

Annual Report 2024



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN





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302 West Church, Champaign, IL 61820 217.356.7238
info@firstpres.church www.firstpres.church

FROM YOUR PASTORS

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior,

What a busy seven months we have had together. My time started with a whirlwind of projects that the congregation was undertaking. My first meeting with the Session was filled with the construction projects on the Church building, and each meeting following has included these ongoing projects. We began with a new roof and a solar power system. Watching the workers easily traverse our roof, and 1st shingles were terrific, and then solar panels were installed. Next up was approving a final bid on the elevator and then beginning construction of the elevator shaft and then the elevator itself. Then, the painting and walls and ceiling were repaired in the Sanctuary, and finally, the sound system was upgraded. All these construction activities occurred while I settled into the congregation and Champaign Urbana.

With every new pastor, there are always tweaks, sometimes pastor preference, and sometimes keeping this decent and in order. You may have noticed that we have already done some tweaking of the order of worship to follow the PCUSA Book of Order. We have celebrated another Advent and Christmas season in Westminster Hall, led worship, celebrated Communion, and honored several saints as they have passed to the Church Triumphant. For the past seven months, I have led each activity with my pastor's heart, open and ready to listen, learn, and guide.

Having highlighted all the things that looked "new" in this transition year, we also have to acknowledge many things didn't change. Traditions serve our church splendidly, and we continue to listen for God's voice to us individually and as a congregation as we actively wait for a new pastor and the coming of Christ again.

We are getting close to returning to the Sanctuary... returning home! And I know that returning home often has a mixture of emotions and feelings. It has been over 18 months since you sat in pews, and you have gotten used to being close together because that was what we had to do to worship downstairs. We have gotten used to a bit of informality within the Westminster Hall space, returning to the beloved old Sanctuary will feel different, just as returning home from college or being away from your childhood home felt.

1st Presbyterian Sanctuary will reflect your love and dedication as the space has been polished and spiffed up this past few months. What a way to begin an anniversary year. 2025 marked your 175th anniversary, and I am looking forward to how you decide to mark this huge milestone.

I continue to hear Paul's words to the Church at Thessalonian and to us: Now, may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him; and may your spirit, soul, and body be kept intact and blameless at our Lord Jesus Christ's coming. The one who is calling you is faithful and will do this. 1 Thessalonians 5:22-24

Blessings,

Pastor Beth

1st Pres Transition Process

June 2024

Transitional Interim Pastor Arrives



Nov 2024

Congregation Steadied



Feb 2025

Transition Team begins the work selecting and then leading a Mission Study



May 2025

Presbytery approves Mission study and permits a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) to be Elected



2025

PNC creates a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP)



2025

MDP is approved by the Session and the Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois



2025

PNC receives and reviews Candidates Resumes (PDP)



2025

PNC interviews potential Candidates via Zoom and in-person



2025/26

PNC selects a Candidate subject to Presbytery approval



20XX

Congregation Votes to Approve Candidate presented by the PNC during a Candidating Weekend



What a Year It Has Been!

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

If you had told me last year of all the things that would happen over the course of this year I don't think I would have believed you, though I may have said a prayer for my future self. At the start of last year we began the DREAAM Bible Club, which is about to start (as I write) next week, and we had hopes of a return to the Sanctuary before the close of the year. Bats were occasional guests at our meetings, and I was enduring what I am told was a "mild" winter.

Fast forward to June with **Matt and Rachel Matthew's** departure and the swift beginning of **Beth Wagner's** ministry here, and then in August **Matthew Shepard** joining us to take up **Joe Grant's** role after retirement. The bats are out of the sanctuary (I think we missed the opportunity to give it to them and become a real bat sanctuary) and elevator progress is well underway. I'm still enjoying joining in with the Knifty Knitters and the Monday Munchers, and the new responsibilities I have picked up in pastoral care. This past year we also went through the book of *Hosea*; I think that it was a great class, whose model we can follow in the future.

In this next year I look forward to continuing to deepen scriptural learning here, both through Sunday morning Adult Discussions and the DREAAM Bible Club. I plan to continue doing pastoral care work and working with our Congolese worship leaders. Currently I am working on a plan for Confirmation and a plan for youth Sunday School offerings in general. I think that there is a bright future ahead for First Pres.

Blessings,
Joe Lundy

Tech Team

BY WEN-MEI HWU, CHAIR
WENMEI.HWU@GMAIL.COM

Thanks to the diligent work by **Robert Ferrer** and all the volunteers, we have been able to have reliable AV and streaming of our services and events from Westminster. The staffing of AV positions on Sundays has been challenging as most of the volunteers are in the Sanctuary and cannot participate in the service in Westminster. The separation also increases the number of volunteers needed to operate the AV equipment. Robert has done an outstanding job coordinating the volunteers through the year.

We lost our Audio Technician **Bryan Cline** in 2024. Bryan served our church faithfully and competently for years. He notified us that he needed to focus on finishing his Ph.D. dissertation and could no longer be available to us. Fortunately, through our U. of Illinois connections, we were able to recruit **Noah McLeod**, an undergraduate student at U. of Illinois specializing in sound engineering for theaters and performance events. Noah has brought excellent expertise in procuring, configuring, operating, and maintaining audio equipment. Noah came from the First Presbyterian Church of Evanston where he served as audio technician. With his excellent technical expertise, relevant experience, outstanding work ethics, and strong social skills, he immediately became an invaluable member of our tech team.

We bought a video recorder to augment our AV capabilities. Robert has defined the instructions and workflow for recording, processing, and uploading the videos. We can now record events without streaming to the cloud. The additional benefit is that we can now record services and events even when the external internet connection fails.

For a long time, we have been using microphones for human voice to capture sound from our piano during services. Unfortunately, the narrow band of these microphones makes our piano sound flat in our video streams. To address this issue, we acquired a pair of microphones designed for music instruments. Noah McLeod installed and calibrated these microphones in the piano. We can now capture the beautiful music played by our exceptional pianist when we stream our services.

In preparation for moving back to the Sanctuary in 2025, we acquired a video camera to be mounted at the north-east position of the sanctuary. We'll have three mounted video cameras and a roving tripod camera for use. This new camera will allow us to make more smooth transitions and capture more angles when streaming our services. A big thank-you to **Dave McNattin** who has completed the wiring preparation for moving back to the Sanctuary.

Our main plan for 2025 is procuring and installing new speakers in the Sanctuary to replace our decades-old speakers that are no longer supported by the manufacturer and pose a high risk of malfunctioning. By carefully designing the placement of the new speakers, we will also solve our long-standing echoing problems during worship and events.

Please consider joining the volunteer group for the AV/streaming positions. As we move back to the Sanctuary, our volunteers will be able to participate much more in worship. You will find yourself in a supportive, welcoming and rewarding environment as you learn and practice AV/streaming operations. A larger volunteer group will help alleviate staffing pressure on Robert. Please contact Robert or any of the Tech Committee members - **Jason Lowe, Sabrina Hwu, and Wen-mei Hwu** if you are interested in learning more about the AV/streaming activities.

ADMINISTRATION

Building & Grounds

BY DARRELL CARLSON

CARLSODL@COMCAST.NET

AND RITCHIE DRENNEN, FACILITIES MANAGER

RITCHIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

As always with a 150-year-old facility the Building and Grounds has been busy this past year. I would like to thank the members of the committee. **Bill Ackermann, Gary Burgett, Ritchie Drennen, Bruce Farthing, Gary Bowen, Pastor Beth and Mark Schoeffmann** for their expertise, judgment, and the time they have spent keeping the church not looking her age. It is a labor of love.

We have had four big projects in 2024. The first completed project was the new roof installed by Dick Butler Roofing (DECA) for the Church.



The second major project was installation of Solar System for the Church by Rout 66 Solar. With the Federal Tax Credit and SREC applied, electric savings should break even in 4-5 years. The system is complete and just waiting for Ameren to do final inspection. Once that is completed the Solar System will be turned on. When reading this report it should be on.



The third project is the construction of the new elevator. The old elevator stopped working in fall of 2023 and moved Sunday Service to Westminster Hall. We have been working with Petry Kuhne Company and Kone Elevators on the installation of a new one.

The new one will be approximately three times the size of the old one. To achieve this size major construction took place to accommodate it. The estimated completion date is set of April 6, 2025. Gary Burgett and his partner Kim Smith were the architects on this project.

The fourth project has been painting the entire Sanctuary. We are working with Wingle Construction on this. The majority of this is being done in 2025 with completion in the middle of March of 2025.



We will keep you posted on the elevator project along with painting the Sanctuary. 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.

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, CHAIR FINANCE

ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Operating Funds

In 2024, total revenues for the operating fund were \$876,013 which was about 98.1% of the budgeted amount. This was \$48,427 less than 2023. Revenue for 2024 included \$770,659 in contributions compared to \$823,257 in 2023. Total expenses for 2024 were \$965,458 which was 100.6% of the budgeted amount and \$5,647 less than 2023. The net result was a deficit of \$89,445 at the end of the year. This compared to a negative balance of \$46,665 last year. In addition to contributions in pledges and plate offerings, we received \$73,016 from the Cannon fund which is \$1776 more than last year.

Other Contributions

In addition to generous giving in pledges, our congregation members have donated to various church funds. A few examples include: \$105,390 was added to the elevator fund, \$4,481 donated to One Great Hour of Sharing, \$2,041 to the Raindrop project, \$2,373 to the Christmas offering and \$3,827 to the Advent offering. Also, \$3,555 was given in memorial gifts and \$4,200 to local missions. The brunch contributions totaled \$2,582 and expenses were \$3,045. 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 \$2,163,249 compared to \$2,449,734 at the end of 2023. The invested funds include \$1,311,532 in Session designated funds. At the end of 2023 the Session Fund account was \$1,644,445.

2025 Budget

For 2025, projected total revenues are \$879,100. Pledges of \$700,000 are anticipated for 2025 which is \$10,000 less than last year but \$17,000 more than received in 2024. Expenses are budgeted at \$947,408 which is \$18,050 less than what was spent in 2024. This results in a projected deficit of \$68,308 compared to an actual deficit of \$89,445 in 2024. Much of 2024's deficit was due to several one-time expenses in Building and Grounds and to uncollected pledges.

The finance team is hopeful that there will be significant energy savings with the solar panels and that it will be reflected in the expenses of the church in 2025. There were no salary increases in 2024, so we felt that our hardworking staff deserved a 2% raise. 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 two major projects in the coming year. We are running a budget deficit again this year of \$61,108 but are hopeful that some outstanding pledges will still come in to alleviate that and that energy

savings will be substantial. Also, we will be getting several rebates, some quarterly, from the installation of the solar panels. In the coming years, though, we will need to be very aware of our expenses and work within the recommended budget.

Capital Improvements

The church had several major projects that were completed this past year. The sanctuary building now has a new roof and solar panels. The solar panels should be connected to the grid soon by Ameren. We will be allowed to sell excess power back to Ameren. The total cost of the roof and solar panels was \$361,073. This work was mainly paid for from Session Designated Funds and the remaining funds from the sale of the farmland to Copper Creek.

The ongoing improvements include the elevator and the painting and restoration of the sanctuary. The total elevator cost of \$571,748 has approximately \$140,000 remaining to be paid and the painting of the sanctuary is \$86,000. We still do not have an estimate for the restoration cost involved in the sanctuary.

Members of our congregation gave generously to the elevator fund in the amount of \$150,000 in the past two years. The remainder of the costs will come from 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 account is currently \$1,311,000.

At the end of 2024, the finance team recommended, and the Session approved mailing of an informational brochure concerning the capital improvements over the past five years to all church households. The purpose of this brochure was to honor the

history of our congregation and to be transparent about the costs and funding of the improvement projects.

Sale of the SW Church Property

The finance team investigated selling the property to help pay off the remaining improvement projects and to invest in our strategic reserves. The property was professionally appraised, and we received an offer of \$625,000 from Hallbeck Homes which exceeded the appraisal value of \$620,000. The Session approved the sale, and the congregation voted to support the sale in January of 2025.

Thank You

Our church family contributed nearly one million dollars in 2024, 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!

Session Approved Budget for 2025

Revenues

	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2025 Budget
Pledges	\$710,000	\$683,383	\$700,000
Plate	75,000	87,276	81,000
Cannon Trust	75,000	73,016	70,000
Restricted Funds	10,750	10,750	10,750
Other	22,390	21,588	26,390
Total Revenues	\$893,140	\$876,013	\$879,100

Expenses

Clergy	\$252,002	\$244,994	\$239,340
GA Per Capita	25,000	23,840	23,000
Staff Misc	5,700	4,540	5,300
Music	64,472	63,499	68,524
Worship	15,540	12,445	7,200
Mission	113,392	99,771	87,780
Children/Youth	13,600	4,665	12,800
Adult Education	800	195	600
Office (Administration)	208,100	199,573	200,453
Building and Grounds	249,900	307,873	282,563
Congregational Care	200	0	100
Hospitality/nurture	7,700	4,065	19,748
Total Expenses	\$959,407	\$965,458	\$947,408
Revenue - Expenses	(\$66,267)	(\$89,445)	(\$68,308)



Nominating Committee

BY MARY NICHOLAS, CHAIR
 NICHOLAS.MARYM@GMAIL.COM

Members of the Officer Nominating Committee worked together to find church members to serve for the next term. 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

- John Muirhead** one- year term
- Ann Webbink** one-year term
- Darrell Carlson** one- year term
- Audry Kukosama** is a new Elder
- Dick Arnould** is a returning Elder

Congregational Care Deacons

- Carol Arnould**
- Jack & Camille James**
- Linda Peterson** one-year term
- Community Mission Deacons**
- Sarah Laufenberg**
- Linda Tauber-Olson**

Officer Nominating Committee

The committee includes **Catherine Emanuel, Claudia Kirby, Mary Lou Bauer, Pat Tarr, Laurie Dey.**

We want to recognize elected officials whose terms ended in 2024.

Session Elders

- Mary Jane Kelley**
- Mary Nicholas**

Community Mission Deacons

- Jane Alsberg**
- Grace Ashenfelter**

Congregational Care Deacons

- Nancy MacGregor**
- Bill & Sherry Marble**
- Eric & Cathy Stickels**
- Tom & Julia Ulen**

Officer Nominating Committee

- Mary Nicholas**
- Sallie Hutton**

We want to extend our appreciation to the members of First Presbyterian Church of Champaign who have acted as Elders, Community Mission Deacons, Congregational Care Deacons and the Officer Nominating Committee. Your willingness to serve strengthens our church mission in many ways.

Church Officers

2027

Session Elders Moderator: Beth Wagner
 Dick Arnould
 Audry Kukosama

Community Mission Deacons Moderator: Kathy Schoeffmann
 Sarah Laufenberg
 Linda Tauber-Olson

Congregational Care Deacons Moderator: Linda Sandquist
 Carol Arnould
 Jack & Camille James

2026

Carol Ann Green
 Mary Gritten
 Carol Miles

Kathy Schoeffmann
 Sallie Hutton
 Kathy Schoeffmann

Pam Knox
 Marge Olson
 Skip Pickering

2025

Darrell Carlson
 Ken Chapman
 Diane Mortensen
 John Muirhead
 Trena Thomas
 Ann Webbink

Holly Nordheden
 Lola Ruthmansdorfer
 Leslie Thomas

Amy Born
 Linda Peterson
 Linda Sandquist

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. In addition to the elevator situation, we have had a new roof installed and new solar panels. A little inconvenience during these installation and repairs to the building will be forgotten soon, as we once again are able to worship in our beautiful sanctuary and enjoy the benefits of the work that has been done.

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 in ensuring that things are working smoothly for our staff. They are: **Jeannie Snoeyink, David Whitford, Cathy Emanuel,**

Mary Nicholas, Pastor Beth Wagner and Pastor Joe Lundy

Our **Associate Pastor Joseph Lundy**, came to us from Shreveport, Louisiana and brought with him a special excitement and passion for the ministry. He is a dedicated and faithful Christian who is committed to sharing the word of God. On Sunday, April 14, 2024, we celebrated Associate Pastor Joseph Lundy's Installation. It was a very special day at First Presbyterian Church of Champaign.



The First Presbyterian Church Nursery staff continue to welcome the youngest children while their parents attend church. We want to thank Nursery Coordinator, **Amber Hyde**, and Nursery workers, **Jessica Budion, Grace Harning, Juliana Bavento** and **Ayan Harris** for the care they provide for the children.

In June 2024, **Pastors Rachel and Matt Matthews** accepted a call to become co-pastors at the Waldensian Presbyterian Church in Valdese, North



Carolina. They left after serving First Presbyterian Church of Champaign for six-and-a-half years. Pastor Matt's last Sunday in the pulpit was June 23, 2024.

On June 24, 2024, **Rev. Beth Wagner** came to First Presbyterian church as the "interim" or "transitional" pastor. She is helping to guide us at First Presbyterian Church through the transition that will lead to our selection/election of a Pastor Nominating Committee. Once they have been confirmed, the committee will conduct the search for our next installed pastor.

In August, we said farewell to our Director of Music and Choir Conductor, **Joe Grant**. He served in that capacity for the last 28 years and provided a variety of music to enhance our worship experience. Shortly thereafter, we welcomed **Dr. Matthew Shepard**, as the new Director of Music. He is the husband of **Sora Shepard**, our organist. It is such a pleasure to know that music at First Presbyterian Church is being led by such an amazing team of dedicated musicians. At the same time the church was also very pleased to welcome the music interns to the choir. They make such an amazing contribution to the quality of music that the choir can perform. They are **Olivia Bell, Amber Phillips, Santiago He, Logan McNichols** and **Jace Kim**.

Church Staff

Pastor:

Beth Wagner.....Interim Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
Joe LundyAssociate Pastor for Discipleship

Staff:

Martice Chapple.....	Facility Assistant	Noah McLeod.....	Audio-visual Technician Assistant
Ritchie Drennen.....	Facility Manager	Ann Petry.....	Accounting
Patty Farthing.....	Office Assistant	Matthew Shepard.....	Director of Music
Fred Foster.....	Evening Custodian	Sora Shepard.....	Church Musician
Robert Ferrer.....	Audio-visual Technician	Bonnie Ward.....	English Language Learner Director
Marcia Franks.....	Office Administrator		

Bonnie Ward continues to serve as Director of ELL. It is an exciting time for everyone involved and the enrollment has continued to grow. We must also recognize the wonderful volunteers who make the ELL program such a great success. It is a blessing to have such dedicated people who are willing to give their time to this important mission. 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.

If you see any of these employees, please take a moment to thank them for what they do here at First Presbyterian Church of Champaign.

Ritchie Drennen our Facility Manager and **Martice Chapple**, Facility Assistant, make sure that everything is in place for worship services, meetings, Bible studies and other events held at the church. **Fred Foster** is the evening custodian and is available if you need assistance.

Marcia Franks, Patty Farthing and **Ann Petry** work in the church office. Marcia is the Office Administrator and can answer any questions you might have. Patty is the Office Assistant and will welcome you either in person or on the phone with a big smile. Ann is the accountant, and the recordkeeper of all things budget related. They work behind the scenes to make sure all needs are met. The office is open Mon-Thurs from 8:30 AM – 2 PM and on Friday 8:30 to noon.

You will see **Robert Ferrer** each Sunday morning, with his able Assistant **Noah McCleod**, who makes sure that all the sound and streaming checks are done to ensure a smooth and flawless service is put on in the church building as well as out on the airwaves.

This has been an eventful year. A good year. And next year will be even better. Many thanks to our Interim Pastor, **Rev. Beth Wagner** and to **Associate Pastor Joe Lundy**. They are doing a wonderful job keeping First Presbyterian Church of Champaign moving in the right direction. And they are doing that

with the help of our elected officials, including Elders, Community Mission Deacons, and Congregational Care Deacons and other members of our congregation who work towards making this church the best it can be.

Thank you everyone!

CONNECT

Adult Spiritual Formation

BY KEN CHAPMAN, CHAIR
KENCHAP@ILLINOIS.EDU

The Adult Spiritual Formation Committee started 2024 by finishing our 2023 Advent book study “Holy Disruption” by Tracy Daub, with **Pat Phillips** leading the concluding lesson on January 7. **Noni Ledford** talked to us about her faith journey. **Joe Lundy** led a discussion of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. **Lindsey Kerr** told us about the work of Lifeline Pilots. Then we had our Lenten book study: *Pause – Spending Lent with the Psalms* by Elizabeth Caldwell.

In April, Mae Chapin Parlor was packed as we listened to **Jene Rene Balekita** share his faith journey and his music. Groups of courageous women from our congregation inspired us with reports of their visits to Cuba and the Sangla Hill Girls School in Pakistan. We enjoyed a joint lesson combining the Adult Sunday School group with the Easy English Fellowship class. And we had guest speakers, **Cyndy Ash** on Earth Sunday and **Cathy Emanuel** who

enlightened us on the shortage of nursing home space in Champaign.

During the summer, **Joe Lundy** led a three week study about what it means to be a Matthew 25 congregation. In the Fall, we met our interim pastor, **Beth Wagner**, heard from our own **Jim Berger**, discussed Earth Sunday in September (it’s normally an April event, but protecting God’s Creation is important all year) and we had an inspiring talk by **Vilmarie Cintron Olivieri** about Ministries in the Caribbean area. This was followed by a three week study of the Book of Hosea, with lessons led by **Ken Chapman, Joe Lundy** and **Dave Bauer**. Then we had a four week Advent series about Our Christmas Traditions: **Ken Chapman** talked about Christmas Trees, **Betty Hollister** talked about Advent Wreath & Candles, **Carol Penka** led a lesson on the Wise Men and **Joe Lundy** led a lesson on Christmas Carols.

We pray for God’s continued guidance and blessings in 2025.

Easy English Fellowship

BY BOB KIRBY, MODERATOR
RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

Easy English Fellowship describes a group of adults who meet each Sunday from 10-11 AM. We worship in slow and easy English with song, bible study and prayer. We read and talk together. We also learn important cultural information. We are a program of Parkland College Project Read which assesses learner progress, provides tutor training and optional community-based opportunities. Our English Language Learners Program shares written material.

Twelve learners are registered along with three principal tutors and five assistant tutors. Our current learners are recent immigrants from Cameroon and The Democratic Republic of Congo. Most attend Sunday worship with us at 9 AM.

Easy English Fellowship reports to session through Mission Team.



Not sure if the adults or children have more fun at our Annual Trunk or Treat??? A good time is had each Halloween!

Children's Ministry

BY MARY GRITTEN, CHAIR CYF
MARYHG3@SBCGLOBAL.NET

The small group of elementary aged children met faithfully on Sunday mornings during the school year with the guidance and love of two very dedicated teachers: **Noni Ledford** and **Mary Lou Bauer**.

The nursery, for children up to age 5, was staffed with paid adults through most of the year. Our church's policy is to have two qualified people for the infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers during the worship hour as well as when the Sunday School classes gathered. The paid staff was assisted with wonderful volunteers from the congregation on those Sundays when they were needed, sometimes stepping in at the last minute. We were especially grateful for those volunteers during the long summer as we were in the hiring process for our current care providers.

The dedicated, caring Children's Ministry committee consists of **Mary Lou Bauer, Claudia Kirby, Trenna Thomas, Blaise Zamena**, Session Liaison **Mary Gritten**, and staff support **Rev. Joe Lundy**.

Congregational Care Deacons

BY LINDA SANDQUIST, MODERATOR
RLSAND2@COMCAST.NET

We began the year 2024 with returning Care Deacons **Amy Born, Pam Knox, Bill and Sherry Marble, Marge Olson** and **Linda Sandquist**. **Skip Pickering** was nominated and installed as a new Deacon. At the end of the year

Carol Arnould, Camille and Jack James and Linda Peterson were nominated to be Care Deacons and will begin their terms in 2025. Our clergy liaison is **Associate Pastor Joe Lundy**. We meet in Mae Chapin Parlor on the first Thursday of each month at 2:30 PM.

The duties of Care Deacons include visiting home bound congregants (monthly when possible), and assisting the pastors with serving communion 3-4 times per year to those who are no longer able to attend Sunday services. This is provided in their individual residences, assisted living and long term care facilities. In 2024 we made in person visits to 18 church members on a regular basis.

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, although several have died in 2024.

During the Christmas holidays, homemade cookies donated by the Presbyterian Women's Circles are delivered to the home bound members by the Care Deacons. We thank God for equipping these Deacons with the spiritual gifts that provide compassionate care to the home bound 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 CAROL ANN GREEN, CO-CHAIR
CADGREEN@COMCAST.NET

Goal: "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." *Romans 12:13*
Charge: Focus on fellowship, membership, welcome and hospitality within our walls.

The members of the 2024 Nurture Committee were **Bob Kirby, Carol Ann Green, Mary Jane Kelley, Marilyn Lamkin, Joe Lundy, Gary Peterson, Linda Peterson and Tom Gilmore**. **Matt Matthews** attended the meetings until he resigned. We met the second Wednesday of the month at 9:30 AM in the Mae Chapin Parlor in person or via zoom. The committee reported directly to the Session.

Our committee headed up the brunches that were held the second Sunday of the month at our church, the Chili Cookoff at our church in February, participated with the weekly DREAM dinners when they were taking place, helped with the Maundy Thursday meal, helped with **Joe Lundy's** installation in April, planned and helped Picnic in the Park, helped with the International Game Night at our church in September, had a small Pet Blessing in October headed by **Joe Lundy**, organized the food for Trunk or Treat in October, participated in the Thanksgiving Dinner with ELL, and participated in the Christmas Caroling event in December.

We were also responsible for the Hospitality Table and Letter writing headed up by **Bob Kirby**; Greeters, by **Ginny Waaler** and Ushers, by **Nancy Martin**.

Membership Report

563

**Total Members
as of December 31, 2024**

**9
Additions**

We Welcomed...

- Leslie Babbs
- Bill Cole
- Kate Cole
- Kat Hilton
- George Johnston
- Larry Krantz
- Betty Meissner
- Melinda Miller
- Peter Yau

**25
Losses**

**3
Certificate**

**11
Deaths**

**11
Withdrawn**

Members Who Joined the Church Triumphant

- Lowella Biddle
- Beverly Cottrell
- Ron Deering
- Pete Fletcher
- David Hunter
- Stuart Jenkins
- Doug Mills
- Sue Moore
- Gene Morgan
- John Stevenson
- Joyce Wittler



Members enjoyed good weather, good food and a good time at International Game Night in the fall.



SERVE

Mission Team

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD, ELDER LIAISON TO MISSION
J.MUIRHEAD@COMCAST.NET

We are a Matthew 25 congregation. We are committed to the three core pillars of being a Matthew 25 congregation; Building congregational vitality, Dismantling structural racism, and Eradicating systemic poverty.

The Mission Team meets monthly to provide a forum for updating us on the various activities of our Mission Committees. Information is shared with the Session at its monthly



DREAAM is one of the local groups supported by your Mission contributions.

meeting and then on to the church through pulpit announcements, Sunday announcements in our Order of Worship, and our monthly newsletter.

First Presbyterian Church has a very intentional mission committee structure that includes Community Mission Deacons, World Mission

Committee, Amateur Preachers, Compassion Peace and Justice Ministry Team, Cuba Partners Leadership Team, Easy English Fellowship, English Language Learners, Environmental Stewardship, Transportation, and we welcome a liaison from Presbyterian Women for sharing updates on mission related activities.

All of these groups have prepared their own annual reports which are included in the 2024 Annual Report. Through them you will be able to see what we (and you!) have done this year. Our mission activities have

involved the commitment of committee members to discernment and work in relating to a number of world, local and church related ministries. Support comes from our annual church budget and from special congregational offerings: Pentecost, Raindrop, Advent and Angel Tree.

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 **Beth Wagner, Joe Lundy, Kate Cole, Naomi Rempe and Kathy Schoeffmann.**



Last summer part of our Mission endeavor was serving meals for the local Habitat build.

In 2024 two benevolence requests were made by families who have a significant relationship to the church and a total of \$2,220 was given from the fund.

In June of this year **Rachel Matthews**, our Covenant Pastor for Missions moved to a new call in North Carolina. Members of our committees, with the support of Pastors Beth and Joe, have stepped in to carry on the good works that have been coordinated by Rachel.

We look forward to carrying on the strong heritage and commitment to Mission that has been a hallmark of First Presbyterian Champaign. We continue to ask for your prayers, your support and your encouragement! We invite you to learn more and join with us to serve others through the variety of missions we engage in and 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 in 2024: **Betty Hollister, Gary Peterson and Dave Whitford.**

We provided these services to a number of churches in our area including Hoopeston, Paxton and Windsor of Savoy on a total of 19 Sundays.

In 2024, our church ministerial staff and Amateur Preachers provided sermons to our friends at the Windsor of Savoy. Our service to Windsor of Savoy declined after the departure of **Matt and Rachel Matthews** at the end of June. Organization of the program at Windsor of Savoy returned to their staff.

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 JANE ALSBERG, MODERATOR

JANE.ALSBERG@GMAIL.COM

Our mission deacons this year were **Jane Alsberg, Grace Ashenfelter, Sallie Hutton, Holly Nordheden, Lola Ruthmansdorfer, and Kathy Schoeffmann** with **Jane Alsberg** acting as moderator. **Ritchie Drennen** was helpful with our connection to Safe House as well as keeping the Free Pantry stocked.

In 2024, Community Mission Deacons updated their mission agency assignments and partnered with the following agencies: CU@Home, DREAAM, Habitat For Humanity, Strides, The Refugee Center, Salt & Light, and Safehouse. With a reduced budget and only 5 liaisons, Community Mission Deacons decided to drop Jesus is the Way Prison Ministry from their budgeted money. This decision does not diminish the good work this ministry does, but merely reflects how we felt the five of us with our reduced budget, could best serve our local missions in 2024. By year's end we spent \$23,000 out of budgeted money on quarterly giving to our local mission agency partnerships.

CMD continues to be in touch with Presbyterian Women and acknowledges their giving cribs and layettes to Empty Tomb.

Following are highlights of CMD's mission work in 2024:

* Some of our restricted funds are being used to operate the Wednesday night DREAAM/Outreach youth club. This much appreciated program is running smoothly with Joe Lundy leading discussion and getting the youth to interact in a non-intimidating way - and in large part

for the help of First Presbyterian volunteers who serve as table partners.

* This year, CMD organized a volunteer effort to help Habitat for Humanity building crews by providing home cooked hot lunches at the build sites. This was much appreciated by those hardy folks doing the heavy lifting, and as always, First Presbyterian volunteers were many - we even had more people offering to cook than we had scheduled days to bring lunches! There is talk of expanding this program next summer.

* The Refugee Center news and needs are brought to CMD's attention by liaison **Kathy Schoeffmann** who is also on their board. We minister to them by spreading information to the congregation such as information about their big fund raising Gala which took place this past year on April 6. This year we have offered information on how to purchase Schnucks gift cards by using the rewards points (dollars) we earn when shopping there. Access to food is a high priority for new refugees.

* This year we added STRIDES to our mission agencies. STRIDES operates as a low-barrier emergency shelter and resource center for adults experiencing homelessness. The program strives to reach a population of community members who are often seen but overlooked. We are just now learning more about STRIDES and have invited Charlene Murray to do a minute for mission and a Sunday adult study group.

* In November, **Lisa Sheltra** and **Gwenna Pelz** from Salt and Light came to talk to us about a new vocational program they have recently initiated. This program expands their mission by helping people gain skills, help ready people for employment opportunities, provide support, and build a social network. It does

this in three ways: 1) through small groups led by Allies (people in the community), 2) educational classes and training, and 3) through credit earning. This program needs volunteers and we feel that once our church members learn more about the program, they might find just the right opportunity to volunteer their own personal skills.

For the CMD's Angel Tree offering this year, we chose Kemmerer Village as our recipient. The "gift" tree was a big success with every ornament taken. The donations were very generous and we feel many children who had nowhere to go over Christmas were blessed to receive several gifts each, including both the child's "needs" and some "wishes". In addition to the gifts from the ornaments on the tree, there was a very generous monetary gift made to Angel Tree. We used that gift to sponsor the miniature horse, Toby, in the Kemmerer Village Equine Therapy program.

New members to CMD's for 2025 will be: **Sarah Laufenberg** and **Linda Tauber-Olson**. **Jane Alsberg** will be stepping down.

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 first and third Tuesdays. 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.

We are guided by the three pillars of our congregation's commitment the PC (USA) Matthew 25 initiative. So, we focus on three pillars: Build Congregational Vitality, Eradicate Systemic Poverty and Dismantle Structural Racism. Our principal mission partner is DREAM Opportunity Center. We are committed to radical welcome of God's people of all ages, ethnicities, races, religions and gender identities.

We added books to our church library for parents learning about gender identity along with children's books about inclusion. We continue to work to recognize Negro Spirituals we sing at worship with some type of royalty collection. We follow the work of the CU Reparations Coalition. We promote businesses owned by people of color and recent immigrants. We teamed with our outreach committee for Pride Fest, Friday Forum at University YMCA, DREAM Opportunity Center Youth Bible Club for middle school children and volunteered at DREAM Thanksgiving Give Away.

CPJMT reports to session through Mission Team.

Team: **Miriam Chenault, Kate Cole, Tracy Dace, Mary Gritten, Elizabeth Hewins, Claudia and Bob Kirby, Brandi Lowe, and Pat Tarr.**

Cuba Partners

BY BOB KIRBY, MODERATOR
RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada en Cuba (IPRC) chooses a scripture to study for a two-year period. Their current text is from *Jeremiah 29:11-13*. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

This text guided our team this year, inspired our visit to Cuba and the theme of our Annual Cuba Forum. 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. Our relationship is a session-to-session commitment. The Cuba Partners Leadership Team (CPLT) meets monthly and reports to Session through voting membership on both world mission (co-worker liaison) and mission team.

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 "hermanamiento". 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.

At a national 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 maintains an informal relationship with the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX which also has a covenant relationship at Luyanó.

History

Since 2010 We have completed sixteen 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.

2024



Brandi Lowe, Matt Matthews, Andrew Schwenck, Libby Sternhagen and John Warren visited Havana from March 12-18 .

Following an extensive preparatory study **Brandi Lowe, Matt Matthews, Andrew Schwenck, Libby Sternhagen and John Warren** visited Havana from March 12-18 at the invitation of session at Luyanó. Highlights included performing with the bell choir at Sunday worship, home visits, a flamenco dance performance and the beach. Best of all, however, was the wonderful Cuba people we came to love.

We hosted mission co-workers for Cuba and the Caribbean. **Vilmarie Cintrón Olivieri and José Manuel Capella-Pratts** led our Annual Cuba Forum on Saturday, October 5 and then preached and led adult spiritual formation the next day. A leadership team was elected during the forum. The CPLT connects 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.

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

The CPLT maintains three accounts. A Session restricted account for the Cuban synod provides support for the seminary in Matanzas and the national camp and conference center near Santa Clara. Donations are accepted to a Travel Fund which facilitates travel to Cuba and a Partners Fund which supports the 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, deepen our understanding of the Cuban experience, and grow together in our faith with our Cuban sisters and brothers. We recognize that circumstances of daily living and travel have become increasingly

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.

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 Partners Leadership Team reports to session through Mission Team.

Champaign First Cuba Steering Committee

Miriam Chenault, Robert Ferrer (treasurer), **Bob Kirby** (moderator), **Claudia Kirby** (secretary) and guests.

Environmental Stewardship Team (Green Team)

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

Committee Members: **Coletta Ackermann, Nancy Brombaugh, Pat Phillips, Dave Bauer, Michael Hogue, Kathleen Schoeffmann, Tanya Deckert, Barbara Fuller Curry, Ginny Waaler, Cindy Shepherd** – Faith in Place

Committee Meetings:

Meeting dates and times are monthly (except for August and December) on the third Monday of the month from 3:30 – 4:30 PM.

Committee Purpose:

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

Budget: \$250.00

Church Renovations:

First Presbyterian's significant contribution to a "green" church in 2024 was the addition of solar panels when the new roof was installed.

On-going Activities:

Adopt-A-Highway
Earth Day Celebration
Earth Care Congregation Recertification
Congregational Education Bulletin Boards – Quarterly Advocacy
Eyeglasses and cases collection and recycling
Battery collection and recycling
Plastic medicine bottle collection and recycling
Communicating environmentally focused community activities to the congregation

Additional Activities 2024:

- The committee chair attended the Faith in Place annual Environmental and Green Team Summit
- Equipment in the medical closet was recycled
- Geothermal Solar Celebration for St. Peter's United Church of Christ was attended by committee chair
- Adopt-A-Highway was scheduled for 4 events and 3 were held. One was cancelled due to lack of available participants
- Committee chair attended the presentation of Faith in Place at McKinley Presbyterian Church for an Earth Care presentation in February.
- Two books, donated by **Nancy Brombaugh**, *Buzzing with Questions* and *Rooting for Plants*, were placed in Mae Chapin parlor for children to read during services.

- The committee chair attended a County Board meeting where protecting the Mahomet aquifer was the main topic. Community support and attendance at the meeting supported a resolution to prevent additional carbon sequestration close to the aquifer until a study of environmental issues were completed. The resolution will be voted on in January 2025.

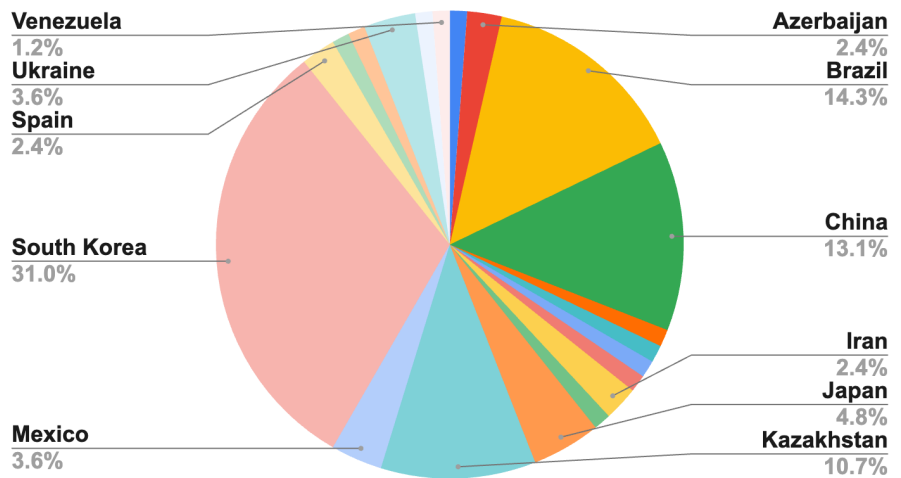
- Earth Day Services were planned and held.
- Committee member **Ginny Waaler** compiled a list of restaurants that used recyclable containers. She wrote letters of appreciation for avoiding Styrofoam and personally delivered these to those restaurants.

2025 Goals

- Our church is in transition with an interim pastor. We are evaluating all our resources and determining our future. The Environmental Committee is doing the same so our future goals are yet to be determined; however, we still want to:

- Highlight the Environmental Stewardship Committee and its work within the congregation.
- Continue to collect and recycle paper, batteries, glasses and other recyclables for the entire church.
- Highlight and celebrate Earth Sunday

Home Country



English Language Learners (ELL)

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR
 BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Volunteer and Committee Activity

The ELL program continues to grow and thrive, thanks to our dedicated and gifted volunteers. This year we have 18 in person tutors, and Mike Havey continues to teach online from Georgia. We have two other potential tutors who are working to decide how they would like to be involved.

Last semester we had up to 90 students enrolled and we had a large influx of visiting scholars from Kazakhstan. We also had students from over 20 other countries. 45% of our students last year were new to the program. Most hear about us by word of mouth, though some do contact us through the church website. Some students continue to return year after year, and our population and attendance fluctuate throughout the year.

Significant Accomplishments/ Highlights of 2024

1) We added a fifth class (YELLOW) at the intermediate level to



Our ELL class and guests enjoyed a Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner partnering with Gary Peterson and crew.

accommodate many of the students on our waiting list. It has been a very popular class, well taught by Anne Mankin, Roxann Bossenbroek and Judy Gordon.

2) We have 18 in-person tutors for five leveled classes, three days a week. Mike Havey teaches online with students who have left our program to return home. Most of his students are Brazilian since the time difference isn't too great.

3) We partnered with **Gary Peterson** and his crew to co-host the Thanksgiving Potluck dinner on November 20th. Pastor Beth offered the opening prayer and we counted about 84 people in attendance. It was a lovely event and many students appreciated the chance to meet church people and enjoy delicious food.

4) **Lidia Colon** continues to work as my assistant. She is such a big help in making photocopies, organizing our teaching materials each month, checking inventory, and helping to welcome new students. She has also done a great job of keeping track of attendance and creating summary graphs and charts for me. This has enabled us to have a good idea of who is coming and how often, so we can better manage class size and the waiting list.

5) Quotes from students:

I just want to say I'm really grateful for everything you've done. When I first arrived to the U.S., I felt really lonely and unsure of myself, but joining the classes made me feel welcome. Not only did I improve my English, but I also made great friends, built my confidence, and finally got the job I was working toward. Thank you so much to all the teachers

for your dedication and support. You've made a real difference in my life, and I'll always appreciate it. Will keep everyone in my memory. Wishing you all the best! (Franciele)

We would like to thank you for your welcome and attention from the moment we arrived. We see in this place much more than English classes, but rather a place of integration, care and affection. (Alan and Pamella)

Hello! I would like to continue going next year, it is my favorite activity, I feel very good there and I have improved, although it is not noticeable in my speech, I do notice it in my confidence and in my understanding, so little by little I will speak, thank you! Thank you Bonnie for this very noble work that you do for us. (Romina)

2024 Budget Expenditures

All of our funds went to provide paper goods, food and decorations for Cafe Time, parties, and the Thanksgiving potluck. With 40-50 students three days a week, we go through lots of coffee, tea and snacks. We are grateful for the church's support of this program. We do accept small donations from students, and they also bring food to share with everyone. We had no major expenses for the year.

Goals for 2025

- Recruit 2-4 more tutors. I am grateful for Lisa Rosenthal and Leslie Penner joining us this year. They are doing a great job. We have several teachers who have had significant health and family challenges and so sometimes cannot teach. We also have a few snow birds who are gone for part of the winter. I would love to have a few more teachers to cover some of those gaps. I would also love to be able to offer a moms class, or an evening zoom class, or classes on

Thursdays.

- Conversation Club on Thursdays. Starting in January, Vern Snoeyink has agreed to host a Conversation Club in the Cafe on Thursdays to offer an opportunity for students to improve their conversation and discussion skills, as well as to make new friends. We are also hoping it will be a place for folks on the waiting list to work on some of their English skills while they wait for a class opening. I believe that time with others in casual conversation is a real confidence booster and one of the best parts of our program.

- Standardize the curriculum for our lowest level class. The teachers of the red class are working together to create a standardized plan for this class. Having different teachers every day, can be a boost to learning, but we are recognizing that sometimes students are missing some basic vocabulary and grammar. We want to work together to find something that will be a bit more systematic, helping to give a more solid foundation for our lowest level learners.

As we move into 2025 we are facing lots of uncertainty, especially for immigrants and newcomers. I believe that our program rooted in Biblical values, offers a strong counter narrative to the political rhetoric. We say that immigrants are welcome here, that they have much to offer us, and that we want to do all we can to communicate welcome and love. As I interact with students and hear their stories, I know that the ELL program at First Presbyterian is doing just that. I love seeing students make new friends and grow in their confidence to speak English. It is a great privilege to be a part of such an amazing program! Whatever happens in the coming year, we will keep doing small things with great love.



Our Presbyterian Women enjoyed several Gatherings throughout the year.

Presbyterian Women

BY KATHLEEN SCHOEFFMANN, MODERATOR
KSCHOEFFMANN@YAHOO.COM

The purpose of Presbyterian Women is to:

- nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study,
- support the mission of the church worldwide,
- work for justice and peace, and
- build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

We strive to accomplish the above in a variety of ways including through Bible study in our three Circle groups that meet on the fourth Thursday of each month, either in person in Mae Chapin Parlor or by ZOOM. Circle of Joy meets at 10:30 AM and is led by **Brandi Lowe** and **Pat Tarr**, Circle of Faith meets at 1:00 PM and is led by **Nancy Brombaugh** and **Elizabeth Hewins**, and **Linda Peterson** leads

In May, 2023 we finished the study of *Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke - Acts* by Olive Mahabir and started *Let Justice Roll Down: God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All* by Patricia K. Tull in September, 2024.

There are three large group get-togethers called Gatherings throughout the study year.

- In May, 2024 - **Pat Phillips** presented a program "Continuing Sacred Encounters" from lesson 9, based on our Circle study books
- September, 2024, **Rev. Cindy Shepherd** gave a talk titled *Doing Justice with Love*
- December, 2024, the Uni High Madrigal Singers provided a musical program that included a sing-a-long. Each program was followed by refreshments provided by each Circle.

PW Mission and Service Projects include:

- Supplying cribs and layettes to newborns through Empty Tomb
- Sponsoring a Pakistan girl to attend school as a boarding student

Circle of Peace at 7:00 PM.

- Purchasing ten sewing machines through Presbyterian Gift Giving
- Donating to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for earthquake disaster relief in Turkey and Syria
- Giving to the Least Coin, Birthday and Thank Offerings
- Providing hats and scarves to Kemmerer Village students, sending yarn to our Cuba partners and making prayer shawls, all by Knifty Knitters

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 is supported entirely through cash donations and shared talents

Inquiries can be made to:

kschoeffmann@yahoo.com or info@firstpres.church

Transportation

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD
J.MUIRHEAD@COMCAST.NET

There was no regularly scheduled use of the Church Van in 2024. Limited use of the van was made for the Saturday Night worship service.

During the year, the Church van was used for special events including an ELL field trip to the Curtis Apple Orchard and providing transportation to the University High School Madrigal Choir who performed at our church.

The van was available to the DREAM program as a backup as needed. We were not able to meet a request from a family for transporting children to Sunday School due to a lack of a driver.

Transportation for college students was arranged by car with **Claudia and Bob Kirby** providing transportation. Additional drivers included: **Ken Chapman, Peter Yau** and **Tanya Deckert**.

John and Becky Muirhead provided regular transportation for an adult to attend worship services.

World Mission

BY JEANNIE SNOEYINK, CO-MODERATOR

JEANNIE.SNOEYINK@GMAIL.COM

World Mission meets monthly at 4:30 on the 4th Tuesday of the month. **Sallie Hutton** and **Jeannie Snoeyink** are co-chairs. Other committee members are **Claudia Kirby, Marvin Brombaugh, Wen-Mei Hwu, Paty Kamenga,** and **Audry Kukosama**. After many years of service in mission projects, **Steve Gritten** felt the need to resign from our committee. We thank him for all his valuable contributions over the years.



Left to right are **Gabriel Mboyo, Jacqueline Oualuel Seyi, Jeff and Christi Boyd, Solange Mboyo** and **Ginette Mukoko**.

World Mission was in full swing this year. With COVID on the wane, our mission co-workers are beginning to travel once again. In August, our mission co-workers, **Jeff and Christi Boyd**, who work in the Congo and surrounding countries, visited our church and gave a well-attended and well-appreciated presentation to members of our church on Monday, August 12 in Mae Chapin Parlor.

In October, our Caribbean co-workers, under the auspices of our church Cuba group and with World Mission support, gave a great report on their work to a small luncheon group. **Jose Manuel** also preached a very meaningful sermon for our church on October 6. We are fortunate to have such dedicated mission co-workers having a great impact for God in areas far from our shores.

This year World Missions was in charge of the Raindrop Offering and One Great Hour of Sharing as well as the Joy Offering. The Raindrop Offering in July collected \$2,041 for Mission Aviation Fellowship and their work via planes around the world reaching missionaries and people in need of their services including medical support and relief aid. We collected \$4,480.75 for One Great Hour of Sharing.

Small World

Presbyterian mission co-workers based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo pose with congregants following their presentation in Mae Chapin Parlor on August 12.

Stories and smiles were shared. **Jeff** serves as regional liaison and **Christi** as regional facilitator for women's and children's interests.

During the month of December, our Advent donations went towards Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. A total of \$3,827 was raised.

Christmas Eve, the Joy offering collection, as usual, provided support for Presbyterian church workers and their families in their time of need and leadership development and education for communities. We sent \$2,373 to the Christmas Joy offering.

We are thankful that our Local Missions Angel Tree project this December went to children in Kemmerer Village. **Marvin Brombaugh**, as World Mission liaison to Kemmerer Village, delivered all the Angel Tree gifts early in December.

We are so thankful for **Rachel Matthews** leadership and guidance in Missions over the past years. She was a valuable component in our Mission outreach. We pray we may be effective and serve God in this area as we function without her overall support.

We welcome any of our congregation who has a desire to participate in World Missions to become a working member of our committee.

WORSHIP

Worship

BY CAROL MILES, CHAIR

C-MILES3@COMCAST.NET

Worship's home for all of 2024 has been the cozy confines of Westminster Hall where worship is joyous and prayerful. Worshipers are loyal members, guests, and online participants.

A big worship change came in June when **Matt Matthews**, our pastor for more than six years, accepted a new call. God is the master of change, and He did not leave us hanging. **Beth**

Wagner stepped in as our transitional minister. More change came when **Matthew Shepard** took over musical duties in August. Beth and Matthew together have tweaked our Sunday service both musically and organizationally to align with the *Book of Order*.

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

Streaming of the Sunday service continues though it is somewhat limited in Westminster Hall. 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.



In 2024 we continued to worship in our temporary worship space while the elevator is replaced to our historic Sanctuary.

Additional aids at Sunday services are a French translator and a sign language interpreter.

The Saturday evening Francophone service has moved from Centennial Hall to the chapel in the Education Building.

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

our Methodist neighbors in their beautiful sanctuary. Fall weather was perfect for a Pet Blessing at West Side Park. The Christmas season brought a Blue Christmas service (December 22) and two candlelight Christmas Eve services. Some Sunday services became special too. In May we celebrated Cuba Sunday with our sister church in Luyano. Music Sundays are greatly enjoyed by the congregation.

This year brought two other special services: An installation service on April 14 for **Pastor Joe Lundy**, and a special musical service for **Joe Grant's** retirement.

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



Pastor Joe Lundy's Installation Service in April.



Music

BY DR. MATTHEW SHEPARD, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC
MATTHEW@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

This year brought unique challenges and opportunities as we worshipped in Westminster Hall due to the elevator renovation. Despite the change in location, the Music Department remained committed to offering uplifting, inspiring music to enhance our worship experience. In August, I began my tenure as Director of Music, succeeding **Joe Grant**. Since then, we've embraced growth and innovation, including the recruitment and hiring of five music interns—four undergraduate music education majors and one graduate conducting intern. Their contributions have elevated our musical offerings and worship while providing First Presbyterian the opportunity to mentor and inspire the next generation of church music leaders.

Highlights of the year included: World Communion Sunday in October: A percussionist joined us for a vibrant celebration featuring inspiring music from around the world.

Advent Concert: We were delighted to host a community handbell choir for a beautiful seasonal performance. **Lessons and Carols in December:** A string quartet accompanied us for a

moving Music Sunday service, bringing depth and beauty to the season. **Christmas Eve:** Once again, a string quartet enhanced the service, making it reflective and memorable. **Special Anthem Commission:** We premiered *I Praise You, O God*, an anthem commissioned from David Sims to honor Joe Grant's lasting impact on our church.

This year also brought a transition for our Bell Choir, as the director moved away during the summer. Without a replacement, the Bell Choir has been on hiatus. We continue to seek the best solution for the small number of players to offer their gifts in worship once again.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are excited about our planned collaboration with the Methodist Church for Good Friday. The choir is already preparing a special musical offering for this significant service. While we look forward to returning to the sanctuary,

the choir and I remain dedicated to offering excellent music for worship every Sunday in Westminster Hall.

Thank you for your continued support of the Music Department. Together, we celebrate the joy and power of music to transform our worship and draw us closer to God.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

First Presbyterian Church of Champaign Minutes of Congregational Meeting February 11, 2024, 9:50 a.m.

Moderator: The moderator was Pastor Matt Matthews followed by Elder Ann Webbink.

Present: A quorum of the congregation was present in person. A motion was made to elect Trena Thomas as Clerk of the Session to record the minutes. The motion was approved.

Purpose: The purpose of this meeting is to conduct the annual meeting of the congregation that is required by our constitution.

Call to order : A call to order was made at 10:50 a.m. with prayer given by Pastor Matt Matthews.

Business:

Mary Lou Bauer, Pat Tarr, Laurie Dey were nominated for the Nominating Committee. Motion was made to close the nominations and was approved. A vote was taken to elect the slate to the Nominating Committee and passed.

Pastor Matt introduced the report and made comments. Regarding staffing on page 12, Brian Cline's name was omitted in error.

Pastor Joe Lundy presented the upcoming Chili Cookoff. He intends for the event to help bring church members and guests together to help build community relationships.

Elder Tom Ulen presented an overview and update on the purchase of a new elevator for the church. The present elevator was purchased by a single church member in 1960. It has aged considerably and failed several times. A new elevator will require changes to the building to accommodate the new technology used, dimensions, and church structure of the current elevator pit. Architect and church member Gary Burgett is lending his expertise in selection and installation. Questions from the congregation were invited but none were voiced.

Elder Ann Webbink presented a report from the Finance Committee. Session has already approved the revised budget not reflected in the report. No capital fund drive will be initiated. Selling the Church's southwest Champaign property is being explored. Explanation of the elevator fund was given, inviting donations to the fund.

The Terms of Call were presented by Elder Ann Webbink on behalf of Pastor Matt Matthews and Pastor Joe Lundy. The terms were printed and handed out to the congregation. Motion was made to accept the Terms of Call. A vote was taken and approved.

Adjournment:

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. The vote passed.

The meeting was closed in prayer by Ann Webbink at 10:12 a.m. and was followed by a well-attended and enjoyed church brunch.

Respectfully submitted,

Trena Thomas, Clerk of Session

**First Presbyterian Church of Champaign
Minutes of Congregational Meeting
May 26, 2024, 10:00 a.m.**

Moderator: The moderator was Pastor Matthew Matthews

Present: A quorum of the congregation was present in person. Members were present and voted on the motion on Zoom as well.

Purpose: The purpose of this meeting is to hear and act upon Pastor Matt's motion.

Call to order: A call to order was made at 10:00 a.m. with prayer given by Pastor Matt Matthews.

Business:

The purpose of the meeting was stated, adding that Matt's last Sunday in the pulpit at First Presbyterian Church, Champaign will be June 23. Matt's last day on the payroll will be the last day of June. The required statement from Process for Moderating a Congregational Meeting for the Dissolution of a Pastoral Relationship regarding the limitations of acting upon the motion were read aloud.

The Pastor's motion was made as follows:

That the First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, concur with Rev. Matt Matthews' desire to dissolve the sacred pastoral relationship that church and pastor have treasured these six-and-a-half years in order that he can assume the duties of co-pastor (with Rev. Dr. Rachel Matthews) of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, Valdese, North Carolina.

The motion was seconded and passed by the congregation.

Adjournment:

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. The vote passed.

The meeting was closed in prayer by Pastor Matt at 10:03 a.m. and was followed by opportunities to chat with the pastors and to enjoy church coffee hour.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Trenna Thomas, Clerk of Session

**First Presbyterian Church of Champaign
Minutes of Congregational Meeting
November 10, 2024, 10:00 a.m.**

Moderator: The moderator was Pastor Beth Wagner

Present: A quorum of the congregation was present in person.

Call to order: A call to order was made at 9:57 a.m. with prayer given by Pastor Wagner.

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

Business:

Pastor Wagner stated 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:

Elders

Dick Arnould

Darrell Carlson (one year term)

Audry Kukosama

John Muirhead (one year term)

Ann Webbink (one year term)

Community Mission Deacons

Sarah Laufenberg

Linda Tauber Olson

Congregational Care Deacons

Carol Arnould

Linda Peterson (one year term)

Jack and Camille James

The motion was seconded and passed by the congregation.

Adjournment:

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. The vote passed.

The meeting was closed in prayer by Pastor Wagner at 10:00 a.m. and was followed by a time for fellowship and a well-attended and delicious brunch.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Trenna Thomas, Clerk of Session