

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN



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SNIPPETS FROM YOUR PASTOR

BY MATT MATTHEWS
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By Easter of last year, I thought we stood at the beginning of the end of Pandemic Road. Like you, I was eager to greet a world free from the long shadow of plague.

Not everyone was vaccinated, but that was just a matter of time, I thought. Vaccines for younger persons would roll out soon, and, because we wanted to be good stewards of community and personal health, everyone would avail themselves of this practical shield against lingering strains of the virus. We seemed to be sailing into a bright spring and Covid-free summer.

Summer gave us a taste of lower positivity rates, freer travel, less anxious prognostication on TV news. We needed the break. Thank God, we were almost home. Every now and then life felt normal. We even got a little bored with perfection, basking in those warm days, cool twilights in the backyard garden, and serene blue nights.

Then came fall.
Omicron.
Climbing positivity rates.
Rising death toll. (945,688 U.S. deaths according to the CDC.)

Old fears pushed the walls closer. I felt stuck with Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia in that trash compactor on the Death Star. Those dreaded questions resumed their nagging yowl. How are we finagling out of this mess? Are we going to survive? Are old norms being reshaped beyond recognition?



We celebrated Pentecost with in-person worship followed by a gathering in West Side Park in 2021.

If we thought the end of masks and social distancing was in sight, we were wrong. Cold weather drove us not only indoors but into the familiar world of holding our collective breath, of masks, of avoiding crowds, of fretting for the more vulnerable among our kith and kin. When someone sneezed at the grocery, we stopped, dropped, and rolled.

And now here we are again, near the end of a winter headlined with cold and snow, hoping for a bright spring and a Covid-free future – even as Russian tanks invade Ukraine.

* * *

One of the constants through an uncertain past and future is the church. Our church. Our church kept on keeping on during pandemic. DREAM House filled our classrooms with children who might have missed the whole school year for lack of wifi and stable homes in which to get their class work done. Our ESL

met online and in parks; our tutors are the greatest. After Thanksgiving, we opened Centennial Hall for a women's overflow shelter run by CU at Home. By Easter of last year, we returned to face-to-face worship. We didn't want to mask, and we didn't want to sit socially distanced, but we gathered in the wisest, safest, and most compassionate ways we knew how. We made due. We laughed at ourselves. We prayed our way through. "Solvitur ambulando," Augustine said. It is solved by walking.

We walked. We paced, sometimes in nervous circles. We kept on keeping on.

Children's Sunday School met online, in-person, online, and, now, back to face-to-face; they pulled off a sublime VBS at Hessel Park. Adult Spiritual formation explored faith in the real world; we shared powerful stories. Our choir has weaved through safety protocols to rehearse and lead us in masked song. Our quartet brings us



Our youth got “creative” in 2021 and painted rocks for Earth Sunday.

Broadway-caliber music each week. I couldn’t stand a few weeks ago after **Jamille’s** soulful “Give Me Jesus.” Our choir catches God’s love like the moon catches the sun and illumines our path with pure, silver light. **Joe Grant** has led us through two years of hymns and has hardly taken a Sunday off. **Brendan** has deepened ties to University Bach choirs. **Libby Sternhagen** has reinvigorated our bell choir. The Gathering Band brings Vince Guaraldi (think Charlie Brown!) and other quirky, refreshing arrangements to 11:15 worship. **Mindy** has transformed our worship space with color and banners, and she continues, with **Samantha** and **Blaise**, to teach our children about Jesus the Good Shepherd.

The rest of our staff have been heroes, too. **Patty** and **Marcia** have coordinated the behind-the-scenes machinery of this busy operation. **Val** has stepped in as our new ESL director without missing a beat; thanks to **Jeanette Pyne** for years of faithful service that concluded this fall. We said goodbye to **Eric Corbin** this year, without whose technical skill we

would have suffered in the age of hybrid church. **Robert Ferrer** has been faithfully streaming worship and editing services for the radio (which make their way to appreciative listeners). **Sam Haupt** runs sound and is the Gathering Band leader. **Rachel Matthews** and **Judi Geistlinger** share worship duties with me, curating creative liturgies, and preaching. Rachel additionally helps with pastoral care, and she coordinates the Sunday services at the Windsor of Savoy. **Jason Gordon**, working only five-hours a week, is helping coordinate technology upgrades. **Ann Petry** keeps our numbers straight.

Not a crystal of ice lingers on our sidewalks after snowfall thanks to **Ritchie, George, and Fred**; additionally, Ritchie has done the lion’s share of coordinating the volunteers and contractors who have flocked to our campus for over two years: We have new front doors, a brand new kitchen, a lift that will get our mobility-impaired saints downstairs to Centennial Hall for food and fun (soon, soon), antiquated boilers in

constant need of repair (replacement is on the horizon), a main elevator that needs regular nursing (replacement is imminent), and much more. Thank you, Ritchie. Thanks be to God.

Jesus said he longed to protect Jerusalem like a mother hen who collects her chicks beneath the safety of her wings. This church, by God’s grace, has provided that kind of welcoming place of sanctuary, learning, prayer, service, and worship.

Some of you have been gathering faithfully online. Others have ventured out in person. You are giving your money (2020 was a good fiscal year—thank you and thanks be to God), your prayers, your energies. You make calls, serve on committees, attend, advise, participate. Your Elders and Deacons work hard and faithfully. Jesus wants our church to be sanctuary for the world (and launch pad and crucible) and you, by the grace of God, are making it so.

Thank you.

ADMINISTRATION

A Passion for Worship

BY JUDI GEISTLINGER, COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR

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August 1st was the day I returned to a very part-time staff position responsible for worship planning. As a Commissioned Lay Pastor, I am in the unique position of being a congregation member but commissioned to a particular role, allowing me to preside at the communion table. My training some 20 years ago and serving a small congregation prepared me, along with my calling, for this role.

I have a passion for worship that is meaningful for all. Sometimes it is the scripture that speaks to us, sometimes the message from the pulpit, sometimes music and other times, it is the atmosphere of being together in the same place gathered around the font or the table.

This past Advent season, we used an interdisciplinary program that coordinated devotionals, music, art, and words for worship to bring us along with the theme of Close to Home that was drawn from scripture. My role at First Pres is to assist in leading worship and preparing bulletins for two Sundays a month. Other Sundays, I might be found preaching across our Presbytery or anchoring a pew, keeping our online congregation connected to what is happening in the sanctuary.

This work is a work of love, and I am honored to hold this place while our APNC seeks a new pastor to lead us. I do still work full-time for the university, so you won't see me at the church much besides evening and weekends. I am currently preparing to bring a

meaningful Lenten season to us in worship. I pray you join us in the journey.

COVID 19 Response Team

BY RUTH CRADDOCK, CHAIR

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The Covid Committee of the church met multiple times during 2021, with the purpose of discussing the pandemic situation in the world as it unfolded around us, reviewing guidance from public health officials, and making recommendations to the Session regarding this public health issue in order to try to keep our congregation as safe as possible.

Members included **Matt Matthews, Eric Corbin, Judi Geistlinger, Ken Chapman, Ron Deering, Carol Miles, Tom Ulen, Mark Schoeffmann, and Ruth Craddock.**

Early in the year, most of the discussion pertained to how to resume face to face worship, which did occur in February. Discussions then ensued about child care, Sunday

school, dinners, funerals, kitchen protocols, DREAM protocols, and ESL protocols. Per CDC guidelines, vaccinated worshipers were allowed to attend services unmasked for a brief period in May; that was short lived due to the rise of the Delta variant which soon had everyone masked indoors again.

Trying to follow CDC guidance, the committee recommended alterations to most of the church's normal activities, which included suspending indoor congregation wide meals due to the inability of children to yet be vaccinated. Covid funds were used to purchase HEPA filters/air purifiers for indoor spaces. Many activities were able to be conducted outside, which was deemed to be safer in general. As the weather precluded ongoing use of outdoor venues, and with the rise of the Omicron variant in the fall, church activities continue with the use of masks indoors. The committee continues to recommend vaccinations, including booster shots, for all eligible members, and will continue to meet as needed in 2022.



With Covid restrictions, social gatherings in 2021 were limited to Sundays in the Park weather permitting.

Building & Grounds

BY TOM ULEN, CHAIR

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AND RITCHIE DRENNEN, FACILITY MANAGER

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The Building and Grounds Committee has had a very productive year. We have dealt with some issues of deferred maintenance around the main building and the Christian Education Building and have begun to plan for some bigger changes to the church campus.

We would like to thank the facilities staff – **Ritchie Drennen, George Almasi, and Fred Foster** – for their service to our church. The members of the committee – **Gary Burgett, Bruce Farthing, Bill Gamble, Gene Morgan, and Tim Young** – also devoted their time and efforts to the church's well-being.

Smaller projects

There were several projects that were designed to improve the exterior of the church facilities. The church parking lot was repaved and painted in Spring, 2021, for the first time in eight years. The kitchen of Mae Chapin Parlor had been having some moisture leakage from outside that was destroying the interior western wall. We had that wall redone and the shaft of the dumbwaiter from the Mae Chapin Parlor kitchen to the kitchen behind Centennial Hall filled in and hidden from view.

We replaced the signboard near the front door on the State Street side of the main church building. The brick pillar on the northeast corner of the church property – the one saying “First Presbyterian Church of Champaign” – had fallen into disrepair. We had **Luther McNeil** redo the tuckpointing on that structure

and redo and clean some of the tuckpointing around the outside of the church.

Something we need to address is this: There is some leakage into the Centennial Hall from water running down from the south entrance to the church. We know what needs to be done and will address the issue as soon as all the remodeling in Centennial Hall is completed. The front doors of the church have been repaired and painted a deep green. Our contractor also removed the rust stains on the stairs leading up to those doors.

As you know, the remodeling of the Centennial Hall kitchen is nearly completed. A lift going from the hallway behind Westminster Hall into Centennial Hall is very nearly complete. Issues arising from the pandemic and manufacturers' supply-chains delayed the completion of the lift project until early 2022.

Also, within the main church building, **Bill Gamble** built a beautiful handrail that makes going up or down the stairs to the chancel much easier. That handrail is removable if necessary. Thanks, Bill.

In the Christian Education Building (CEB), there have been several projects. The doors into the building from Church Street have had some repairs that make it easier to open and lock those doors. **Itch Jones** and Ritchie installed new vinyl plank flooring in the nursery after a damaged rug and asbestos tiling had been removed.

Thanks to a very generous gift from the Presbyterian Women, we have scheduled the installation of a new water bottle filling station in the hallway on the second floor of the



Water Bottle Filling Stations are now in both buildings!

CEB in lieu of the two current water fountains.

We intend to repair some of the ceiling tiles of the second-floor café in the CEB.

Bigger projects

There are three bigger B & G projects for which we have made preliminary plans this past Fall. The first is to have a long-term building assessment done with a Charlotte, NC, firm called “Smart Church Solutions.” The goal of the assessment is to have some professionals take a hard look at our facilities and to give us their recommendations on how we ought to prioritize the in-avoidable B & G issues that arise in older structures like ours. We have had several conversations with the firm and are impressed with them. However, we have put our negotiations with them on hold, pending the outcome of the other two big projects that have been thrust upon us.

The second big project is the replacement of the 70-year-old hydraulic elevator that runs from the Westminster Hall level to the Sanctuary level. As some of you know from being trapped in the elevator or marooned on the first floor when the elevator is not working, the current elevator is unreliable. Every time the elevator stops and needs to be revived costs us about \$1,000 in repair costs. Parts to repair the elevator are not available anymore.

We have had several meetings with engineers from elevator manufacturers and installers about either modernizing or replacing the elevator. Because so much of the hydraulic mechanism needs to be replaced and because the cab of the elevator is an outmoded size and design, the modernization possibility is at least as expensive as installing a new elevator. That new elevator would be in the same general space as the current one but would include widening the current shaft, increasing the size and carrying capacity of the elevator, and reorienting the entrance and exit to be south facing. We are currently working through a proposal with a prominent elevator supplier.

The third big project is the replacement of the two-boiler heating system with a more modern HVAC system. As you may know, we currently heat both buildings with two ancient boilers located in the CEB. Those boilers take in water, heat it to boiling, and then capture the steam and pipe it throughout the CEB and through pipes under Doxology Lane to the main church building. As **Clemmie Ackerman, Ritchie Drennen**, and **Tom Ulen** learned at a two-part symposium on “Energy Management for Churches,” steam heating is the least efficient method of heating. It is so inefficient that our consultant, who did an energy audit of the church in 2020, estimated that we would recover the costs of installing a modern heating system within 11 years of installing it. If one adds in the very high natural gas (about \$34,000 per year) and repair costs of the current system, we should recover the installation costs of a new system in seven years.

We have had several meetings with Davis-Houk Mechanical about a modern replacement and are waiting

to hear back from them with an installation cost estimate.

Our beautiful facilities are generally in good shape. We have a superb facilities staff who maintain things in top order and ambitious plans for improvements that will almost certainly make the church even more beautiful and accessible for decades to come.

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

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Operating Funds

In 2021, total revenues for the operating fund were \$1,145,778, about 5.1% above the budgeted amount and \$43,129 more than in 2020. Revenue for 2021 included \$878,481 in contributions compared to \$875,288 in 2020. Total Expenses for 2021 were \$1,079,773, about 3.2% above budget and \$67,341 more than in 2020. The net result was a positive balance of \$66,005 compared with a positive balance of \$90,217 in 2020. Contributions in 2021 were about 81.4% of church expenses with other funds accounting for 24.7% resulting in the 6.1% surplus. Other revenues include payments from the Cannon Trust which amounted to \$100,320 in 2021 and \$15,750 in transfers from other funds. The significant end of year surplus in the Operating Fund is due to the receipt of \$134,295 from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program and an additional fifth quarterly distribution from the Cannon Trust.

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 \$85,628 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 \$3,282,846 compared to \$2,980,956 at the end of 2020. The invested funds include \$2,035,986 in strategic reserves and \$634,719 in permanent endowment funds. Net investment returns were 11.9% for 2021 compared to 5.3% in 2020.

2022 Budget

For 2022, projected total revenues are \$983,340. Pledges of \$800,000 are anticipated for 2022 which is 1.8% more than pledges budgeted for 2021 but only 0.7% more than actual pledged contributions received last year. Expenses are budgeted at \$1,021,942 which is about 5.4% less than the actual expenses in 2021 and 2.3% below the 2021 budget. This results in a projected deficit of \$38,602, compared to a budgeted surplus in 2021 of \$43,434. The projected deficit represents 1.9% of our strategic reserves. The budgeted level of spending allows for the continuation of our programs and current staffing levels.

Overall Financial Health

The receipt of two rounds of Federal Paycheck Protection Grants resulted in two years of budget surpluses. These surpluses exceeded all of our budget deficits of recent years and along with strong returns on our investments result in a healthy financial position. However, without the grants we can anticipate the return of yearly budget deficits.

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 2021 and 2022

Revenues

	2021 Budget	2021 Actual	2022 Budget
Pledges	\$786,000	\$794,021	\$800,000
Plate	67,000	84,460	68,000
Cannon Trust	81,000	100,320*	80,000
Restricted Funds	15,750	15,750	15,750
Other	140,050	151,227**	19,590
Total Revenues	\$1,089,800	\$1,145,778	\$983,340

Expenses

Clergy	\$268,796	\$227,379	\$164,137
GA Per Capita	24,000	27,510	27,500
Staff Misc.	5,800	5,454	5,900
Music	63,096	62,609	72,060
Contemp. Worship	16,000	13,593	15,710
Worship	5,000	14,945	40,410
Mission	129,531	125,552	128,242
Children/Youth	114,005	104,528	115,200
Adult Education	2,450	448	2,450
Office (Administration)	183,836	195,034	196,238
Building & Grounds	224,852	301,049	244,095
Congregational Care	1,000	0	1,000
Hospitality	8,000	1,672	9,000
Total Expenses	\$1,046,366	\$1,079,773	\$1,021,942
Revenue-Expenses	\$43,434	\$66,005	(\$38,602)

*Includes five quarterly distributions

** Includes \$134,295 from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program

Narrative Budget 2021

Every month in the church newsletter, you get a snapshot of where we are financially: income v. expenses, where we are supposed to be budget-wise v. where we actually are. Your Finance Team wants to keep you abreast of these details. Because financial numbers can be measured, we attempt to measure them well with charts and graphs and columns of numbers. What is trickier to measure is how does our budget bear God's love in the world? How do we harness the finances God entrusts to us to build God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven?

Consider these stories.

- In 2021, you gave \$6,407.56 to our One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. This was above and beyond your regular gifts to our local, unified budget. You are generous. Thank you. Typically received during the season of Lent, each gift to One Great Hour of Sharing supports efforts to relieve hunger through the Presbyterian Hunger Program, promote development through the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, and assist in areas of disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). Because of your contribution, you went all over the United States and to 57 countries as part of gifts distributed in the first half of 2020 through PDA.
- \$1,425.50 will go to CU at Home in 2021 through our budget—that's just part of your \$28,550 our Community Mission Deacons will share with our local mission partners. This is part of what being a good neighbor means. Thank you.
- Our ministry with and for children has been hampered by Covid. Nevertheless, we've spent \$196.79 on snacks for them. These small expenses add up and up, and this figure doesn't cover all the sandwiches our Nurture Team made for our children attending our four-week Vacation Bible School this summer at Hessel Park. Little things matter. Thank you for your gifts.
- Office postage (\$1,921.42), clipboards for Sunday school in West Side Park (\$36.69), and communion juice and bread for the table in July (\$7.25), are among ordinary expenses your church incurs doing extraordinary ministry.
- Late this summer, we hosted a community-wide vaccination/back to school fair for our neighbors, primarily in the immigrant community. Jeanette Pyne, our former English as a Second Language (ESL) director and Samantha Nichols, our Sunday School coordinator, honchoed that event. They secured area grants to help pull this off. Our portion of this event was \$3,742. Because of you, children have new backpacks filled with school supplies, their families were educated by community leaders, and they were fed on a golden, sunny day. On that day, heaven and earth kissed.
- We broadcast an edited version of our Sunday service on the radio (WDWS-1400) each Sunday. This costs \$5,460 per year, not to mention the services of our AV Tech, Robert Ferrer who records, edits, and sends. How many listeners are fed with this choir music and sermon each week?
- How many lives have you touched through your gifts to God through the ministry of this church? Where has your money taken your love? A third of our Advent Offering went to Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada de Luyano—our partner church in a suburb of Havana. Most of the money you gave to this church stayed local in the form of utility costs and salaries, music supplies and emergency rental assistance. Your gifts will help pay for some big-ticket items this year, such as a lift/elevator to Centennial Hall; it's about time all of our people can make it downstairs for a congregational meal. Inclusivity matters.

Because of your generosity (and the federal Paycheck Protection Program), not one person on our staff missed a paycheck during the pandemic. Your staff, in turn, was able to pay their bills and provide for their families. We've kept the lights and the heat on in order that our DREAAM kids can meet here to build the amazing DREAAM Team. Circles have prayed. Knitters have knitted. Friends in AA have found haven here. Our choir section leaders and musicians are making college money and putting their training to godly use. People who need counseling are getting it. The "Little Pantry" (a new edition to our campus thanks to a thrifty Eagle Scout) is staying stocked. You've provided life-skills training and computer tablets for our brothers at S.A.F.E. House.

Last year, Byron Kemper, parsed our financial numbers and made these observations:

Where does a dollar of income for church programs come from? Most of the income, about 90-cents of the dollar, is derived from contributions, pledged and unpledged, from members and friends of the church. About 8-cents comes from a trust set up by a former member, the Cannon Trust. The importance of a source of funds like the Cannon Trust cannot be overemphasized in maintaining the excellence of our programs. We might all consider such a pay-forward gift to the church that keeps on giving well beyond our lifetime. About 1.5-cents come from transfers from restricted funds and the last 0.5-cent from miscellaneous sources. This dollar of income does not quite match our expenditures, so about 3.5-cents more is projected as a deficit. In terms of expenses, 69-cents of the dollar are spent on personnel and 31-cents on church programs and operations.

* * *

Studies show that we humans yearn to be part of something bigger than just our small lives. We want our lives to matter. By investing your time, talent, and treasure in First Presbyterian Church, you help nurture the communion of saints here who serve neighbors near and far. The ministries of our church don't happen only because we have a flush budget; they happen because we have a gracious God calling us to be a caring and generous congregation. God brings hope to the world in part through your generosity. Friends are being made. Lives are being enriched. The money you invested here has brought joy and healing to our community and world.

Thank you, and,

Thanks be to God!

Human Relations

(aka Human Resources)

BY ANN STOUT, CHAIR

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As Covid 19 has continued to impact every aspect of our lives, the FPCC staff has been working earnestly to keep our ministries running smoothly. Sometimes through Zoom, sometimes in person, the staff has maintained high standards in order to keep FPCC ministering to God's people

As in previous years, your HR Team has continued to be supportive and encouraging to the employees. 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. **Eric Corbin** accepted a call to pastor a church in Woodstock, IL. Although we miss him, we wish Eric, Kristi, and the family the very best in their new adventure. We are currently beginning the process to search for a replacement for Eric. In order to temporarily fill in the gaps that Eric left, **Judi Geistlinger** and **Rachel Matthews** were hired part time to help with worship and other pastoral duties. In addition, **Jason Gordon** was hired part time to assist with technology needs. We also said goodbye to **Damen Rowell**, maintenance, and **Jeanette Pyne**, the ESL director. We have subsequently welcomed **Val Smith** as her replacement. And, last but not least, you may have noticed that **Libby Sternhagen** is now leading the Bell Choir.

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 Webbink**, and **Dave Whitford**.

2022 Church Staff

Pastor:

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

Staff:

George Almasi Facility Assistant
Brendan Barker.....Church Musician
Ritchie Drennen.....Facility Manager
Patty Farthing..... Receptionist
Robert FerrerAudio-visual Technician
Marcia Franks..... Office Manager
Judi Geistlinger..... Commissioned Lay Pastor
Jason Gordon..... Technology Support
Joe Grant..... Director of Music

Sam Haupt Director Contemporary Worship Band
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Assoc.
Samantha Nichols..... Sunday School Coordinator
Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant
Ann PetryAccounting
Val SmithEnglish as a Second Language Director
Libby Sternhagen Bell Choir Director
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;

SAMANTHA NICHOLS, SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR

SAMANTHA@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

BLAISE PASCAL, CONNECTIONS ASSISTANT

BLAISE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Personnel changes

Samantha Nichols began employment as our Sunday School Coordinator in January of 2021.

Connor Stout resigned as Children's Choir Director in August of 2021. A search committee was formed and interviewed candidates, but have not yet filled the position.

Sunday School Winter/Spring

Unfortunately January of 2021 found us still under pandemic restrictions and the Sunday school program continued through Zoom online. Through a generous grant from the PCUSA, we were able to provide each household with elementary aged children a *Growing in God's Love A Story Bible*. Stories from this book and the corresponding curriculum were used beginning in the fall of 2020 and continued into the Spring semester. At home materials were mailed and Zoom sessions were held each Sunday morning.

We held a Bible Class for our 3rd Grade students in the church patio and Centennial Hall May 9, 16, and 23. **Nicole Miller** led the class. Bibles were presented on the last day of class and recorded to share in the recorded worship for May 30. Receiving Bibles this year were **Blessing Ngalamulumbe, Blessing Mfulama, Ursula and Orsela Tembo, Kerene Lembelembe,**

Grace Ledford, and Jack Ludwinski.

Our middle school and high school students continued to meet through Zoom in an afternoon time slot. See Samantha's report below for more details about the topics of study in our Sunday school program..

Summer Education

Mindy created a 'Parable of the Sower' intergenerational summer curriculum. This involved creating a website that featured Bible story videos, sing along songs, games, crafts, and science facts. The title was "Sowing Spiritual Seeds." The website was live in June and the events at Hessel Park were the last three Sundays in July and the first Sunday in August. The events began with a box lunch prepared by our Nurture Committee followed by storytelling of the parable, songs, games and crafts. The outdoor setting was the safest for all to participate. We rented the two small pavilions on the east side of the park, and gladly did not get rained out for any dates. The close proximity of the playground and splash area were enjoyed by the children too.

Sunday School Fall/Winter

We began the fall semester on September 12. Sunday school classes met in Westside Park with masks and social distancing as precautions. The elementary ages were combined as one group and the middle school and high school ages were combined as a group. All volunteer teachers were required to be vaccinated. Individually wrapped snacks were provided at the conclusion of the lesson to be eaten outside in the alley while waiting for parent or driver pick up. The classes

were held indoors in late fall when the weather fell below 60 degrees. All students were required to wear face masks and maintain physical distance, air purifiers were running in each classroom and windows were opened slightly for maximum air circulation. For specific units of study topics, see Samantha Nichols's report below.

Sunday School Mission

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.

Children helped advocate for clean energy by sending postcards to our local representatives and helped plant our pollinator pocket.

Families were invited to be part of the CROP Walk on October 3rd and walk the route that began and ended at our church.

The children made signs to encourage congregants to donate food for the hungry to our little pantry. Children sorted the donations and filled the little pantry on a Sunday morning.

Children's Choir

Children's choir did not sing in worship during 2021.

Children's sing-along time was offered during the elementary Zoom time every other Sunday by Mr. Connor in the spring semester. Mr. Connor came to some of the summer program Sundays to lead us in song.

Family Events

All ages were invited to the church patio for a special Earth Day event on April 25th from 1-4 PM. Postcards were written and decorated and sent to our Illinois state representatives in support of the clean energy jobs act. Ceramic pots were painted and filled with potting soil and marigold seeds for the families to grow at home. Participants also created plant signs to identify the native plants in our church landscaping.

A special Pentecost party was held in West Side Park May 23. Children listened to the Bible story, sang songs with Mr. Connor and were invited to make a Pentecost kite. A gift bag was distributed to each family for more fun Pentecost celebration options at home. Some of the children helped plant the seeds in the pollinator pocket for the church garden.

The "Fun in the Sun" event was held August 15 in Centennial Park. Although we were unable to hold a full potluck, CYF worked with the Nurture and Outreach committees to host a family carnival complete with popcorn, cotton candy, and Kona Ice as well as a ring toss, fishing game, ladder ball game, corn hole, bucket toss, and Goliath game. Children could play the games to earn tickets that

were then exchanged for their choice of prizes. The pool time followed and was enjoyed by many.

Families were also invited to take part in the Trunk or Treat event October 24, but that date was rained out so it was held October 31 from 4-5 PM instead. This was extremely popular and appreciated by the neighborhood families! We had over 100 children in the first 20 minutes. We ran out of candy before the hour was up for the first time ever!!! No soup supper was held due to coronavirus conditions.

Ten folks met at the church and traveled to Hardy's Reindeer Ranch on November 7 for outdoor masked fun in the corn maze and a visit with the reindeer.

A youth and parent participated in the Salt and Light service date on December 5th from 2-4 PM.

An Interactive Christmas pageant was held December 19 to the delight of the whole congregation followed by the making of candy houses in Westminster Hall.

Special Lent and Advent gift bags were assembled by Mindy and delivered to the homes of Sunday school families by Mindy, Samantha, and Blaise.

Special Youth Events

DREAA youth participated in an art installation piece designed by Mindy Watts-Ellis displayed on the church lawn for the 48 Hours of Peace Anti-gun violence event June 25-26. The youth painted wooden doves that were then suspended from solar LED light nets. The number of doves represented the number of "shots fired" incidents in Champaign from January of 2020 to April of 2021.

The Christmas Cookie Fundraiser was held December 12 with record results. The youth have earned over \$1,000.00 towards next summer's Youth Triennium event.

Professional Development

Mindy Watts-Ellis, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry attended a virtual national conference for the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) February 4-6th. Mindy has now begun a term of service on the APCE Communications and Resource Team.

From Samantha Nichols, Sunday School Coordinator...

I have really enjoyed this first year of serving as Sunday School Coordinator. I am grateful to the church staff, CYF committee, and our wonderful volunteers for supporting this program throughout each twist and turn we've experienced. Below you will find an overview of the year as well as a list of topics we explored.

January - May

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Sunday School classes took place over Zoom throughout the Winter/Spring 2021 semester. Elementary school students met at 10:15am to read and explore a story from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. Every other week, Mr. Connor joined the Zoom class to lead us in song. Middle and high school students met at 1 PM to discuss a variety of topics.

Students of all ages were invited to a special Earth Day celebration in April. This was our first in-person Sunday School event in 2021. Students and their families met outside the church to plant flowers, create plant identification signs for the church garden, and write to our elected officials about the importance of caring for the earth. Several families participated in this event.



Trunk or Treat was a BIG success!

We concluded this semester of Sunday School with another in-person, outdoor event. Through crafts and music, we celebrated Pentecost at West Side Park.

Throughout the semester, materials were sent to Sunday School families with elementary school students to encourage and assist them in exploring each lesson as a family.

June - August

In addition to supporting various CYF events, the summer months were spent planning for the Fall 2021 semester. In addition to selecting curricular resources and determining which subjects and stories to explore, plans were made to keep our students and volunteers as safe as possible amid the ongoing pandemic. These Covid-19 precautions have been outlined above.

Two volunteer training sessions were held in August to prepare for the fall semester.

September - December

In-person classes resumed for the Fall 2021 semester. Classes took place in West Side Park until it became too cold. Sunday school materials were also posted on the First Pres Kids website and mailed to families who did not yet feel comfortable attending in-person classes.

Due to a limited number of adult volunteers and lower student enrollment than pre-Covid years, classes were structured differently than in years past. We offered classes for the following age groups:

- Kindergarten - 5th Grade
- 6th Grade - 12th Grade
- Preschoolers were invited to participate in the elementary class until it was determined that it would work better for preschool

students to attend their own class. Childcare workers agreed to lead these classes.

This new division of classes has allowed us to explore the benefits of multi-age ministry.

Sunday School Topics

Preschool students were invited to learn about the Bible, Advent/Christmas, as well as many of the elementary school units prior to creating a separate preschool class. Units unique to the preschool class were adapted from Karyn Henley's curriculum.

Elementary school students were invited to explore the following units in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*:

- People Jesus Met
- Parables
- Endings and Beginnings
- The Early Church
- Listening to Jesus
- Pentecost
- Exodus
- Elijah and Elisha
- Esther
- Advent

Middle and high school students were invited to explore the following units and utilized a variety of curricular resources including several from the PC(USA):

- Peer Pressure
- Prayer
- Mental Health
- Environment
- Pentecost
- Paul and Epistles
- Identifying Our Gifts
- Stewardship
- Spiritual Disciplines (Lectio Divina)

Lots of learning and faith formation took place in each of these units.

It was especially fun for our preschoolers and elementary students to learn about the ten plagues in Exodus by acting them out in a play. Elementary school students also got to move through an obstacle course in the gym as part of a lesson on John the Baptist. Our middle and high school students worked particularly hard to write an epistle to the church as a way to complete their unit on Paul and biblical letters. Their final draft offered words of encouragement as well as fresh ideas for mission and engaging youth.

* * *

I deeply appreciate the participation of our students, their families, and the wonderful volunteers who make this program possible.

From Blaise Pascal Zamena, Connections Assistant...

The year 2021 was the most difficult one due to the COVID 19. As a connections assistant, my role was mainly to be in touch with the french-speaking families, translate documents, and plan for church events transportation if possible.

Besides being part of the Sunday online session, most of my work was planning transportation and delivering gift bags to our Sunday school learners. Family events were successful due to the well-planned coordination by CYF leaders.

I am taking this opportunity to thank everyone who helped transport our learners to attend church events.

Many thanks to the CYF Team CYF Committee: **Mary Gritten, Mary Lou Bauer, and Claudia Kirby.**

Sunday School Volunteers: **John Muirhead, Celeste Kim, Sabrina**

and Wen-mei Hwu, Noni Ledford, Sarah Laufenberg, Naomi Rempe, Jan Wittler, and Mary Lou Bauer.

Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team (CPJMT)

BY BOB KIRBY, MODERATOR

RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

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 (CPJMT) is a small group guided by Micah 6:8 and Isaiah 6:8. We meet on first and third Thursdays at 6:30 PM. Our time together includes prayer, Bible study, fellowship, book discussion and information sharing. Our principal mission partner is DREAM Opportunity Center.

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 both Mission Team and Small Groups Ministry. 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.

2021

CPJMT met on Zoom. We continued our efforts to understand and address systemic racism and immigration justice issues and recently have begun to think of other ways our congregation can be more welcoming. We are working with others in our congregation to assure our campus restrooms are more accessible.

We read *Between the World and Me*, a book by Ta-Nehisi Coates which resulted in a four-week congregational study led by Pastor Matt. We presented a Wednesday evening discussion on *The Danger of a Single Story*, a video presentation by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche.

Tracy Dace gave our group an early introduction to a new framework for DREAM that will address violence in Champaign County.

CPJMT is an open group welcoming all who are interested in joining regularly or on occasion.

Team: **Sandy Carr, Miriam Chenault, Kate Cole, Tracy Dace, Mary Gritten, Bob Kirby** (moderator), **Claudia Kirby, Brandi Lowe** (scribe), **Bill Marble, Sherry Marble** and **Rachel Matthews** (staff).

Congregational Care Deacons

BY PAM KNOX, CO-MODERATOR

POKNOX@GMAIL.COM

2021 began with our 11 Care Deacons visiting with our 28 Care Receivers in their private homes, at retirement communities, and nursing homes. Most of our care-receivers are unable to attend church and appreciate knowing our church family wants to maintain a connection. These contacts occur at least monthly if not more often.

The pandemic continues to dictate how our Deacons visit with their Receivers. At times institutions have been locked down and we've been unable to visit in person. But cards and phone calls have become our lifelines. As well as baked goods and flowers. Over the course of the year, we have learned to evolve and grow our connections in spite of Covid.

Monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 2:30 PM. For most of the year we met via Zoom then restrictions improved, and we were able to meet in person, masked of course.

In July we were able to serve our quarterly Communion for the first time in over a year to our Care Receivers. This wonderful aspect of our ministry was repeated in October and December. Our quarterly Communion at Windsor of Savoy is served during a bible study lead by

Pastor Matt Matthews. The Care Deacons arrange with the church to transport a minister to the homes or residences for the remaining receivers who wish to partake in Communion.

Please notify the church office if you know of someone who would benefit from this ministry.

Nurture Team

BY GREG COZAD, CHAIR
AMER-SWEDE@YAHOO.COM

The Nurture Committee had a wide variety of activities during 2021 many of which were limited or restricted due to Covid. We held Virtual Desserts via Zoom in the Winter and had Sundays in the Park for Members post Church in the Spring. We also helped host a reception for departing **Pastor Eric Corbin**. We prepared lunches for several weeks for Vacation Bible School. One of the highlights of the year was Sholem Fest held on August 15th where many youth in the community had the chance to participate and enjoy some swimming. In the fall we had a Fall Y'all outdoor event that was limited to the distribution of a number of tasty treats due to the weather. Finally some hearty souls did some Christmas caroling the week before Christmas.

The Kitchen Committee led by **Gary Peterson** continues to plan how the Church may best utilize our new facility once Covid restrictions abate. Letter writing campaigns continue and the committee also reached out to many members via phone to stay updated. Nurture looks forward to 2022 and hopefully promoting a number of activities in person as the year progresses.

Membership Report

613

Total Members
as of December 31, 2021

2

Baptisms

Eliana Zawadi Johnson
Alexandra Marie Jo Deis

3

Additions

Anand Swaminathan and wife, Jennifer Nelson by Letter of Transfer;
Cathy Emanuel, reinstated

21

Losses

18

Deaths

2

Certificate

1

Withdrawn

Members Who Joined the Church Triumphant

Les Etheridge
John Goin
Carl Herzog
Adella Hodges
Marsha Nichols
Paul Rector
Ron Short
Wanda Tuchel
Linda Wilson

Pat Failor
Dick Green
Jean Hinton
Chuck Kelly
Steve Nichols
Ralph Sackett
Mike Stallman
Bob Twardock
Charlie Wittler



Many enjoyed a Pentecost outing in the Park in May.

Church Officers

2024	2023	2022
Session Elders Moderator: Matt Matthews Mary Jane Kelley Mary Nicholas Ann Webbink Jan Wittler	Mary Gritten Carol Miles Steve Tock Tom Ulen	Ken Chapman Celeste Kim John Muirhead Ann Stout
Community Mission Deacons Moderator: Leslie Thomas Jane Alsberg Grace Ashenfelter	Kathy Schoeffmann	Itch Jones Bruce Rainey Lola Ruthsmandorfer Leslie Thomas
Congregational Care Deacons Moderators: Amy Born & Pam Knox Amy Born Nancy MacGregor Bill & Sherry Marble Eric & Cathy Stickels Tom & Julia Ulen	Jean Brunson Pam Knox Marge Olson	Sue Fischer Mary Jane Kelley Buddy Selin

Associate Pastor Nominating Committee

Betty Hollister
 Kevin Kim
 Nancy Martin
 Carol Penka
 Bruce Rainey
 Kathy Schoeffmann

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 may meet monthly to communicate, plan, and organize. During 2021, the Mission Team met sporadically as need arose.

Members of the team include:

Mission Team Session Elder, **John Muirhead**

Amateur Preachers, **John Muirhead**

Community Mission Deacons, **Sandy Carr**

Cuba Partner Steering, **Bob Kirby**
Children Youth and Family, **Mindy Watts-Ellis**

ESL, **Jeanette Pyne** left in October and **Valerie Smith** became the new director.

Environmental Stewardship, **Clemmie Ackermann**

Mission Possible (and Go and Serve) became inactive due to Covid precautions.

Presbyterian Women, **Clemmie Ackermann** and **Brandi Lowe**
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 (fundraisers, 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 2021 amid the pandemic the Mission Team members were hard at work through the committees they represented. **John Muirhead** became chair. Amateur Preachers continued its work and began working with a new group of preachers who were serving Windsor Savoy Retirement community in a 30 min. preaching and prayer service on Sunday morning. The van was not used but was maintained during this time.



Participants for this year's CROP Walk braved rainy conditions.

Amateur Preachers

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD

J.MUIRHEAD@COMCAST.NET

Amateur Preachers serve churches whose pastors are away for vacation, or other forms of leave by leading their Worship services.

As we prepared for the 2021 year of service we held a "training" meeting with **Pastors Matt and Rachel Matthews** and with **Lay Pastor Judi Geislinger**. A number of helpful

hints, resources and planning tips were shared.

Requests for our assistance in 2021 saw a return to providing this service as the COVID eased. We did not provide the service in 2020.

We did provide service to a number of churches including Arcola, Ashmore, Danville, Hoopeston, Paxton and Piper City. We provide an "Amateur Preacher" to give the sermon and lead worship services. In some of these visits we also provided our own liturgist.

In June of 2021 we joined with our Pastoral staff in providing a 10:15 service at the Windsor of Savoy. In all, 4 Amateur Preachers served 6 different churches a total of 7 times and the Windsor of Savoy on 7 Sundays or once per month. We would like to increase our number of Amateur Preachers for the coming year. Perhaps you have been thinking of a message you would like to share? You may also consider serving as a liturgist for an Amateur Preacher as a way of being introduced to this mission of our church. Please feel free to talk with one of the Pastors or contact **John Muirhead** (j.muirhead@comcast.net or cell phone 217.840-7768) to discuss Amateur Preachers.

Benevolence Report

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS, MISSION COORDINATOR
RACHEL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The Benevolence Committee was formed in 2014 to act on financial requests to the church for emergency assistance. Benevolence Committee members for 2021 include **Sandy Carr**, **Mike Havey**, **Matt Matthews**, **Rachel Matthews** and **Naomi Rempe**.

Mike Havey has moved off of the committee to be replaced in January 2022.

The fund 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 we had three initial requests, two of which did not qualify for this fund and one of which did not continue with the application. Of the two who did not qualify after filling out the application, one request did qualify under Covid relief and was helped in this manner. The account currently has \$2399. There were other requests made that were helped through the pastor's discretionary fund, a different account. 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

I could almost submit last year's report. We were still following pandemic protocols and were unable to visit our agencies as much as we would have liked. Despite the

difficulties our agencies were still able to help local residents. We had one new endeavor...a short course in self-awareness and personal growth with a group of girls, similar to DREAM.

The Raindrop project this year was SAFE House. We have had a long relationship with this program. Our funds enabled them to supplement their "self-help" library and add services to the resident's physical well-being. Our Mission Coordinator, **Rev. Dr. Rachel Matthews**, taught 20 additional classes there.



Rachel Matthews and Lola Ruthsmandorfer delivered Angel Tree presents to Kemmerer Village in December.

Kemmerer Village was our Angel Tree choice in 2021. We were able to make Christmas a bit brighter for ten children there. A special "thank-you" to all of you who shopped for gifts or contributed toward Camp Carew scholarships for them.

I am closing with a plea to you "mission-minded" members in our congregation. Please speak to a member of the nominating committee or Rachel and express your interest in serving the community.

Thank you.



Cuba Partners

BY BOB KIRBY, MODERATOR

RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

¹³ *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

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 relationship renewed every three years. 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 67 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 Cuba Steering Committee meets monthly and reports to session through Mission Team and also has a seat on the World Mission Committee.

At an international level, our congregation is a member of the Presbyterian Church USA Cuba Partners Network (CPN). This group works closely with the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba, World Mission and mission coworkers to stand with 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 which also has a sister relationship at Luyanó. We share responsibilities for vacation bible school.

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, 2018 and 2021. We have completed thirteen trips, including two trips to support Vacation Bible School, a youth focused trip and several smaller trips to honor celebrations of our Cuban congregation. We hosted Cubans in Champaign on eight occasions.

2021

A continuing pandemic, travel restrictions and economic collapse in Cuba were all factors in the work of the Cuba Steering Committee. We maintained contact through Meta, WhatsApp and Zoom.

We Collaborated with the PC-USA Cuba Partners Network to raise funds for the Cuban church and to send supplies of food and medicine. We supported the work of the seminary in Matanzas and the national camp and conference center near Santa Clara. We began recharging the phones of **Pastor Daniel Izquierdo** and wife **Anaitza** each month. As much of their work is now done distantly, phone contact has become an essential tool for their ministry.

The Annual Cuba Forum and Annual Cuba Partners Meeting on May 1 and May 2 included a keynote presentation of Cuban history, short presentations from Cuba partners in San Antonio

and Austin Texas and a moving collection of Cuban music and photos from past visits to the island. Cuba Steering Committee members were elected.

Both of our sessions signed an updated partnership agreement on September 14.

The annual Cuba Partners Network Meetings on September 24 and 25 included presentations by Cuban and U.S. leaders on life and ministry in our respective countries.

We celebrated our congregational partnership at worship services on May 2 and November 14.

Moving Forward

We will continue to 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 Cubans. We desire to learn and respond in a manner that is practical and sensitive to the evolving conditions. We aim to maintain 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, practical expressions of confidence in God's goodness.

Champaign First Cuba Steering Committee

Dave Bauer, Mary Lou Bauer, Miriam Chenault, Tracy Dace, Bob Kirby (moderator), **Claudia Kirby** (secretary), **Sherry Marble** (treasurer), **Rachel Matthews** (staff)



Environmental (Green Team)

BY COLETTA ACKERMANN, MODERATOR

COLETTA.ACKERMANN@GMAIL.COM

Committee Members

Clemmie Ackermann, Dave Bauer, Nancy Broumbaugh, Tanya Deckert, Ron Deering, Barb Fuller-Curry, Claudia Kirby, Sam Laufenberg, Rachel Matthews, Liz Miley, Pat Phillips, Ginny Waaler, Kathy Schoeffman

Committee Meetings

Meeting dates and times are monthly (except for August and December) on the third Tuesday of the month from 3:30 – 4:30 PM. The committee has met primarily via Zoom or had hybrid Zoom and in person meetings.

Committee Purpose

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

Budget: \$250

On-Going Activities

- Adopt-a-Highway
- Earth Day Celebration
- Earth Care Congregation Recertification
- Education
- Bulletin Boards
- Gardens – Peace Garden and Pollinator Gardens planted and maintained
- Advocacy
- Styrofoam Collection & Recycling
- Eyeglass and Cases Collection & Recycling
- Battery Collection & Recycling
- Plastic Medicine Bottle Collection
- Communicating environmentally focused community activities to the congregation.

New Activities and Initiatives

- Attended Faith in Place Green Team virtual kick-off celebration
- Water cooler and bottle filler installed in the education building and funds donated for a second one for the main church building. Recyclable paper cups made available.
- LED lights installed in the chapel
- LED lights installed in all the church outdoor security lights
- Attended 2 webinars offered by LIT consulting. As a result of the webinar, a church work group formed has been formed to review options for new heating and cooling system for the church buildings.
- Met with another area Green Team to tour their new environmentally friendly landscaping done with native plants including a grove of oak trees.
- Collecting Styrofoam weekly on Sundays along with quarterly Styrofoam drop-off events
- Sponsored speaker from Environmental Defense Fund in a hybrid invitation open to church and community members
- Sponsored a webinar from Faith

in Place called
“Sustainable Celebrations”

- \$250 donated to Faith in Place from the Green Team budget
- Team member attended virtual Advocacy Day sponsored by Faith in Place

Goals for 2022

- Continue to replace LED lights
- Install 2nd water cooler/bottle filler as supplies allow
- Sponsor a movie night and open it to church and community
- Connect with other church environmental teams – host a “meet and greet” as allowed by CDC guidelines
- Highlight the Environmental Stewardship Committee and their work within the congregation
- Increase congregational participation in environmental activities

English as a Second Language (ESL)

BY VAL SMITH, DIRECTOR

VAL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Volunteer/Committee Activity

Pivoting is a word that has taken on new meaning during the coronavirus pandemic and it has certainly been true for the First Pres ESL Program. This year the classes continued on zoom. Students and staff said goodbye to **Director Jeanette Pyne** at a reception and Christmas party in December. The new director, **Val Smith** assumed responsibilities in November.

The First Pres ESL Program continues to thrive due to the hard work and dedication of the seven online and six in person volunteers. The volunteers provide English instruction to immigrants, refugees, and international

visitors. Tutors consistently model friendship, hospitality, openness, patience, enthusiasm, and flexibility.

Communication with tutors includes email updates, meeting individually in person or on zoom, collaboration documents, and monthly curriculum folders for instruction. During the transition, Google Classroom was added as a space for online resources, announcements, training, and attendance sheets.

2021 Highlights/ Accomplishments

The ESL Program continued concurrent classes online in 2021 using several Zoom accounts. Jeanette taught an online evening class for English learners who work during the day, especially in the Spanish-speaking community. In response to a request from our Congolese congregants, a late afternoon was started. During November and December, Val contacted students on the 2020 waiting list and added interested students to the January 2022 classes. New students were also assigned.

Jeanette continued cataloging resources in the ESL Program Library. There are over 500 different books available for classroom use or teacher training at the church. The online catalog for hosting this library is liblib.com. To make it easier to organize, find and return the books, there is a unique library call system for all the materials, workbooks, textbooks, resources, and equipment. Several people from the church and the community donated ESL materials at the end of 2021. Since online teaching will continue in the future, the purchase of an online core text series is being explored.

Training of volunteer tutors was provided throughout the year. Val visited all the classes in November and was impressed with the quality of lessons provided to the students. Each tutor differentiates their instruction to meet the needs of the students from a variety of backgrounds. The tutors requested more online teaching resources which have been provided.

To maintain communication with First Presbyterian Church of Champaign,



New Director Val Smith hosted a farewell reception for retiring Director Jeanette Pyne in December.

monthly updates about the ESL Program were provided in the church newsletters. The congregation gave a warm farewell to **Jeanette Pyne**. The new director, **Val Smith**, enjoyed attending the Women's Christmas Tea. Val and her husband have also joined in worship several times and have enjoyed talking with church members and some ESL students who attend the after service fellowship time and the Easy English Fellowship class on zoom. Val hopes to meet and share with more congregational groups in the future. Students of all levels participated in the online classes during 2021. While attendance for individual students is sometimes sporadic, most students attend regularly.

One student in particular from Brazil sends his thanks to the congregation for their ongoing support of this program. Students continue to come primarily from China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Congo, Turkey, Kakistan, and Spanish-speaking countries including but not limited to Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Vietnam. We are blessed that they have chosen to connect with us.

2021 Budget Expenditures

ESL Program expenditures for technology in December, 2021 included a new online program called IXL. This program can be utilized for instruction and individual practice. Registration for the TESOL (Teaching English Speakers of Other Languages) conference in March, 2022 was made for the new director, **Val Smith**. Information from the conference workshops on adult English language learning and online resources will benefit our program in both the new arena of online and 'in-person' instruction. Another event expenditure was the 'in-person' and

zoom good-bye party for **Jeanette Pyne** and a Christmas celebration on December 16, 2021. The remaining budget of \$718.26 was spent by the end of December, 2021.

2022 Goals

Looking ahead, we would like to:

- Continue to provide a supportive environment where students can learn English and feel part of a caring community.
- Continue to provide growth opportunities for volunteers who want to support English Language Learners.
- Transition to 'in-person' classes, while retaining online classes.
- Provide services that best meet the needs of the students.
- Purchase curriculum that includes online access
- Utilize technology in instruction to increase student computer literacy and English vocabulary as needed for online instruction.
- Continue recruiting and training tutors in online and in-person instruction as well as cross-cultural competencies.
- Continue to make the ESL Program accessible to the communities who need it most.
- Collaborate with community partners to meet the English language needs of students.
- Continue to communicate with FPCC on a regular basis.
- Restart 'in-person' events including shared events with FPCC.
- 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 4th Thursdays of the month. We continue to have three 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. This year we gained the opportunity to meet either in person or on Zoom with the help of the OWL used to connect people at home and in person. This has helped those who want or need to stay home due to health or weather stay connected with one another.

In February, we honored our church staff with a luncheon. This year's luncheon was a bit different than in the past as we couldn't all sit down together. A box lunch was provided for each staff member who was able to participate.



Presbyterian Women enjoyed a presentation from Julie Pryde at their Fall Gathering in 2021.

Our new leadership team was installed in June over Zoom, where we dedicated our Birthday Offering. We held a fall gathering on October 7, in person, with guest speaker **Julie Pryde** who talked about ways in which Covid has impacted different communities and how they have reacted. We also dedicated our least coin offering. On December 2nd, we held our annual Christmas Tea, in person, where each of our three circles provided a short performance around the theme of their circle name, and made our Thank Offering dedication. Much fun was had by all. We gathered our cookies and made deliveries to our friends who stay at home, bringing them a bit of Christmas cheer.

Covid did change things a bit, but we were still able to do most of our normal activities. Knifty Knitters donated 24 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. Helping Hands continued to call and deliver meals to members of the congregation. This year, we donated a water bottle filler/drinking fountain to the Education Building and promised a washing/drying machine combo for the new kitchen when it was ready to be installed.

A newsletter was published every month that we met.

Transportation Ministry

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD

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The Transportation Ministry of First Presbyterian Church Champaign saw an increase in service as we moved beyond the Covid year of 2020. As we began to offer in-person services and returned to in-person Sunday School we did have a smaller number of riders than in 2019 which was our last year of full service.

The van served us well during the annual Christmas Caroling evening this past December. We remain open to new ways of using the van to provide service to our Church and where possible to our larger community. Those who drive the 15 passenger van (driver plus 14 passengers) have passed a driving test in the van in order to meet our church's insurance requirements. If you might like to join our group of approved drivers please contact the church office and we will share with you the full requirements.

World Mission

BY SALLIE HUTTON, CO-MODERATOR

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World Mission is made up of individuals who are passionate about sharing God's love into the regional and world geographic areas. This includes supporting our PC(USA) mission coworkers in areas of the country that we have a personal interest in this congregation as well as other mission partners throughout the world including regional entities in Illinois, Indonesia, Cuba and the Caribbean, Mexico, Pakistan, Africa and areas identified by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Our purpose is "Sharing God's love and message of salvation with people in need

around the globe through support, empowerment, education and relationships." Members are involved in educating each other and the congregation on the work of these regional and global ministries. At the beginning of each year, we focus on where the money should go as we restudy our purpose. Money was set aside this year for unexpected events. Here is where that extra money went:

\$1,000 to Opportunity International

for India and the Covid Epidemic

\$1,000 to South Sudan for

Supporting and conducting a

Conference

\$1,500 to Mexican Border Relief

Thru Mission Co-Worker, Mark

Adams

\$500 to Haiti Hurricane relief

through Presbyterian Disaster

Assistance (PDA)

\$1,000 to Camp Carew

\$1,000 divided equally among the

Mission Co-Workers

World Mission Team: **Jim Berger, Marv Brombaugh, Steve Gritten, Audry Kukosama, Bob Kirby, Jeannie Snoeyink** - Co-Moderator **Ann Stout, Sallie Hutton, Rachel Matthews** .

WORSHIP

Worship

BY CAROL MILES, CHAIR

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This has been a year of transition in many areas and that includes worship. We hope we are transitioning back to what we used to call normal.

The year began with only the 9 AM pre-recorded worship service. In February we added a short (liturgy and sermon, no singing) in-person service following the 9 AM streamed service. In June the pre-recorded service was replaced by in-person worship at 9 AM with a streamed broadcast of that service. The services were always cognizant of the safety guidelines set up by the Covid committee.

Even with restrictions we continued with many established traditions. Our combined Good Friday service with the Methodist Church took place on-line. Cuba Sunday was shared with our sister church in Luyano. And we had wonderful candlelight services on Christmas Eve. The committee is working on reinstating French translation at the 9 AM service.

Gradually we are moving back to worship with hugs and handshakes.

The Gathering Worship

BY BILL STOUT, CHAIR

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP TEAM (CWT)

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Committee Purpose and Functioning.

The CWT is charged with developing strategies to maintain, execute, and grow the 11:15 worship service, aka



The Gathering Band under the leadership of Sam Haupt on drums.

The Gathering. Current committee members are **Pastor Matt, Sam Haupt** (our new worship leader), **Gary and Linda Peterson, Bill and Ann Stout** (more members desirable, a 2022 goal!).

We are pleased to report Sam has very effectively led the band since live worship was reinstituted, with spontaneous clapping occurring on occasion.

The CWT meets monthly, with our meetings consisting of planning the general structure of the service and sometimes discussing ways to help grow the Gathering and the larger church.

CWT's central mission includes maintaining and modifying The Gathering so that it provides a family friendly (there is a children's activity area in the Chapel) contemporary worship experience that is spiritually meaningful for those who prefer a more relaxed yet worshipful service. We plan to institute live streaming in 2022.

CWT has an important church growth purpose, noting that almost all of our local churches offer a "contemporary" service, with some of these churches growing.. CWT has a fixed budget to carry out its various functions, including a modest line item to pay outside musicians, as needed.

Distinct elements of the Gathering service.

We provide Communion every Sunday, provide an extended prayer time where those present can offer prayers of concerns and joys, have minimal liturgy, and the band leads us in song (a mixture of contemporary worship songs and traditional hymns sung up-tempo). Sometimes Sam brings his own band music to the Gathering. We continue to work on the general structure of our worship service.

We look forward to 2022!



Several of our members shared their musical talents at a Caroling Party at the Windsor of Savoy in December.

Traditional Music

BY JOE GRANT, CONDUCTOR/DIRECTOR

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Despite our best efforts, the pandemic continues. From January through May of 2021, the paid quartet plus occasional soloists and **Brendan Barker** met weekly to rehearse then record a month's worth of anthems that were edited into the spoken portions of each Sunday's service. Without Pastor Eric, Robert, Sam and the rest of the tech personnel we couldn't have done it as safely as we did.

As vaccinations became available and the volunteer members of the choir said that they were ready to meet, we started with a simple sing-along on Wednesday, June 2. We sang through several familiar anthems, laughed, cried and cautiously bumped elbows and were blessed to be together once again. For the rest of June we sang and carefully began to rehearse music to be used in a live service.

On Sunday, June 20 we had our first in-person service with the quartet singing. By July 4, the rest of the volunteer members sang with the quartet during the in-person service

for the first time. This continued through July, stopped for our annual August recess, then resumed with our first rehearsal on September 1. With the start of the new semester we had three new members of the paid quartet. They include: **Alejandra Sandoval**, alto; **Stephen Burdsall**, bass; **Jason Pandelidis**, tenor; and returning from Texas, **Jamille Brewster**, soprano. **Brendan Barker** continued his outstanding work as organist.

One other addition to the music staff was **Elizabeth (Libby) Sternhagen** as bell director. She is a very experienced player but had not led a group before. This has not been a detriment and the group has played in regular services as well as our Christmas Music Sunday on Dec. 12.

A search was also made for a director for the Children's Music position which functions as part of the CYF program. While two interviews were conducted neither person was able to fill the position. Unvaccinated youngsters began the fall semester in Sunday School held in the park but have not been singing in "choir" at this point.

Following the passing of a much beloved member of the choir, **Robert Twardock**, the music program received a generous donation of \$25,000 from **David and Kathy Twardock**. These funds will be used to support the program in our efforts to enhance worship through high quality music performances.

With the rise of the Omicron variant, we are now (early January) pausing choir rehearsal once again. Our hope is that this will be a short delay before we can begin to rehearse and appear in worship once again.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Annual Congregational Meeting First Presbyterian Church, Champaign IL Sunday, February 14, 2021 10 AM

Quorum was met.

Mark Schoeffmann gave brief summary of budget.

Pastor Matt Matthew's terms of call were approved.

Pastor Eric Corbin's terms of call were approved.

Motion: To propose a 2% bonus based on salary for both Pastors Matt Matthews and Eric Corbin. Motion carried.

Entertained motion to adjourn meeting. Motion carried.

Pastor Eric Corbin closed in prayer.

Meeting ended at 10:52 am.

Celeste Kim
Clerk of Session

Congregational Meeting First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois June 20, 2017

Pastor Matt Matthews opened the meeting at 9:48 a.m. and stated that the meeting had been called for the purpose of concurring with Rev. Eric Corbin's desire to dissolve his pastoral ties with First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois, in order that he may receive and accept the call of First Presbyterian Church of Woodstock, Illinois, to be effective July 31, 2021 (with his last day in the office being July 11, 2021).

Pastor Matthews led the congregation in a brief opening prayer for the congregation and for the Corbin Family.

Pastor Matthews indicated that Eric Stickels had agreed to serve as secretary for the meeting. Hearing no objection, Pastor Matthews indicated that Eric Stickels will do so.

Pastor Matthews indicated that he would entertain a motion to concur with Rev. Corbin's desire to dissolve his pastoral ties with First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. It was so moved and the motion was seconded. Pastor Matthews asked if there was discussion of the motion before the congregation voted. Hearing no call for discussion, Pastor Matthews asked the congregation if it was ready to vote on the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Pastor Matthews then indicated to Rev. Corbin that he goes with the blessing and gratitude of this congregation.

Pastor Matthews then led the congregation in a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Eric Stickels
Secretary pro-tem