

January 2023



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Snippets from Your Pastor/January 2023

BY MATT MATTHEWS

MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

I'm looking forward to the New Year. In the list below, I've tried to note a few coming highlights. However, whenever I do this, I fear I'm forgetting other important events. For example, our Spiritual Formation Team is working on GREAT Sunday school talks each week; they have a Lenten series coming into focus, as well as many guest speakers, including our very own church musician, Sora Shepard. Compassion, Peace, and Justice often has an interesting series going on. And our community has myriad lectures, concerts, and games to attend. There are things going on at Krannert, Allerton, and in Chicago all of the time.

Don't forget these (and other) events at your church for the first half of this year. These events aren't intended to entertain us; they are events designed to help us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as the body of Christ.

Some of the dates are pending. All of these events are opportunities to invite friends and guests.

- January 23 – Matt leaves for a one-month mini-sabbatical, returning February 20.
- February 12 – Second Sunday Brunch
- February 22 – Ash Wednesday, service in sanctuary. This kicks off the season of Lent.
- Winter – We'll be planning our next trip to Cuba. Who is interested?
- March 10-12 – Ten Thousand Village Rug Sale @ First Pres. We'll meet partners in ministry from Pakistan; we'll share stories, and, perhaps, a dinner, and much fun. Plans are still coming together. Many from our community will be attending this sale, so we'll have an opportunity to provide welcome hospitality as we support a local mission partner.
- March 12 – Second Sunday Brunch
- March 23 – Quincy College Choir Concert. We'll feed them and host a concert, then we'll welcome them overnight in our homes. Interested in housing some college kids? Call Joe Grant. And, please bring a friend.
- April 2 – Palm Sunday. It's also called "Passion" Sunday. It's both.
- April 6 – Maundy Thursday. We'll gather for worship (and maybe dinner).
- April 7 – Good Friday. It's our turn to host the service with our Methodist neighbors. This is a meaningful service remembering the cross.
- April 9 – Easter & Second Sunday Brunch.
- April 16 – David LaMotte In Concert, 3 PM. (David is a great singer-songwriter and storyteller. This will be an afternoon of song, fellowship, and welcome. Invite a friend. You'll be hearing more later.
- May 7 – Music Sunday. Joe Grant, our musical miracle worker, is pulling together great music to deepen our walk in worship.
- May 14 – Second Sunday Brunch
- May 21 – Car Show! Harvey Hodges, Gary Wiseman, and others in our congregation are collecting vintage cars for a "show" in our alley after worship. Come see these neat, old cars.
- May 28 – Pentecost.

God has a lot in store for us. I'm eager to see you in the coming year.



Easy English Fellowship small group sings at Sunday worship. In front from left to right are Jacqueline Seyi, Solange Bosamba, Emilie Sudika, Colette Mikemoto, Ginette Mukoko, Jose Pukuta, Noel Ntumba and Nadeige Lumbu. Standing behind is Gabriel Mboyo.

**Were you inspired by the music through the Christmas season?
Amazed at the bell choir?**

Now is the time to get involved with one or both of these groups. For Chancel Choir contact Joe Grant at joegrant@illinois.edu. For Bell Choir contact Libby Sternhagen at ecsternhagen@gmail.com. We'd love to have you with us.

Human Relations

We had a very busy and productive year in 2022, bringing on new staff and enjoying a bit of freedom to worship and meet in person. We are looking forward to getting back to a more normal schedule post pandemic as the situation improves. We will continue to offer worship to those who are unable to come to church in person.

Per the terms of his call, Pastor Matt is eligible for a three-month sabbatical after serving four years. The Session has approved a mini-sabbatical for him and he will use the other two months of sabbatical leave at a later time. He will be gone from January 23 to February 20, 2023, for one month and four Sundays.

Two local sabbatical pastors, **Reverends Connie Bandy** and **Jean Oliver-Holder** will be here while Pastor Matt is gone. They will be preaching, meeting with staff, and providing emergency leadership with our **Covenant Pastor Rachel Matthews** (who will not be traveling with Matt) and our Commissioned **Lay Pastor Judi Geistlinger**. They will each lead a "Faith in the Real World" discussion sharing their faith story and how their faith shapes their life in a day-to-day way.

Rev. Bandy, a recently retired PCUSA pastor, has served many of the churches in Champaign-Urbana; **Rev. Oliver-Holder** is a hospice chaplain. Rev. Bandy will be acting head of staff and will help our able staff, Session, and other leaders to ensure all runs smoothly in Pastor Matt's absence.

What is a sabbatical?

The word sabbatical has its roots in the biblical concept of Sabbath ("to rest" or "to cease"). Sabbath-keeping is setting aside time that God consecrates and makes holy. Sabbatical leave is a time for our pastor to shift gears, to rest, disengage, study, reflect and travel, to return to minister among us refreshed and renewed in body, mind, and spirit. It is not a time for routine work.

Sabbatical is more than a vacation from meetings, budgets, sermons, and people in need. It is a time for Pastor Matt to receive spiritual nourishment and a change in perspective to deepen his relationship with God, himself, and his family—a brief season of spiritual growth. This special time will also be a season of growth for the entire congregation.

Pastor Matt's goals for this mini-sabbatical are to seek rest and renewal by focused writing, reading, weekly in-person worship, some travel and retreat in the vicinity of his sons, and retreat in North Carolina with his decades-old study group.

We welcome this sabbatical opportunity for our church and Pastor Matt. We pray that Pastor Matt will return refreshed and renewed. And we welcome the Reverends Bandy and Oliver-Holder to our church family to teach and guide us during this time.

We Need Your Help

The Free Little Pantry is a small but important way you can help our neighbors without an address (and others on financial hard times).

We are currently low on supplies for our Little Pantry and are asking for food bars, snack bars, nut bars, dried goods, canned soups and meats with pull top lids, and other pantry items. Also socks, gloves and hats. Cold weather is a critical time for these items.

Thank you for your generosity. Drop off at church office or there is a basket in Westminster Hall.

Face to Face with Jose Pukuta and Emilie Sudika



Jose reads scriptures in French during traditional worship. Both attend Easy English Fellowship.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

Our children worshipped here. When they moved away, we stayed. We also felt welcome when we saw French language used here.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

Worship is always the highlight of church including the sermons and the organization of the worship. The worship tradition here is very much what we enjoyed in Congo. We feel at home in worship.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

Well, we have twelve children and twenty-two grandchildren. So, for Emilie that has been her full-time work. I owned a bakery in Congo as well as several stores and warehouses related to my bakery business.

What do you do in your free time?

Free time? We love being with our family. And when we relax, we pray, read scripture and sing.

What are your favorite Bible characters?

We can both quickly say David. Jose's favorite scripture is Psalm 23 and mine (Emilie) is Psalm 27.

What advice can give on how to be the church? Or how can the church best be the church?

Most simply stated it is to be one in Christ.

We accepted Christ in 1978 and have been servants of Christ since. I served many years in our church of 1200 people in Congo as the children and youth Sunday school superintendent and for thirteen years as the secretary which means I was the chief administrative officer for the congregation.

One Winter Night

One Winter Night is an annual event that provides a powerful opportunity for our community to learn about homelessness, build empathy for the people we serve, and discover ways to partner with us in our mission.

On Friday, February 3, 2023, churches and organizations across Champaign-Urbana will be hosting empathy-building activities designed to shed light on the challenges involved in moving out of homelessness, as well as some of the community resources available to help with that process.

Leading up to the One Winter Night event, there will also be multiple ways to contribute financially to C-U at Home, culminating in a donation drive hosted by WCIA on February 3 where people will be able to drive through their backlot to drop off cash or checks, or give online through our website. The majority of our operating budget is funded by individuals, churches, and businesses in the community. We couldn't do this without your donations!

Finally, on Saturday, February 4th, C-U at Home will host a celebratory concert at the Venue C-U to recognize the effort and generosity of the people involved in addressing the issues surrounding homelessness.

You can get involved with One Winter Night in lots of different ways this year. Go to <http://www.cuathome.us/one-winter-night-2023/> to learn more!

The Heart of Mission

Cuba Remembered

Visitors to Cuba shared their memories with our sister congregation in Havana at their 100th year anniversary celebration in November. If you would like to join a group from our congregation visiting our church in Cuba, please contact Rachel Matthews. rachel@firstpres.church

The Meals We Shared

The kindness and generosity of our brothers and sisters in Cuba were memorably embodied in the meals shared with us. Meals were prepared and presented with attention to the needs of travelers whose bodies tended to be unfamiliar with the climate, culture, language, daily patterns of life and some foods.

Familiar foods were incorporated with unfamiliar foods. Sliced fresh tomatoes and strips of papaya were arranged invitingly on platters coaxing us to try something new. Guava and papaya juice along with the more familiar orange juice helped us hydrate and adjust to the climate and new routines. Some of us even acquired a taste for the new foods and sought them out at home. A substantial breakfast prepared us for busy days. Silvia kindly refilled the coffee pot some mornings when we were particularly thirsty for the wonderful coffee.

Many, many thanks for your welcome and care. The love of Christ was amply expressed through the thoughtful generosity of the meals served to us.

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering

prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. "Philippians 1:3-6
Abrazos, A visitor in 2010 and 2011

Warmth and Hospitality

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Luyanó, Thank you so much for hosting us back in 2018. Your warmth and generosity touched me deeply. Below are two Haiku (Japanese-style) poems that were inspired by this experience.

Haiku from Luyanó.
Pulpy sweet sunshine,
Heaven sliced into a bowl,
Fresh mangoes in spring.

Rooster crows at night,
Hoping to summon the dawn,
Breaking dark's silence.

Peace,
A visitor in 2018

A Spiritual Connection

There are so many fond memories I have from my visit to Luyanó. What sticks with me the most though, is not a memory, but a feeling. The feeling of being with brothers and sisters in Christ from afar and having such a spiritual connection was humbling. I pray all continue to be protected by His love.

A visitor in 2011 and 2012

Embrace Diversity

The Presbyterian Church (USA) welcomes and affirms all people. Recently our congregation completed a series of online discussions with a representative of Powell Presbyterian Church in Tennessee. She led us to a deeper understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community, one of the most oppressed groups of people in the world.

As we strive to be a congregation embracing the diversity of God's children we continue to learn and to love those God brings us.

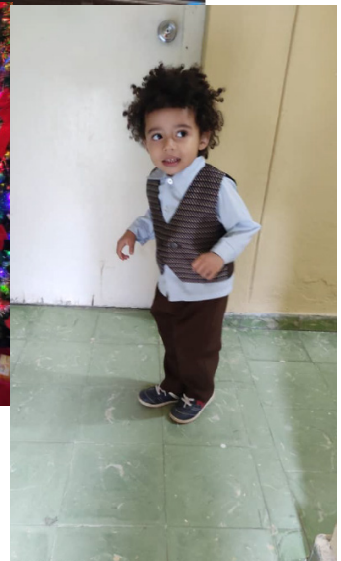
Here is a brief statement from our denomination about inclusion. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/lgbtqia-f-a-q-s/>

Used Mattresses and Bedding Needed

A shortage of household furnishings needed to resettle local immigrants now exists. Particularly needed are mattresses (twin, full, queen) with or without box springs or frames, bedding, small dining tables and chairs and end tables. Donations will be picked up at your home and of course you will get a receipt for tax purposes.

To donate used items, go online to isc-u.org and then to donate-household and leave a written message. Or contact **Bob Kirby** at 217-621-5915 who will help you connect.

Merry Christmas from our sister church in Luyano, Cuba



Mission Co-Worker Visit

Dear friends,

Wow! What a gift to be with you at First Pres this past week! It was an honor to share a bit of life and ministry with y'all and inspiring to meet some of your ministry partners. We cherish your partnership and are grateful to serve as your PC(USA) Mission Co-workers on the US/Mexico border.

I am including some links below that share a bit more about other aspects of our ministry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any follow-up questions or comments—I would love to hear from you.

Finally, know that if you ever would like to share a bit of life and ministry with the extraordinary community with whom we serve, you are welcome on the border—nuestra casa es su casa!

Several of you expressed interest in volunteering with FDC for a couple weeks. Feel free to contact me for more information, and download our [volunteer application](#).

Thank you again for taking the time to come and hear a little of how God is at work in and through your sisters and brothers on the US/Mexico border.

Peace,
Mark



Twenty years ago, before our two youngest children were born, we were blessed to accompany the farmers of Café Justo in birthing their vision of allowing their families to thrive on their lands.

FPC's partnership over the years has helped the farming families live into the vision. Let us know if you are interested in participating in the 2023 Border-to-Border Delegation by emailing us. We will put you on the interest list and send you more information when available.

Frontera de Cristo Links

[Facebook](#): Check us out on Facebook, and maybe even "like" us!

[December FDC e-letter](#): If you'd like to receive Frontera de Cristo's monthly e-letter there is a "join email list" button in the upper right of the e-letter.

[FDC Overview](#): What Frontera de Cristo has been doing since its founding in 1984 as a ministry of the PC(USA) and the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico.

[Mission Delegation Manual](#): Several folks mentioned that there was interest in having FPC send another mission delegation to share life and ministry with us. This manual tells as much of the story as we can put on paper. The rest? You gotta be there!

A Matthew 25 Congregation



We are a “Matthew 25 Congregation” the three pillars of which are Eradicating Systemic Poverty, Dismantling Structural Racism and Building Congregational Vitality.

We see our Matthew 25 mark on the News Gazette Church announcements each Friday.

“The circular shape of the Matthew 25 mark represents unity and equality. Like God, a circle has no beginning and no end, and it symbolizes our continuing effort to help one another. The shape also suggests a globe that points to our engagement with the world.

The three interlocking figures represent the equality of all people without gender or race bias. They have their arms around each other, symbolizing friendship, protection, and service. The number three suggests the three focus areas of congregational vitality, structural racism and systematic poverty, as well as the Trinity.

The color palette is bright, lively, friendly and energetic — suggestive of our active commitment.

Finally, the legend “Matthew 25” below the symbol is the literal identification of the mark. We use a handwritten font to make the point that active engagement in the world requires human effort.”
PC-USA

Our small groups are addressing structural racism through study, action, and reflection. Here are some working definitions.

What is Structural Racism ?

Race is a socially constructed concept that purports to use characteristics such as skin color, facial features,

and body structure as a basis for classifying people. It has no scientific or biological basis. It was introduced during the period of European colonial expansion.

Prejudice is pre-judgment in the absence of evidence and held even when evidence contradicts it. Social power is the capacity of individuals and groups to determine what happens in society. Their decisions and actions then shape society’s values, beliefs, institutions, and systems.

Racism = Racial hierarchy + Prejudice + Social power

Racism is the combination of social power and racial prejudice to create systems that treat people differently, based on their defined racial group. Privileges are provided for some while dehumanizing, excluding or oppressing others.

What is structural racism?

Structural racism is the normalizing of racism within institutions and structures. Once racism is structural and institutional (as it is in the United States), it creates ongoing, persistent inequality. Inequality occurs in accessing money, land, housing, education, health, information, and social power. Because inequality is a part of the structures and institutions that we interact with every day, it often goes unquestioned and unchallenged by most of society or the dominant

culture. In the United States, structural racism particularly advantages white people while producing negative impacts for people of color. Important notes:

- Racism is measured not by intent, but by its impact on those who are oppressed.
- Racism can be overt or covert, individual or systemic, intentional or unintentional.
- Racism grants privilege to some and sustains the dominant group.
- Racism exists everywhere in our society, and in all institutions, including our church.

From:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/racism/>

Environmental News

BY PAT PHILLIPS

P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Many thanks to **Sherry Marble** for the beautiful Christmas stockings she made, to hold environmentally friendly items, to be given to those questionnaire respondents whose names were drawn. It was a fun project!

Issue with Tissue

Have you ever heard of Everspring toilet paper? You can get it at Target. Or Seventh Generation at Walgreens. Why would you want to? Because the familiar name brands are made by cutting down forest trees in Canada. The brands mentioned above are not bamboo but rather 100% recycled paper. They are also available online.

Coming up on January 29

In Westminster Hall, after worship, some owners of electric vehicles will share their experiences and answer some questions.



Dear First Presbyterian Church of Champaign,

The weather may be icy, but our hearts at DREAAM are overflowing with warmth! Thanks to you and the indispensable support of community, we were able to continue investing in our DREAMers and fostering hope for the future throughout 2022. We are exceedingly grateful for all the ways individuals and organizations have partnered with us.

We can not affect change without YOU.

English Language Learners News

BY VAL SMITH, DIRECTOR
VAL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

"Practice hospitality." *Romans 12:13b*

In December, the English Language classes experienced 'hospitality' complete with coffee in our café for the first time since Covid. Thanks are extended to **Bob Kirby** who shared the men's Bible study coffee with us! It was particularly appropriate

joined the evening gathering at the church.

Other events in December included a farewell Christmas celebration with Christmas songs led by **Mike Havey**, former 'in-person' tutor, and now a remote tutor from his new home in Georgia. Students love his class. One student wrote, "Dear Mike, I'm so thankful for what you have taught me. You are the best teacher of the year for me!!! I love to chat with our group." Students receive a certificate of

our interactions so the students may sense the Lord's presence even when they are far from home.

"Offer hospitality to one another"
1 Peter 4:9a



participation each semester. Sixty-four students have already pre-registered for the winter/spring semester. Registration for new students begins in January.



since we were welcoming Mark Adams from Frontera De Cristo where farmers grow coffee as a cash crop. Mark's presentation engaged the students in discussions and individual conversations and later two families

I personally want to thank all of you for your faithful support for this ministry to internationals and immigrant families in our area. I want to challenge all of us to open our hearts to increase





A meaningful translation of 23rd Psalm, from a Daily Devotion, to begin our new days in 2023...

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows ; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life. And I will live in the house of the Lord forever.”

Jays & Concerns

We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of..

- Leland Andrews who died December 22. Her services will be held at the church on Saturday, April 8.
- Don Clegg who died January 1, 2023. Services will be held at a later date.
- Royce Hinton who died December 29. Services are planned for Saturday, January 21, at 11 AM at the church.
- Gene Miller who died December 4. Services were held earlier.
- Marilyn Parkhill (Mrs. Tom) who died December 5. No services are planned per Marilyn's request.
- Jo Tummelson who died December 21. Private services are planned.
- Priscilla Visek who died January 2, 2023. Services will be held at a later date.
- Julie Walsh Seiler (daughter-in-law of John and Jane Seiler) died December 23.. Services were held January 7 in Tupelo, MS.
- the father of Cathy Schowengerdt who died January 6, 2023 in Bloomington, IL. Arrangements are pending.

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.

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM

ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total November contributions: \$50.3K
from plate and pledge plus \$10.2K
from prepaid= \$60.5K

This is \$15.3K more than last year and
\$11.8K over budget

Total contributions YTD: \$813.4K
which is \$61.1K more than last year
and \$17.7K over budget.

At 91.6% of the year, we have 94.9%
of the budgeted contributions.

Expenses

November expenses were \$59.6 K
which is \$51.K less than last year and
\$25.6K under budget.

Expenses YTD were \$881.3K which is
\$86K less than last year and \$55.5K
under budget.

At 91.6% of the year, we have spent
86.4% of the budget.

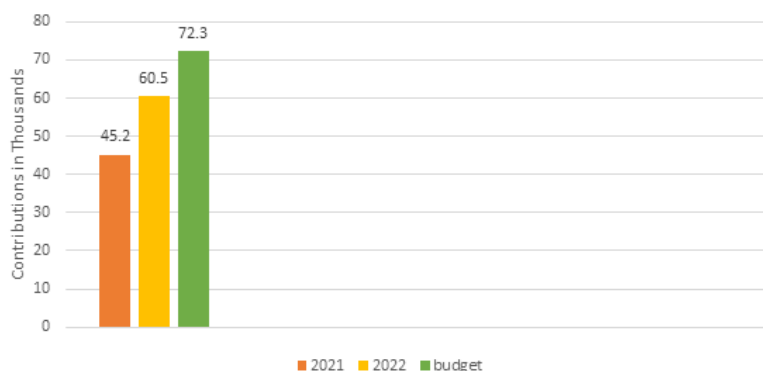
Balance YTD

Revenue exceeds expenses by
\$43.9K which is \$12.1K more than last
year.

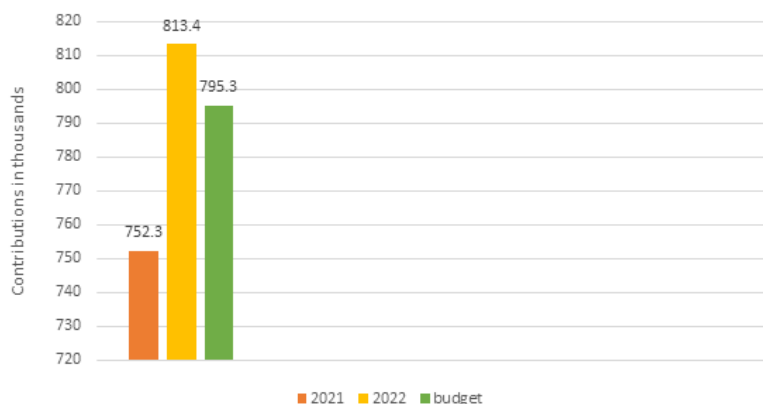
Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$8023 was donated to various funds
in November. This includes \$5017 to
Cuba Partners.

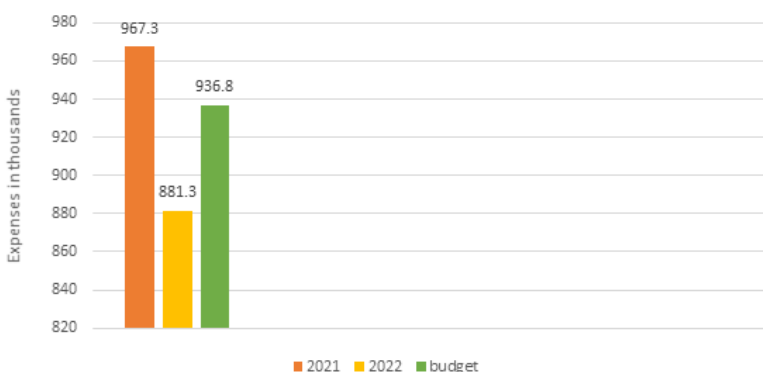
November Contributions



YTD Contributions



Expenses YTD





**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

www.firstpres.church

Sunday:

9 AM Worship/Sanctuary

10 AM Sunday School for Children & Youth

10:15 AM Adult Sunday School

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:

Martice Chapple..... Facility Assistant
Ritchie DrennenFacility Manager, Ext. 237
Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant, Ext. 211
Robert FerrerAudio-visual Technician
Fred Foster Evening Custodian
Marcia Franks Office Administrator, Ext. 210
Judi Geistlinger..... Commissioned Lay Pastor
Joe Grant..... Director of Music
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Associate, Ext. 219
Ann Petry.....Accounting, Ext. 224
Sora Shepard Organist/Pianist
Val Smith English Language Learner Director, Ext. 235
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director
Kelsey Stremplewski.....Director Contemporary Worship Band

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.