

February 2022



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Snippets from your Pastor

BY MATT MATTHEWS

MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

I'm eager for us to welcome **John McCutcheon** in concert on Sunday February 20th at 2 o'clock. It'll be a great matinee. Johnny Cash said John is "the most impressive instrumentalist I've ever heard." Johnny's heard a lot of players, so, that's high praise. I like John's live shows because of the stories he tells between ballads. He's funny and fun and deep and centered. His songs tell stories that do a soul good. And, Cash is right, John McCutcheon can flat out play.

Little, Brown and Company published his song *Happy Adoption Day* in 1997 as a children's picture book with illustrations by Julie Paschkis. The song, on his album *Family Garden*, tells the story of an adoption celebration played out in families around the world:

*Oh, who would have guessed, who could have seen
Who could have possibly known
All these roads we have traveled, the places we've been
Would have finally taken us home*

*So here's to you, three cheers to you
Let's shout it, "Hip, hip, hip, hooray!"
For, out of a world so tattered and torn,
You came to our house on that wonderful morn
And all of a sudden this family was born
Oh, happy Adoption Day!*

*There are those who think families happen by chance
A mystery their whole life through
But we had a voice and we had a choice
We were working and waiting for you*

*No matter the name and no matter the age
No matter how you came to be
No matter the skin, we are all of us kin
We are all of us one family*

continued on the next page

Bach Concerts

presented by
UI Choral Dept

Wednesdays
February 16 and 23
March 9 and 30
April 6 and 20

12 noon - 12:30 PM

Sanctuary
First Presbyterian Church
Champaign, IL

**Join us at noon each of
these Wednesdays as we
enjoy singers and
instrumentalists from the
U of I Choral Department
present selections
from Bach.**

**Concerts are free and
open to the public.
Masks required.**

*So here's to you, three cheers to
you
Let's shout it, "Hip, hip, hip,
hooray!"
For, out of a world so tattered and
torn,
You came to our house on that
wonderful morn
And all of a sudden this family was
born
Oh, happy Adoption Day!*

John's not a minister, but that song will preach.

John tells stories about growing up, about the watermen who work the bay in boats built by hand by their father that will be handed down to sons and daughters. He sings stories about yearning for peace in the Middle East and a Christmas Eve respite in no-man's land in WWI, about tragedy, baseball, and Krispy Kreme doughnuts—about life in all its ordinary grandeur.

I understand and appreciate my life a little better after John introduces me to the characters he's been writing about since I heard him last. Good songs have that affect. I get a better glimpse of my place in the world after I spend a few hours listening to John sing stories from kin I've never met. Good songs do that, too.

I hope the McCutcheon show will draw a crowd. I hope you'll invite our community. By laughing together and sharing the gift of song, I pray we'll be enriched for our service in the world about which John so artfully sings.

We will livestream the show to our flock who cannot attend in person. Wearing a mask and proof of Covid vaccination (or a negative test result) are necessary for the in-person show. I hope to see you—and your neighbors, co-workers, and extended family—there.



JOHN MCCUTCHEON

**Sunday 2 p.m.
February 20**

**First Presbyterian
Church of Champaign**
302 W. Church Street, Champaign

Folk music's renaissance man —
Master instrumentalist,
powerful singer-songwriter,
storyteller, and author

**Admission is free,
donations appreciated**

**Proof of vaccination or negative
COVID test required to attend**

**Face masks must be worn
during the concert**

Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth, Family

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR
MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

With the current numbers high with Omicron transmission in late January, we will not be scheduling a CYF family fellowship event. We do suggest planning to attend the **John McCutcheon** concert this month on the 20th at 2 PM in our sanctuary. All concert attendees must show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test result and wear a face mask over their nose and mouth for the duration of the concert.

We will plan to have another family fellowship event on March 27th. Look for details in next month's newsletter.

Registration opens March 14th for the **Youth Triennium** for July 24-27, 2022. Those youth who have already contacted me with an interest in attending will be contacted directly for the critical information needed. If you have a youth still considering going, or you are a youth considering attending, please reach out to **Mindy Watts-Ellis** at mindy@firstpres.church.

Registration will be open until June, but lodging arrangements need to happen in March and are first come, first choice, so the sooner you tell me, the better. You must be entering high school in fall of 2022, continuing high school in fall of 2022, or be a graduating senior of spring 2022 in order to be eligible to attend as a youth.

Sunday School Update

BY SAMANTHA NICHOLS, SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR
SAMANTHA@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Sunday School Update

Writing a February update for the Sunday School program in mid-January is not an easy task. Hopefully, Covid-19 case numbers and hospitalizations will have declined enough to allow for a safe return to in-person Sunday School. If we are unable to resume in-person classes in February, we will continue to offer Sunday School resources for use at home. Keep reading for more information about our upcoming units and what to expect if we are not in person:

Preschool

Our next preschool unit is all about what it means to be friends with Jesus. This unit will include the stories of Jesus blessing the little children, feeding the disciples, and visiting Mary and Martha. If we are not in-person for this unit, the stories will be uploaded to the [Firstpres.church/kids](https://firstpres.church/kids) webpage (password: Firstpreskids) along with activity suggestions. For example, students will be invited to look at pictures from around the world as they reflect on the promise of their friend Jesus to be with them at all times and in all places.

Kindergarten - Fifth Grade

Elementary school students will continue to learn from the Growing in God's Love Story Bible as they focus on the people Jesus met and the important lessons he shared throughout his ministry. If we are not in-person for this unit, students can listen to recordings of the stories on the [Firstpres.church/kids](https://firstpres.church/kids) webpage

(password: Firstpreskids). In February, we will explore the stories of *The Very Thirsty Woman* and *The Rich Man* before moving into Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Each story will be accompanied by activity suggestions. For example, after learning about the Beatitudes, students can download worksheets to help them create their own "blessing maps!"

Middle and High School

In February, our middle and high school students will explore the subjects of leadership and service before moving into a new unit on Revelation at the end of the month. If we are not in person for these lessons, resources will be uploaded to the [Firstpres.church/kids](https://firstpres.church/kids) webpage (password: Firstpreskids). These resources will include readings, discussion questions, and activity suggestions. For example, students will be invited to reflect on the tree of life as described in the book of Revelation and create their own message of hope. These messages could be shared with someone who is struggling or be kept by the student to help them through struggles of their own.

* * *

The CYF Team will be in touch with Sunday School families as we get closer to February 6th to share our plans. If we are in person, students will be in class from 10:15 to 11:05 .. If we are not in person, we hope and pray that our online resources will contribute to fruitful conversations and meaningful faith formation at home!

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Mission Updates

The Heart of Missions Newsletter has been revived. Our local and global mission agencies have made changes due to COVID restrictions, 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

in our understanding of the needs of others.

What strengths do you have that might encourage struggling English students? Feel free to email **Val Smith** (val@firstpres.church) to set up a time for you or your group to hear more about this vital outreach.



English as Second Language News

BY VAL SMITH, DIRECTOR
VAL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

When we think of February, Valentine's Day is often our first thought. This holiday is a special day when we are encouraged to express love and affection to one another. The English Language program at FPCC is an outreach dependent on loving volunteers. What motivates the hearts of our volunteers? "We love because he first loved us." *1 John 4:19.*



Volunteers are the heart of the outreach English language teaching program. One couple prays for the program. In the past, some people photocopied teaching materials. Other people served in the cafe. Many tutor one student or a small group of students one to four times a week either in person or online.

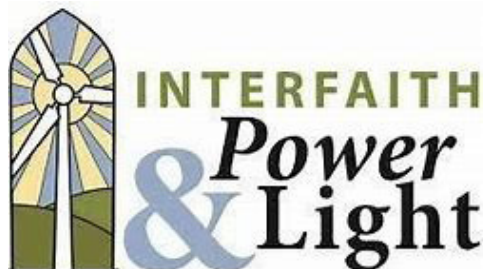
One person said, "Volunteering helps the students, but it helps us, too". Joy comes from giving. In giving to others, we learn new skills and grow



Environmental Stewardship

BY PAT PHILLIPS

P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET



Have you heard about Interfaith Power & Light? It's an organization focused on education and advocacy campaigns to engage churches in a religious response to global warming. There are affiliates in 40 states and over 20,000 congregations! Faith in Place is the Illinois affiliate, and our congregation has an active environmental stewardship committee.

The Rev. Cindy Shepherd, the Faith in Place outreach director for central Illinois is now the state Director, overseeing outreach and engaging more congregations. There are now 181 Green Teams in Illinois, and the goal is 250 by year's end!

First Pres Champaign has new LED lights in the chapel and security lighting, water coolers to reduce the use of bottled water, recycling programs, adopt-a-highway collections, and is researching, through a Faith in Place webinar, new energy-saving technologies for our aging utilities. (Please keep bringing Styrofoam, taped batteries, eyeglasses, and medicine bottles to church and recycle all the plastic you can.)

The Faith in Place website offers webinars and virtual conversations on a variety of environmental topics.

Check out <https://www.faithinplace.org/upcoming-events>

There are so many ways to improve sustainability and the environment; check out the Faith in Place website and let your Green Team know your ideas and discoveries.

With Love From Luyano

One body, that of Christ.

1 Cor. 12:20-27 (Sunday, January 23)

We're in the midst of a Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians. The body image is used by Paul to present his idea of unity in this text, following his exhibition about the gifts of the Spirit. Paul uses the phrase "body of Christ" and not "of Christians", which points not only to a visible, local meaning, but beyond a scatological end.

The various uses that Paul makes of the expression make to think that this metaphor teaches members of the church that their existence and unity depend on Christ, and thus warns that each member has the power to promote or endanger the unity, as simple as that complex. Unity is fragile if we are dominated by other things other than the thought of being the body of Christ! For this reason, the placement of the church is very rewarding after talking about the spiritual gifts God grants for church building.

Praying for the unity of the church and all Christians cannot be a one week goal, but it must be constant and daily concern. Living by faith in Christ, under the hand of God and the guidance of His Spirit, must direct us to that idea of unity manifested in Jesus' earthly ministry, surrounded by

diverse people whom He called His disciples and apostles. He must also lead us to the own unity of the mystery of a trinitary God. How much damage has the idea that the image God created us has to do with teaching, which we translate as mastering. I agree with several authors that we need to go and disband the notion of an Imago Dei (image of God) in this exclusive sense, and work more and rescue the idea of a trinitatis image. To be like God involves carrying the image of that slender God, perfect in his relationships of compenetration and harmony, in total unity. Everything else is secondary, St. Augustine would say, and it should always be.

Let's live in unity, and not just pray for it. May God bless us like this. Amen.

One Winter Night



Jesus preached good news to the poor. He healed people and fed people who had no one to help them. We at First Presbyterian want to do what Jesus did and help our friends without an address and we know we cannot do this alone. We do not have the skills, the training or the relationships with our friends without an address, all of which are necessary, to help them grow and transition toward more permanent solutions to their homelessness.

We are so grateful for CU at Home for the unique relationships they have developed with our friends without an address as well as the way they have partnered with congregations

and community agencies who want to help. They understand that what it takes to help are not quick fixes but long term solutions and compassion. They value the relationships that are developed.

We have been impressed with how CU at Home has listened to where we have gaps and tried to help us. They have sought the education and training they needed to fill in the gaps. We are grateful for how they have partnered with the city of Champaign and other agencies and churches in bringing us together to help our friends without an address. We are glad to partner with them this winter until our community can fully provide for our friends without an address 365 days, 24/7 for their well-being.

The evening of February 4, 2022 is CU at Home's Annual One Winter Night event. It brings awareness to our community of the difficulty our friends without an address have as well as raises a large portion of funds for the year. Please go to their website for more information on how you can help: <https://www.cuathome.us/one-winter-night/>

Financial Reports in the monthly newsletter will be a month delayed due to new deadlines. The February financial report will be published in the March issue.

The Republic of Cuba

Occupation and Conditional Independence 1898-1959

BY BOB KIRBY, CUBA PARTNERS
RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

On December 10, 1898 following the Second War in which the United States prevailed over Spain, the treaty of Paris was signed with no Cubans participating. This continued an attitude of paternalism toward Cubans. Cubans had little recourse given their economic and political position but to submit. American occupation resulted in appropriation of the Cuban treasury and its public revenues. A "rural guard" was put in place to protect US properties. Roads, bridges and railways were rebuilt and port facilities improved. Cubans were denied loans to maintain their properties and many were forced into bankruptcy. Land was available at one-tenth its prewar value and thousands of Americans came to Cuba to buy cheap land and build their fortunes.

A constitutional convention was convened in 1900. The US insisted on language commonly known as the Platt Amendment to the Cuban constitution which gave US continuing control of Cuba and shaped US Cuba relations to the present time. The Platt Amendment forbid Cuba from making treaties with other countries. If forbid foreign military bases without US approval. Cuba's finances were to be overseen by the US. The United States could intervene in Cuba whenever it felt a need and could build permanent military bases on Cuban soil. The US intervened with military occupations largely to protect US private property in 1906-1909, 1912 and from 1917-1923. The Platt Amendment was abrogated in 1934.

The United States successfully invested in Cuba. Americans brought not only money to Cuba but with it organized crime and overt racism. Increasingly Cuba became "America's playground".

Next month: America's Playground



Adult Sunday School

Spiritual Formation Committee paused adult Sunday School during January due to the resurgence of COVID. The hope is to resume Sunday discussions after worship beginning February 6.

February 6 - **David Bauer** will lead a discussion of the rich text found in the first verses of the book of Romans. The title of the talk is, "Paul, Human Nature and Faith". The topic is Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 1, vs 1 - 17.

February 13 - **Matt Matthews** will lead a discussion entitled, "The Theology (or the rather limited theology) of Rock and Roll."

On February 20 - FPCC will host a concert, at 2 PM, by the renowned folk singer, **John McCutcheon**. There will be no discussion after the worship service that day so members can get lunch and return to the Church for the concert at 2.

February 27 - Topic will be announced later.



Romans 15:12 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus.

Romans 14:1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. "Our principles should be in essentials, unity, in nonessentials liberty in everything else."

Ephesians 2:8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Hear My Prayer, O Lord...

by Barbara Hamby

Hear my prayer, O Lord, though all I do all day is watch old black-and-white movies on TV. Speak to me through William Powell or Myrna Loy, solve the mystery of my sloth. Show me the way to take a walk or catch a cold, anything but read another exposé of the Kennedys. Teach me to sing or at least play the piano. For ten years I took lessons, and all I learned was to hate Bach. Shake me up or down. Call me names. Break my ears with AC/DC—I deserve far worse. Rebuke me in front of my ersatz friends. Who cares? They don't like me much anyway. Make me fat in lieu of thin. Give me a break or don't. I'm a hundred million molecules in search of an author. If that's you, thank you for my skin. Without it I'd be in worse shape than I'm in.

Barbara Hamby, "Hear My Prayer, O Lord" from the poem cycle entitled "9 Sonnets from the Psalms" and from All-Night Lingo Tango. © 2009, University of Pittsburgh Press. **Used here with permission from the author.**

Help support our **Free Little Pantry**. Supplies are very low and much appreciated during these cold winter months. Suggested items are small cereal boxes, self opening cans, protein bars, granola bars, small Kleenex packs, nuts and dried fruits. Items can be dropped off in the church office or Westminster Hall.

Jays & Concerns

We extend our sympathy to...

- The family and friends of **Tom Buschbach** who died January 10, 2022;
- The family and friends of **John Dodson** who died January 14, 2022;
- **Tracy Dace** on the death of his mother, **Dorothy Scott Chesser** on January 13, 2022 in Mississippi.

**The Annual Meeting
of the Congregation
will be held
Sunday, March 6,
immediately following the
9 AM service.**

**Resolution of Appreciation
Dorothy Scott Chesser
from the DREAAM House Board of Directors**

We, the Board of Directors of DREAAM House, grieve with and for our Founder and Chief Executive Officer, **Tracy Dace**, upon the physical death of his Mother, **Dorothy Scott Chesser**.

Whereas our Friend and Brother Tracy Dace was born into a Christian home and nurtured with siblings by a Mother committed to loving God and serving neighbor;

Whereas Ms. Chesser nurtured and served not only her own children but also the children in her community as their constant advocate for justice and dignity;

Whereas we all stand on the shoulders of giants, and Ms. Chesser was one such giant in her community and in the State of Mississippi from whom generations of neighbors have drawn strength and hope;

Whereas we affirm with Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth that “If one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (First Corinthians 12:26).

Therefore, be it resolved that we celebrate the life and legacy of Dorothy Scott Chesser; we grieve her loss; we rejoice in her life; we thank God for her witness; and we recommit with hope and courage to live into our calling to love and serve our neighbors—especially the children and families entrusted to our care—in whose face is graven the image of God.

Respectfully submitted, on behalf of the DREAAM House Board of Directors,

William P. “Matt” Matthews, Jr.
President of the Board
January 21st, 2022
Champaign, Illinois

SMALL GROUP SUPPORT

Training for the session on Tuesday, February 1 at 9 AM will be **BUILDING VITALITY IN YOUR GROUP**.

All facilitators are encouraged and welcome to attend. We will send more info closer to the time of the meeting.

Sallie Hutton sallie.hutton@gmail.com

**As we move
through this season of
Epiphany,
we look for
God’s revelation in Jesus.
Lent does not begin until
the first week of March.
In the meantime, we are
working on Lenten plans
for worship,
from the ashes
of Ash Wednesday to the
empty tomb
of Easter morning.**

**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.**

Bless be the tie that binds.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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Sunday:

9 AM Worship/Sanctuary

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:15 AM The Gathering/Chapel

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.

Pastor:

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

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
Judi Geistlinger..... Commissioned Lay Pastor
Jason Gordon..... Technology Support
Joe Grant..... Director of Music
Sam Haupt Director Contemporary Worship Band
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Associate, Ext. 219
Samantha Nichols..... Sunday School Coordinator, Ext. 216
Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216
Ann Petry..... Accounting, Ext. 224
Val Smith ESL Director, Ext. 235
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director
Mindy Watts-Ellis..... Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

Most of the staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by @firstpres.church. For example, matt@firstpres.church.

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.