

August 2024



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



**There will be no Second Sunday Brunch in August, instead we will enjoy the waning days of summer with an All Church Picnic in the park.**

**Please join us on Sunday, August 18, at Hessel Park Pavilion at 4 o'clock. The church will provide sandwiches, beverages and tableware. You may bring your favorite picnic food or dessert.**

**In order to know how many sandwiches are needed please RSVP to the church office or send an email to [info@firstpres.church](mailto:info@firstpres.church).**

August Coffeeshop Office Hours  
Thursdays, August 21 & 28  
10 AM - 12 NOON



Beth is headed southwest for coffee on Thursday, August 21 and 28.

The new location is Espresso Royale in the Village Green Plaza 2401 Village Green Place (Windsor and Duncan) next to the Walgreens. Plenty of free parking and lovely drinks, snacks and ice cream.

Join her from 10-12 noon on those dates!

## The Dog Days of Summer

BY BETH WAGNER

BETH@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

We have hit the “dog days of summer,” as my mother used to say. The corn is more than knee high, the temperature is hovering in the upper 80s, pushing toward 90, and you know that a few 100-degree days are in our future.

As I grew up during the ‘dog days of summer,’ my siblings and I spent time between my grandparents in Clinton, MO, my grandma in Malta Bend, MO, and visiting cousins on the family farm in Alma, MO. The days were filled with simple yet profound experiences—watering the garden, looking for ripe tomatoes, flipping burgers at the county fair, and picking the wildflowers that grew in the ditches around the farm. We might catch a frog or two from the pond, and we would never miss a chance to cuddle with the barn cats and kittens.

It was a world that I thought was amazingly beautiful. And my grandparents never missed an opportunity to remind me that this world was a beautiful gift God gave to be cared for. I believed that and was beguiled by the beauty of God’s creation I was to care for.

Our worship series for August and early September is called *Beguiled by Beauty* and is based on a book written by Dr. Wendy Farley by the same name. This is a quoted fragment from her book. “An early 6<sup>th</sup>-century theologian described God as “beguiled by beauty.” The Creator was lured by a longing for beauty and so set in

motion a world of immense diversity and goodness. We were made for this Divine Goodness. We were made inherently worthy, not by our “doing,” but by our simply being. All things are beautiful—not by a standard of “pretty” as seen by our eyes, but by an essence of sacred worth that is sensed by the spirit. This is the root and heart of compassion and justice.

Practices of contemplation help us train our gaze to these deeper truths.” In this worship series, we will dwell with the God of Divine Goodness, who is deeply in love with us. We will practice ways to return that love as we fall more deeply in love with creation and with one another.”

As I prepare for this series, I have found Dr. Farley’s book refreshing and helpful in thinking about this idea of God being in love with beauty—not pretty, but beauty. If our eyes spy on the beauty of the creator’s world, we are profoundly in touch with our creator. Are you ready to be Beguiled by Beauty? I warmly invite you to join us in worship, either in person or online, beginning August 4<sup>th</sup>.

Blessings,  
Beth

## A Fond Farewell...

BY JOE GRANT, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

The music program has plenty of news for August! (Most of it you already know.)

First, let me thank you all for your prayers and personal support during the last month when I was in and out of the Emergency Department with kidney stones and what eventually was diagnosed as acid reflux instead of a heart problem. I’m feeling much better and am regaining my strength.

By now you are all aware that I am retiring as of August 18, and I can’t say enough about how thankful I am to have been able to serve as your Director of Music and conductor of the choir for the last 28 years. The dedication of the choir members, bell players, various organist/pianists, and the support of staff members and congregation has been all that I could hope for.

I am also very pleased that you have been able to secure **Dr. Matthew Shepard** to replace me in this position. He is a wonderful musician, a warm and engaging person and he was smart enough to marry Sora, so I don’t think you can go wrong with this leadership team.

Becky and I will remain here in Champaign, and we look forward to continuing our friendships and personal relations with all of you.

**We wish Joe Grant well  
in his upcoming retirement.**

**La Bahia Grill**

FROM THE COMPASSION, PEACE & JUSTICE TEAM

Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team promotes local businesses owned by minority



residents.

Located a few steps from First Church at 134 W. Church St, this [charming eatery](#) offers breakfast, lunch and supper seven days a week. The space is clean, comfortable and quiet enough for easy table conversation. The specialty at Bahía is seafood, but they also offer traditional Mexican cuisine, several vegetarian options, daily specials as well as a children’s menu.

Many of the choices are under \$15.00. We found the service friendly and timely. Owner **Leonel Carmona** came to the United States at age fourteen working and learning in restaurants since. His partner **Magaly Avila** is a former teacher who continues to work in the education industry.

We ordered Salchicha a la Mexicana and Pollo Asado with Mexican Sangría, a non-alcoholic specialty beverage. We were impressed with the food and drink, decor and exceptional service.

**Elementary Sunday School Pool Party**

We are excited to announce a special pool party for our elementary-aged Sunday School class! This fun event is a wonderful opportunity for our younger members to enjoy fellowship and make lasting memories.



**Details:**

- **Date:** August 11, 2024
- **Time:** 4-6pm
- **Location:** The Ledfords home, 1709 Mayfair Rd, Champaign, IL
- **RSVP:** [joseph@firstpres.church](mailto:joseph@firstpres.church)

Parents are encouraged to participate. A current Family Registration Form is required and is available at the church office.

We invite the entire congregation to join us in celebrating and supporting our young members. Let's come together to show them how much they mean to our church family. Your prayers and encouragement for this event are greatly appreciated.



**Face to Face with  
Pat Mitchell**



Pat serves as a greeter for Sunday worship.

**What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?**

It was after my first husband passed and finding employment in Champaign that I quickly decided I should move from Mahomet to Champaign with my two young daughters so I wouldn't be doing so much driving back and forth. First Presbyterian had a strong reputation for their youth Sunday School and Senior High Youth Club, and I have been a member of this church since 1980.

**What has been the highlight of your church experience?**

I have never regretted joining First Presbyterian because of the positive influence the Senior High Youth Club and its Christian leadership provide to all who were a part of that program. To this day, I still see many positive traits my daughters were given all those many years ago as they parent their own children. Plus, I have had many friends over the years who continue to support me each and every day and I cherish them all, especially now.

**Tell me about your family and your work.**

I have been blessed with two beautiful daughters, two caring sons-in-law, and four very Grandma loving grandchildren, and all of them keep in contact with me on various topics and events.

I am a retired Legal Assistant employed by Meyer Capel law office, where I worked for over 20 years!

**What do you do in your free time?**

Try and relax whenever I get some free time! I grew up on a farm in southern Illinois as one of three sisters. Daddy had no sons to help outside with the farm work and not being fond of cooking or inside cleaning, I did all the outside chores. To this day, I enjoy outside doing whatever needs done around the house and a daily walk.

**Who are your favorite Bible characters?**

For sure, the Bible has many loving, and some thought-provoking characters, but what I enjoy most is my "love for good Gospel music". Growing up, every Sunday morning while we were getting ready for church, my parents would turn on the radio, and eventually our black and white tv, there would be awesome Gospel music to enjoy listening to. My two favorite and most meaningful hymns are "How Great Thou Art" and "His Eye Is On the Sparrow".

**What advice can you give on how to best be the church?**

Be willing to pass the love all of us receive from God on to others when we see someone in need. Enjoy wonderful friendships of thoughtfulness, kindness, support and love which are blessings everyone needs.

**"We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it."**

**Wendell Berry**



Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole hearts and have not loved our neighbors as ourselves, through what we have done and left undone.

Forgive us when we return to the familiar in fear rather than promise. Forgive us when we turn inward rather than become the hosts you call us to be. Guide us as we seek to turn around toward greater love. Lead us to travel in your ways. Amen.

### Men's Prayer Group

The men of the congregation gather each Friday at 8:15 AM on Zoom for prayer. We pray in turn, each in our own way and in our language of choice. We praise God and ask forgiveness. We pray for the world, our nation our communities and our congregation.

All men are welcome.



The [Rev Jihyan Oh](#) was installed as the new stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA July 1 at the 226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

She begins her work on August 1.

### *Jays & Concerns*

#### We express sympathy...

- to **Gary and Linda Peterson** on the death of their brother-in-law, David Riddle, on Tuesday, July 30. Please pray for his wife Judith, daughter Ashley and son Tristan and his family.
- Former Associate Pastor **Michael McGaughan** died June 27, 2024 in Bloomington, IL. We express sympathy to his family and friends. A Memorial Service will be held Friday, August 2, at 11 AM at the Second Presbyterian Church in Bloomington. Visitation from 9-11 AM.

# The Heart of Mission

## Recycling for Blessings

BY PAT PHILLIPS, ENVIRONMENTAL TEAM  
P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET

After a broken ankle or during convalescence from illness, our thoughts may turn to Medical Supply. Time to visit our church's equipment closet. As you enter from the State Street entrance, look to your left to find a room filled with canes and crutches, wheelchairs and more. Borrow what will help, and, later, clean and return it for others to use. It's a blessing!

Please continue to recycle prescription bottles and batteries; sadly, there's no longer a place to take Styrofoam. When eating out, taking your own container for leftovers is an easy way to keep that sturdy foam stuff out of the landfills.

## Missionaries from the Congo to Visit in August

World Missions received the fantastic news that **Jeff and Christie Boyd** will be visiting with us August 11 and 12. They arrive late afternoon on Sunday, August 11 and are with us on Monday, August 12.

Christie will be speaking at the Presbyterian Women gathering in St. Louis from August 8-11. Jeff and Christie currently are in the Congo and would love to share news of the work of church partners, particularly in the Congo as well as Christie's work of reconciliation for people greatly impacted by tribal discord.

Join us Monday, August 12, at 1 PM for an Open House/Dialog with the Boyd's in Mae Chapin Parlor. Light refreshments will be served.

Jeff notified us that just a week ago, their offices were closed by order of the governor due to friction. Both Jeff and Christie have much to share with us, so we hope you can join us for an informative discussion on Monday.

## English Language Learners (ELL)

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR  
BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

As I finish up my first year as director of the ELL program, I am so grateful for all that has happened this year. It has been a privilege to meet so many people from all over the world, and to be able to welcome them to our community. In these challenging and divisive times that we live in, our ELL program is a haven of goodness, welcome, and kindness.

A few highlights from this year include:

- International Game Night in partnership with the New American Welcome Center
- Thanksgiving Potluck dinner in Centennial Hall
- Christmas Party
- Valentine's Day Party
- Adopt a Highway clean up day on State Street

I am so grateful for all the volunteer teachers who serve faithfully each week. Our teachers are passionate about helping students gain language proficiency, about welcoming them to the community, and about building authentic relationships. I am so thankful for their faithful service in this way.

Our summer semester ended July 24 and the fall semester will begin on August 26. Most of our classes are full, but we hope to squeeze in a few more students! If you know of students who are interested in joining us, please give them my email address and have them contact me.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the director of this fabulous and exciting program.







## We're All In Welcoming America Week 2024

Join your First Pres friends and greet community friends for 90 minutes of fellowship. Relax, laugh and play games with all ages. Game time is 4:30-6 PM on Tuesday, September 17, in Centennial Hall, the patio and the alley. We will have special activities for children and some treats.

This event is organized by your Outreach and Nurture Committees and your English Language Learners Program as an event in Welcoming American Week, an annual national program of welcome. "Organizations and communities bring together neighbors of all backgrounds to build strong connections and affirm the importance of welcoming and inclusive places in achieving collective prosperity". Wow!! We're all in!

Collaborating with us are Hessel Park Church, Immigration Services of Champaign-Urbana, New Americans Welcome Center, Parkland College and Michael Hogue Team at Re/Max Associates.



**It's Game Time!**

Tuesday, September 17  
4:30-6 PM  
Centennial Hall and the alley  
Mark your calendar,  
attend and greet our guests.

### Cuba Study

Your Cuba Partners Leadership Team will offer an eight-week Cuba Study beginning September 9. We will learn about the history, the people, the culture and the church.

Participation is mandatory for those who might travel to Cuba in March but valuable to all who are curious about our sister church and the Republic of Cuba. Contact **Bob Kirby** for more information. [rwk3213@gmail.com](mailto:rwk3213@gmail.com)



## Cuba Partners Network

[226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Resolution on Cuba](#)

# Finance

## Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM  
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

### Contributions

Total June contributions: \$69.8K from plate and pledge plus \$10.3K from prepaid= \$80.1K This is \$20.6K more than last year and \$14.7K over budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$ 443.5 K which is \$7.6 more than last year and \$51.1 K over budget. At 50% of the year, we have 64.4% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

### Expenses

June expenses were \$75.3 K, which is \$19.6K less than last year and \$4.7K under budget. Expenses YTD are \$511.7K which is \$2.7K more than last year and \$31.7K over budget. At 50% of the year, we have spent 53.5% of the budget.

### Balance YTD

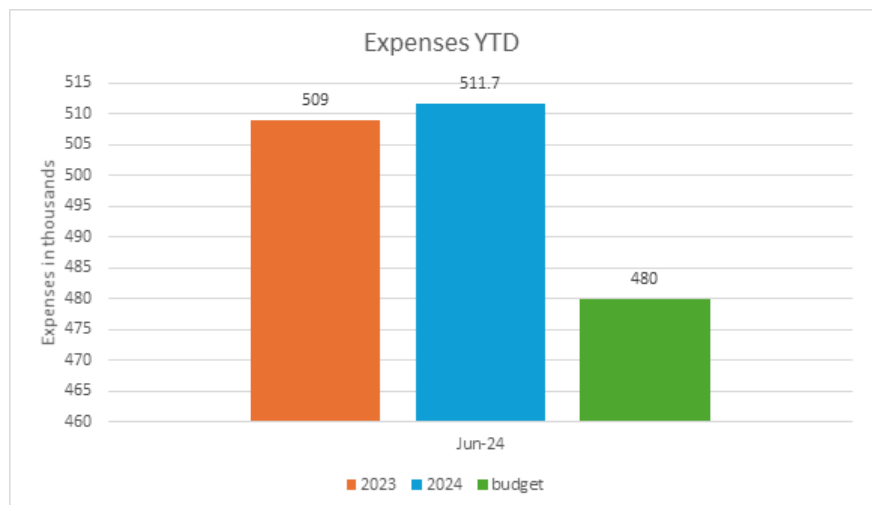
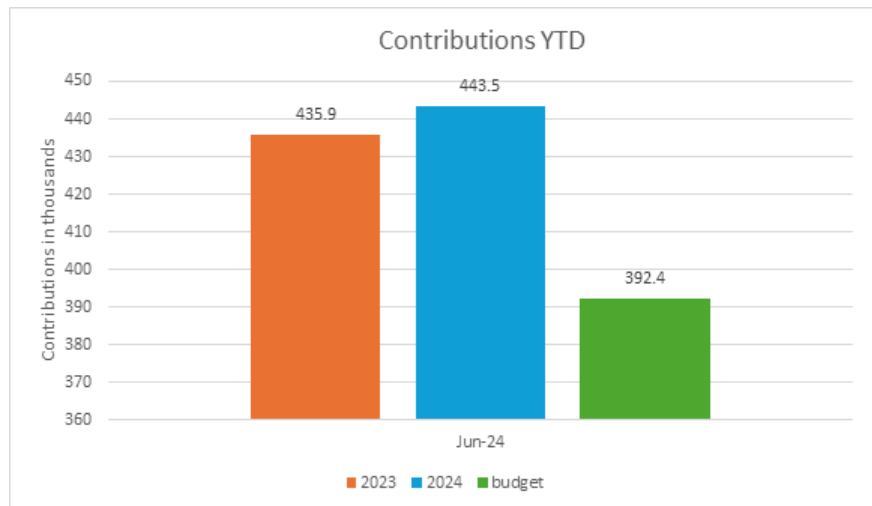
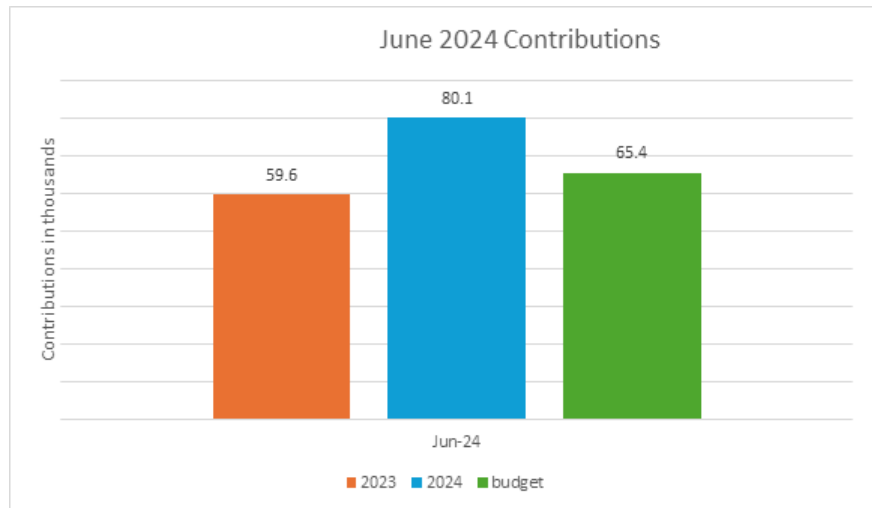
Revenue, including prepaid, exceeded expenses by \$45.3K, which is \$28.7 more than last year at the same time.

### Session Designated Funds

\$1,683,899 which is \$12,309 more than last month.

### Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$32,106 was given to various funds, including \$20,000 to the elevator fund and \$6840 to special events.







**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

302 West Church Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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**P:** 217.356.7238

**E:** [info@firstpres.church](mailto:info@firstpres.church)

[www.firstpres.church](http://www.firstpres.church)

**Sunday:**

9 AM Worship

10 AM Coffee and Fellowship

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:**

Martice Chapple..... Facility Assistant  
Ritchie Drennen.....Facility Manager  
Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant  
Robert Ferrer.....Audio-visual Technician  
Fred Foster..... Evening Custodian  
Marcia Franks..... Office Administrator  
Joe Grant..... Director of Music  
Ann Petry..... Accounting  
Sora Shepard..... Organist/Pianist  
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director  
Bonnie Ward..... English Language Learner Director

Staff email addresses are the person’s first name followed by @firstpres.church For example, matt@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](mailto:marcia@firstpres.church).