

April 2026



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Times Are Changing!

Sunday morning worship
time has moved to
9:30 AM



2nd Sunday Brunch April 12th

**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 9:30 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.



MUSIC *Sunday*

April 12 9:30 AM Worship

Our choir will combine with
the choir of First Presbyterian Church of Urbana
to present the Faure Requiem
accompanied by orchestra.

Please join us!

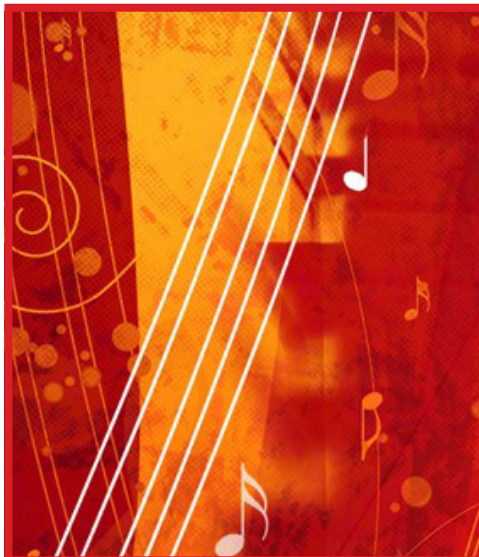
We Have NEW Nametags

Nametags are provided for members of the church. It's important with a new minister coming in the near future, that you wear your nametag to help our staff get acquainted.

If you cannot find your nametag, please contact the church office (info@firstpres.church; 217.356.7238).

The cost for your first nametag is provided by the church. If you should lose your nametag, you will be responsible for the \$10 expense to replace it.

Jean René has been a friend of First Church for the past decade. Let's show up for him on April 9.



Upcoming Spring Concerts

April 19 3 PM Clarinet Concert featuring **Gary Winder**

May 2 3 PM Piano/Classical Guitar Concert featuring **Yuxi Chen** and **Yuan Cao**

FREE open to the public
Concerts will be held in the church Sanctuary



Letter from Pastor Beth

The following letter was sent to members and friends in March announcing Pastor Beth's retirement as Interim Pastor/Head of Staff.

March 23, 2026

Dear 1st Presbyterian Church family,

I want to share with you, that over the last several months, I have been discerning a call to a new place called retirement.

As I spent time in prayer, talked with my coach, counselor, and the Presbytery, it became clear that I am ready to give retirement a try! My family and I have decided that my retirement will officially take place on June 12, 2026. My final Sunday will be June 7, 2026. I will spend June 8-10 packing my church office and saying final good-byes with the staff and congregation. June 10-12 will be my final vacation days for this contract year.

While June feels a long way off, it will speed by, especially with all the activities the transition taskforces are working on; those will not stop simply because I am leaving because The Holy Spirit is at work in this church, preparing for your next pastor and your next chapter. While the next pastor has not yet been identified know that the staff and Human Resources are working to create a smooth interim period.

One thing I have learned about saying goodbye to over ten churches is that a good goodbye leads to a great "hello"! I want you to be ready to welcome a new pastor into your midst, wholeheartedly, and that will happen, especially if we have a good goodbye. I will continue to host weekly coffee and invite anyone who wants some time for a personal goodbye to let me know, so that we can schedule it.

I keep going back to the imagery of the Transitional Dance I preached about on my 1st Sunday in Champaign, and I remember telling you it was an improv-style dance, and not to worry, because before we danced, I would teach you all the steps. So now all the steps have been learned, and on June 7th, we will dance our final dance together. Let us do it with passion and delight.

I have one more request: please respect the PCUSA professional boundaries of ministry and do not ask me to officiate at weddings, funerals, or baptisms, to make pastoral calls, or to provide counsel regarding personal situations or this congregation. After a time (at least one year) and if the current pastor and the governing council wish to invite me to participate on occasion in the life of the church, I will gladly do so if I am able. Please let the new pastor take the initiative. I want only the best for this congregation and will do all I can to ensure the future health of your ministry, without weakening the ministry of your new pastor. Please continue to honor our respect and affection for one another by honoring these guidelines.

It is and has been my privilege and delight to serve as your transitional pastor.

Thank you, and may the Lord bless you and keep you today, tomorrow, and forevermore,
Pastor Beth

Kickstart the First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry

Why a New Food Pantry?

Although there are other food pantries in Champaign, the need for food assistance remains great. Each pantry operates on a limited schedule and usually cannot provide enough supplies to sustain a family for an entire week—or sometimes even for a day. Additionally, to ensure that resources stretch as far as possible, most pantries limit the number of visits that a person can make in a certain period; for example, a person may only be able to visit a pantry once a month. The result is that people facing food insecurity must visit multiple pantries; any single pantry cannot possibly satisfy our community's need.

The Importance of Location

It's really all about location, location, location. Just to give you a sense of the need at the church's location, on February 16, the Eastern Illinois Foodbank conducted a one-hour pop-up pantry in our parking lot. More than 40 people came to this pop-up event, and only one of them had been previously registered with the foodbank. Foodbank representatives reported to us that most pop-up events only get just a handful of people. We had more than 40. The location of a pantry is crucial, and our church's location provides a valuable complement to the existing pantries in Champaign, as we will be one of the few serving this area.

How You Can Help

Today, we are asking for your support for our pantry's soft launch, which is tentatively planned for July.



Our new Food Pantry (the old woodworking shop) is ready to be stocked!

Specifically, we request donations of certain food items for our opening day, with the goal of supplementing food supplies for 60 families. Many filled our Easter basket on Easter Sunday!

Requested Items

Just a quick word about what we're seeking. For this launch, we are seeking only dry, canned or boxed shelf-stable food items. We cannot accept baked goods, produce, or foods that require refrigeration at this time. The complete list of needed items can be found below in the handy shopping list.

There is one item that is brand and type specific: Kraft Macaroni and Cheese with squeeze cheese. Food pantry veterans reported to us that there really is no substitute for this

product. And we're asking for the type with squeeze cheese because that way, pantry recipients will not require milk or butter to prepare this meal.

Dropping Off Your Items

We have received very generous donations already! THANK YOU to our wonderful donors! If you wish to deliver items during the week, please contact one of the people listed below so we can set up a time to help.

Questions

If you have any questions, please contact **Marty/Darrell Carlson, Ann Webbink, Bob Kirby, or Anne Craig**. We are excited to partner with you all and prayerfully pursue our mission to feed our neighbors.

Thank you so much!

FPC Food Pantry Shopping List



Dry goods

- beans (bag)
- rice
- oatmeal
- pasta
- lentils

Main course/protein

- chili with beans
- Kraft Mac & Cheese with squeeze cheese packet (no substitutions)
- peanut butter
- tuna (chunk light or white)
- canned chicken breast

Vegetables

- canned peas
- canned green beans
- canned mixed vegetables
- canned corn
- canned carrots

Miscellaneous

- beans (canned)
- spaghetti sauce
- powdered milk
- tomato soup
- chicken noodle soup
- canned fruit

Copies of the 2025 Annual Report can be found in the kiosks at church or on the church website.

Francophone Bethesda Fellowship

All are welcome Saturdays from 6 -8 PM. This small group of new Americans whose native languages include French gathers in the chapel. We pray. We read scripture. We pass “shalom” with each other. We find peace in this challenging time. One of the best parts of our spiritual experience is our extended prayer time. We worship through words and music, then bring our burdens to God in faith. On first Saturdays we receive communion.

Join us at 6 and feel free to depart at any time.



April Coffee with Beth
beginning Thursday, April 16

Thursdays, 10-12 noon

Hopscotch Bakery
Champaign

Enjoy coffee and conversation

Spiritual Formation

First Kids – First Youth

But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' Luke 18:16



Our children and youth are flourishing and our teachers are amazing. We still have space for more volunteers. So, if you would like to be a teacher or an assistant or furnish snacks or just attend our planning meetings you are welcome. We meet on first Wednesdays at 5:30 PM on zoom. And you can reach us any time at info@firstpres.church.

We also invite you to spend some time with our young people in June and July on a Sunday to describe your role in the church. You will set an example. If you are a greeter, you can describe your role and then invite a young person to greet with you. If you sing in the choir, you can teach a song they could share on Sunday morning. If you are an usher, you can invite some young person to work with you. We will meet each Sunday. That is every Sunday. We will enjoy a summer Bible school July 27-31.

Our current team includes **Lisa Ainsworth, Mary Lou Bauer, Judy Hendrickson, Betty Hollister, Stephen Kemboi, Claudia Kirby** (moderator), **Fiona Leakey, Noni Ledford, Rev Joe Lundy** (staff), **Dave McNattin, Margaret and Terry Noonan, Pat Tarr, Trena Thomas and Blaise Zamena.**

Please know we will welcome you with open arms to our growing team.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth"
3 John 1:4.

Sunday Adult Discussions

Grab a cup of coffee and join our Adult Discussions each Sunday following worship in the Parlor. (We do not meet on the second Sunday when brunch is offered.)

April 19 Feeding God's Children
Marty Carlson and **Ann Webbink** will tell us about our new food pantry initiative.

April 26 Protecting God's Earth Pt. 1
Cindy Shepard leads a discussion of the negative ecological impact of giant AI data centers.

May 3 Protecting God's Earth Pt. 2
Cindy Shepard leads a discussion of actions we can take to reduce damage caused by data centers.

May 17, 24, 31, June 7, 21, 28
Bob Kirby leads a six-part series of lessons about Cuba and our sister congregation in Havana.

Presbyterian Men

Presbyterian men meet Tuesday mornings from 8:30-9:30 AM for coffee, donuts, fellowship and Bible study. Join us in Mae Chapin Parlor or on Zoom as we complete a study written by Max Lucado, *Life Lessons from Hebrews*.

On completion, we will begin a new study, *Christian Virtues*, by Cindy Bunch.

Join us again each Friday at 8:15 AM on Zoom for prayer. We pray in turn in our own ways and languages for about twenty minutes. For Zoom links to either of these gatherings go to info@firstpres.church.

Fruits of the Spirit

International Visitors working on English language proficiency are welcome to attend a program on fruits of the spirit based on *Galatians 5:16-25*.

Learning will focus on reading, listening and speaking.

We will gather in room 204 from 11:15-12:15 on Thursdays beginning April 16. **Anne Craig** and **Bob Kirby** will lead.

The Heart of Mission

Certified PC(USA) Earth Care Congregation



We are certified as an Earth Care Congregations by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Presbyterian Hunger Program through February 2027. The Earth Care Congregation certification is designed to recognize churches that take seriously God's charge to "till and keep" the garden, that is our shared common home.

Since 2010, this PC(USA) program certifies and celebrates environmental ministry across 4 major areas of a congregation's life: worship, education, facilities, and outreach in the community. This program currently has 4.5% of all PC(USA) congregations and continues to grow each year.

Earth Care Congregations exist as important examples for congregations across the country. One of the goals of this program is to inspire churches to care for God's earth in a holistic way, through integrating earth care into all aspects of their church life. By the time a church has recertified for several years, the earth care ethic becomes ingrained in a congregation's culture,

spreads to the surrounding community, and impacts the personal lives of individual church members.

We are one of the 373 congregations in 42 states that chose to dedicate themselves to intentional care of God's earth this year. This denominational program for churches has lasted longer and been more successful than some other models we've seen and the individual churches deserve all the credit for the success of the program. Our Earth Care Congregations are vital parts of their communities and inspirational witnesses to caring for God's creation and we are so grateful for their presence in the world," says Jessica Maudlin, Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Adapted from PSEI newsletter March 23, 2026

Diversity and Inclusion

More than just welcoming new faces through the door, true inclusion requires a congregation to fundamentally shift who it is — not simply expect newcomers to conform to the culture already in place.

That was the central message delivered Saturday morning by the **Rev. Jihyun Oh**, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and executive director of the Interim Unified Agency, as she addressed the 2026 Georgia

Presbyteries' Gathering at Epworth by the Sea.

She began by challenging what she described as a common conflation in PC(USA) circles between diversity and inclusion. Having people present in a room, she argued, is not the same as having their full personhood incorporated into the life of the body. She illustrated the distinction with a personal anecdote about a tight-knit friend group adding a new member. "The expectation was that the new person would then come and adjust to the group that was already there — not that the group as a whole would shift because of the addition of a person." That expectation, she said, is precisely what most churches quietly maintain, often without realizing it.

Oh grounded her theology of inclusion firmly in both Scripture and the PC(USA)'s constitutional foundations. Referencing the Book of Order's F-1.0404, she walked the gathering through the denomination's foundational call to a new openness — in membership, in discernment, in institutional forms and in God's continuing reformation of the church. "We are to be open to new membership. We are to be open to what God is doing in the world," she said. "That might mean different people, different sorts of things, different ways of being church in the world."

She paired that constitutional grounding with three New Testament passages. From *2 Corinthians 5:15-17*, she highlighted the call to no longer regard anyone from a merely

human point of view. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away."

From *Galatians 3:27-29*, she cited the baptismal formula that erases the categories of Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female — "be encouraged," she said, "to take those things that are dividing, excluding, othering, bringing people apart into us-versus-them categories, to actually say we need to be working towards something bigger, a bigger we." Oh read aloud the advice from *Romans 12:2-5* to "not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." calling it another invitation in the Bible "to be grounded in God's grace, to think more expansively, maybe more organically, about what it means to be church, but also to have our minds renewed about the way we think about what it means to be the body of Christ, to be church, to be participating in God's mission and ministry in the world."

For complete text click [here](#).

In Favor of Love, Truth and Justice

Psalm 45:4-6:

Your glory is to advance triumphantly, fighting for truth and doing justice to the humble.

Your right hand performs great deeds!

Psalm 45:4 (NRSV)

As the psalm says, we must act with truth and justice, because our glory doesn't come

from riches, nor from wisdom, nor from material things, but from our ability to move forward in the midst of adversity, from our voice when it rises up in favor of justice, from when we reach out to those in need and do so from the heart, without seeking approval, fame, or compliments. It's not easy, but it's what God commands us to do, and it's also what Jesus did while he was among us.

Let us help sincerely without expecting anything in return; not only those we like, for it is easy to love those we like, but difficult to bless those who curse us, and that's what the call is all about.

Let us walk in paths of righteousness that prevent us from remaining silent, that overturn exclusionary positions and everything that does not speak in the name of God's healthy and pure love.

Prayer:

God, guide us in paths of righteousness, help us to be more sensitive and understanding, and teach us how to love. Amen.

Su Voz (His Voice) is a daily devotion written by members of our sister church in Cuba. To receive Su Voz daily by email go to info@firstpres.church.

Our Church In Cuba Today



Rev. Jihyun Oh is the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the **Rev. Jimmie Hawkins** is the Advocacy Director for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), leading the Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C., and the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations. He directs PC(USA) social witness policies, advocating on issues like poverty, racial justice, and gun violence, while supporting the church's Matthew 25 vision.

Read what these two leaders learned on their recent [visit to Cuba](#).

Technology Frustration

Bring your frustrations and devices to the church library at 10:45 Sundays. Phones, i-pads, lap tops, our grad students will do their best to send you away unburdened.



Your Name is Love

Verse of the day

Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.

- Philippians 2:3-4

Voice of the day

If equal affection cannot be, / Let the more loving one be me.

- W.H. Auden, "The More Loving One"

Prayer of the day

Lord, your name is Love. In an era that suffers from the absence of it, steer us out of scorn and into pursuing the highest good for others, regardless of their response.

From Sojourners 3/26/2026

Our Vision Statement (adopted 2014)

We envision a multi-generational, multi-cultural, servant-missional church at the heart of the city.

- Multi-generational means that God is calling us to both honor our existing members and to dramatically improve our ministries to children, youth, and families.
- Multi-cultural means that we wish to intentionally seek to be racially and culturally diverse.
- Servant-missional means that we desire to have a measurable impact on our neighborhood, city and world.
- At the heart of the city means that we serve the needs of a revitalized downtown.

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.

Definition of Discipleship (adopted 2014)

A disciple has:

- A heart for Christ alone,
- A mind transformed by God's word,
- Hands that serve,
- Knees that bend in prayer,
- A voice that speaks good news, and
- A spirit of sacrifice and stewardship.



Face to Face with Robert Ferrer, Sound Tech

Tell us a bit about yourself and your family.

I was raised by my grandparents who had immigrated here from Poland and Russia. They met at an English language class. I have five siblings and three children, mostly living in the Los Angeles area. As for me, I have always loved learning. This passion led me to three master's degrees, in education technology, information science and computer science. It was computer science that brought me to Illinois. And I am happy to be here.

What about your work and other interests?

I took a position at the U of I with information technology, audio visual and conference support. It was great work for thirty years. I am currently interested in learning philosophy, linguistics and history. Theology is also my current passion. I have substituted for my rabbi and written sermons. I can get rather deep into theological discussions. Some of you know that I do like to talk.

What has been your experience at First Pres?

This is a loving place. People go out of their way to support each other. I am honored to be part of the community.

What do you hope for your future?

I am seventy! I just want the world to settle down.

Anything else you would like to say?

Yes, I must say how much we appreciate our volunteer tech staff. They are capable, amazing, selfless and dedicated. They serve behind the scenes, but they are a critical part of our worship service. Thank them when you walk back to the exits on Sundays.

The church uses Church Community Builder (CCB) as the church database which gives individuals access to addresses, emails, and their own individual records of giving. We no longer provide a printed Church Directory as soon as we print it, it is usually already out-of-date since information changes on a regular basis.

To gain access to the church database, email info@firstpres.church and a link will be sent to you to set up a password for your account.

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total February contributions: \$97.5k from plate and pledge plus \$8.2K from prepaid= \$105.7k This is \$38.8k more than last year and \$43k over budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges are \$171.6k. This is \$23.6K more than last year and \$ 46.2K over budget At 16.7% of the year, we have 33.7% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

Expenses

February expenses were \$62.1 K, which is \$21.6k less than last year and \$15.8k under budget. Expenses YTD are \$114.2k, which is \$34.4k less than last year and \$41.6k under budget. At 16.7% of the year, we spent 12.2% of the budget.

Balance YTD

Revenue from all sources exceeded expenses by \$147.1K.

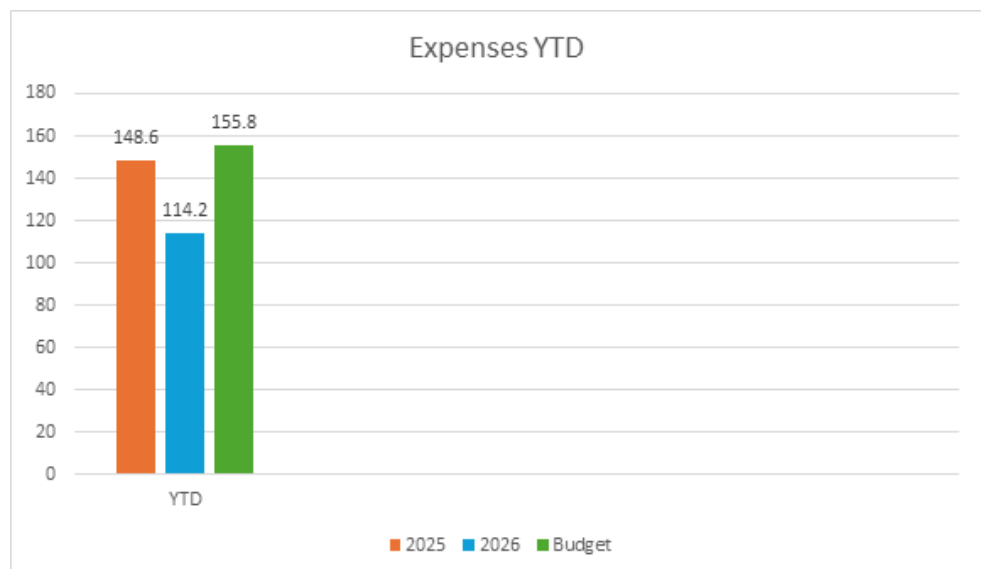
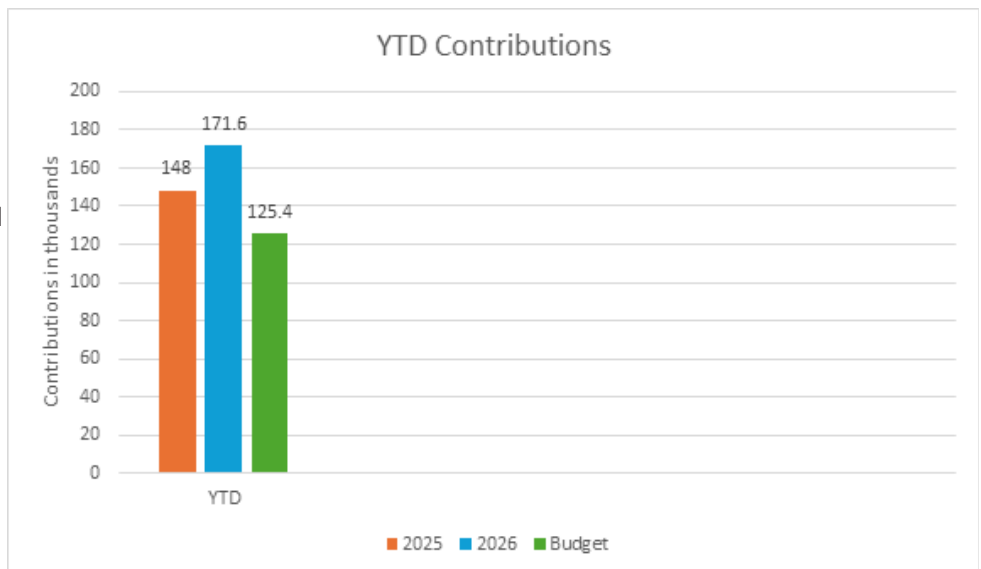
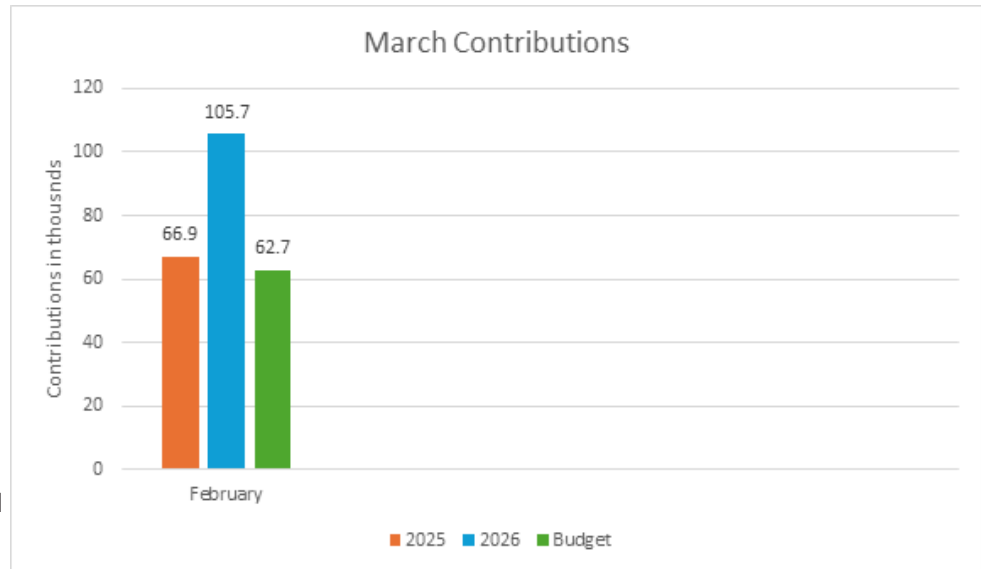
Session Designated Funds

\$1,067,328 which is \$11.6K more than last month.

Summary of Restricted Accounts

Woodshop/pantry donations were \$500, \$715 was donated to the General Memorial fund, \$200 to the Benevolence Fund, \$4000 local missions, and \$500 to OGHS

Note: Non pledges continue to run high. Marcia expects that some were actually pledges but never returned their 2026 pledge card.





FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

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:

- 9:30 AM Worship
- 10:30 AM Coffee and Fellowship
- 10:40 AM Sunday School/Adult Discussions

Online Worship is also available at 9:30 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:

- Yuxi Chen..... Organist/Pianist
- Ritchie Drennen Facility Manager
- Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant
- Robert Ferrer Audio-visual Technician
- Fred Foster Evening Custodian
- Marcia Franks Office Administrator
- Samuel Stephenson..... Director of Music
- Jill Stewart..... Accounting
- 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.