

# April 2018



## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

### You Are Never Alone!

BY MATT MATTHEWS SENIOR PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF  
(matt@firstpres.church)

Dear Friends:

For one nervous moment, in the summer of my thirteenth year, the United States Coast Guard thought I was dead.

My twelve-foot sailboat had sailed off across the Hampton Roads harbor without me. Frank Henry and I stood on his pier barefooted and empty-handed and watched my little sloop zigzag nonchalantly away before a gentle, off-shore breeze. I was mortified.

“It did what,” Frank’s dad asked? “It sailed away? By itself?” Dr. Henry was incredulous that I could actually lose a whole boat under full sail, but he drove us to the marina, anyway. We jumped into their motorboat, and roared in the direction of my long-gone sailboat.

We found it two nautical miles distant at the Middle Ground Lighthouse; the Coast Guard had already arrived. Dr. Henry insisted I do the talking. Yes, sir, that was my boat, I told the ruddy guardsman shouting down from the deck above our dwarfed outboard. No, sir, there was no other crew with me. Yes, sir, I forgot to wear a lifejacket. No, sir, I wouldn’t let it happen again.

They cancelled their call for a dive crew from Norfolk to search for my body, tossed me the bowline to my boat, and we towed it back to Sunset Creek in Hampton. I was embarrassed, but mostly glad to have my errant boat back. I felt wiser and, possibly, unsinkable.

But the event shook me. Just as unexpectedly as my boat had slipped my grasp and sailed off without me, so, too, death would eventually come for me. I’ll be on the sandy shore one minute, then out on wider seas the next. This was the most ominous existential crisis so far in my tender years: Life was both fleeting and fragile. Even though I thought my death was light-years away, on the summer before eighth grade, death felt like a solid, real thing.

**continued on next page**

*“Lord, here I am, send me...”*

Celebrate with us the installation  
of our Senior Pastor

*Matt Matthews*

**Sunday, April 8, 2018 at 4 PM**  
in our Sanctuary.

Following worship, join us for  
a reception and  
fellowship in Westminster Hall.

There are still opportunities  
over the next few weeks to  
**“Meet the Matthews.”**

You can sign up at  
**[firstpres.church/meetthematthews](http://firstpres.church/meetthematthews)**  
or by contacting the church office.

A lifetime of Easters has ingrained in me the belief that I'm never alone. God was with Jesus through life, death, beyond, and back. No, I don't pretend to understand the mechanics of such mystery, but I've been seized by a faith that God loves me like he loves Jesus and stands with me—in this life and the next. So, while life's scary realities still unnerve me, I, nevertheless, wholly trust God's hands are so big nobody can fall out. All will be well.

One day, death will really come. Some Coast Guard chaplain or ER doc will apologetically tell my gathered family that I didn't make it. Summoning a dive crew from Norfolk would not help. Next of kin will be sad, but I'll be whole and well doing whatever it is one does in heaven, glad beyond all measure that God shepherds us through every passage, every change. Death, fear, discord, and a million other sharp-edge worries don't have the final word. God does. And that word is love. That word is life.

My word is *Hallelujah!*

That's what Easter means to me.

Matt Matthews

***Feasting on the Word***, adult Spiritual Formation drop-in class, resumes April 8 at 10:10 in the Parlor. We study and reflect on the lectionary scriptures for that Sunday. No preparation needed and all are welcome. Bring your coffee and join us! More information? contact **Judi Geistlinger** 217-493-5462 or [judi-geistlinger@outlook.com](mailto:judi-geistlinger@outlook.com)

## Financial Update

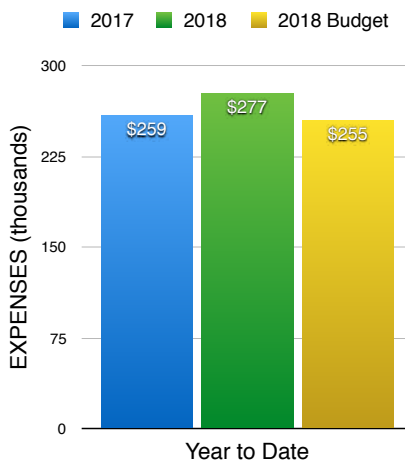
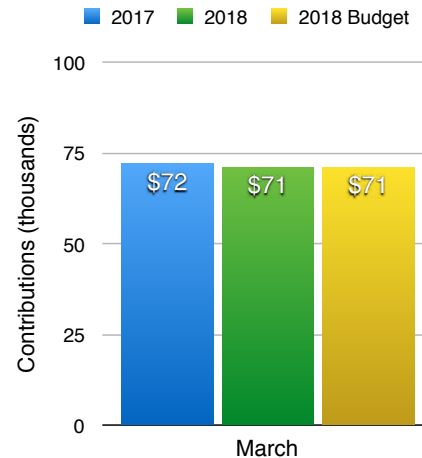
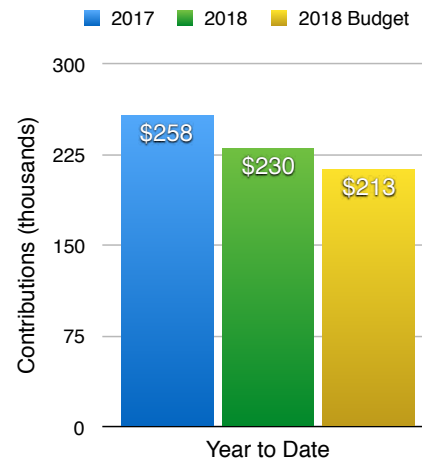
BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, FINANCE CHAIR  
([mschoeffmann@mchsi.com](mailto:mschoeffmann@mchsi.com))

### Contributions

Contributions in March were \$1K less than in 2017 and equal to the budget at \$71K. The Year to Date total is below last year by \$28K but is above the budgeted amount by \$17K. 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.

### Expenses

Year to Date expenses are \$22K above budget at \$277K and above 2017 by \$18K. Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$85K which \$15K less than at the end of March in 2017. This figure includes \$48K more in prepaid pledges than in 2017.





## Victory Through Jesus

We have gone through the soul searching and surrenders of Lent, and have arrived at Easter and victory through Jesus. We have recognized the thoughts, words and actions that did not make us like Christ, but now the death and resurrection of Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins and given us eternal life instead of death. We can cry out "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

After thanking God for the gift of eternal life, we are told to "always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain," (verse 58)

## Presbyterian Women News

BY SABRINA HWU, MODERATOR  
(sabrinhwu@yahoo.com)

The Presbyterian Women of Southeastern Illinois Presbytery Spring Gathering will be on Saturday, April 14, at the First Presbyterian Church, Effingham, Illinois. Registration is at 9:30 AM followed by the meeting and program. Lunch is \$7 and a "CentsAbility Hunger Offering" will be taken. Donations of items for the Effingham Child Development Center are welcome. For more information, please go to [http://www.pseillinois.org/files/pw/pw\\_2018\\_spring\\_newsletter.pdf](http://www.pseillinois.org/files/pw/pw_2018_spring_newsletter.pdf)

Presbyterian Women cordially invite all women to join us for our monthly circle meeting on Thursday, April 26, during one of the following three choices of time: 9 AM @ Baytowne Club House (contact **Sandy Carr** or **Kathy Schoeffmann**), 1 PM @ Mae Chapin Parlor (contact **Julie Shult**), or 7 PM @ Mae Chapin Parlor (contact **Carol Penka**). We will be studying Lesson 8: *In Community with the Household of Faith*. We will continue to study the book of Hebrews and focus on the theme of building a community of faith where the love and hospitality of Jesus are on broad display.

Presbyterian Women Spring Gathering will be held on Thursday, May 31 at 12:30 PM in Westminster Hall. The program will be on The Life of Mae Chapin.

## Jays & Concern

### *Congratulations to...*

- **Jo Foley** who recently celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- **Nancy E. Fay** and **Kendrith M. Rowland** for being recognized as 2017-2018 Best Doctors in America.

### *We extend our sympathies to...*

- the family and friends of **Emily Watts** who died Monday, March 12, 2018;
- the family and friends of **Donald Dodds, Jr.** who died Thursday, March 29, 2018;
- the family of **Cesar Myampara** and **Mamiley Masweka** on the death of Mamiley's aunt in Texas.

# Our Church

## Children, Youth & Family Update

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CYF  
(mindy@firstpres.church)

### Go and Serve Fundraiser

Beginning on April 8, there will be a bulletin board in Westminster Hall covered in numbered envelopes. The number on the outside of the envelope is how much money is being requested to help cover the cost of the trip.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to choose an envelope and return the envelope by April 22 with the equivalent money value of the external number enclosed. For instance, if I take envelope number 10, I am agreeing to bring back ten dollars for the Go and Serve trip.

Inside the envelope, you will find a picture of a student who is planning to go on the Go and Serve Mission trip along with a quote from him/her about what he/she is looking forward to learning or doing on the trip. You are encouraged to keep the photo and quote and pray for that student while they are on the Go and Serve trip experience June 3-8. Thank you for making this faith filled experience possible for these young people!

### Sunday School Notes

In March, the elementary classes studied 'Breakfast on the Beach,' when Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The preschool studied Bible stories that reinforced sharing. The Middle School class explored "Why do Christians think Christianity is the best religion?" as well as an in depth study of Palm Sunday and a review of the events of Holy week.

The Confirmation Class is in the process of discerning what they believe and of writing their own faith statements. The class is now preparing to be received by Session on April 19.

The Confirmation Class is invited to the April 13-15 Confirmation retreat at Camp Carew. If the weather cooperates, there will be chances to kayak or canoe on Little Grassy Lake, ride horses, and do some fishing, besides meet other youth in the Presbytery while studying the word of God together.

If the weather isn't nice, we will have indoor games, crafts, and other activities to enjoy. This is a retreat we would like to have all of our confirmands attend. Respond to Mindy and let her know if you will be attending, then go to this website to register: [campcarew.org](http://campcarew.org).

We are seeking parent chaperones to drive. Camp Carew will be able to offer overnight accommodations for adult chaperones in the lodges. Contact Mindy if you can be a driver and chaperone.

### Youth Group

The next youth fellowship event will be at our church on April 29 from 6-7:30 PM.

### Children's Mission

The children have finished a banner for our sister church in Cuba. They have placed prints of their hands on the banner with their names and the message reads "Be the hands of God in the world." They have also filled out information about themselves to share with the children of Luyano. I will be taking these items to share to our sister church in May.

Come to the Cuba Two Step fundraiser to get a glimpse of the finished banner!

Our next project will be to put together craft kits for the Crisis Nursery kids.

## Graduation Sunday

# May 27

with a reception after  
the 9 AM service

honoring graduate school, college, and  
high school graduates

Please contact the church office if you have a graduating student with their name, email address, recent photo and phone number. PW will be making a bulletin board to recognize these students.

## Outreach

BY GARY PETERSON, CHAIR OUTREACH  
(amer\_swede@yahoo.com)

The Outreach Committee is in the process of planning a reception to follow Pastor Matt's Installation on April 8. A light supper will follow the service in Westminster Hall. Michaels' Catering will be providing the food and members of the congregation are being asked to bring finger food type of desserts.

An Information Fair will be held on April 15 between services in Westminster Hall to inform the congregation of opportunities to serve and upcoming events that Outreach is involved with. Please take a look.

Membership has sent letters to members we have missed seeing at church announcing Pastor Matt's arrival and promoting the Easter week service times.

## Dancing & Dinner

BY LIZZ PIPPEN, CHAIR CUBA STEERING COMMITTEE  
(elizabeth.m.pippen@gmail.com)

Sunday, April 22, Cuba Partners is hosting Cuban Two Step. Step One...Salsa Dancing starts at 4 PM and Step Two...Cuban Dinner starting at 5 PM.

The suggested donation is \$20 a ticket with the proceeds from the event going to the mission programs of our sister church in Luyanó, Cuba. We look forward to everyone joining us for the fun and food.

**What do we mean by our sister church in “Luyanó?”**  
The Presbyterian Reformed Church at Luyanó is the name of our sister church. Luyanó is a neighborhood (borough) in the municipality of “10 de Octubre” which is in Havana Province. The name Luyanó is that of a language of one of the native peoples of Cuba as well as the name of a small stream that traverses the neighborhood.

### Mission at Luyanó

There are many mission projects at our church at Luyanó. These include an herb and medicinal garden, an after school program for at risk children, a breakfast feeding program for the poor elderly, a monthly cultural program at the church, and an ESL program.

The church provides filtered drinking water for the neighborhood and exercise classes for the elderly. These programs are funded by external support from congregations like ours and our partner, Covenant Presbyterian in Austin, Texas.



Alejandra Pérez Carbón explains the mission projects of our church at Luyanó.

## Su Voz

Su Voz, “His Voice” in Spanish, is a devotion written by the people of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. It is translated to English and distributed by email in English and Spanish each day. To subscribe, email [marcia@firstpres.church](mailto:marcia@firstpres.church).

Medical forms for those participating in the 2018 Mission Possible trip need to be returned by April 15, 2018.

## Silver Auction

Saturday, April 21, 2018  
1:30-3 PM

Westminster Hall

The Presbyterian Women are hosting a silent auction on items no longer used from their silver closet. Mark your calendar for this event. RSVP to 607-1370.



**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

**F:** 217.356.7242

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

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

**Sunday:**

8 AM Contemplative Service

9 AM Traditional Service

9:15 AM Children’s Sunday School

10:10 AM Adult Education & High School Class

11 AM Contemporary Service

**Saturday:**

6 PM Praise & Prayer Gathering  
(French-English Service) Centennial Hall

**Pastors:**

Matt Matthews ..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, Ext 213

Eric Corbin..... Covenant Associate Pastor, Ext. 214

**Staff:**

Beth Chandler .....Outreach Coordinator

Kristi Corbin ..... Missions Coordinator, Ext. 219

Ritchie Drennen .....Facility Maintenance

Patty Farthing..... Receptionist, Ext. 211

Robert Ferrer..... Audio-visual Technician

Marcia Franks .....Administrative Assistant, Ext. 210

Joe Grant .....Director of Music

Blaise Pascal ...Asst Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext 216

Chris Penny ..... Facilities Manager, Ext. 237

Ann Petry ..... Accounting, Ext. 224

Andrea Pope.....Contemporary Worship Director

Jeanette Pyne.....ESL Coordinator, Ext 235

Richard Rossi ..... Church Musician

Mindy Watts-Ellis .. Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

All staff email address are the person’s first name followed by  
[@firstpres.church](mailto:eric@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).**