

**May 2018**



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

## Your Eyes

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

You ask me to look into your eyes.  
You ask me, "What do you see?"  
I say I'm no healer, I'm only a friend.  
I say I see nothing; you say look again.

You say that you're fine, that you've been doing okay.  
If I see our old friends, want me to tell them all "Hey."  
But I'm not your agent or your soldier of war.  
Won't do that again as I've failed there before.

But I miss your laugh like I've been missing the moon.  
Can't fly all the time. We're all grounded soon.  
Your eyes they are pleading, though you try to act cool.  
Your eyes are betraying you.

You ask me to look into your eyes.  
You ask me, "What do you see?"  
I see that you're tired. I see an ocean of blue.  
I see my reflection looking at you.

But I miss your laugh like I've been missing the moon.  
Your eyes are so dark I hope they start shining . . .  
I pray they start shining—soon.

\* \* \*

The psalmist suggests that we are the apple of God's eye. God delights looking into our eyes, the window of our soul. God sees the good, the bad, and the ugly within us and loves us anyway. When we are hurting, God sees that, too, and this must make God ache.

continued on next page

*Music Sunday*  
May 6, 2018  
8 and 9 AM

**Featuring...**  
**strings**  
**woodwinds**  
**organ**

**Join us for stirring  
music of worship**

When Jesus told his disciples to “carry your cross” he didn’t mean that we should be satisfied with being ‘stuck’ in a blue season of depression or anxiety. When we are inwardly bruised, God would want us to seek healing—from God and from all those healers God has equipped to touch us on his behalf.

If you’d like company through a rough passage in your journey, consider giving me a call. I’d like to introduce you to the counselors, spiritual directors, and others gifted in the healing arts who I am getting to know and value. God wants your dark eyes to shine.

So do I.

PEACE,

Matt Matthews

## Shades of Blue

### The month of May is Mental Awareness Month

BY JIM LUCK

IN MEMORY OF HIS BROTHER, DR. PHILIP A. LUCK,  
JULY 5, 1969-OCTOBER 2, 2007

3:04 a.m. I had just heard something – loud and almost violent – and I was sitting straight up in bed. I hadn’t been dreaming because my wife got up almost as fast as I did. I was scared enough to be calm and I was listening hard. There was no stirring in the boys’ bedrooms, so they hadn’t fallen out of bed. I listened for the cat, but was met with only more silence. I asked, aloud or to myself I know not, “Did someone just break in?” And then I heard it again - this time clearly: someone was beating on the front door. I grabbed a robe and headed downstairs. When I got to the stairs a blue light was dancing on the white paint of the downstairs hallway. To this day I can close my eyes and see that shade of blue flickering there.

“Police? What are the police doing here at 3 in the morning?”

I said a short prayer for our neighbors never imagining that I would be the one needing theirs. The officer pounded once again and was now peering through the windows on each side of the door using a flashlight.

I yelled, “I’m coming.”

But first I had to move all the furniture that had been relocated to the hallway while I painted my office. Chairs were shoved aside with no thought to the hardwood floors beneath them. But even then I couldn’t get the door open. With no light in the hallway – it never occurred to me to turn them on – and with my hands trembling, I was finding the deadbolt lock to be a rather difficult mechanism to operate. The officer waited quietly, bathing my hands in the light of his flashlight while I fumbled with the key. When the door finally opened I mumbled an awkward apology.

“Are you James Luck?”

“Yes.”

He’s too calm to be dealing with a neighborhood emergency & yet...

“Mr. Luck are you here alone?”

“Um... no. My wife is here.”

Why in the world does he want to know if Mandy is here?

“Is she here with you right now?”

Now I was really getting scared.

“Yes, she’s right here,” and I opened the door wider so he could see her.

“Mr. Luck. Mr. Luck, do you have a brother?”

And then I saw the officer’s eyes.

Oh God.

“Mr. Luck... I’m so sorry.”

Oh God. This poor man can’t even bring himself to say it aloud.

I turned, walked away from the officer & lay down in the kitchen floor. I could hear my wife in the background talking to the officer, thanking-him. He gave her a number to call for more information. Information... I had to find out what happened before mom and dad left for work. Maybe at the very least I could find out where his three cats and beloved dog were. And then I was up, adrenaline clearly kicking in. I called a friend, pulled on a pair of jeans and a black t-shirt and headed into the night not knowing what I would find come morning.

I was on I-40 when my cell phone rang some 30 minutes later. It was Dad. When he spoke his voice was controlled, but vulnerable, softer.

“Dad I’m on my way to Roanoke now. Dad... I...”

“Jim, we already know. Philip killed himself.”

There. Someone had finally said it aloud. Fantasies of finding him in an ER evaporated.

“How?”

“Hung himself in the bathroom at his apartment. Probably a couple of days ago.”

I couldn’t breathe. I managed to make out a sign: exit 150. I hung up, pulled into a Shell gas station and wept.

\* \* \*

While 19 months have passed, the tears and pain have not. They are not as overwhelming as they once were, but omnipresent nonetheless. He’s been on my mind a lot lately, especially as his 40th birthday is but weeks away. But then again, he’s always close by. Whenever I

hear Bruce Springsteen's hoarse voice, or read another Cormac McCarthy novel, or even drink a Mountain Dew, he's there. And when I look at his watch, which always is found on my wrist, I think of the time we shared and the time we could have shared.

But we ran out of time because my brother ran out of hope; the hope that things would be different; the hope that our struggles and tears are worth something. Depression isn't simply a product of neurotransmitters, although biochemistry cannot be ignored. And despair isn't simply a product of the past, although, as Faulkner said, the past is neither dead nor past. Rather, the orientation of both is directed towards the future. Our beliefs and attitudes about tomorrow determine our experiences of today. That's what happened to my brother; he finally gave up on tomorrow.

While Philip was a brilliant sociological theorist, who was right more often than not, he lacked both sight and insight when it came to himself. For several weeks after his death I carried his cell phone with me breaking the news to the unaware. He would have never imagined the depth of their cries and pain. He never heard - or at least he did not integrate - the praise of his colleagues. I think he saw the adoration of his students - how could you not? - but he never understood the degree to which he was changing their lives. He never saw just how much his big brother envied and looked up to him. His mental illness and acedia blinded him to all that was good and joyous, but most importantly to the beauty that dwelt within him. There was more love than he could feel, more light than he could see, and more hope than he could comprehend.

But when you're carrying a cross it's hard to find any light. Sadly, Philip's last and fatal mistake was that he wouldn't ask anyone to help him carry that cross. He would make an appointment with a therapist, but after two or three sessions stop

attending. He would get a prescription for an anti-depressant, but then stop taking it before it could make a difference. And then there were his friends. I can't begin to tell you how many all but screamed "He could have called me!!" We would have gladly shared that burden with him.

Thankfully we talked the day before his death. We had spent the previous week together at his apartment. We read, I worked on my dissertation and he worked on his first book to be published. We ate great meals and shared more than a bottle or two of wine. I am lucky. The last thing I said to him was "Thank-you." That's not a bad way to say goodbye. As for him, the last thing he wrote to me was "Forgive me." I'm getting there bro'. I'm getting there. I just need a little more time.

\* \* \*

May is Mental Illness awareness month & the first week of May is frequently designated Suicide Prevention Week. If you're where my brother was I'm not about to offer you some pie-in-the-sky theology. But what I will say is this: You cannot always trust your vision especially when you are wrestling with depression. So find those who will help you carry this cross - a friend, a therapist, a doctor, a minister - and then you hold on. Hold on until you see what you can't see today; that you are loved and beloved more than you possibly can imagine.

If you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please get help. The national suicide hotline can be reached by calling 1-800-273-TALK. Lastly you can call 911 and let the dispatcher know that this is a mental health crisis. You will then be connected with those who can help you.

*Before serving as pastor of Grace Reformed United Church of Christ, Newton, NC, Jim Luck served churches in Virginia Beach and Portsmouth, VA, where his and Pastor Matt's families were friends. This article is reprinted with Jim's permission.*

## Outreach

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

All slots are filled for "Meet the Matthews". We've heard nothing but great reviews and we thank the host families for opening their homes. If you were not able to attend but would still like to attend a Meet the Matthews gathering, please contact amer\_swede@yahoo.com, stop by the Welcome Center or call the church office.

We are currently working with CPJ on an International Dinner to be held the evening of June 24. A fun-filled evening is being planned with dinner, music and dancing. Please mark your calendar for this annual event.

Our church was featured in the News Gazette on April 29 as part of the *Significant Structures in Champaign*. A big thank you to **Beth Chandler, Jack and Ginny Waaler** and **Jim Andrews** for their part in making this happen.

We also want to thank the Outreach Committee for an outstanding Installation reception for Pastor Matt and helping with the Outreach Fair in Westminster Hall in April.

## All Aboard

BY BRANDI LOWE  
(brandiscrapbook@yahoo.com)

Fun was had by all on our inaugural First Pres Game Night. We met at 5:30 for pre-gaming conversation and a "City of New Orleans" themed dinner and music provided by the Matthews. Games started around 6:30 and was over around 8.

We had fun visiting cities all over the country with Ticket to Ride and Trans-America which are train-themed games. The kids (mostly were kids at heart) had

quite a blast with some great games of cat and mouse, panning for gold, and trying to avoid the crazy Tornado Rex. Overall, the night was a great success. While one game took the whole time, others were played multiple times, and the “kids” played a handful of games.

**Matt Matthews** started off the night with roaring success, but quickly lost his golden touch. Still, I think he’ll be signing up for our next game night which will happen this summer. This first game night was a “soft opening,” but our next one will be open to everyone. Keep an eye out for more details to come.

## Using the Power

**Matt and Rachel Matthews** invite you to attend with them *The Better Angels Conference/Using the Power of Community to Change the World*, October 8-11, at the Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC.

When we look at the intersection of today’s headlines and God’s concern we see topics like racism, #metoo, immigration, and violence. In each of these discussions, the common thread is power. It’s the same when we look at the topics of spirited discussion in our churches, like the budget, mission, stewardship, and recruitment of leaders. And yet power is something we rarely talk about, analyze, or organize around, even though we’re dealing with it, using it, or finding ourselves without it, all the time.

Better Angels invites you to enter the discussion of power where you find it most relevant, by choosing one of several areas of concentration including gender and power in church settings, race, and toxic charity. See the following link for more info. <http://www.montreat.org/better-angels/>

## Financial Update

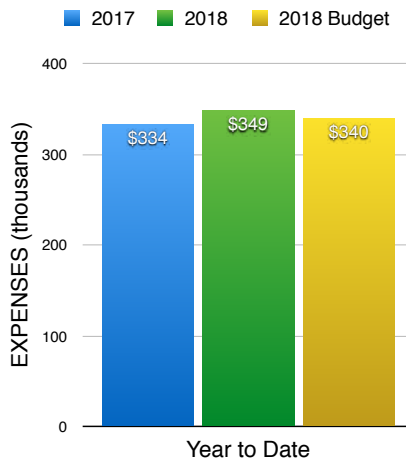
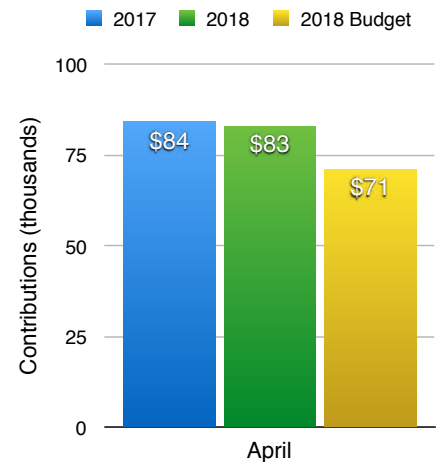
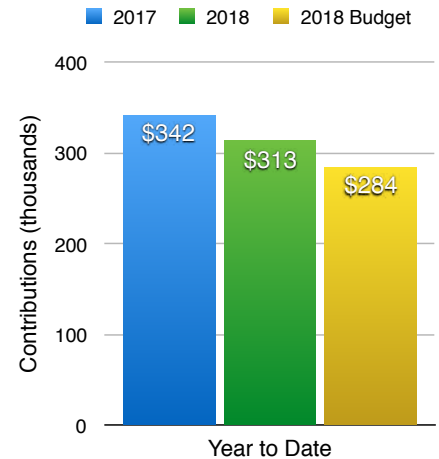
BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, FINANCE CHAIR  
(mschoeffmann@mchsi.com)

### Contributions

Contributions in April were \$1K less than in 2017 but \$12K above the budget at \$83K. The Year to Date total is below last year by \$29K but is above the budgeted amount by \$29K. 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 \$9K above budget at \$349K and above 2017 by \$15K. Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$106K which is \$16K less than at the end of April in 2017. This figure includes \$48K more in prepaid pledges than in 2017.





## Responding to Love

How should we respond to the perfect love God has for us? Jesus gives us the answer when he says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind — and love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37,39) This love for God is not in word only, but involves our emotions as well. We spend time rejoicing in who God is as both Creator of all things as well as personal Savior. Then Jesus says we should love our neighbor as ourselves. We need to be concerned about the welfare of every person. Sometimes this means giving up something for the good of others. This can be hard to do.

Let us pray to continually grow in our love for God and for others.

## Spring!

BY ANN STOUT, HR Co-CHAIR  
(mrsas2003@gmail.com)

Finally! The flowers are blooming and the trees are beginning to burst with green. We are breaking out our warm weather clothes and spending time outside.

Another great thing is that our church parking lot is clean when we arrive for church on Sunday morning. Oh, wait! Our parking lot is ALWAYS clean when we arrive for church – year round. And we have our wonderful maintenance crew to thank for that. On bad days, they arrive ridiculously early to ensure that everything is in ship shape order for us when we come to worship.

Next time you see one of our maintenance people (**Chris, Ritchie, Fred, Damen, or Nissi**) give him a high five or a big "Thank You!" for their efforts to keep our facility one we can be proud of.

Your HR Team

## Special Thanks

We received the following note along with a financial contribution from the men's AA group that meets weekly on Monday evenings.

*The enclosed check is a donation from the participants in the Monday night Men's AA meeting held in the basement of your church at 5:30 PM.*

*We want to thank you for allowing our group to use your wonderful facility. We want to extend a special thanks to your staff for their ongoing and special support.*

*Between thirty and fifty men meet weekly to discuss and support each other in their ongoing clean and sober living. Men in this meeting have anywhere from a few days of sobriety to over forty years.*

*Thank you so much!*

## Jays & Concern

*We extend our sympathies to...*

- **Max and Faye Reid** on the death of their daughter, Deborah Moore, on May 1, 2018;
- **Mary Wood** on the death of her brother John Rayburn.

*Congratulations to...*

- **Alain Ngenzi** and his wife **Nadeige** on the birth of twin sons, Jensen and Ronny on May 2, 2018;
- **Charles Watsidila** and his wife **Silvie** on the birth of a son, Rehobeth, on April 8, 2018.

# Our Church

## Children, Youth & Family Update

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

### Go and Serve Fundraiser

The fundraiser was extremely successful! We raised over \$3,000.00 through your generosity. Thank you for making this faith filled experience possible for these young people! Our group will be staying at Ferncliff Camp near Little Rock, AR. They will volunteer at the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance warehouse, the Arkansas Foodbank warehouse, the Little Rock Compassion Center, and the Stewpot. They will also have the chance to tour Heifer International. You are encouraged to pray for the students and chaperones while they are on the Go and Serve trip experience June 3-8. The adult chaperones are **Sabrina Hwu, Elizabeth Pippin, and Matt Mathews**. The youth participants are **Audrey Pascal, Destin Lembelembe, Emilio Kabakele, Khyla Dee, Miriam Bokamo, Oceanne Mnyampara, Rick Loma, Samantha Musasa, Syntiche Ngonde, Princess Lutete, and Sephora Mayele**.

### Sunday School Notes

In April, the elementary classes studied 'The Great Commission.' The preschool studied Bible stories that celebrated that Jesus is alive. The Middle School class explored many questions, 'How can I stop doing things I know I shouldn't do?', 'Why does God let bad things happen?', and 'How can God be three in one?' Our high school students have been discussing the topic of bullying.

The Confirmation Class was received by Session on April 19. All of the students wishing to join the church are completing

their faith statements and will be assisting in leading the worship service on May 13. They will be received by the congregation during the 9 AM worship service May 13, and a special reception will be held for them in Westminster hall immediately following worship. All are encouraged to attend and welcome these young people into full membership in the church.

### Youth Group

The youth had a great time at Skateland on April 29 for skating and laser tag. Our next event will be to go bowling in May. Watch the weekly Wednesday CYF Praise and Prayer newsletter for more details to come.

### Children's Mission

Our children put together craft kits for the Crisis Nursery kids. Twelve cardboard tube puppet kits and five bookmark kits were delivered to Crisis Nursery on April 23. The children also made bracelets to keep or share with friends. Our next project will be to decorate twenty canvas bags...five to our sister church in Cuba and fifteen for patrons of Salt and Light.

## 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.

## Pentecost Offering Received May 20

A gift to the Pentecost Offering helps the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also address the needs of at-risk children. 40% of the Pentecost offering is retained by individual congregations wanting to make an impact in the lives of young people within their own community. The remaining 60% is used to support ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency:

Young Adult Volunteers  
Ministries for Youth  
Children-at-Risk  
Pentecost Offering Financials

Envelopes will be in the pews for you to use on Sunday, May 20.



### Cuba Fellowship Fundraiser...Great Fun!

A capacity crowd attended a salsa dance lesson and authentic Cuban dinner on April 22. Thanks to the Yaus for preparing the dinner, to our Cuba Partners for all the organizational work and to our congregation for the big turn out. We will provide a significant gift to our sister congregation as a result.



### Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba at Luyanó celebrated its 96<sup>th</sup> year on Sunday, April 27. Congratulations to our brothers and sisters in Havana.



Pastor Daniel Izquierdo will visit First Pres this spring.



Raise a joyful sound.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN**

302 West Church Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN**

**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, Ext 215  
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. For example, 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.**

302 West Church Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

**P:** 217.356.7238

**F:** 217.356.7242

**E:** info@firstpres.church

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