

April 2025



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



Entering the Passion of Jesus

Our theme for Lent, Entering the Passion of Jesus: Picturing ourselves in the story, continues throughout Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday – Centennial Hall April 17, 5 PM

We will hear the Word proclaimed, share a light supper and fellowship with Communion as Jesus did that Last Supper.

Good Friday – First United Methodist April 18, 7 PM

Join us for a powerful Good Friday Service featuring Henrich Schutz's *Seven Last Words of Christ* – a 20 minute Baroque masterwork that brings Jesus' final words to life with profound emotion and depth.

Easter – April 20, 9 & 10:30 AM

We celebrate the risen Christ. At our 9 AM service, special music from our choir will be accompanied by a brass quartet. Communion will be observed at both services.

**2nd Sunday Brunch
April 13th**

**Come, enjoy brunch
Centennial Hall**

We will have a variety of brunch items along with some special sweet treats. Enjoy food and fellowship right after the 9 AM service.

Donations appreciated!

Volunteers are needed to help with the brunches. If interested, please contact Carol Ann Green, (cadgreen@comcast.net), Gary Peterson (amer_swede@yahoo.com) or the church office.



Good Friday Service at First United Methodist

The choir’s special musical offering this semester will be on Good Friday. Join us for a powerful service featuring Heinrich Schütz’s *Seven Last Words of Christ*—a 20-minute Baroque masterwork that brings Jesus’ final words to life with profound emotion and depth.

This moving setting will be performed by the combined choirs of First Presbyterian and First United Methodist, along with soloists and orchestra.

As we conclude our Lenten series, *Entering the Passion of Jesus*, this service serves as a meaningful capstone, drawing us deeper into the gravity of Christ’s sacrifice. Through the expressive power of Schütz’s music, we will reflect on the depth of Jesus’ final moments.

Join us on Good Friday for an evening of contemplation, beauty, and spiritual reflection.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

One Great Hour of Sharing is the single largest way that Presbyterians join together to share God’s love with our neighbors-in-need around the world. Each gift helps to improve the lives of people in challenging situations through three impactful programs:

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance...
32% of the offering works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters.

Presbyterian Hunger Program...
36% of the offering takes action to alleviate hunger and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed.

Self-Development of People...
32% of the offering invests in communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, poverty, and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these societal ills.

While gifts may be made at any time throughout Lent, the One Great Hour of Sharing will be received on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

Springing Forth

BY BETH WAGNER, INTERIM PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF
BETH@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Spring is emerging around every corner. As I walk to work, the birds are singing, the trees are budding and a few bulbs have burst forth and into bloom. Spring has sprung. There are emerging activities around the church as well.

The long-awaited elevator is IN! Not operational for the congregation yet, but we are getting closer. The painters are moving the scaffolding in the sanctuary each and every day. And they are planning on moving into the stairwells and entry way within the next week or so. We are looking forward to returning to the sanctuary very soon (no date yet though).

Over the next several months we will say good-bye to **Ann Petry, Sora and Matthew Shepherd** and welcome new people to help lead us in finances and music. New ways of doing things and new people doing it will emerge shortly.

The transition team has been meeting and has begun the process of selecting a Mission study to help us envision our future story. Once our future story has been selected the congregation will elect a Pastor Nominating Committee and the formal search for the next pastor will begin. Lots of activities are occurring around this church.

It reminds me of the message from the prophet Isaiah:
43:19 *I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not*

The elevator is now 100% complete. **We discourage the use of the elevator because of all the activity of painting, etc. in the Sanctuary.** The Sanctuary is approximately 75% complete. The painting of entrances and north and south stairs are also being started. Cleaning of all these areas will take place when painting is completed. All landscaping areas have had Spring clean-up and new mulch has been laid. Other improvements and replacements are always going on.



It's time to celebrate graduates! Contact Brandi Lowe at brandiscrapbook@yahoo.com with your information on where you are graduating from including degree and what you have planned for the future. If you have a graduate in your family, whether a church member or not, we would love to recognize them. Please submit their name, relation to you, information on future plans, and a picture.

DREAM Bible Club

The DREAM middle school youth and staff will again join us on our campus for fun activities, a Bible study, and to share a meal. We'll meet twice a month on Wednesday from 3:30 to 5 PM.

The remaining dates are April 16 & 30, and the last date will be May 14.

For more information, contact **Peter Yau** pmyau@illinois.edu (217-621-0448) with questions or to sign up to help in the kitchen, or **Holly Ewan Nordheden** hnordheden@gmail.com (217-621-3450) with questions or to sign up to serve as one of the 4-6 table partners we need to greet our guests and facilitate conversation with prepared questions during our shared meal.

Put the dates on your calendar and sign-up NOW!

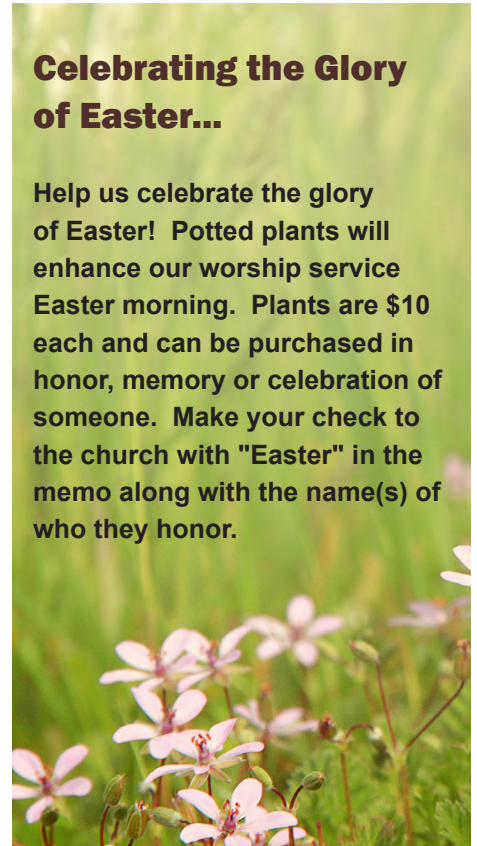
**Presbyterian Women
Spring Gathering
Thursday, May 22
11:30 AM
Westminster Hall**

Kena Jo Chapman will share her experiences and insights as she leads us in concluding this year's Bible study lessons in *Let Justice Roll Down*. A light lunch will be served following the program.

Please join us!

Celebrating the Glory of Easter...

Help us celebrate the glory of Easter! Potted plants will enhance our worship service Easter morning. Plants are \$10 each and can be purchased in honor, memory or celebration of someone. Make your check to the church with "Easter" in the memo along with the name(s) of who they honor.



Tea Time with Beth
Wednesdays, 1 - 3 pm
Hopscotch Bakery & Market
802 West John, Champaign

Come enjoy conversation
and tea with Beth.



We come here to encounter the teachings of Jesus. Many wanted to destroy him for these teachings, and sometimes we too find that his words challenge us, calling us to more than we think we can be or do. Forgive us, O God. Let us be shaped into a new people, made in the mold of justice, not the stamp of Caesar’s coin. You entered our story through Jesus, now help us to enter fully into the story of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Share the Love of Christ

Then the master told his servant, *Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.* Luke 14:23

Our Outreach and Church Growth Team was recently reconstituted. We are ten strong. We have big ideas for a First Church presence outside our walls. Evangelism is a frightening word to many of us, but we are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and action. We must not be afraid to give witness to how Christ has shaped our lives. A beginning may be to think of one person you know who is de-churched or un-churched. Build a relationship. Don't be afraid to invite them to join you in one congregational activity. What would be the impact on newcomers and on congregational vitality?

Your Outreach Committee includes **Carol Ann Green, Betty Hollister, Kevin Kim, Bob Kirby, Noni Ledford, Brandi Lowe, Gabriel Mboyo, Bruce Rainey, Pat Tarr.** Pastor Joe Lundy is staff. Join us.

We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard. Acts 4:20

Do you have good used bath towels that are crowding your linen closet? The Stride Shelter can use them. Just drop off with the front desk staff at the shelter on the corner of Washington and Market, Champaign.

Jays & Concerns

We express sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Newton “Newt” Dodds** who died March 6, 2025.

If you or a loved one is in the hospital or in need of a pastoral visit, please let the church office know. Our pastor, staff, and hospital visitors keep this information confidential.

Your church wants to be in touch. Blest be the tie that binds.

The Heart of Mission

English Language Learners

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR
BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Our ELL program is bustling! We have 100 students registered in six different classes. Not everyone comes every day, but we have used up all the chairs in the Café more than once this semester! Recently, we added a moms' class taught by **Eugenia Fitzgerald** and **Sharon Scott**. We have room for up to 8 moms, and currently average 4 each day.

Vern's Conversation Club on Thursdays has also been a big hit. We have between 16-25 students each week. It has been a good way to incorporate people on our waiting list and help students grow in their ability to speak confidently.

Our semester will end on May 14. At that time, we will say good-bye to many Kazakhs who have been part of our program this year. We will also have summer school beginning June 9—July 23. I am thankful that so many of our teachers are able to continue teaching through the summer. For most of us, the ELL program is part of our strengths and a way for us to change the narrative about immigrants.

Here is a quote from a student who recently left the program.

I got a new job opportunity, and I know this moment was only possible because of the learning and support I received on my English journey.

Every coffee conversation, every class, every tip, and every word of encouragement made a huge difference in helping me communicate with more confidence and reach this important goal. Your work goes beyond teaching a language – it changes lives, opens doors, and creates opportunities. It feels like a big family. In every class, I felt the comfort of my Brazilian home, like I was embraced by my own family. So, I want to express my deepest thanks. I will keep learning and carry everything I learned from you with me.

I am so grateful to be part of such an important ministry in our community. Thank you for your support of the ELL program.

Help DREAAM at This Year's Illinois Marathon

Thank you to FPCC for your ongoing support of DREAAM! As a Community Race Partner of Illinois Race Weekend on April 24-26, DREAAM is required to have 10 individuals volunteer on our behalf. Shifts are as short as 90 minutes, and volunteers can sign up to volunteer together!

The link to sign up to volunteer is here: <https://illinoismarathon.volunteerlocal.com>. When you register, please identify DREAAM as the Charity Running Partner that you are representing.

A Word from Salt & Light

Volunteer Program

The "Secret Sauce" that allows for community transformation here at Salt and Light is the volunteer work that runs our stores.

*Our participants rely on the volunteer opportunities for practical skill development and work experience.

*Our customers come back and support us with their shopping because of the top-quality inventory and customer service that volunteers make possible.

*Our staff depends on the support of the volunteer teams that help them carry out our operations in a hundred ways at a time each day.

*Our organization continues to be able to serve C-U with resources, relationship, and renewal because of the work of volunteers carrying out the million tasks that make it happen.

We need to increase our volunteer base this year to keep up with our growth! Come volunteer with us! We accept volunteers during all open hours--Monday through Saturday from 9 AM-8 PM, and Sunday from 11 AM-5 PM.

Let us help you get started! Visit our website <https://www.saltlight.org> or call 217-355-5654

Dessert Night

Dessert Night is an opportunity to discover Salt and Light's mission, explore our work, and see how you can support us through giving. Indulge in sweet treats while learning how you can make a lasting impact in our community!

What to expect:

- *Enjoy a variety of delicious desserts.
- *Take a behind-the-scenes tour of our Urbana facility with our Founder and Executive Director, Nathan Montgomery
- *Watch a short testimonial video.
- *Participate in an open Q&A session.

Our Dessert Nights are the fourth Thursday of each month from 7-8 PM. RSVP is required. For questions, please contact our Director of Development, **Kaela Williams** at kwilliams@saltandlightministry.org.

Together Fifteen Years Serving Christ

We celebrate fifteen years of fellowship with our siblings in Cuba this year. Our first trip in 2010 was an exploratory one seeking a congregation with whom we would partner. This led us to formalize our relationship with the Havana congregation at Luyanó in 2013. Enjoy these [photos](#) which are also available on our bulletin board in the hallway at Westminster Hall.

Who can you identify?

Connect – Cubans Yearn to Learn and Share Stories

Our Cuba blog <https://cubapartnersfirstchurch.blogspot.com/> keeps us connected with life in Cuba. The blog contains an outline of our annual Cuba study, historical and contemporary information you may

enjoy. Need an uplift? Enjoy the dance and music videos on the blog.

We plan a full Cuba Study beginning the last week of August with options to participate online or in person. This study will provide a foundation for those who will travel to Cuba in March of 2026. Tell us if you are interested and we will provide an application.

You can keep connected in other ways. Most Cubans use [WhatsAp](#). We also share a [Facebook](#) site.

Su Voz (His Voice) is a short daily devotion written by both pastors and lay people in the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. You can view it online or receive it each morning by [email](#).

Mission Changes at PCUSA

This past fall, the PCUSA unified the offices of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. We then heard about the possibility that up to 50% of our mission co-workers would be asked to resign with three months severance pay plus money for each year of service.

At that time, it looked like all our PCUSA mission co-workers might be able to retain their positions. As you can see from the letter we received from the Boyds, all mission co-workers are being dismissed. Some of them will be able to join other ecumenical partners as PCUSA joins with International Ecumenical Liaisons.

Financially, PCUSA has been unable to support all our current co-workers and practically, working together with other denominations, strengthens a global church. PCUSA leadership has not let individual churches know these final decisions. We have found out about it from our mission co-workers.

Mark Adams and his wife, **Maldonado Escobar** are retiring from their border work with Mexico, **Bob and Kristi Rice** hope to find more mission work in Africa, and **Jeff and Christi Boyd** are now in early retirement. We pray God will sustain them all in this transition period and continue to bless them and all the important work and people they have impacted throughout these many years.

From Our Missionaries Jeff & Christi Boyd and Bob & Kristi Rice

Greeting friends and supporters of our service to God's mission through the Presbyterian Church USA.

Many of you have reached out to us asking how we are affected by the reorganization happening as part of the unification of what was once the Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. We are very grateful for your prayers and expressions of concern for the impact of changes on our global partners, and for our mission service more personally.

As you may have understood from various news articles, such as the ones noted at the end of this letter,

what used to be Presbyterian World Mission ceases to exist as of March 24, with all mission coworker- and other World Mission staff positions concluding.

That does not mean global engagement will end for the denomination. But it will be restructured and made leaner in order to be financially sustainable moving forward. International Ecumenical Liaisons, initially selected from among the currently serving mission coworkers will be appointed to help guide PC(USA)'s global engagement and to resource presbyteries, congregations and mission networks as you engage with our global partners.

It pains us to let you know that this process has led to our early retirement after 35 years of mission service in Africa. When we met in Pakistan 38 years ago, we sensed a calling to serve the church together. We agreed that, if God entrusted us with children, ensuring their well-being would also be our shared mission.

At critical junctions during our mission service, we have discerned each of these commitments. Our family, including our three children, has been grateful for the opportunity we have had to serve with the PC(USA) since 1990.

As we understand that our service together as a couple does not fit with the new plans of the Interim Unified Agency of the PC(USA), we embrace the joy of new life within the family God has blessed us with. On Friday, March 21, we became grandparents. Our son and daughter-in-law gave

birth to their beautiful and healthy daughter, Maddy.

We are deeply grateful for the privilege of having been invited to work alongside global partners and the communities they serve. As we move to the next chapter in our lives, we carry in our hearts and minds a treasure of memories from our many visits, conversations and experiences with church partners in Africa, and with PC(USA) churches, members and friends who kindly hosted us and allowed us to share how we witnessed God at work through ministries run by our church partners.

We appreciate the various ways you have been coming alongside our mission service with PC(USA)'s global partners. Support of the church's global engagement remains important.

As the Presbyterian Church (USA) discerns this new path forward, we encourage you to remain connected and engaged. Please keep an eye open for any relevant articles from Presbyterian News service, starting with those that have already been published.

- March 17, 2025 - World Mission leader addresses questions regarding shift in global ministry approach
 - February 7, 2025 – The Shifting Patterns of Ecumenical Global Engagement
 - February 5, 2025 – Interim Unified Agency Announces Shift in Global Ministry Engagement
 - January 23, 2025 – A New Vision for Global Ministry
 - November 5, 2024 – Next Steps in Reimagining Global Mission
- Since March 24 was our last day of

service, we will no longer be able to communicate via our pcusa.org work e-mail addresses. Our personal addresses remain the same: pc.boyd.vanoverbeeke@gmail.com (Christi) and jcmsnboyd@gmail.com (Jeff). Wherever God leads us in our next steps, we stay connected in God's greater mission.

May the peace of Christ be with you!

Christi and Jeff Boyd

* * * *

Dear Mission Team and Friends:

Warm greetings to you in this season of Lent, as we reflect on the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We want to ensure you are aware of some significant changes happening in PC(USA) and for us personally.

This month the work and role of all mission co-workers with PC(USA) is being concluded. PC(USA) is transitioning to a new model of engaging with global partners currently called Global Ecumenical Partnerships. This [news article](#) from early February describes more about this significant shift: Any financial support sent to PC(USA) for mission co-workers in the future will go to support continued engagement with global partners in this new model.

For several months we have been preparing to transition from South Sudan. Last week we said farewell to friends and colleagues that we have worked with over 8 years and moved from Juba to the U.S. We will

be discerning over the next several months where God is calling us to continue in ministry, with a hope to return to Africa to serve. We anticipate that we will serve through a different sending agency in this next place of ministry.

If you want to hear updates as we discern our next steps or want to continue supporting us in our next chapter, please let us know. Our personal email address to use going forward is bob.kristi.rice@gmail.com. Our PC(USA) email addresses will no longer be active after March 24.

We are very grateful to you for your support, prayers, and partnership in this ministry. Your participation in this ministry has enabled us to equip and accompany the church in South Sudan as they train leaders and promote healing and reconciliation. We consider it a gift to be connected with you, and we hope to stay in touch. We would love to hear from you. If you have questions about the new model of PC(USA) or want to discuss our transition or how you can continue supporting us in future ministry, please let us know.

We pray for God’s Spirit to continue working in your congregation, to renew your faith and love as you reflect on Jesus’ death and resurrection in this season. Despite the tragic conflicts and suffering in our world, we have hope in our God who continues to show His love and restore life.

Gratefully,

Bob and Kristi Rice



Reach Across the Border - Share Your Love

Frontera de Cristo (Christ’s Border) and Café Justo (Coffee with Justice) bring coffee from farms in Southern Mexico to the American border where the coffee is ground, packaged and shipped. These efforts lift impoverished Mexican farmers to independence and thereby deter immigration. Your gifts have supported these ministries for many years.

Throughout April we invite you to sample a carafe of Café Justo at our Sunday hospitality table. We will provide a different choice each week. We will value your response with the flavor you prefer. Drop a tab into the “yes” (I like it) or “no” (not so good) bowls on the table.



Church Office Hours

Office hours are.

The church office is now open:

Mon-Thurs 8:30 AM - 2 PM

Friday 8:30 AM - noon

Please note these times.

**The Will of God
never takes you to
where the
Grace of God
will not protect you.**

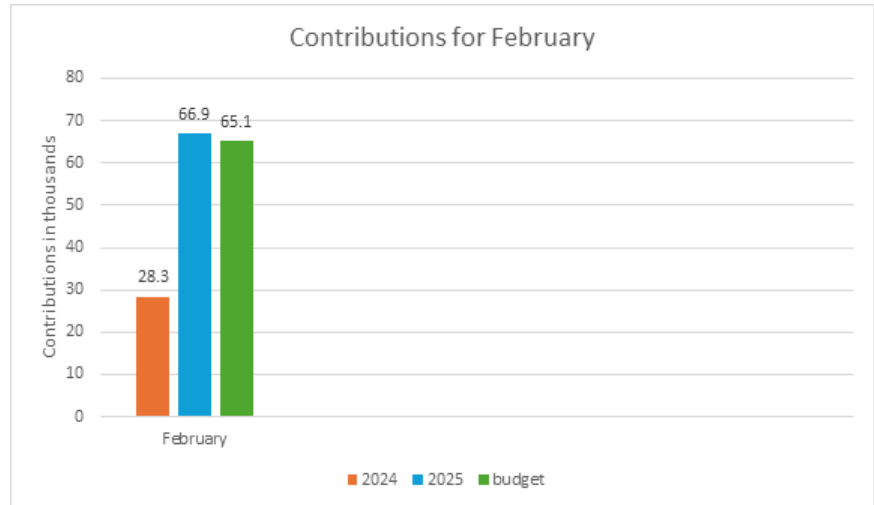
Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

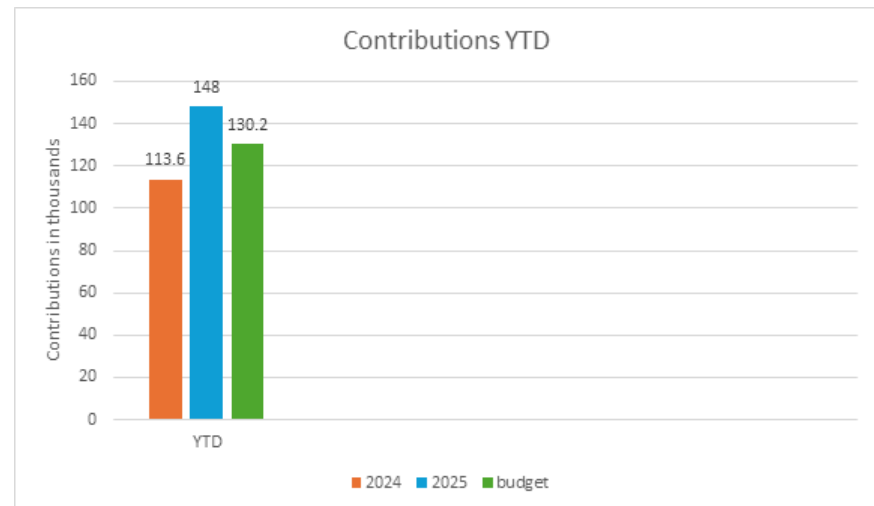
Contributions

Total February contributions: \$59K from plate and pledge plus \$7.9K from prepaid = \$66.9K This is \$38.6K more than last year and \$1.8K over budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$148K which is \$34.4K more than last year and \$17.7K under budget. At 16.7% of the year, we have 29.1% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.



Expenses

February expenses were \$83.7K, which is \$20.4K less than last year and \$4.7K over budget. Expenses YTD are \$148.6K, which is \$25.6K less than last year and \$9.4K under budget. At 16.7% of the year, we have spent 15.7% of the budget.



Balance YTD

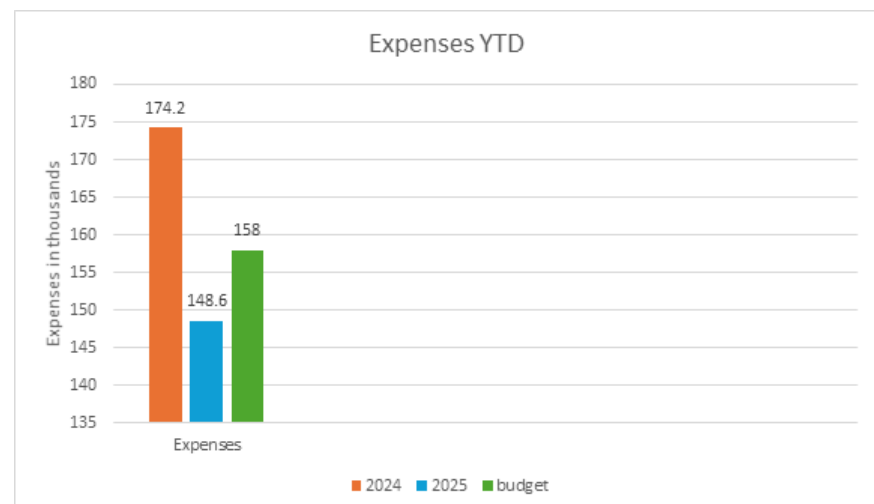
Revenue from all sources exceeded expenses by \$83,340 which is \$35.3K more than last year at the same time.

Session Designated Funds

\$1,201,684 which is \$21,553 less than last month.

Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$2000 was donated to local missions, \$2000 to the benevolence fund, \$2364 to PDA and \$470 to DREAAAM



Crockpot White Chicken Chili

By BETH WAGNER, WINNER OF THIS YEAR'S CHILI COOKOFF

Equipment

- 6-quart Crock Pot

Ingredients

- 1.5 lbs. chicken breasts
- 15 oz can great northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 4 oz can diced green chiles
- 15 oz tender cactus (drained)
- 1 onion or shallot, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-1/2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- big pinch dried oregano
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 small lime
- 1/4 cup milk, any kind
- 1 tablespoon flour
- Toppings: green Tabasco sauce, verde sauce, lime wedges, tortilla chips, shredded cheese, chopped cilantro, sour cream

Directions

1. Add first 12 ingredients — chicken breasts through lime juice — into a 6-quart crock pot then stir to combine. Cover then cook on LOW for 4 hours or until chicken shreds easily.
2. Remove chicken from crock pot then shred and place in the refrigerator. Whisk flour and milk together in a small dish then drizzle into chili and stir to combine. Cover then cook on high for 30 minutes. Stir shredded chicken back into chili then scoop into bowls and serve with toppings.



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302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

P: 217.356.7238

E: info@firstpres.church

www.firstpres.church

Sunday:

- 9 AM Worship
- 10 AM Coffee and Fellowship
- 10:10 AM Sunday School/Adult Discussions

Online Worship is also available at 9 AM on Sunday mornings thru YouTube, Facebook, and our church website. Go to FirstPres.Live

Contact the church office for more information.

Pastors:

- Beth Wagner..... Interim Pastor/Head of Staff
- Joseph Lundy..... Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Staff:

- Ritchie DrennenFacility Manager
- Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant
- Robert FerrerAudio-visual Technician
- Fred Foster Evening Custodian
- Marcia Franks Office Administrator
- Ann Petry..... Accounting
- Matthew Shepard Director of Music
- Sora Shepard Organist/Pianist
- Bonnie Ward..... English Language Learner Director

Staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by @firstpres.church For example, beth@firstpres.church

Church Office hours:

- Mon-Thurs 8:30 AM - 2 PM
- Friday 8:30 AM - noon

The newsletter is published monthly.
Deadline is the third Monday of the month for the following month's edition.
Send submissions to marcia@firstpres.church.