

February 2024



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



Ash Wednesday

WORSHIP SERVICE

February 14th | 4:00pm

Lent is the season of the liturgical year that leads us to the cross and the glory of Easter morning. The season begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14. Your worship committee has planned a brief Ash Wednesday worship service at 4 pm in Westminster Hall.

During the Lenten season we will be focusing on our journey with Jesus to the Cross.

2nd SUNDAY BRUNCH February 11th

immediately following
Annual Meeting

Come, enjoy brunch
Centennial Hall

We will have a variety of
brunch items along with some
special sweet treats. Enjoy
food and fellowship right
after the 9 AM service.

Donations appreciated!

Volunteers are needed to help with
the brunches. If interested, please
contact Jan Wittler, Gary Peterson
or the church office.



Illinois Interfaith Conference February 23 & 24

The Illinois Interfaith Conference is a FREE opportunity for University of Illinois students and campus allies- as well as student leaders and professionals from across the Midwest- to join together to engage in critical questions about interfaith engagement on the college campus.

The conference will be held Friday, February 23rd and Saturday, February 24th at the University YMCA (1001 S. Wright St., Champaign). The opening keynote on Friday evening will be in room 112 Gregory Hall (810 S. Wright St., Champaign).

Keynote speaker **Nadia Bolz-Weber**, Lutheran pastor and New York Times bestselling author, will speak about her latest book *Shameless: A Case for Not Feeling Bad About Feeling Good (About Sex)*, which reclaims the conversation around sexuality, shame, and desire for a new generation of believers. In her talks, she explores spirituality and faith; friendship and community; life purpose and activism; self-care, shame, and the body; recovery and self-awareness; sex and intimacy; health and wellness;

and leadership and authority. Nadia will also be speaking at the Friday Forum + Conversation Cafe at noon on Friday at the University YMCA in conversation with **Pastor Leah Roberts-Mosser**.

All people of religious and non-religious philosophical traditions are welcome! The Illinois Interfaith Conference is co-sponsored by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Diversity & Social Justice Education, Illini Hillel, Interfaith in Action, Department of Religion, and the University YMCA.

To register [go here](#).

DREAAM Youth Bible Club



Tracy Dace, Founder and Chief Executive Director of DREAAM.

DREAAM Youth Bible Club meets Wednesdays from 3:30-5 PM in Centennial Hall.

You can volunteer in the kitchen or in the front room as a table partner. You can sign up [here](#) to be a table partner or phone the church office at 217-356-7238 or contact **Bob Kirby** at 217-621-5915 or rwk3213@gmail.com

Clubs include an opening ritual followed by a fun Bible story activity, dinner with conversation, clean up, prayer and closing ritual. Seventeen church volunteers attend with DREAAM staff and twenty middle school age girls and boys. Volunteer time is 3:30-5 PM.

Write a Note

Does a moment of joy come to you when you receive a handwritten note in the mail? Does it brighten a dark day, help you celebrate or bring affirmation? As the First Pres "family" we strive to share the peace and love of Christ with each other. One way is through writing notes.

The Session sends a letter regularly to those for whom they recently prayed and our Nurture Committee writes a note to first time attenders. Memorial donations to the church are followed by a personal note. Some write to our incarcerated friends and those in the military. Others write to those they know from our prayer list.

To assure we respond to everyone with needs and joys your Nurture Committee coordinates writing notes on behalf of all the congregation.

Please join us as we strive to blunt the pain or share the joy with all our siblings in Christ. Contact **Carol Ann Green**, Chair, Nurture Committee or the church office to join our note writing team.



Chili Cook Off

BY JOE LUNDY, ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR DISCIPLESHIP
JOSEPH@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Although it may not be as cold as it was last month, I think we are still definitely in what I have heard called "chili weather". On Sunday, February 25, at 3 PM in Centennial Hall, I am looking forward to getting together with all of you, to have some good food, good conversations, and good friendly competition to see who can claim the bragging rights for the year. Remember that each person can (but isn't required to) enter one dessert and one chili.

You also do not need to enter any dish at all. You can bring your expert palate to help us find which dishes will win the day. I hope that everyone comes ready to have fun and fellowship.

The Heart of Mission

English Language Learners

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR
BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

ELL started off the new semester with several ice and snow days, but we are fully underway now. We have had a few teachers out with illness or other family matters, but others have stepped up to fill in the gaps. I am grateful for each of our teachers. We have a new teacher this semester in **Judy Gordon**, as well as a student volunteer in **Kruti Thakkar** who will fill in and help co-teach.

In January, we added a 5th class, YELLOW, which allowed us to add new students, as well as move those who are progressing. We have over 60 students enrolled and most days things are quite busy here.

We will have a Valentine's Day party on the 14th. If you ever want to visit the program, especially during Cafe time from 9:15-9:45, we would love to have you. It is rewarding to see students connecting and chatting in English. Many came very shy and reluctant to speak English but are quickly progressing and engaging in conversation.

I am amazed that I get paid to do this work! Thank you for your support of this great program.



Ngoma African Arts Festival

Given our close and now decade old relationship with people from Western Africa it is not surprising that we would join them to celebrate their culture. The African Arts Festival will include traveling and local African musicians, a curated photo exhibit featuring African histories, a fashion show, public dance, and African food. Venues will include Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Community Center for the Arts (C4A) and Lincoln Square Mall.

Our friend **Jean René Balekita** is a principal in organizing the festival as a community service project for his PhD in music at the University of Illinois. The date of the festival is Sunday, June 23. First Pres is honored to be a sponsor.

A fund for tax deductible donations is set up at First Pres. You may donate to the church and memo, "African Festival". Donate now as funding support will in part effect program development.

Collecting for Cuban Adults & Children

"Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."
Romans 12:13

A delegation of five will visit our sister congregation in Cuba in mid-March. They will be carrying special gifts to help their mutual musical learning and playing of bells together. They also will take your donations for everyday needs so scarce in Cuba. Remember we would like to take things for both children and adults.

Please consider donating any of the following items dropping them off at the library adjacent to Westminster Hall or the church office. Or call the church office for pick up. Or, you can make a financial donation to the church in the memo: "Cuba"

1. Small clear empty medicine containers. We will clean off the labels.
2. Over the counter medicines
Analgesics: aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin)...
Decongestants: phenylephrine, pseudoephedrine (Sudafed)....
Vitamins: multivitamins
3. Hygiene items
Feminine hygiene products, shampoo, bathing soap, deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste- (Your dentist may have free samples.)
4. Adult diapers small, medium, and large
5. Wet wipes for babies and adults
6. Insulin syringes and insulin
7. Materials for Sunday School
glue sticks and liquid like Elmer's glue, pencils, crayons, erasers, construction paper...

Knowing Cuba



Almost every worker in Cuba makes less than \$150 per month and 75% make less than \$50.00. Inflation is 34%.

All private autos were produced before 1959. More recent vehicles are owned by the government. The principal mineral export of Cuba is nickel. Cuba provides about 4% of the world's need. Cuba also exports physicians and nurses on contract.

Poverty by America

“Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages?” Join with other PC(USA) members across the country to discuss **Matthew Desmond’s** book “Poverty, by America” over 4 sessions (2-3 chapters will be discussed each session). 6:30-7:45 PM. CDT Mondays in February on February. 5, 12, 19, 26 All are welcome!

This denomination wide study is free. Register [here](#).

Your Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team studied this book as a part of its commitment to the Matthew 25 pillar of eradicating systemic poverty. The book is provocative, opening windows for understanding our nation’s struggle with homelessness, crime and racism. The author offers practical solutions.

SPRING 2024

FRIDAY FORUM + CONVERSATION CAFÉ



Student Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

- 02/02** Exploring the Radical Black Church
Rev. Terrance Thomas, Bethel AME Church
- 02/09** Cartooning Can Save the World! A comic strip slideshow by Keith Knight
Keith Knight, Gentleman Cartoonist
- 02/16** Good Ole Abe and Emancipation and Reparations
Illinois State Representative Carol Ammons
- 02/23** Nadia Bolz-Weber, Lutheran Pastor, NYT Bestselling Author, Illinois Interfaith Conference Keynote Speaker
In conversation with Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Community United Church of Christ
- 03/01** Overcoming Inequalities and Barriers in Refugees' Labor Market Participation in Germany
Ozge Yenigun, Department of Urban and Regional Planning
- 03/22** The Education of Charlene Teters (Spokane Nation)
Charlene Teters, Artist and FAA Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient
- 04/05** 'In Whose Honor?' 30 Years Battling Native Sports Mascots and Chief Illiniwek
Jay Rosenstein, Department of Media and Cinema Studies
- 04/12** The Mission and Vision of the Salaam MENA Cultural Center
Awad Awad, Salaam MENA Cultural Center
- 04/19** Envisioning Reproductive Justice in the Post-Dobbs Landscape
Samantha Auerbach, Urbana-Champaign Reproductive Justice
- 04/26** Earth Day and Environmental Justice: Allies or Enemies?
McKenzie Johnson, Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Sciences



12-1PM | UNIVERSITY YMCA
1001 S. WRIGHT ST., CHAMPAIGN
FREE LUNCH PROVIDED

Face to Face with Sallie Hutton



Sallie Hutton in the Chapel.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

Well, I grew up with the Disciples of Christ but my husband was Presbyterian. When we came to Champaign in the early sixties we did some church shopping. We liked what we saw at First Pres and I am here still.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

There's probably more than one but the first would be the people. This is a safe place to build enduring relationships. Then after that would be our focus on service, particularly in mission but also the learning and spiritual growth opportunities here.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

My job was social work focused on neglected and abused children, child welfare.

I have two wonderful children, one here and one in Michigan and two grandchildren.

What do you do in your free time?

I have my church groups of course including women's groups, our Pakistan Group, Small Groups Leadership Group and World Mission. I will soon start a rotation with Community Mission Deacons. And, I have two small church groups of singles who gather regularly for meals out.

Beyond church I have long been interested in genealogy and I read a lot.

How can the church best be the church?

That's an easy one. Be a place of caring relationships among diverse people.

Presbyterian Film Critic's Top Ten Movies in 2023

'The Color Purple' tops **Dr. Edward McNulty's** [rankings of films](#) that Explore spiritual and ethical issues.

Dr. Edward McNulty, a semi-retired Presbyterian minister, for many years reviewed films for Presbyterians Today and over the years for a dozen other religious and secular publications. He has been posting weekly film reviews at his Visual Parables site for 33 years. His three Westminster John Knox Press film books are "Faith & Film," "Praying the Movies" and "Praying the Movies II." His most recent book is "Jesus Christ, Movie Star."

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

**Sunday, February 11
immediately
following worship**

**Copies of the
Annual Report
will be available.**

**The Annual Report will
also be available online at
[https://firstpres.church/
newsletters-reports/](https://firstpres.church/newsletters-reports/)**

**Copies of the
2024 Spring
Study/Social Groups
are now available.**

**Pick up your copy
from one of the kiosks
after church or
contact the church office.**



So we begin a journey through the wilderness of Lent with the marks of our human brokenness upon us. Accompany us on the way; forgive us as we stumble; encourage us as we learn the way of discipleship; bring us safely to the cross and the empty tomb.

Restore us to wholeness, and embrace us in your steadfast love.



For the Lenten season the adult Sunday School will be using devotions from a recently published book: *Pause - Spending Lent with the Psalms* by Elizabeth Caldwell. This book guides us on a different sort of Lenten pilgrimage, lingering with the ancient words of the Psalms and uncovering layers of personal meaning from the divine poetry.

Books will be available on Sunday morning. Cost is \$10. If you don't have the book, you can still join our discussions. The Psalms are in the Bible. For our first session, on Sunday, February 18, we will reflect on the meaning of Ash Wednesday and the first week of Lent by connecting with *Psalms 51 and 25*.

Men's Prayer

The men of the church gather for prayer Fridays at 8:15 AM on Zoom. We pray in turn in our own way and in the language of our choice. We pray for the world, our nation, our communities and for those with special needs or joys. [Join us.](#)

Jays & Concerns

We extend our sympathy...

- to the family and friends of **Gene Morgan** who died January 26, 2024. A Memorial Service was held Saturday, February 3.
- the Memorial Service for **Jim Andrews** will be held this Saturday, February 10, at 11 AM in Westminster Hall.

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. Blest be the tie that binds.



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CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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Sunday:

- 9 AM Worship
- 10 AM Coffee and Fellowship
- 10 AM Sunday School for Youth & Adults

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
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
Rachel Matthews..... Covenant Pastor for Mission
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

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.