return safely to a more normal setting and schedule of choir and bell rehearsals to prepare music for worship and to lead the congregation in making a joyful noise!

# CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

## Annual Congregational Minutes February 16, 2019

Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

Quorum: Yes

Moderator: Pastor Matt Matthews

- Pastor Matt Matthews delegated Celeste Kim, clerk of session, to serve as secretary.
- Pastor Matt Matthews briefly reviewed the 2019 Annual Report with the congregation.
- Pastor Matt Matthews entertained a motion to approve the report.
- Congregation moved to approve, and seconded the motion.
- Vote proposed and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.
- Meeting adjourned at 10:15am.

-Pastor Matt Matthews invited Mark Schoeffmann to speak as chair of Finance Committee, in regards to approving the terms of call for Pastors Matt Matthews and Eric Corbin.

-Mark Schoeffmann entertained motion to approve terms of call for Pastors Matt Matthews and Eric Corbin.

-Congregation moved to approve, and seconded the motion.

-Vote proposed and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.

-Mark Schoeffmann closed in prayer.

-Meeting adjourned at 10:23am.

Respectfully submitted,

Celeste Kim

## Congregational Meeting Minutes August 16, 2020

Signed on participants: 45 Quorum: not declared

Meeting began at 10:14am.

-Motion made to elect the clerk of session as secretary. Motion carried.

-Motion to close nominations from the floor was made. Motion carried.

-Motion to elect Greg Cozad and Michael Hogue to Session in order to fill the vacated positions. Motion seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

-Pastor Matt Matthews closed in prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25am.

Respectfully submitted,

Celeste Kim (clerk)

## Congregational Meeting Minutes October 25, 2020

Meeting began at 10:06am.

Quorum was called and met.

-Pastor Matt Matthews opened in prayer.

-Motion to elect the following new officers as presented by Eric Stickels on behalf of the Nominating Committee for three year terms beginning in 2021 unless otherwise noted.



**Session**

Mary Gritten  
Carol Miles  
Steve Tock  
Tom Ulen

**Community Mission Deacons**

Mike Havey (one year term)  
Nancy Phippen  
Kathy Schoeffmann

**Congregational Nominating Committee**

Beth Hutchens  
Vern Snoeyink  
Skip Pickering to fill the 2-years remaining of the term for Bill Stout

Motion seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

-Pastor Eric Corbin closed in prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 10:21am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Celeste Kim (clerk)

**2021 Church Officers**

2023

2022

2021

**Session Elders** Moderator: Matt Matthews

|              |               |                  |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| Mary Gritten | Ken Chapman   | Greg Cozad       |
| Carol Miles  | Michael Hogue | Ron Deering      |
| Steve Tock   | Celeste Kim   | Mark Schoeffmann |
| Tom Ulen     | Ann Stout     | Eric Stickels    |

**Community Mission Deacons** Moderator: Sandy Carr

|                   |               |                      |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Nancy Phippen     | Bruce Rainey  | Sandy Carr           |
| Kathy Schoeffmann | Leslie Thomas | Mike Havey           |
|                   |               | Richard "Itch" Jones |
|                   |               | Lola Ruthmansdorfer  |

**Congregational Care Deacons** Moderators: Amy Born & Pam Knox

|              |                  |                  |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| Jean Brunson | Sue Fischer      | Amy Born         |
| Pam Knox     | Mary Jane Kelley | Nancy MacGregor  |
| Marge Olson  | Buddy Selin      | Jean Smith       |
|              |                  | Julia & Tom Ulen |