

December 2020



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

## One Day In the Life of Your Worship Team

BY JUDI GEISTLINGER, WORSHIP CHAIR

JUDIGEISTLINGER@HOTMAIL.COM

Sunday was such a big day for the worship committee.

We began the morning premiering the worship video put together by our editing crew. All of us worshiped at home. We enjoyed the Advent candle liturgy from Gary and Linda, music by our soloists and church musicians. The tech crew made everything seamless.

Following the broadcast, a small crew gathered to record a face-to-face baptism for the next Sunday. Afterwards, they set up for recording more worship, watered poinsettias and vacuumed up leaves, ironed purple tablecloths we are using for ambiance, practiced camera angles, taught a new backup camera operator, and envisioned candlelight and staging around the tree decorated by Ritchie and crew under direction of a PW angel.

Later that evening, expert scene-dressers from local theatre installed directional lights for the Christmas Eve session. Scenes, sight-lines, and lighting for Christmas Eve were tweaked.

Friends, this is just one day in the life of what it takes to do worship for our church community. Our team works hard to bring meaningful worship that is accessible to all. Usually, no more than nine people are in the sanctuary when we shoot services, but another group of nine record batches of music at other times. Special greetings such as the heart-felt Stewardship messages, Advent candle lighting, and special music take more creative effort. Then, behind the scenes saints edit all the parts together.

I've tried not to name these workers because I'm likely to leave someone out. Many hands make for light work. When these hands come together, I see the grace of God at work, and I see the community called "the church" growing in grace.

Our Christmas Eve worship service will premiere at 4 PM on Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, the time of our usual family worship service. It will be available on our [firstpres.live](https://firstpres.live), YouTube and Facebook anytime after 4 PM. We invite you

continued on the next page

*Celebrate the  
season with us*

Children's Pageant @firstpres.live  
December 20 · 9 AM

Family Carol Sing via Zoom  
December 23 · 7 PM

Christmas Service @firstpres.live  
December 24 · 4 PM



217.356.7238 or [info@firstpres.church](mailto:info@firstpres.church)

The Methodist Church has invited  
us to a candlelight service  
West Side Park 7 PM Christmas Eve  
Bring your own battery-powered candle.  
Otherwise candles (bring your own matches)  
will be available in our church alley  
from 6:45 PM until close of service.

to share this Christmas gift to those you love.

Some of you may wish to watch it as the sun sets. Some, after dinner. Some near midnight, so that by the time it's over it will be Christmas "day." We do hope you will tune it, that you will share the link on your social media and with both your near and far away family and friends.

*O come all ye faithful,  
to Bethlehem.*

I can't wait to see you there.

## Worship Committee News

BY JUDI GEISTLINGER, WORSHIP CHAIR  
JUDIGEISTLINGER@HOTMAIL.COM

Your worship committee has planning carefully and recording for Advent, which started on Sunday, November 29. Look for how the Sanctuary is quietly transformed to aid your worship experience.

This month, you might consider doing your own Advent candle lighting practice at home. Attached is a brief liturgy, called *Home for the Holidays* written for this pandemic year by St John's Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, CA.

You might have noticed several members of our congregation recording portions of the liturgy from their homes and sharing during worship on Sunday mornings. No wreath required; just five candles (one for each of the Sundays and one to act as the Christ candle.)

In addition to our regular Sunday worship, we have a couple of additional worship opportunities:

## Zoom Meetings

**Thanks, again, for learning about using Zoom these past several months. A reminder to email [zoom@firstpres.church](mailto:zoom@firstpres.church) if you need a meeting set up. Also, please make sure you click on the correct link for the meeting. Meeting links will look very similar, but clicking on the wrong link can interfere with other meetings. The meeting name will be displayed when you connect, so if the meeting name isn't correct, check to make sure you have the correct link. If you have any questions about the link, email [zoom@firstpres.church](mailto:zoom@firstpres.church).**

Wednesday, December 23, at 7 PM  
join us for a collection of music from our choir and soloists from this year and prior years, curated by **Joe Grant**, our Director of Music.

And as mentioned in the previous article, Thursday, December 24, our online Christmas Eve service will be pre-recorded. It is brief and lovely enough to share with friends and family near and far. It will premiere at 4 PM but can be viewed anytime after that from [firstpres.live](http://firstpres.live) or on Facebook and YouTube.

## HR Update

BY ANN STOUT, CO-CHAIR HR  
MRSAS2003@GMAIL.COM

As you know, **Rachel Matthews** has been serving as our Temporary Mission Coordinator for over a year now. She has really "dived in" and embraced our extensive Mission Ministry with energy and enthusiasm. (If you haven't checked out the *Heart of Mission* newsletter on Tuesdays, be sure to look for it next Tuesday.)

We are very pleased to tell you that Rachel and HR have agreed to drop the "Temporary" status from her title and she is now the "Mission Coordinator".



**Mark your calendar for  
December 22<sup>nd</sup>!  
The Nurture Committee  
Christmas Dessert  
gathering via Zoom  
will be fun wearing your  
favorite or ugly sweater.  
More details coming soon.**

# Children, Youth & Family

## Children, Youth & Family

### Update

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CYF

MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH



Get ready for a virtual Christmas pageant! Our kids and families have been hard at work recording a unique interpretation of the classic story of love coming to dwell among us for this Advent season.

Our very own crew will serve as news anchors and reporters to bring you “live” coverage of the story that could very well change the world. The film will debut as part of the online worship service on December 20<sup>th</sup>.

Go to [Firstpres.live](https://firstpres.live) to view it on the video streaming service of your choice.

Our online Sunday school continues through Zoom. Our elementary kids are starting a unit on the Christmas story and the youth are exploring God’s promises to Mary, Simeon, and Isaiah as part of our Advent study.

I would still welcome volunteers to read the stories online with the kids and be part of our discussions. Contact Mindy at [mindy@firstpres.church](mailto:mindy@firstpres.church) to volunteer or for more information.

## DREAAM Is Thankful

DREAAM is very thankful for the support from our church and community. We are able to impact lives, work to heal trauma, and mend broken hearts. We are happy to serve and love on boys and their families in small and big ways.

Through collaboration with the Unit 4 Food Service Department and a generous donor, DREAAM delivered Gratitude Baskets to 40 families for Thanksgiving. We will continue to express gratitude throughout the Advent season.

Peace and blessings  
to First Presbyterian!

Tracy Dace  
Executive Director



Food baskets delivered by DREAAM staff included a turkey, vegetables, dessert, a drink and PPE supplies.



# Finance

## Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

MSCHOEFFMANN@MCHSI.COM

### Contributions

Contributions in November to the Operating Fund were \$6.4K more than in 2019 and \$13.0K below the budget at \$64.5K. The Year to Date total is below last year by \$12.0K and below the budgeted amount by \$70.7K. These figures include prepaid pledges (those paid in the year prior to the budget year) that are prorated over the year with 1/12 added to each month's contributions. Including all revenue sources, at 91.7% through the year, we have received 98.9% of the expected 2020 revenue.

### Expenses

Year to Date expenses are \$88.9K below the budget at \$894.1K and less than in 2019 by \$9.0K. At 91.7% through the year we have experienced 83.4% of the expected 2020 expenses.

### Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$127.9K which is \$143.6K better than at the end of November in 2019. This figure includes \$134.2K from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program established by the Federal CARES Act.

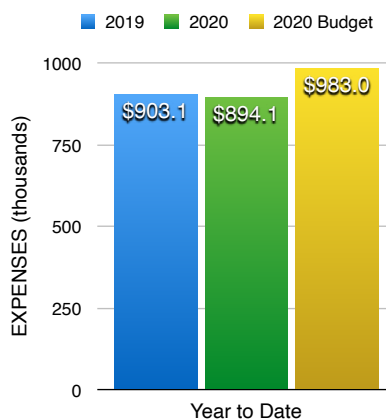
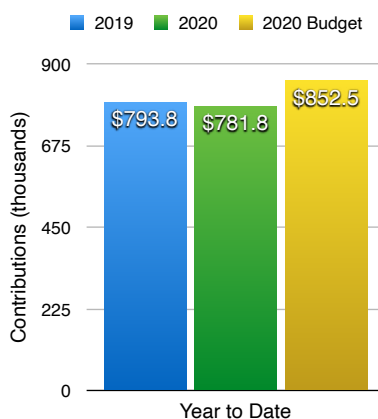
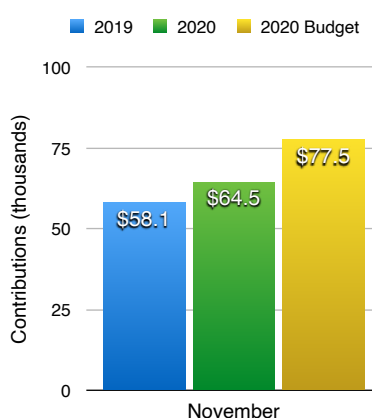
### Restricted Funds

In addition to contributions to the operating fund there was \$23,565 donated in November to funds restricted to specific purposes such as missions supported by our church.

### Stewardship

Thanks to the responses of 159 families we have reached 90% of our projected pledge commitments for 2021.

If you have not yet made your commitment please prayerfully consider your ability to support the continuation of our programs and ministry. You may respond by completing and mailing a pledge card or online at <https://www.firstpres.church/pledgecard>.



## Information About Email Scams

BY ERIC CORBIN, ASSOCIATE PASTOR  
ERIC@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Emails claiming to be from **Pastor Matt** have been received again recently, but please note that these emails are NOT actually from him. Please do not respond to such emails, as they are an attempt by a scammer to get money from you (often in the form of gift cards). If you have already responded, please discontinue the conversation and DO NOT send any money or gift cards. These scammers appeal to our generosity, and can seem legitimate. However, they are not.

The bottom line is this: before purchasing gift cards or some other method of sending money, you should always attempt to contact by a different method the person supposedly sending the email (or phone call, as is sometimes the case). Or, you can check in with the church office to see if we have heard about any such need. It is unfortunate that we have to be leery of such requests for help, but we must do so in order to be able to help when genuinely needed.

You can learn about other email scams (often known as "phishing scams") at <https://techservices.illinois.edu/security/phishing>. The Federal Trade Commission also provides a helpful page with information about a variety of different scams at <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts>.

We hope this information will help you to stay safe!



In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the Saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole word, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. Colossians 1:3-6

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore. Psalm 131:3

## Session Motions Passed at November Meeting

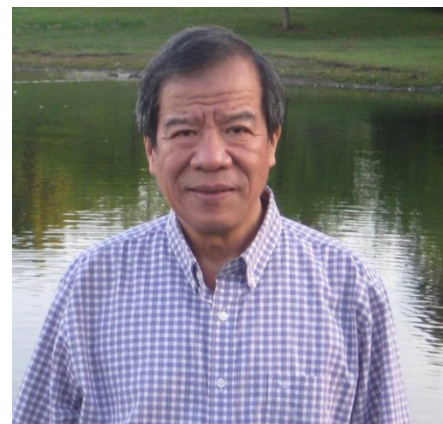
- Motion: to approve the proposed 2021 budget version 2, but to revisit the issue of staff pay increases based on the pledge commitment total at the end of the year, with priority given to increasing the pay of those earning less than \$15 per hour.
- Motion: to establish a fund restricted to session designated unbudgeted expenses during 2021 utilizing an anonymous donation of \$10,000.
- Motion from Worship- to not offer communion at the Christmas Eve service, as it will not be in person.
- Motion from Pastor- to instruct Ann Stout to compose short letters to members rotating off session this term.

*God is faithful,  
even in a pandemic.*

## *Joys & Concerns*

### *Congratulations to...*

- Chi Ming Hwang, aka Paul (see pic below), became a U.S. Citizen on November 18, 2020. Paul is active in our Men's Bible Study and Men's Prayer Team. He said, "It's an honor to become an American."



### **Pray With Us**

The men of the church pray together Fridays at 8:30 AM. We pray for our world, nation, community, our church and its people. We welcome prayer concerns. Contact the church office for a zoom link.

# Mission Updates

## ESL News

BY JEANETTE PYNE, ESL COORDINATOR

JEANETTE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

### New Students

Recently, 21 new students from Mexico and Guatemala registered for our Zoom classes. All of them are immigrants and most of them are beginner or high-beginner learners of English. This is so exciting for us because, historically, we have had a difficult time getting this population to register and attend classes. We suspect that this has to do with conflicting schedules and lack of access to transportation to get to our classes. With classes on Zoom, we can offer classes at more convenient times. Furthermore, to lessen the burden on these students and make these Zoom classes accessible, the program purchased 10 Chrome Books and will be loaning all of them out to the students who need them to attend class. This population has a great need for improving their English much like our Congolese refugee population. English is a gatekeeper for better job opportunities, access to services, lowered stress levels for living in an English-dominant country, etc. We hope and pray that these classes can open more doors for our students.

### ESL Café Time

What? This is a monthly café time on Zoom for the students to see their friends and tutors from all of the classes. It's a chance for them to practice English and interact with Americans who are not their tutor. We will split into small groups so that we can discuss and catch up. First Pres members are invited to join us for the ESL Program's time of fellowship

Bring your favorite hot drink and a snack to café time.

When? Second Thursday of every month at 10 AM. The first one is December 10th at 10 AM. The next café times are:

- January 14<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM
- February 11<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM
- March 11<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM
- April 8<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM
- May 13<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM

### Zoom Information:

Please email [jeanette@firstpres.church](mailto:jeanette@firstpres.church) for the Zoom meeting information.

## Blue Christmas

BY ROBERT KIRBY

[RWK3213@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RWK3213@GMAIL.COM)

Will it be a blue Christmas for our Cuban brothers and sisters at our sister church at Luyanó?

The coronavirus pandemic and our government's "maximum pressure" policy for Cuba have created the worst economic depression in three de-

acades. The tiny island, always dependent on imports of fuel, food, medicine and on cash from Cuban American remittances was on its knees even before the pandemic halted its lifeline tourist industry.

Cuba has done well with public health for years. Its government responded with an early and clear message for mitigation including extensive testing, contact tracing, masking and social distancing. A "Cuba Vaccine" is in clinical trials.

The World Health Organization reports 7,700 cases and 131 deaths in Cuba. At the same time the state of Illinois with approximately the same population reports 634,400 cases and 11,300 deaths. Pastor Daniel tells us that none of the congregants at our sister church have been seriously ill. Cuban churches are now meeting in-person. Havana International Airport reopened on November 15.

The Cuban people have long suffered and they are resilient. As they continue in the advent season our Cuban Presbyterian brothers and sisters are grateful and faithful and continue filled

with hope for easier days ahead.

This will not be a blue Christmas for our Cuban friends. We can almost hear them praying Psalm 71:14. "As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more." May we keep them in our prayers.



David Gonzalez, Belinda Crespo and Katerine Diaz in the sanctuary of our sister church.



## Environmental Stewardship

BY CLEMMIE ACKERMANN

COLETTA.ACKERMANN@GMAIL.COM

This season and this newsletter, require something more than a list of things to recycle and things to do. Instead, it's a time to be grateful for all the gifts we've received and challenges we've been given. It's most of all, an opportunity to take time to rejoice in the anticipation of the birth of our Lord.

We have been blessed by our committee and church members and their dedication to doing everything from working in the native plant gardens to saving styrofoam and celebrating Earth Day. A special blessing and heaps of thanks go to **Kathy Schoeffmann** for the last two years of her service as Chairperson of the Committee. She had the ability to wrangle us all to move through an agenda, plan for major and minor projects and did that all in a spirit of joy and service. Her leadership has kept the committee strong and focused and we'll miss her leadership but will enjoy her knowledge and commitment as she changes her focus from Chairperson to committee member.

We're looking forward to a new year and new opportunities to serve and to protect the glorious world we've been given.

The Heart of Missions Newsletter has been revived during this COVID-19 crisis. Our local and global mission agencies are having to make rapid changes due to shelter in place orders, as well as food and medical supply shortages. The newsletter helps summarize some of what has been in the mission news for our mission workers and agencies during the past week in case you missed it.

You can access The Heart of Missions on the church website under the SERVE tab at [firstpres.church/heartofmissions](http://firstpres.church/heartofmissions)

## A Gift to Mother Earth

Are you looking for that perfect gift to give to Mother Earth for Christmas? Why not use some or all of the suggestions from NOAA? (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) (<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ocean/earthday.html> )

**PROTECTING OUR PLANET STARTS WITH YOU**

 <p><b>BIKE MORE DRIVE LESS</b></p>	 <p><b>reduce REUSE recycle</b></p> <p>Cut down on what you throw away. Follow the three "R's" to conserve natural resources and landfill space.</p>	 <p><b>choose sustainable seafood</b></p> <p>Learn how to make smart seafood choices at <a href="http://www.FishWatch.gov">www.FishWatch.gov</a>.</p>	 <p>Trees provide food and oxygen. They help save energy, clean the air, and help combat climate change.</p> <p><b>PLANT A TREE</b></p>
 <p><b>EDUCATE</b></p> <p>When you further your own education, you can help others understand the importance and value of our natural resources.</p>	 <p><b>CONSERVE WATER</b></p> <p>The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater that eventually end up in the ocean.</p>	 <p><b>-SHOP- WISELY</b></p> <p>Buy less plastic and bring a reusable shopping bag.</p>	 <p><b>Don't send chemicals into our waterways.</b></p> <p>Choose nontoxic chemicals in the home and office.</p>
 <p><b>Volunteer!</b></p> <p>Volunteer for cleanups in your community. You can get involved in protecting your watershed too!</p>	 <p><b>Long-lasting light bulbs - ARE A BRIGHT IDEA</b></p> <p>Energy efficient light bulbs reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also flip the light switch off when you leave the room!</p>	 <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="http://oceanservice.noaa.gov">oceanservice.noaa.gov</a></p>	

In addition to these ideas, please continue to save Polystyrene (Styrofoam) trays and block foam with the "6" recycling symbol for another recycling event after the holidays.

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!  
Your Environmental Stewardship Committee!

## Mission Special Offerings

### The 2020 Angel Tree

The Community Mission Deacons hosts an Angel Tree every year for local mission agencies.

This year we do not have an actual tree to take an angel tag off of and replace with a gift but we are asking for \$25 gift cards from Salt & Light, Target or Walmart to give to our agencies. You can identify which you would like your gift card to go to.

You can bring the gift cards to the church office Tuesday through Thursday mornings before December 15 so we can deliver them to the agencies before Christmas.

Community Mission Deacons are adding a gift, a large gift, to the Angel Tree that will be given to Eastern Illinois Food Bank, designated to the Champaign-Urbana area to help alleviate food shortage in our community. You are invited to add to the starting gift of \$4000 by going online or mailing your check to the church. We already have someone who has pledged \$1000 to that amount. Don't wait. We want to send our gift to them before Christmas.

### The 2020 Advent Offering

The Advent Offering will be taken for the whole month of December.

Christmas is the season of Advent. What love, joy and redemption we have in the birth of our Savior! And so, it is with thankfulness that each year at this time we have our annual Advent Offering. This year -2020- the year that is like none other we have experienced, your World Missions Committee is asking that our Advent giving go to two organizations that will

help many people. The first organization is our own Presbyterian Disaster Assistance that is comprised of two components: National Relief and International Relief.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> component of our giving will go to our own sister church, Luyano in Cuba. This is a year of isolation between our two churches due, among other things, to Covid19. None of us are allowed to travel between our countries this year. We are not able to carry supplies to them nor can we send money directly to them. The Luyano church is in dire need of help. We are able to provide aid through PCUSA and our own church's Cuba Committee is requesting this help. It is in gratitude to our relationship with our sister church that 1/3 of our Advent offering will be earmarked for our Luyano brothers and sisters.

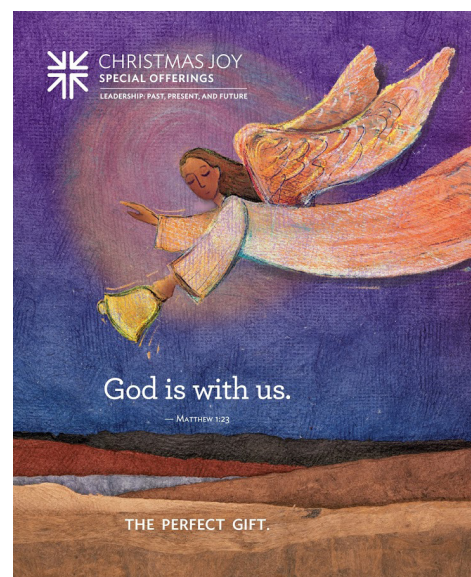
### Christmas Joy Offering

Every year on Christmas Eve, First Presbyterian Church Champaign takes up the Joy Gift Offering, a special offering of the PC(U.S.A.). The Christmas Joy Offering reflects that God is with us, through the generous gifts that support church leaders among us, retired, present and future, who have pointed us to God. Even as we support our current and former church leaders through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, God is calling new leaders for our Church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color — offering students the means for a brighter future and enhanced opportunities to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come.

Because God is with us, we see the potential of students of color who will become our leaders and we seek to come alongside them, to encourage them, to be with them. 50% of your gifts make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Because God is with us, we see church workers who have critical financial needs and we come alongside them, to assist them — we are with them. 50% of your gifts provide assistance for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs.

Thank you for your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering — for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.



For more information on these offerings, please see *The Heart of Missions*. You can access *The Heart of Missions* on the church website under the SERVE tab at [firstpres.church/heartofmissions](http://firstpres.church/heartofmissions)



# Presbyterian Women

## Presbyterian Women News

BY LINDA PETERSON  
LINDAKPETE@GMAIL.COM

Presbyterian Women held their Christmas Gathering over Zoom on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. They shared stories about favorite ornaments and special holiday memories. **Brandi Lowe** and **Karin Vermillion** prerecorded songs for the ladies to sing along. Their daughters also joined in. A zoom photo of those attending was sent to wish a Merry Christmas to ladies unable to attend.

We want to thank **Diane Mortensen** for her leadership of the Christmas Cookies. She is terrific. **Linda Peterson** and **Dianne** decorated containers. We also want to thank so many of you for bringing cookies to the church for the shut ins. Wow! So many!!!



**Diane** and **Ginny Waaler** put them in the decorated Cool Whip containers. The Care Deacons delivered them to our shut-ins. We also had separate containers for the wonderful church staff.

We had so many extras, that we decided to make a large tray for Safe House, CU at Home, Phoenix Center. They really appreciated receiving them.

So, all of the good things that PW does is sure appreciated by everyone!

## Spreading the Joy of Christmas

**Kathy Schoeffmann** was pleased to report that eight comforter/sheet sets and five soft shag rugs were purchased with the PW Mission funds and delivered to Kemmerer Village on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, along with the 20 fleece blankets from Circle of Peace that the children will complete in their craft cottage.



Alice at Kemmerer emailed me... *The gifts: blankets, rugs and comforters were amazing. ... Please express our gratitude to the ladies for their part in making this a special Christmas.*

*We always look forward to the Knifty Knitters hats and scarves, they choose great colors.*

Alice



Thank you to all of the women who support PW with their prayers and donations.

As an added note Knifty Knitters also have made 22 sets of hats and scarves for the children at Kemmerer Village and made some 20 more available to **Mindy Watts-Ellis** to use for any DREAAM student. **Katherine Jones** delivered the items to Kemmerer Village.

Circle of Faith members **Leland Andrews** and **Lola Ruthmansdorfer** delivered three Family baskets to empty tomb from the Circle ladies' donations.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

302 West Church Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
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[www.firstpres.church](http://www.firstpres.church)

**Sunday:**

9 AM Worship\*

10:15 AM Sunday School and Adult Education\*\*

11:15 AM Worship\*

\*Due to COVID, online Worship only is available for viewing at 9 AM on Sunday mornings on YouTube, Facebook, and our church website. Go to FirstPres. Live.

\*\*All Sunday School and Adult Education opportunities are through Zoom.

Contact the church office for more information.

**Pastors:**

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, Ext. 213  
Eric Corbin..... Associate Pastor, Ext. 214

**Staff:**

George Almasi ..... Facility Assistant  
Brendan Barker..... Organist  
Ritchie Drennen ..... Facility Manager, Ext. 237  
Patty Farthing..... Receptionist, Ext. 211  
Robert Ferrer ..... Audio-visual Technician  
Marcia Franks ..... Administrative Assistant, Ext. 210  
Joe Grant..... Director of Music  
Rachel Matthews..... Mission Coordinator, Ext. 219  
Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216  
Ann Petry..... Accounting, Ext. 224  
Jeanette Pyne..... ESL Coordinator, Ext. 235  
Mindy Watts-Ellis..... Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

All staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by [@firstpres.church](mailto:info@firstpres.church). For example, [eric@firstpres.church](mailto:eric@firstpres.church).

The newsletter is published monthly. Deadline is the last Monday of the month for the following month's edition. Send submissions to [marcia@firstpres.church](mailto:marcia@firstpres.church).