

Annual Report 2023



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

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FROM YOUR PASTORS

Looking Back on 2023

BY MATT MATTHEWS, PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF

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Dear Friends,

This Congregational Meeting packet you are holding shares some snapshots of your church. Taken together, these brief reports are a collage of who we are.

Sort of.

No words or snap shots capture the full picture.

The woman who sits alone and finds her spiritual center each week during **Sora Shepard's** ethereal prelude doesn't appear in these pages. Nor does the joy many of us feel when we walk through the doors and begin rubbing elbows with old friends. The man who lives close to the streets drops in often on Sundays and a few other days during the week when there's a crowd; for him, we have the best coffee in town. Maybe it's not the free coffee that attracts him, but that he feels safe here. The kid who grew up here flying up and down in dumbwaiter from the Mae Chapin parlor to the old kitchen is sixty now. When he closes his eyes in worship, he sees the living and the long-dead and feels embraced by that populous Communion of Saints. One fella keeps getting his mind blown by all that he's learning from people in this church; he grew up believing God was exceptionally angry, stalking around in heaven looking for sinners on earth to punish. Sinners like him. That's not the God he experiences here, though he's

still a little wary, still guarded. He'll probably never take off all his armor. But he can breathe in this church, and he enjoys the nurture he gives to and receives from you. It's a holy give-and-take. There's the boy who snags five, sugary doughnut holes every Sunday; there's more to this sweet place than his young mind can yet articulate. But he loves it here.

God's grace keeps showing up. God's grace is a little like your old auntie Esmerelda who always ducks out of family photos. You see her only sideways and at a blur in the scrapbook Polaroids, never front and center, always in motion doing something for somebody. Nonetheless, God's grace is here, blurring every snapshot.

None of these stories of God's grace appear front and center in these pages, per se. But, you'll notice, these pages point beyond themselves to God's work. If you're able to read between the lines, that is what you'll discover. Every single line of the budget somehow supports God's ministry here. Every committee report has something to do with sustaining and extending God's holy welcome that envelops us here.

Taken together, these brief reports are a collage of who we are and what we strive, by God's grace, to be and to become. We aren't perfect, and we haven't arrived. We only see dimly, as if through some antique mirror. But God's sees clearly, which is why—as we make this journey—our constant prayer is, “Holy God, guide our steps.”

Those of you with eyes to see, look.

THANK YOU so much for all you are and do here at First Pres. May God continue to use us all in a powerful way to serve and love our neighbor.

Here are some personal highlights:

- Rachel and I attended dinners and receptions galore to celebrate hellos, goodbyes, birthdays, and anniversaries, as well as some twenty funeral celebrations. It was a full year.

- Besides the ongoing choral music offered under the direction of Maestro **Joe Grant** and musician **Sora Shepard**, our church hosted several concerts in 2023. **David LaMotte** performed a Sunday matinee in April to a full house; his stories and songs hit home. We welcomed our old friend **Jean Rene Balekita** for a concert during our churchwide June brunch. **Gary Winder** performed a thrilling clarinet recital for us this fall. The **Uni High Madrigal Choir** under their (zany) director **Rick Murphy** performed at the Presbyterian Women's Gathering this winter, and Rick often fills in at the piano when Sora is away.

- I was blessed to be able to support the work of the Interfaith Alliance of Champaign County, and I'm on the Leader Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches. I assist in the box office from time to time at the Station Theatre. I do Spiritual Direction with a local pastor/spiritual director. I thoroughly enjoy leading conversations at our weekly Bible study on Thursdays at the Windsor

of Savoy. (I preach there, roughly, quarterly). I've caught recent lectures at the Art Club of Chicago (Malcolm Guite [poetry] & Brian McLaren [alternative orthodoxy & Christian futures]) sponsored by the Christian Century magazine. **Tom Ulen** and I led a church trip to watch the Cubs late in their season when we still held out hope for post season play. I drove a church van-load to Kemmerer Village where **Jean Rene** did a concert for the residents, after which we had lunch and took a tour. Rachel and I led an 8-week Covenant Bible Study over the summer and into the fall.

●Our churchwide Second Sunday Brunch has been a lovely time for fellowship and food. We are getting to know and enjoy each other better, and, not unimportant, we are getting to know our brand new kitchen. I hope this new kitchen will continue to draw us together and weave us more meaningfully into the life of our community.

Ben and Faith. I took long walks around the city and spent meaningful hours at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine watching shadows roam through great swaths of stained glass light on the walls and ample floor. I walked the whole High Line (a small bucket list item) with my old friend Stephen Emick, after an afternoon at an Edward Hopper exhibit at the Whitney.



On the way home from New York, I stopped by Tybee Island and hiked with our eldest son, Joseph, the freezing beach looking for shells.

Alone, I climbed the Tybee Island Lighthouse and enjoyed the terrifying view at the top of 178 stair steps. This mini-sabbatical allowed me time to reset, think, and to see family and a

half-dozen old seminary friends.

This mini-sabbatical was an emotional, thin space. Rachel and I enjoyed a jaunt to see dear friends at St. Joseph, MI, my scarf-making brother-in-law died in Charlottesville, and Cousin Tom got sick in New Mexico; I flew out to

see him and watched him eat Jello in his recovery. He gave the first draft of my novella a close read and offered a full page of nearly illegible suggestions. (I've been shopping the rewritten novella to publishers off and on all year.)

The Tybee Island Lighthouse is not the only place that doesn't have an elevator.

●On September 3rd—Labor Day—our elevator to the sanctuary broke for the last time, trapping precious cargo (some of our people). The fire department arrived within nineteen-or-so long minutes and sprung our trapped friends.

The Worship Team had been planning for this eventuality for at least a full year. Our Grounds Committee had been ordering used parts for that increasingly unreliable elevator from E-bay for years. (It was installed in the 1960s.) Up to the week it broke, our No-Elevator plan was to continue conducting worship upstairs in the sanctuary for those who could trod up and down the 24-steps. Less mobile parishioners would worship in the Parlor where they would watch a direct feed on-screen. Both our more-mobile and our less-mobile saints would convene at the reception table in Westminster Hall for after-worship doughnuts and coffee.

We thought it was the perfect plan.

When it came time to enact this plan, however, a member of the worship committee observed that for the whole pandemic our flock had been separated. She asked did we really want to separate again while we were without an elevator? It's like a light went on in our collective brains. Our universal answer was "No, of course



●I used one month of my three-month sabbatical from mid-January to mid-February. I spent time in NYC with my son and his then fiancée, Faith. It was there I got well into the first draft of a novella; I enjoyed live music (NYC Wine Bar, Birdland) and theatre, and great meals with

not. Let's worship together as one body."

Westminster Hall has been our "sanctuary" ever since. Yes, we miss upstairs. Yes, we are eager to return. Yes, we can't wait to hear the organ, to see the sunlight streaming through those windows, and to sit on a real pew again. But we've made the best possible lemonade with the lemons we were dealt. (Was this a sneaky means of God's amazing grace? Some say we're a friendlier bunch when we sit more closely together.)



●**Rachel Matthews** led an April Cuba trip to Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Luyano, our sister church in Havana. (It was **Rachel, Brandi Lowe, Matt, Linda Sandquist** and **Sarah Laufenberg**.) These trips continue to break and remake my heart. I'm so grateful for these Cuban friends who pray with and for us, dance with us, and feed us. We should all be glad that God calls us to support their amazing ministry in Cuba. (I'm grateful for the work of our World Mission Team that keeps our various international connections strong.)

●I've continued my work as President of the DREAM Board of Directors. I often feel I'm not contributing much, but I do help keep certain necessary wheels turning. We recently completed a nearly year-long strategic plan, for example. Tracy Dace, our founder, is a visionary prophet, and keeping up with him remains impossible. Our church hosted two Wednesday "Youth Clubs" with a few dozen middle school DREAMers. These test-run dinners have emboldened us to try them weekly this semester. (Thank you for volunteering).

●Rachel and I traveled some this year. We were able to write and preach a sermon for four voices at the St. Giles Presbyterian Church fiftieth anniversary Sunday in March. It was great seeing old friends, including my revered disc-golf cohort; we fit in an early morning round, and guess who won? We attended the Festival of Homiletics in Minneapolis in May staying with my childhood friend **Bret Godfrey** and his wife (and happy dogs). In July, we met cousins and family at Pawley's Island hitting Montreat on the long drive home; it was great seeing all our sons and reconnecting with Cousin Dave's family. In August we completed the second and final stage of "Transitional Ministry" training at Montreat Conference Center. In September, we attended our middle son, Ben's, wedding in Charlotte; I wore seersucker, danced to the jazz band, and reluctantly played a poolside concert with brother-in-law, Alan. It was a blast. We spent Thanksgiving in Atlanta with Ben, Faith, and family; we toured the Atlanta Botanical Garden, played disc golf adjacent to the local expressway jammed with screaming traffic, explored downtown Decatur, and ate too much food. At Christmas,

Joseph and John Mark, along with his girlfriend Amy, came home to see us; we tirelessly worked two puzzles, cooked slow food, watched a movie, walked all over downtown, saw the lights at Allerton, and spent a night on the Navy Pier on the way to dropping John Mark and Amy off at O'Hare.

My and Rachel's local jaunts include luxuriating strolls through Allerton's peony gardens and the cherry blossoms at the Japan House; catching music at Krannert and the Rose Bowl; enjoying films, lectures (David Sedaris), music (Pat Metheny, Amy Grant), and theatre (Rent) at the Virginia Theatre; pizza at Antica Downtown; and long walks through our neighborhood. Rachel and I took a beginners' course in throwing clay at the Champaign Park District; we loved spending two-hours every Tuesday evening together with other young professionals working on the alter ego as artists.

●In August, we welcomed **Rev. Joe Lundy** as our associate pastor! It is a joy to have him on board. Thanks be to God for him.

●During this season, we also thanked **Rachel Matthews** for the work she did in the area of pastoral care and preaching during our interim without an associate pastor. We also thanked **Judi Geistlinger** for her work preaching and writing creative liturgies for us during this interim season. Thanks be to God for them.

●A frustrating bout of Covid sidelined me when **Bob and Kristie Rice**, our mission partners from South Sudan, came to visit our congregation in October. That afternoon, though barely done with my Covid quarantine, I rode my bike over to the Churchwide picnic at Hessel Park and

loaded my basket with homecooked food and slices of **Joe Lundy's** green cake. Who wants to miss a church picnic?

●Beginning in October, I started memorizing the nativity as recorded in Luke and Matthew's gospel. Memorization doesn't come easily for me, so I spoon-fed myself these great stories line by line. I spent the whole fall walking around town with (and talking to) Gabriel, Mary, Joseph, shepherds & angels, and other characters in Galilee and Judea. My heart grew in this process. I spent Advent Sundays preaching through those texts (and further integrating them into my brain), and on Christmas Eve I told the story as it had been etched upon my heart. This process coupled with our English Language Learners Program (ELL) hilarious Christmas party gave flight to the season. In some ways, this was my most significant Advent/Christmas experience as a parish pastor.

I'm forgetting a million things (the Ten Thousand Villages bi-annual Rug Sale, great meetings with our Session, hatching cool plans in committee meetings, working with our staff, convening area PCUSA ministers for monthly coffee and fellowship, and ...

In looking back, God's grace abounded in ways seen and unseen.

I look forward with hope.



Go Cubs, Go! Dick Arnould and Joe Lundy cheered on the Cubs at a game this past summer.

Thanks for the Warm Welcome!

BY JOE LUNDY, ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR DISCIPLESHIP
JOSEPH@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Dear Congregation,

As I sat down to write this report, I realized that I still haven't even been here for even half a year, yet I already feel like part of the community here. I first met you through your APNC in the Spring of last year, in a zoom interview from my office in Shreveport, LA. May was my first time to experience your people in person. I found that I loved the downtown in which you are situated and I got to learn even more of your stories, and more of the hopes and dreams that the nominating committee held for this community. Finally in early June I indicated my readiness to accept a call which eventually led to me meeting all of you in August. I have said (and written) many times that I have received an immense welcome from all of the congregation here. Over the

past five months I have gotten to learn more and more about this place and people.

Over the last five months I have gotten to go to many different cottage gatherings, attended the Cuba study, attended my first Cubs game, crocheted (admittedly the same scarf I am still working on) with the knifty knitters, and planned a Blue Christmas Service. It's been a packed five months, and I count myself as blessed to have spent them with this community. I

In this next year I look forward to my installation service, finding new ways for us to study together, finding new ways for us to serve together, and becoming even closer with this entire community. I think God has wonderful things in store for all of us!

ADMINISTRATION

Building & Grounds

BY TOM ULEN, CHAIR

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AND RITCHIE DRENNEN, FACILITY MANAGER

RITCHIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH



As always with a 150+ year old facility, the Building & Grounds Committee has been busy this past year. I would like to thank the members of the committee – **Bill Ackermann, Gary Burgett, Ritchie Drennen, Bruce Farthing, and Gary Bowen** – for their expertise, judgment, and the time they have spent in helping to keep the church not looking her age. For all of us on the committee, it is a labor of love.

We have had three big projects in 2023, two of them completed; one of them on-going. The first completed project was the upgrading of the electrical service to the two buildings. We were at maximum capacity and before we added anything new – such as the new alarm systems with panic buttons – we had to add service capacity. Davis Electric completed the job in the early Fall.

We have now added some additional outlets into the kitchen, both to help our volunteers prepare and serve food to the Second Sunday Brunch crowd and to the DREAAMers on Wednesday evenings but also to allow some commercial operations to make use of the kitchen with a donation when we are not using it.

The second major project we completed was Davis-Houk Mechanical's installation of the new heating system for the sanctuary building. As you may remember, we had an ancient boiler system (the boilers were actually in the Christian Ed Building) that generated steam heat for both buildings. The steam heated the sanctuary building by traveling through pipes under Doxology Lane and then being distributed throughout the main building to the radiators in Centennial Hall, Westminster Hall, and the Sanctuary upstairs.

It was a tremendously inefficient system – so much so that church organizations around the country that advised congregations on energy matters used our system as an example of what not to do. The system was 40 percent efficient. That means that for every dollar's worth of natural gas that we purchased to heat the water in the boilers, we got 40 cents' worth of heating.

Our annual natural gas costs were between \$35,000 and \$40,000. The new system resides in two boilers behind the kitchen behind Centennial Hall; each boiler is about the size of a small refrigerator. They also use natural gas, but these boilers are 95 percent efficient. We'll obviously save

a lot of money just from that fact. But moreover, we'll save even more from the fact that, unlike the old system, which heated all of the sanctuary building at once, the new system can be used to heat the individual rooms or halls in the sanctuary building. So, if there is a meeting in Centennial Hall but the rest of the sanctuary building is not being used, we only have to heat that space, not the entire building.

Ameren gave us a generous grant to install this more efficient system, and our hope and expectation is that we may save between \$15,000 and \$20,000 on natural gas costs because of the new system.

Our other big project of last and this year is the installation of a new elevator. You will recall that the old elevator stopped working early last fall after trapping two delightful and brave regular visitors (now new members). The Church decided that we could not afford to have that happen again; so, we simply shut down the elevator and moved the Sunday service to Westminster Hall.

In the meantime, we talked with Koné Elevators about moving forward on a new elevator. They sent a demolition crew to the church in early November, and the old elevator was removed by mid-November. Our task then was to configure the new elevator and hoistway and to make sure that the new set-up would comply with all the relevant regulations promulgated and enforced by the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

The biggest concern in that regard was whether the pit underneath the

cab was the regulation depth of five feet (60 inches). The pit for the old elevator was only 42 inches deep – first, because that was all that was necessary when the old elevator was installed in 1960, and second, because there was some fear that digging a deeper pit might compromise the foundation of the bell tower.

We are still not sure of how deep we can dig the pit, but **Gary Burgett**, who is serving as our consultant on the elevator project, is talking with a local structural engineering firm about removing the concrete slab at the bottom of the old pit to see how far down we can dig the new pit. If we cannot reach the full 60 inches, we will have to apply to the Office of the State Fire Marshal for a variance. We're confident that that will be granted.

Gary and his business partner, **Kim Smith**, have worked up some new drawings of the new elevator and its hoistway. We will share those drawings with representatives from Koné. Our hope is that we'll all agree on next steps and can proceed to seeking bids on constructing the new hoistway and ordering and installing the new cab and traction system.

We will keep you posted on the elevator project and other improvements that are underway. The facilities staff remains the same able and highly valued individuals.

Ritchie Drennen continues as our Facilities Manager. **Martice Chapple** serves as Ritchie's right-hand man. **Fred Foster** continues to work at the church many nights of the week.

Session Approved Budget for 2024

Revenues

	23 Budget	23 Actual	2024 Budget
Pledges	\$750,000	\$749,800	\$710,000
Plate	88,000	73,500	75,000
Cannon Trust	70,000	71,000	75,000
Restricted Funds	14,750	14,750	10,750
Other	24,990	15,200	26,390
Total Revenues	\$947,740	\$924,440	\$897,140

Expenses

Clergy	\$211,844	\$193,350	\$252,002
GA Per Capita	26,000	24,520	25,000
Staff Misc	5,900	4,384	5,700
Music	70,872	60,841	64,472
Worship	45,325	37,937	15,540
Mission	130,193	125,590	113,392
Children/Youth	37,785	9,808	13,600
Adult Education	1,250	346	800
Office (Administration)	210,363	214,420	208,100
Building and Grounds	242,840	294,563	246,900
Congregational Care	400	0	200
Hospitality/Nurture	9,860	5,347	7,700
Total Expenses	\$992,632	\$971,105	\$956,406
Revenue - Expenses	(\$44,892)	(\$46,665)	(\$59,266)

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, CHAIR FINANCE
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Operating Funds

In 2023, total revenues for the operating fund were \$924,440 which was about 97.54% of the budgeted amount. This was \$101,008 less than 2022. Revenue for 2023 included \$823,257 in contributions compared to \$900,412 in 2022. Total expenses for 2023 were \$971,105 which was 97.83% of the budgeted amount and \$15,613 less than 2022. The net result was a deficit of \$46,665 at the end of the year. This compared to a positive balance of \$38,730 last year. Contributions in 2023 met about 85% of the expenses for the year with other funds covering the remaining amount. In addition to contributions in pledges and plate offerings, we received \$71,239 from the Cannon fund which is \$16,669 less than 2022.

Other contributions

In addition to generous giving in pledges and plate contributions, our congregation gave a total of \$103,919 in non-operating gifts and pass-through accounts. The non-operating gifts included \$21,460 in memorial gifts, \$4,000 for local missions and \$43,000 for the elevator fund. The pass-through accounts included \$4,430 for the Raindrop project and \$8772 for the Advent offering, OGHS, and the Christmas offering. \$1600 was donated to Safe House and \$3325 to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. \$1250 was designated for missions. In addition to this, we have at least fourteen members supporting students at the Sangla Hill school in Pakistan and many others supporting our sister church in Luyano, Cuba. This is just a small sample of how far our pledges and donations go to support people and communities at home and around the world. By investing

your time, talent, and treasure in First Presbyterian Church, you help to nurture the communion of saints who serve neighbors near and far. God brings hope to the world in part through your generosity.

Endowment/Strategic Reserves

Total invested funds at the end of the year were \$2,449,734 compared to \$2,754,842 at the end of 2022. The invested funds include \$1,644,445 in Session designated funds.

2024 Budget

For 2024, projected total revenues are \$897,140. Pledges of \$710,000 are anticipated for 2024 which is 5.3% less than 2023. Expenses are budgeted at \$956,406 which is within \$15,000 of the expenses for 2023. This results in a projected deficit of \$59,266 compared to a budgeted deficit of \$44,892 in 2023.

The finance team is hopeful that there will be significant energy savings with the new boiler system and that that will be reflected in the expenses of the church. We will also need to address the fact that there were no salary increases for 2024 and that there were some cuts to the Mission budget. However, the current budget deficits cannot be sustained, and this will eventually have to be addressed. However, with our generous congregation and God's guidance, we have hope that our yearly budget deficits will be covered.

Overall Financial Health

This is difficult to predict due to the fluctuating stock market and the fact that the church has several major projects in the coming years including a new elevator for the sanctuary building and possibly a new roof for that building.

Capital Improvements

The church had one major project that was completed this past year. We now have a new boiler system for the sanctuary building. This project cost \$508,810 plus \$141,000 for electrical work. We used the remaining balance of approximately \$262,000 in the South Campus Reserves (from the original sale of the land to Copper Creek) to partially fund this project. The remaining costs were covered by Session Designated Funds. Luckily, we had a very good stock market year and with the generous contributions to the endowment in years past our Session Designated Funds continues with a healthy balance.

The next big project is the elevator which will cost around \$250,000.

Thank You

As **Dave Whitford** noted in the end of the year giving letter, our church family contributed more than \$1 million in 2023, a testament to your overwhelming commitment to do God's work. God has entrusted much to our care; in fact, all that 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. We are blessed to have a generous congregation and God brings hope to the world in part through your generosity. Thank you all and most of all, thanks be to a generous God!

Nominating Committee

BY MARY NICHOLAS, CHAIR

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The Office Nominating Committee worked together to find church members to serve for the next term.

The committee included **Cathy Emanuel, Beth Hutchens, Sallie Hutton, Claudia Kirby, John Pickering, Vern Snoeyink** and **Mary Nicholas**.

We are very pleased to welcome the church members who have agreed to serve in the important positions of Elder, Congregational Care Deacon and Community Mission Deacon.

Session Elders

The Elder whose term ended in 2023 is **Steve Tock**. Steve has served with integrity, and we thank him for his commitment and dedication.

Carol Ann Green is new
John Muirhead will serve another term on a year-to-year basis
Tom Ulen will serve another term
Mary Gritten will serve another term
Carol Miles will serve another term

Congregational Care Deacons
Pam Knox will serve another term
Marge Olson will serve another term
Skip Pickering is new

Community Mission Deacons
Sallie Hutton is new
Kathy Schoeffmann will serve another term

Officer Nominating Committee

The members whose terms ended in 2023 are: **Beth Hutchens, Skip Pickering** and **Vern Snoeyink**

We want to thank them for their commitment and dedication. They have all served with integrity.

Mary Lou Bauer is new

Laurie Dey is new

Pat Tarr is new

I want to thank the members of the Officer Nominating Committee for their hard work and diligence in finding church members willing to serve. And congratulations to all who have accepted this calling to serve.

Church Officers

2026

2025

2024

Session Elders Moderator: Matt Matthews

Carol Ann Green

Mary Gritten

Carol Miles

Tom Ulen

Ken Chapman

Diane Mortensen

Trenna Thomas

Mary Jane Kelley

John Muirhead

Mary Nicholas

Ann Webbink

Jan Wittler

Community Mission Deacons

Sallie Hutton

Kathy Schoeffmann

Moderator: Leslie Thomas

Holly Nordheden

Lola Ruthmansdorfer

Leslie Thomas

Jane Alsberg

Grace Ashenfelter

Congregational Care Deacons

Pam Knox

Marge Olson

Skip Pickering

Moderator: Linda Sandquist

Gary Bowen

Mary Jane Kelley

Linda Sandquist

Annilee Shaul

Amy Born

Nancy MacGregor

Bill & Sherry Marble

Eric & Cathy Stickels

Tom & Julia Ulen

Human Relations

BY MARY NICHOLAS, CHAIR

NICHOLAS.MARYM@GMAIL.COM

This year the FPCC staff has been working tirelessly to keep our ministries running smoothly. Many are eager to attend services in person, while others prefer to worship from home. The staff has maintained high standards so that FPCC can continue ministering to God's people. During the last few months, we have faced a broken elevator, which has required us to worship together in Westminster Hall. Although we miss worshipping in the sanctuary, there is a special charm in spending time together and sharing this adventure with our fellow church members.

Your Human Relations Team has continued to focus on providing support and encouragement to the church employees. Some things HR is responsible for include (but not limited to) overseeing the hiring process when necessary, evaluating the policy manual and making changes when needed. This may also include determining if there are needs or improvements that need to be made to help the employees perform their duties. Our goal is to offer a positive and supportive work environment and show our appreciation to the employees.

We appreciate the people who serve on the Human Relations Committee. They cheerfully and thoughtfully invest their time and energy into ensuring that things are working smoothly for our staff. They are: **Jeannie Snoeyink, David Whitford, Ann Stout** and **Mary Nicholas**. We are looking forward to welcoming **Cathy Emanuel**, our newest committee member in January, 2024.

We would like to say a special thank you to **Ann Stout**. She served as Human Relations Committee Chair for many years. Her insight and

knowledge provided guidance and stability to the church, staff, and the Session. This was in addition to her serving on other committees in the church. She and her husband, Bill have relocated to Tennessee. We wish them well as they enjoy many new opportunities.

Per the terms of his call, Pastor Matt was eligible for a three-month sabbatical after serving four years. The Session approved a mini-sabbatical for him for the period of January 23 to February 20, 2023. Two local sabbatical pastors, **Reverends Connie Bandy** and **Jean Oliver-Holder** were here while Pastor Matt was gone. They preached, met with staff and provided emergency leadership with our Covenant Pastor Rachel Matthews and Lay Pastor Judi Geistlinger. They each led a "Faith in the Real World" discussion sharing their faith story and how their faith shaped their life in a day-to-day way.

Val Smith, our ELL Director for several months retired in May so she could spend more time with her family. We appreciated her service and knew she would enjoy her time traveling and doing many things she looked forward to doing when she had more time. During this period **Linda Sims** stepped in to help keep everything running smoothly. We appreciate her willingness to help during this transition. In August we welcomed **Bonnie Ward** as the new Director of ELL. It was an exciting time for everyone involved. It was fun to get to know the students and watch their confidence grow as their English skills improved. I must also recognize the wonderful volunteers who made the ELL program the success that it is today. We are very lucky to have such dedicated people who are willing to give their time to this important mission.



On September 1, 2023, we welcomed **Associate Pastor Joseph Lundy**. He came to us from Shreveport, Louisiana and has brought with him a special excitement and passion for the ministry. We are so lucky to have him here at First Presbyterian Church. Please introduce yourself to Joe if you haven't already done so. He is a dedicated and faithful Christian who is committed to sharing the word of God.

On September 10, 2023, we recognized both **Covenant Pastor Rachel Matthews** and **Lay Pastor Judi Geistlinger** for their dedication and hard work during the time we were without an Associate Pastor. We appreciate all the extra effort they provided during that time. Officially, **Lay Pastor Judy Geistlinger** served until September 24, 2023, and is now serving various churches in the area. However, Judi will continue to worship with us and share her continuing commitment to the mission of First Presbyterian Church. **Pastor Rachel Matthews** will continue serving as Mission Coordinator and Parish Associate.

2023 Church Staff

Pastor:

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
 Joe LundyAssociate Pastor for Discipleship

Staff:

Martice Chapple..... Facility Assistant
 Ritchie DrennenFacility Manager
 Patty Farthing.....Office Assistant
 Fred Foster Evening Custodian
 Robert Ferrer Audio-visual Technician
 Marcia Franks..... Office Manager

Joe Grant..... Director of Music
 Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator
 Ann PetryAccounting
 Sora ShepardChurch Musician
 Libby Sternhagen Bell Choir Director
 Bonnie Ward.....English Language Learner Director

And finally, we want to recognize our Nursery School Coordinator and Nursery Workers who joined us in the Fall, 2023. **Hayden Cecil** is the Coordinator and **Goelle Biyenga, Tapeeka Chatman, and Jolina Mujinga** are the Nursery Workers.

We on the Human Relations Committee appreciate the opportunity to serve the First Presbyterian Church, the staff and the congregation. We would like to recognize each member of the Church Staff, as they are an asset and an integral part of making the Church run smoothly.



We look forward to returning to our beautiful Sanctuary with the sun streaming through the stain glass windows once the elevator is replaced.

CONNECT

Adult Spiritual Formation

BY KEN CHAPMAN, CHAIR
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During 2023 the Adult Spiritual Formation Committee led two book studies. For the Lenten season we went through a book by Adam Hamilton: "The Walk" - Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life which challenges us to follow Jesus more closely by developing better habits of prayer, worship, study, service, giving and sharing our faith.

For the Advent season, the book "Holy Disruption" - Discovering Advent in the Gospel of Mark by Tracy Daub taught us to appreciate the Incarnation not just in the birth of Jesus but in every aspect of his life, death and beyond.

During the summer, ASF helped organize a Covenant Bible Study group on Wednesday evenings, where we shared a meal and were led by **Matt and Rachel Matthews** through lessons from "Creating the Covenant".

During the Sunday School hour, we had: reports from our Cuba teams on January 15 and September 17, Faith in the Real World talks by **Sora Shepard, Rev. Connie Bandy, Rev. Jean Oliver-Holder, Libby Sternhagen, Vickie Garrett, Cynthia Heren, Dixie Jackson and Joe Lundy. Cindy Shepard** talked to us about her electric car and also about financial incentives to adopt solar power and energy efficient home improvements. We also had a visit with **Dave LaMotte**, a discussion of electric cars by **Jason**

and **Brandi Lowe, Kristi and Bob Rice** discussed their ministry in South Sudan, there was an Old Time Car Show and **Rev. Matt Matthews** gave us "An Introduction to Studying the Bible".

We look forwards to 2024 and pray that we can all have a closer walk with Jesus.

Easy English Fellowship

BY BOB KIRBY, MODERATOR
RWK3213@GMAIL.COM



Easy English Fellowship shared their gift of song during worship.

Easy English Fellowship is a group of Christian English language learners who gather each Sunday from 10-11 to worship, build community and improve English fluency. We improve our English language skills by reading, writing, speaking, and listening using scripture, song, prayer and discussion. United States holidays and culture are also highlighted.

We partner with Parkland College Project Read which provides

assessment of learner progress, tutor training and support along with optional community based opportunities for learning.

All our learners are recent immigrants to the United States, the majority from Central Africa. Most worship at First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. First Presbyterian Church provides space and duplicating services. We have four volunteer tutors, two of whom are Project Read certified and a University of Illinois graduate assistant. Several students are at sufficient levels of fluency to serve leadership roles.

Children, Youth, Family

BY MARY GRITTEN, CHAIR CYF
MARYHG3@SBCGLOBAL.NET

The **NURSERY** is fully staffed with four workers who work two at a time during worship services and the educational hour.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, using PCUSA material, is being offered for 1st thru 8th graders, lead by dedicated and caring volunteers **Noni Ledford, Mary Lou Bauer, Mary Gritten, Brandi Lowe, and Judy Hendrickson.**

Some other popular family activities that were formerly organized by the CYF paid staff were taken over by Nurture/Outreach.

Church staff has been incredibly helpful with advice and time this

year. Much thanks to **Rev Rachel Matthews** and to **Patty Farthing**. We now have the much anticipated and appreciated help of **Rev Joe Lundy**.

Congregational Care Deacons

BY LINDA SANDQUIST, MODERATOR
RLSAND2@COMCAST.NET

We began the year 2023 with eight individuals and four couples as Care Deacons. Due to personal or family illnesses or other obligations, several found it necessary to resign. The remaining deacons were: **Amy Born, Jean Brunson, Sue Fischer, Pam Knox, Mary Jane Kelley, Marge Olson** and **Linda Sandquist**. **Jean Brunson's** term has ended and **Sue Fischer** has now resigned. **Pam Knox** and **Marge Olson** have agreed to extend their service and **Skip Pickering** will come in as a new deacon.

Our clergy liaison has been **Pastor Rachel Matthews** until the arrival of our new associate **Pastor Joe Lundy**. We meet in Mae Chapin Parlor on the first Thursday of the month at 2:30 PM.

The duties of Care Deacons include visiting homebound congregants (monthly when possible), and assisting the pastors with serving communion quarterly to those who are no longer able to attend Sunday services. This is provided in their individual residences, care facilities or as a group at the Windsor of Savoy. The church remains connected to those members who reside too far away for in person visits by maintaining a US Mail ministry facilitated by **Amy Born**. Due to the shortage of quality skilled care

facilities in C-U and for care receivers moving to be closer to family, we have quite a few people being served by the mail ministry.

During the Christmas holidays, homemade cookies donated by the Presbyterian Women's Circles are delivered by the Care Deacons.

We thank God for equipping these Deacons with the spiritual gifts that provide compassionate care to the homebound members of our church family.

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

Nurture/Outreach Team

BY JAN WITTLER, CO-CHAIR
JANM58@GMAIL.COM

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" *Matthew 28:19*

Purpose

The purpose of this committee is to add more formally to the nurturing and evangelism work that members of this congregation do routinely every day.

Charge

The Nurture Committee focuses on fellowship, membership, welcome and hospitality within our walls and the Outreach Committee focuses on church growth and evangelism. These committees were combined this year.

Organization

Committee members met monthly and worked with others in the congregation who did not attend committee meetings but who had significant responsibility for services within the committee's charge.



All enjoyed an antique car show after worship in May.

Statement of Faith

"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *Galatians 5:14*

The committee reports directly to session. Members of the committee this year were **Jan Wittler** (chair), **Tom Gilmore**, **Bob Kirby**, **Gary Peterson**, **Linda Peterson** and staff of **Matt Matthews** and **Joe Lundy**, **Rachel Matthews**.

Activities

We believe all these activities were important responses to our call.

Managed Sunday morning hospitality table led by **Tom Gilmore**. Sunday morning greeters are led by **Virginia Waaler**.

Second Sunday Brunches led by **Jan Wittler**, **Carol Pearson**, **Peter Yau**, **Gary** and **Linda Peterson** with kitchen team.

Letter writing ministry for those with sorrows and joys and those incarcerated includes **Bob Kirby**, **Diane Mortensen**, **Jane Seiler** and **Jane Tock**. Session also writes yearly to those in the congregation for whom they have prayed. Those celebrating 85th birthdays receive a phone call from **Virginia Waaler**. Some small groups are active in writing.

Sponsored Friday Forum at University YMCA

Provided Wednesday afternoon Bible Club for DREAMers who attend after school program on our campus March 3 and December 6.

Collaborated with others in preparing Cuba Emphasis Sunday and DREAM Sundays

April 16

David LaMotte in Concert, Rotary World Peace Fellow in sanctuary-Refreshments



A couple of elves (aka Gary & Linda Peterson) joined the caroling at Windsor of Savoy.

May 21

Antique Car Show in the alley
June 7

Jean René Balekita in concert at Kemmerer Village

July 6-August 16

Covenant Bible Study meals
September 3

Pride Fest booth and parade participation
September 11

Worldwide Game Night in Welcoming America Week
October 1

Congregational Potluck Picnic at Hessel Park
October 29

Trunk or Treat. Coordinated with First United Methodist. **Marc Miller family**.
November 14

English Language Learners
Thanksgiving Dinner-coordinated with ELL.
December 17

Community Christmas Caroling and Hot Chocolate-coordinated with choirs

Plans for 2024.....

We will continue to have our 2nd Sunday Brunch in Centennial Hall.

We are planning regular DREAM Wednesday Afternoon Bible Club

Welcome America Week is 9/13 to 9/22

October 5th Pastor Joe would like to offer Pet Blessings at West Side Park.

October we will continue to have the Trunk or Treat.

ELL November Thanksgiving

December Christmas Caroling

Beginning January 2024 Nurture and Outreach will be separate committees.

Nurture Committee:

Carol Ann Green, **Gary** and **Linda Peterson**, **Mary Jane Kelley**, **Bob Kirby**, **Joe Lundy**, **Rachel Matthews**, **Matt Matthews**.

Outreach Committee:

Jan Wittler, **Bruce Rainey**, **Bob Kirby**, **Ginny Waaler**, **Joe Lundy**, **Matt Matthews**.

Members Who Joined the Church Triumphant

Jim Andrews
 Sandy Carr
 Chip Castelo
 Donald Clegg
 Esther Fay
 Carol Karch
 Beverly Kelton
 Gene Lamkin
 Bill Mitchell
 Margaret Parkinson
 Dorothy Pearson
 Marjorie Sodemann
 Sophia Van Arsdell
 Priscilla Visek
 Wanda Whitsitt

Membership Report

579

Total Members
as of December 31, 2023

1

Baptism

Henry Jason Lahorgue

8

Additions

Darrell & Marty Carlson
 Janice Cunningham
 Jack & Camille James
 Andrew Schwenk
 Elizabeth Sternhagen
 Pat Tarr

1

Wedding

Mia McDonald & Thomas
 McLaughlin were married by
 the Rev. Scott Keeble on
 December 31, 2023.

3

Certificate

25

Losses

7

Withdrawn

15

Deaths



Old friendships were nurtured.

SERVE

Mission Team

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS, COVENANT PASTOR FOR MISSION

RACHEL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH



We are a Matthew 25 congregation. We want to be in the world sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to the stranger, the thirsty, the hungry, the sick and the imprisoned. What we do in the world matters and we want to be a welcoming, generous and loving presence in our neighborhood and the world. In fact, we would love for the world to join us in our attempt at a mutual ministry of God's love to each other.

Therefore, First Presbyterian Church has a very intentional committee structure that includes Community Mission Deacons, World Mission Committee, Environmental Stewardship Committee, English Language Learners, the Cuba Leader Team, the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team, Amateur Preachers (which these days also includes our Prayer and Preaching service each Sunday at Windsor Savoy), and any missional activity that happens through Presbyterian

Women and our Children Youth and Families. The Mission Team, made up of leaders from all these groups, seeks to coordinate it all and report

what is happening to the session by our elder **John Muirhead** who moderates the Mission Team. Also, the Mission Team hears reports from the benevolence committee which is the way we care for people in crisis who have a significant relationship with our congregation. They administer the benevolence fund. Our benevolence committee is made up of **Matt**

Matthews, Rachel Matthews, Kathy Schoeffmann, Naomi Rempe and Kathryn Cole. In 2023 three benevolence requests were made with families who have a significant relationship to the church were made and a total of \$1981.15 was given from the Benevolence Fund.

All these groups have worked hard to write their own annual reports which follow so you will know just a little of what we (and you!) have done this year. Our community knows who we are. Our mission deacons have focused their energies locally through mission partners who feed the poor, help those struggling with substance use issues, seek asylum and a safe house over their head in this country, and more. They have raised money through the special congregational offerings Pentecost, Raindrop, Advent and Angel Tree) that have supported young people, racial ethnic groups, poor, and immigrant families. The World Mission Committee prayerfully

and financially supports education in Pakistan, our mission co-workers in African, the Caribbean, Mexico and Indonesia, theological education, young adults volunteers and our Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois. It seeks to support micro financing efforts in out of the way places and advocates for those struggling to be in relationship with one another across fearful divisions as well as serve the chaos on the border. They have conducted special denominational offerings through the One Great Hour of Sharing and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and the Joy Gift.

Friends, the work our Mission Team comes into contact with throughout the year is at times emotionally overwhelming. It is hard to hold all these ministries close to our hearts and not be affected. We invite any and all of you to find out more and join hearts with us and step into the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

This is the end of my fifth year as mission coordinator. I filled great shoes before me. I can only imagine what is ahead of us. This past year I also filled in gaps in our ministry as we searched for a new associate pastor. The pastoral care, worship and preaching tasks have been so fulfilling. They have reminded me of why I went into ministry when I was ordained in 1989. So, I am grateful I was able to step in during the interim. Now that **Rev. Joe Lundy** is with us, I will be going back to my original hours focusing on coordinating the mission work that you all do. Pray through the pages that follow for the words represent how we follow the steps Jesus walks and this year will bring challenges as all the years do! We need all of your support.

Amateur Preachers

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD

J.MUIRHEAD@COMCAST.NET

Amateur Preachers serve churches in our Presbytery whose pastors are away on vacation or other forms of leave by leading their church's worship services.

The following church members served as Amateur Preachers: **Betty Hollister, John Muirhead, Gary Peterson** and **Dave Whitford**.

We provided these services to a number of churches in our area including Ashmore, Danville, Hoopeston, Paris and Paxton on a total of 14 Sundays.

In 2023, we continued to join with our church ministerial staff in providing sermons to our friends at the Windsor of Savoy. Members of the First Pres team preached on each Sunday of the year.

The Amateur Preachers would like to invite all church members to consider joining us in our mission. Perhaps you have been thinking of a message you would like to share? You may also consider serving as 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 our pastors or a current member of Amateur Preachers listed above.

Community Mission Deacons

BY THE COMMUNITY MISSION DEACONS

Our mission deacons this year were **Jane Alsberg, Grace Ashenfelter, Holly Nordheden, Lola Ruthmansdorfer, and Kathy Schoeffmann** with **Jane Alsberg** acting as moderator. **Rachel**

Matthews staffed the committee. We were aided by **Ritchie Drennen** who helped with our connection to Canaan SAFEhouse as well as assisted in keeping the Free Pantry stocked.

In 2023 the Community Mission Deacons updated their mission agency assignments and partnered with the following agencies: Habitat for Humanity, CUatHome, DREAM, Refugee Center, Jesus is the Way Prison Ministry, SAFE House, and Salt & Light.

Due to a reduction of mission liaisons and a desire to give a greater impact to local agencies that we partner with, Courage Connection and Restoration Urban Ministry were dropped from budgeted money. This is in no way reflective of the good they do in the world. We still promote their work. We gave Restoration Urban Ministry money from the restricted funds at the end of the year to go toward their food pantry in order to support both the eradication of poverty and an end to structural racism.

The CMD affirmed and acknowledged that Presbyterian Women was giving cribs and layettes to Empty Tomb.

Following are highlights of CMD's mission work in 2023:

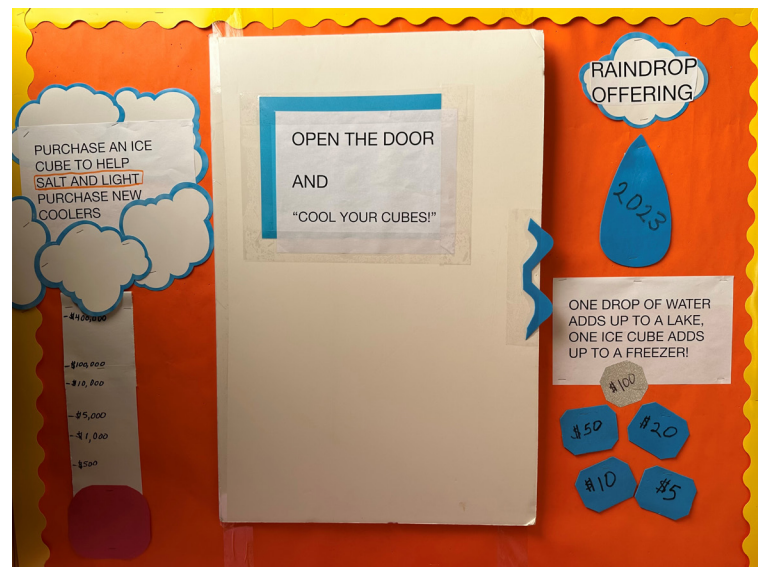
- Habitat for Humanity and Salt and Light were both beneficiaries of a large scale collection of used goods - both large items like furniture, appliances, lawn equipment, etc. plus smaller items such as clothing, electronics, tools, kitchen goods, etc.

This drive had a three-fold purpose:

1) To help generate funds by the sale of these donated items as in the restore of Habitat and the store for S&L.

2) To help struggling families by providing needed items that they could buy at a reduced cost.

3) To help our congregants by providing them an outlet to downsize and a helping hand to get their no-longer-needed items to the two charities. In effect, a win-win-win. The drive was successful and appreciated by both organizations.



- The raindrop offering this year benefited Salt & Light by raising funds to go to their much needed refrigeration improvement project. We were able to give them \$4,430.00 toward this huge project. We acknowledge and thank the congregation for their faithful giving.

- In September, **Erin Wason**, Young Lives director, and **Karen Decker**, board member of El Roi House, came to talk to us about the El Roi house. This is a non-profit organization designed to house teen mothers for one year, while also educating them in ways that can help them secure housing on their own when they leave. CMD gave them \$500.

●The Advent offering and the Angel Tree were combined this year to support the Refugee Center in their mission to get new refugees settled in Champaign Urbana. The Refugee Center does this by paying for their first month of rent and providing them with much needed items for setting up house. The Advent offering this year raised \$2,870. These funds will be used by the Refugee Center for their rent assistance. The Angel Tree received many needed items from the Center's "wish/needs list". Once again, much prayerful thanks to our congregation.

CMD welcomes two newly installed Deacons for 2024, **Kathy Schoeffmann**, (who renewed her three year term), and **Sally Hutton**.

Compassion, Peace & 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 second and fourth Mondays at 9:00 AM. Our time together includes prayer, Bible study, fellowship, education and action planning. We gather outside our regular meetings to learn from and engage our community. CPJMT is an open group welcoming all who are interested in joining regularly or on occasion.

CPJMT works with the leadership of the denomination in the PCUSA's Presbyterian Mission Agency Compassion Peace and Justice Ministry. We support First Presbyterian Church's work as a Matthew 25 congregation. Within our congregation, we report to Mission Team.

2023

We have two areas of focus: the Matthew 25 pillars of dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty. The first pillar includes radical welcome of God's

people of all ages, ethnicities, races, religions and gender identities.

Our learning leads to action. During 2023 we studied *Poverty by America* by Matthew Desmond, attended a seminar sponsored by Better Angels dealing with political instability, participated in meetings of the Champaign-Urbana Coalition on Reparations and an Allerton Park lecture-discussion on reparations. We hosted a session about the work of "Advocates for Aging". We coordinate with Adult Spiritual Formation in our education work.

We move from learning to action. Our principal mission partner is DREAM. We worked collaboratively with DREAM staff and with our Nurture/Outreach Committee to offer two Wednesday evening Youth Clubs for middle school boys who are in the after-school program on our campus. We sponsored a booth at Pride Fest and participated in the parade. With Outreach we sponsored the Friday Forum at University YMCA. We tried to stay aware of policies and procedures of our own congregation to assure we are faithful to our vision statement and our statement of faith.

Team: **Bill Marble** (treasurer), **Miriam Chenault**, **Kate Cole**, **Tracy Dace**, **Mary Gritten**, **Elizabeth Hewins**, **Bob Kirby** (moderator), **Claudia Kirby**, **Brandi Lowe** (scribe), **Rachel Matthews** (staff), **Pat Tarr**.



Cuba Partners

BY BOB KIRBY, MODERATOR
RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

A Church that Works in Unity for a New Heaven and a New Earth (Rev 2:1-5)

Champaign First Cuba Partners (Cuba Partners) includes all those who share in the covenant relationship between the people of First Presbyterian Church, Champaign and The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba at Luyanó (loo-ya-NO). 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. The partnership is to be a three-year commitment renewable at the end of its term after evaluation by both churches.
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 a part of the Body of Christ, can make a substantial contribution.
4. To explore various areas for joint

mission.

5. To partner with each other as sister congregations in developing joint ministries with other Presbyterian churches in the United States and Cuba to encourage ourselves and others to follow Jesus.

Organization

Our work is guided by a memo of understanding between our two sessions reviewed and signed every three years, which we call a “hermanamienta”. This describes our relationship not only as siblings in Christ but a relationship more like that of twins. Champaign Cuba Partners includes about 65 people who have completed a study of Cuba. Most have traveled to our sister church. A meeting of the Champaign Cuba Partners is held when needed but at least yearly at which time a business meeting and election of a Cuba Partners Leadership Team occurs combined with the Annual Cuba Forum. The Forum is an informational congregation-wide meeting.

The Cuba Partners Leadership Team adopted by-laws calling for election of a five to seven-member team which then elects three officers. The team meets monthly and reports to session through voting membership on both world mission (co-workers liaison) and mission team.

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 and mission co-workers to stand with Presbyterian entities in both the U.S.A. and Cuba.

Champaign First Cuba Partners also maintain an informal relationship with the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX which also has a covenant relationship at Luyanó.

History

Twelve congregants made our first trip to Cuba October 14-22, 2010 to explore the possibility of partnership. This resulted in a covenant (hermanamienta) agreement between the sessions of our two churches signed in 2012 and renewed in 2015, 2018 and 2021. We have completed fifteen 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.

2023

We collaborated with the nurture committee to organize a Cuba themed Sunday brunch which also served as our Annual Cuba Forum and a time for election of members to the team. Bylaws were amended to change the group name from Cuba Steering Committee (CSC) to the Cuba Partners Leadership Team (CPLT). The office of moderator-elect was discontinued and a “Scholarship Fund” to help support travel expenses for individuals was renamed “The Cuba Partners Travel Fund”. We gave input for two Cuba emphasis Sundays. A delegation from our congregation was invited by the consistorio (session) to visit Luyanó. A five-day

trip from April 20-24 included **Rachel Matthews, Brandi Lowe, Sarah Laufenberg** and **Linda Sandquist**.

The CPLT attempts to connect people from our congregation with the congregation at Luyanó. For example, our pastors and mission staff are in conversation with Pastor Daniel Izquierdo. Through WhatsApp and Facebook we continue to live out our lives together with our Cuban friends. Liaisons from the CPLT encourage regular communication with groups with whom we share ministry: Worship, Presbyterian Women, Nifty Knitters, Children-Youth-Family and our mission co-workers **Vilmarie Cintrón Olivieri** and **José Manuel Capella Pratts**.

We charge Cuban phones for **Pastor Izquierdo** and wife, Anaitza, as phone communication is essential to their ministries.

The CPLT maintains three accounts. A session restricted account for the Cuban synod has provided support for the seminary in Matanzas and the camp and conference center near Santa Clara at the synod's request. Donations are accepted to a Travel Fund which assists travel to Cuba and a Partners Fund which allows support to the consistorio (session) at Luyanó for their ministries.

We are active participants in the PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network.

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 seek mutuality in our relationship. We strive to maintain effective communication with the congregation at Luyanó and with other partners. We will also seek ways to broaden and deepen our communication within our congregation.

A delegation of five will represent us in Havana March 12-18. We will host our mission co-workers on the weekend of October 6.

We are thankful for the ways our Cuban brothers and sisters embrace us as brothers and sisters (*hermanos/as*). We appreciate their example of open-hearted hospitality to us in all circumstances, their graciousness in care for one another, and their joyful, daily, practical expressions of confidence in God's goodness.

Cuba Steering Committee
Dave Bauer, Miriam Chenault, Bob Kirby (moderator), **Claudia Kirby** (secretary), **Bill Marble** (treasurer) and **Rachel Matthews** (staff) and guests

Environmental (Green Team)

BY COLETTA ACKERMANN, MODERATOR
COLETTA.ACKERMANN@GMAIL.COM

On behalf of the Environmental Stewardship Committee, I am pleased to tell you some of the things we do on behalf of our church, to cherish God's creation of land and water.

Many of you know that we made a significant effort to keep styrofoam

out of the rivers and lakes by recycling those containers. We took them to DART where they were shredded and reused for picture frames and other items.) We are going to get a list of restaurants and stores who use other than Styrofoam containers for take homes, etc. (One member of our church always takes her own container!)

In July, the recycling coordinators of Urbana and Champaign came to our committee meeting. They shared information about what happens to all that stuff we put in our recycle bins. Where does it go? If you want to know, please pick up one of the information papers on the welcome table in Westminster Hall.

We also try to keep our church area clean because volunteers spend a Saturday morning walking up and down State Street, picking up the trash left there. (If you would like to be a part of this group, let **Kathy Schoeffmann** or me know. We can use your help. (Sometimes, they have lunch afterwards!) Many of the ESL students have participated!

Please check out the ESC bulletin board outside Westminster Hall. This is all about trees, and my friends will tell you that I have suddenly become a fanatic about trees, including meeting a sculptor who has just finished a piece with birds in it and a girl swinging in it.

Some of our funds in the past were used to purchase washable coffee cups, rather than foam or paper. We also collect eye glasses and plastic pill bottles for reuse. We have used some of our funds to help the Faith in Place Green team sponsor programs about the environment.

We also bought some recycle bags with the church logo on them. Most of all, we appreciate all the love you have for the wonderful world God has created for us. We know you do this when you plant your vegetable and flower gardens and walk in the parks and enjoy God's art work.

English Language Learners (ELL)

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR
BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

1. Volunteer and Committee Activity

Val Smith, the former director, retired in May of 2023. **Linda Sims** worked as Interim Director to maintain the summer program. We had a little over 40 students in attendance for the months of June and July.



I was hired in July, to begin work on August 1, 2023. I worked closely with Linda during the month of July to familiarize myself with the job and the systems of the program. I scheduled a teacher training event in early August, but I got sick with Covid and so Linda took over. I am deeply grateful for

all the help she has given me. She continues to be a resource whenever I have questions.

2. Significant Accomplishments/ Highlights in 2023

- 1) We added a third day of classes, meeting on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.
- 2) We resumed Cafe Time from 9:15-9:45 with coffee and snacks. Students sign up to help with making the coffee and cleaning up afterwards. It has helped to create a lot of positive energy, good conversations, and friendships. It is a key part of our program that sets it apart from others and I am so happy we were able to resume it, post pandemic.
- 3) We added two new tutors—**Roxann Bossenbroek** and **Judy Gordon**. We were also able to bring back a few former tutors who left during the pandemic, or taught online.
- 4) We have a total of 16 in-person tutors. **Mike Havey** continues to teach online from Georgia. We decided to make his class for alumni

only, who want to continue learning once they return to their home countries.

- 5) We recently added a fifth class for intermediate learners, that will begin in January. We have a waiting

list for beginners and intermediates, so I really wanted to increase our capacity. We currently have over 50 students registered for the spring semester.

- 6) We had a fun Halloween party, a great Thanksgiving potluck with First Presbyterian members, and a Christmas party on the last day of

class. Students and tutors helped to pull off these events and I am so grateful. These events help to create a greater sense of community and fun around learning English.

- 7) I was able to take on a student volunteer to help with some of the program logistics. **Lidia Colen**, from Brazil, has been a huge help. She is skilled at Microsoft and spreadsheets, and she is eager to help and eager to learn. The use of volunteers is beneficial for them in terms of learning English and preparing them for work in the US, once they receive work permission.

3. 2023 Budget Expenditures

One major expense was a new laptop for the program. The old one was not meeting our needs and was due for replacement. Most of the rest of the money went for coffee, snacks, food for events, office supplies, and paper products for serving food. In the coming year, I anticipate that we will continue to spend money on paper products and food, primarily. We were able to cancel a few online resources and subscriptions that we no longer need. There may be a need to spend some on teacher training and teaching materials.

4) Goals for 2024

- Recruit 2-4 new tutors to fill in, and possibly to add another class. The Advisory Council has talked about an evening class for those who work. We have also talked about online classes for people with transportation and childcare issues. I would love to add a class for moms, where they are able to bring their children with them while they learn. We will need to find the right people for these options.

Our immigrant population in CU continues to grow and there is a huge need for ELL and language access for many. First Presbyterian plays a

significant role in helping people learn and be welcomed into our community. This is a passion of mine and I would love to see us able to serve more people.

- Teacher training—I want to explore training opportunities that are practical, affordable, and accessible for our teachers. Many are educators, and others have a passion to help in this way. All of us, would benefit from ELL specific training and tools.

- Teaching materials—I am in the process of cleaning out some of our files and getting rid of outdated materials. I want to replace them with newer, more helpful tools for teachers. My desire is to keep our volunteers happy, well-equipped, and competent to teach good classes and enjoy their work.

Before I became director of the ELL program, I volunteered for about 9 years as a tutor.

I LOVE this program! I have made many friends over the years, and am constantly learning new things from our students. I enjoy all of our dedicated volunteers and it is a privilege to work with them. I hope to continue to improve our program and make it a positive place for learning. I also want to help newcomers in our community feel welcomed and find a sense of belonging here. English is a first major step in that process, and making friends is the a close second.

I am privileged to be able to do this work and I look forward to a great year in 2024.

Presbyterian Women

BY LINDA PETERSON, MODERATOR
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The purpose of Presbyterian Women forgiven and freed by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit to:

- Nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study
- Support the mission of the church worldwide
- Work for justice and peace
- Build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Witness to the promise of God's Kingdom

We strive to accomplish the above in a variety of ways. We have three Bible study Circles on the 4th Thursday of the month, either in Mae Chapin Parlor or by ZOOM. Circle of Joy meets at 10:30 AM and led by **Kathy Schoeffmann** and **Brandi Lowe**, Circle of Faith at 1:00 PM and led by **Nancy Brombaugh** and **Elizabeth Hewins** and Circle of Peace led by **Linda Peterson** at 7:00 PM. We finished the study of Celebrating Sabbath in May and started Sacred Encounters in September.

We enjoy three socials called Gatherings throughout the study year with key note speakers planned by **Sabrina Hwu**:

- May 2023- **Lisa Wilson** from the Refugee Center
- October 2023- **Melissa Courtwright** from CU at Home
- December 2023- The Uni High Madrigal Singers

Mission and service projects:

- We supply cribs and layettes for newborns to empty tomb

- We support a Pakistan girl board and education at Sangla Hill school through Presbyterian Education Board
- We donated to the Refugee Center

- We pledge funds to Presbytery
- Are active in the Least Coin, Birthday, and Thank Offerings
- Knifty Knitters provide hats and scarves to Kemmerer Village students, send yarn to our Cuba partners and make prayer shawls.

Nurturing our congregation:

- We support and or provide memorial receptions
- Honor our graduates
- Supply Christmas cookies for our homebound
- Deliver meals to our members (Helping Hands) when temporarily unable to do for themselves
- Provide a Staff Recognition lunch each year

Funding:

- Presbyterian Women are supported entirely through cash donations and their lovingly shared talents

Inquiries can be made to lindakpete@gmail.com or info@firstpres.church

Transportation

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD
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As a result of not having enough children for Sunday School classes, we did not offer transportation in the spring and fall of 2023.

MTD busses on Sunday do not run at a time that allows riders to arrive at Church in time for the morning worship. Some of our regular attenders provide rides to church for

those who are no longer driving or who typically use the MTD for their normal travel.

Primary use of the church van in 2023 was for adults. The van was used for a trip to Kemmerer Village; to transport the Cuba group to Indianapolis Airport; a trip to a Cubs game; transporting Madrigal Singers from University High to sing at a Presbyterian Women's luncheon meeting; and a trip to the Krannert Center for the Christmas program.

Other uses in the past have been for an ELL field trip to Curtis Orchard and Christmas Caroling. In all of these activities the van has been an asset.

The church van had also served as a back-up for the DREAM program as needed.

World Mission

BY SALLIE HUTTON, CO-MODERATOR

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JEANNIE SNOEYINK, CO-MODERATOR

JEANNIE.SNOEYINK@GMAIL.COM

World Mission members are: **Sallie Hutton** and **Jeannie Snoeyink**/co-chairs, **Steve Gritten**, **Jim Berger**, **Wen-Mei Hwu**, **Claudia Kirby**, **Marv Brombaugh**, **Audry Kukosama**, and **Paty Kamenga** With **Rachel Matthews** as our mission co-ordinator.

Our World Mission Committee has been involved in mission projects here in our expanded community, in our state, country, and in important areas around the world. In 2023, we would like to share some examples of various aspects of work in all of these areas.

Most of the congregation is aware of our church's World Missions involvement in Camp Carew and Kemmerer Village. However, World Missions also supports an organization started by a former member of our church, **Wanda Whitsitt**. In 1981, Wanda founded LifeLine Pilots whose mission is to coordinate free air transportation, through volunteer pilots, for passengers with medical and humanitarian needs far from home. Lifeline is now headquartered in Peoria but works throughout a ten state region. **Marv Brombaugh** is our church liaison in this important area.

Our church, through World Missions, donates to the Presbyterian Education Fund that partially funds our country's seminary students and relies on presbyteries, individual churches, and individuals for support. As many of you probably realize, in today's church environment, it's difficult for seminary students to graduate and earn a salary that will let them have a living wage and repay student loans. Without the willingness of Presbyterian churches to contribute to seminaries, we would not have available new ministers. Out of the current clergy serving in the Presbyterian Church USA congregations, 85 % will likely retire in the next decade so we are in great need of new ministers.

Under the auspices of our denomination's Presbyterian Mission Agency, our church's World Missions is in relationship with 5 mission couples in various areas of the world: US/Mexican border with **Rev. Mark Adams** and **Miriam Escobar**, Indonesia with **Farsijana Adeney-Risokota**, **Jeff and Christi Boyd** in central African countries, **Bob and Kristi Rice** in South Sudan, and **Vilmar Tu** and **Jose Manuel** in the Caribbean.

This year, **Bob and Kristi Rice** completed their sabbatical in Bloomington, IL. and were able to visit our congregation in October. We were fortunate to have **Bob Rice** preach for us on October 1, and have both Bob and Christi talk with our adult Sunday School class after church. Bob and Christi are serving in South Sudan, an area where there has been much turmoil in the past. Kristi supports a healing and reconciliation ministry and community development initiatives through the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church. This ministry helps people find God's healing from trauma and promotes unity in the midst of ethnic conflict. Bob serves as an instructor at Nile Theological College. His passion is to empower and equip emerging church leaders and to instruct them in a manner that is contextually relevant and helpful.

In all, our church supports 17 extremely important programs, ministries, and missionaries. **Steve Gritten** has developed a detailed description of all the agencies we actively support and with whom we are in a relationship. Any one of you who wishes to receive this important information can contact the World Mission Committee. We greatly appreciate your interest in this vital ministry.

WORSHIP

Worship

BY CAROL MILES, CHAIR

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Worship reached a post-pandemic new normal in our beautiful sanctuary, but in September we were hit with a worship surprise. When the elevator stopped working we moved worship to Westminster Hall to keep the congregation together for worship.

Sunday mornings in Westminster Hall have been cozy, joyous, and prayerful. Attendees at worship include loyal members, guests, and online participants.

Worship requires many volunteers. There are greeters, ushers, communion servers, and tech team helpers. And we always welcome new volunteers to help out. The tech team, especially, would welcome more help.

Streaming of the Sunday service has continued and still has an occasional glitch. Every regular worship service is streamed. The live broadcasts go to both YouTube and Facebook and can be accessed from the church website. An archived version can be seen any time via the worship link on the church website. And our volunteer “online convener” keeps watch as the service is live broadcast.

The Gathering Service, which was put on indefinite hold in late 2022, was ultimately discontinued in mid 2023.

Communion Sundays we are serving regular communion elements.

Our tradition of special services has continued. Lent included a Maundy Thursday Soup Dinner service, and Good Friday was shared in

our sanctuary with our Methodist neighbors. The Christmas season brought a Blue Christmas service (December 10) and two candlelight Christmas Eve services. Some Sunday services became special too. We celebrated Cuba Sunday with our sister church in Luyano and DREAM Sunday. Music Sundays are greatly enjoyed by the congregation.

Looking forward we will have a special service to install our new Associate Pastor—maybe in April.

Special services prompted two special purchases for worship ambiance. Six lamps have been useful in Westminster Hall, and will create a warm atmosphere for Maundy Thursday. And LED candles were used for Christmas Eve services to prevent an unnecessary triggering of the fire alarms.

We are looking forward to moving back to the sanctuary with its beautiful stained-glass windows when the new elevator installation has been completed.

Music

BY JOE GRANT, CONDUCTOR/DIRECTOR

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The music program currently includes the bell choir (Upper Room Ringers), led by **Libby Sternhagen**, and the Chancel Choir, conducted by **Joe Grant**. The choir and services in general, are supported by organist/pianist, **Sora Shepard**. She has been a joy to work with and a true blessing to our programs. Since taking this position, Sora has improved her organ skills significantly and her playing is of true professional quality.

Libby has taken a strong lead in developing the skills of the bell choir players and has prepared the group to play more frequently than in the past. They played on both Music Sundays as well as monthly services and two of the annual Christmas Eve services. We are actively recruiting players but even though the group is small, they play with convincing skill.



Jean René Balekita shared his musical talents on a Sunday morning.

The Chancel Choir has had its ups and downs this year in terms of attendance and quality of performance. To accommodate Sora's teaching schedule, rehearsals were moved to Thursday evening. This created a conflict with the UI Lyric Theatre's rehearsal schedule and made recruiting our paid quartet extremely difficult.

Major accommodations were also made when the elevator finally gave up the ghost. It was necessary to move all the chairs, music, folders etc. from the choir room, downstairs to Westminster Hall as well as moving rehearsals there to allow everyone to participate without climbing the stairs.

The Baldwin baby grand piano that originally was used in weekly services in the sanctuary, had long since been in residence in the parlor. The only piano in Westminster was an older upright. We received approval to have the Baldwin refurbished and tuned, then moved from the parlor to Westminster. The upright was moved to the parlor to open space for the choir and piano.

While the space in Westminster has been a bit cramped it has proved to be a reasonable way of having the choir continue to support the weekly services. The lack of space necessitated omitting orchestral accompaniment for the Christmas Music Sunday service. The program was scaled back to fit both the space available and the number of singers in

the choir. This will likely be the case again this spring for Easter and Music Sunday.

We had a number of performances during the weekly service by solo instrumentalists. One of these was a strong, professional clarinetist, **Gary Winder**. He also organized and performed a concert recital that included a harpist, vocal solo by UI voice professor, **Yvonne Redmon**, with accompaniment of all by **Sora Shepard**. It was a wonderful concert and was well attended by both the community and church members.

The program also received two generous monetary gifts from the families of **Bob Twardock** and **Esther Fay**. Both of these people had been choir members and passed away this year.



We shared our appreciation for our choir and music leaders during coffee hour last spring.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

First Presbyterian Church
Champaign, Illinois
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation
26 February 2023, 10:00 A.M.
Zoom available via our "OWL"

Moderator: Matt Matthews

Present: A quorum was present, including Zoom congregational members

Purpose: The purpose was to review the Annual Report 2022 and to approve the pastoral 2023 Terms of Call for Matt Matthews

Handouts: 2023 Terms of Call for Matt Matthews, and the Annual Report 2022

Call to Order: The Congregational Meeting began at 10:00 a.m. with prayer led by Matt Mathews.

Business:

The Annual Report 2022 was presented and explained by Matt Matthews

A motion was made to elect Claudia Kirby to the Nominating Committee.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed.

The Terms of Call for Matt Matthews was presented and explained by Ann Webbink.

The budget (p.7 of Annual Report) was explained by Ann Webbink.

There was a call for questions. There were none.

The Finance Committee had already made the motion to approve the budget. The motion was seconded.

The motion was approved.

Adjournment:

Motion was made to adjourn the Congregational Meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The meeting closed with prayer and adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Trenna Thomas

Clerk of the Session

First Presbyterian Church
of Champaign Minutes
Congregational Meeting
August 20, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Moderator: Pastor Matt Matthews

Present: A quorum of the congregation was present both in person and via Zoom.

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to hear and act upon the report of the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Call to order: The congregational meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Matt Matthews, and opened with a prayer.

Business:

Matt Matthews explained the purpose of the meeting and that a vote would occur before the end of the meeting in order for the congregation to accept or reject Joseph Lundy as the Pastor Nominating Committee's selection as candidate for First Presbyterian Church of Champaign Associate Pastor for Discipleship.

The present congregation will vote on paper and the congregation on Zoom will vote electronically. Ballots will be counted and the results shared.

Matt Matthews introduced to Pastor Nominating Committee members. The congregational meeting was then led by co-chair Bruce Rainey. Committee members are: Betty Hollister, Kevin Kim, Nancy Martin, Carol Penka, Co-Chair, Bruce Rainey, Co-Chair, Kathy Schoeffmann

The candidate for Associate Pastor for Discipleship was introduced to the congregation. Bruce Rainey explained the committee's reasons for their selection and that they were unanimous in selecting Joe Lundy as their candidate. The congregation had the opportunity to read the provided handout outlining Mr. Lundy's background and experience. The congregation also had the opportunity to observe Mr. Lundy participating as liturgist during this morning's service. The question was put forth, shall the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois request that the Presbytery install Joseph Lundy as Associate Pastor for Discipleship for this congregation.

Ballots were distributed and on-line voting commenced.

Tom Ulen, Sarah Laufenberg, Dave McNattin counted the paper votes. Matt Matthews counted on-line votes. Tenna Thomas acted as observer.

The results of the congregational votes are as follows: 3 abstentions, 3 no votes, 89 paper yes votes, 6 zoom yes votes

Matt Matthews announced the results of the vote and Mr. Lundy accepted the call as the new Associate Pastor for Discipleship.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved and the meeting closed with prayer at 10:19. A reception followed.

Respectfully submitted by Tenna Thomas

First Presbyterian Church of Champaign
Minutes of Congregational Meeting
September 24, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Moderator: Pastor Matt Matthews

Present: A quorum of the congregation was present both in person and via livestream.

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to dismiss the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee.

Call to order: The congregational meeting was called to order at 9:56 a.m. by Pastor Matt Matthews, and opened with a prayer.

A secretary of the meeting, Session Clerk Tenna Thomas, was elected by consensus and without objection to prepare a written record of the meeting proceedings.

The congregation would be voting on whether to disband the APNC of First the Presbyterian Church of Champaign, since the selection of Rev. Joseph Lundy for the new Associate Pastor had been made and approved.

The question was put forth, shall the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois dismiss the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee.

The present congregation voted unanimously and with thanks by voice vote to approve the motion. No accommodation for Zoom vote was made.

The Congregation thanks the APNC committee members:

Betty Hollister	Carol Penka, Co-Chair
Kevin Kim	Bruce Rainey Co-Chair
Nancy Martin	Kathy Schoeffmann

Adjournment: The meeting was closed with a benediction. Coffee and refreshments followed.

Respectfully submitted by Trena Thomas

First Presbyterian Church of Champaign
Minutes of Congregational Meeting
October 15, 2023, 9:55 a.m.

Moderator: Pastor Matt Matthews

Present: A quorum of the congregation was present in person

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to hear and act upon the report of the officer nominating committee.

Call to order: The congregational meeting was called to order at 9:56 a.m. by Pastor Matt Matthews, and opened with a prayer.

Business: Matt Matthews explained the purpose of the meeting and that the congregation would be voting on a slate of members as presented by the officer nominating committee.

Mary Nicholas presented the following slate:

-Session

Carol Ann Green	John Muirhead	Carol Miles
Mary Gritten	Tom Ulen	

-Community Mission Deacon

Sallie Hutton	Kathy Schoeffmann
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- Congregational Care Deacons

Pam Knox	Skip Pickering	Marge Olson
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-Nominating Committee

Mary Lou Bauer	Pat Tarr	Laurie Dey
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Motion was made and approved, to close the nominations. The question was put forth; shall the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois approve the proposed slate. The present congregation voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the motion.

Adjournment: The meeting closed with a prayer at 9:58. Coffee and refreshments followed.

Respectfully submitted by Trena Thomas