

July 2022



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Snippets from Your Pastor/Love in Action

BY MATT MATTHEWS

MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

A friend told me about an exchange he had with a friend. Conversation somehow got to face masks, Covid, and Trump. He said he was no fan of Trump. She thought Trump had hung the moon. They spared a bit, and then they laughed. They agreed they'd never agree on that. But—and here's the kicker—they still loved each other anyway.

Mutual forbearance. That's what that's called. And that is one of the "foundations" of Presbyterian polity. Theologically and constitutionally, we believe that sometimes we must agree to disagree. This is how our PCUSA Book of Order puts it:

[W]e . . . believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men [people] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other. (From the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, 1788).

My late friend Johnnie Underwood would add this: "And we can disagree without being disagreeable."

BUT, loving each other by exercising mutual forbearance is increasingly difficult. "America has a scorn problem," says By Tish Harrison Warren, an Anglican priest who reflects on matters of faith for the NYTimes.

A Scientific American report on political polarization noted that Americans increasingly hold "a basic abhorrence for their opponents — an 'othering' in which a group conceives of its rivals as wholly alien in every way." It continues, "This toxic form of polarization has fundamentally altered political discourse, public civility and even the way politicians govern." A 2019 study by Pew said, "55 percent of Republicans say Democrats are 'more immoral' when compared with other Americans; 47 percent of Democrats say the same about Republicans."

We find one another repugnant — not just wrong but bad. Our rhetoric casts the arguments of others as profound moral failings.[1]

We despise people who don't think like us. If we cannot be neighbors and have conversations with one another about the day's hot topics, then we cannot practice democracy.

continued on the next page

2nd SUNDAY BRUNCH

July 10th

10:10 AM

*Come and enjoy brunch
Centennial Hall*

2nd Sunday of each month

We will have an array of brunch items each month prepared in our new kitchen by volunteers led by trained cooks. Select from different hot dishes, meats, fruits, pastries and beverages each month. Enjoy the fellowship right after the 9 AM service.

Donations are appreciated to help cover the costs.

Mutual forbearance. Being good neighbors. Agreeing to disagree. Growing closer and deeper. This communion leads to answers, to the possibility of friendship, and to a more hopeful tomorrow.

If Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, then we belong together, we live together, we grow together.

These are some ways we can put the walk into the talk of love. Yes, love is the answer, but we are the agents of God's love in this place. As disciples of Jesus, we are the hands and feet of God's love. Consider loving the world in this way:

1. Support public education. I pray the Buffalo and Texas shooters had great teachers in school, a great system of academic and socio-emotional support. But maybe they didn't. Maybe these young men were tough kids and got pushed to the margins. Maybe there wasn't a teacher or a coach or a school nurse who could make the positive difference for them. All education is good, of course. But public education touches most of our kids. Not every family can homeschool, and most parents cannot afford sending their kids to private school. Public education must succeed in our county. Tutor kids. Coach soccer. Support local public schools.

2. Support mental health. We can help (1) raise awareness about the challenges those living with mental health and addiction issues face. We can (2) work to reduce the stigma many experience. When people have mental health needs, there are fewer affordable places they can go. Support mental health.

3. Have a conversation about gun violence. What's the answer, or

answers? Should we ban assault weapons? Why didn't the NY "red-flag law" work? Let's get beyond the heated rhetoric that "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." Let's move on. Let's go deeper. These conversations are important for both our nation and our community. Gun violence, after all, has found its way to Champaign County in a big way. We lost a DREAMer in June to gunshot wounds. A Journal of Pediatrics study found that "the number of young people carrying a handgun was 41 percent higher during the years 2015 to 2019, than in the period 2002 to 2006.[2] Is this a good thing? Let's talk about guns.

4. We can talk about race. If you are black, Asian, Jewish, immigrant, transgender, gay, lesbian, or queer you are at a significantly higher risk of being subject to a hate crime perpetrated by a young, white male. What are we doing to stand against hateful rhetoric like "replacement theory"? All of us need to talk about race, white people especially.

5. We can support our very own DREAM House. DREAM seeks to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by replacing it with an opportunity pipeline stocked with caring mentors, a great after school program, and summer activities designed to help kids do well academically and to thrive emotionally. We are building a community of support around vulnerable children and youth. On Tuesday evening there was no parking here because Centennial Hall was filled with DREAMers and families learning about an upcoming basketball program. Good news is happening in DREAM, and your church supports it.

* * *

If we think that loving the world only means having occasional warm thoughts about others, that's short-sighted. Love is the answer, and that means we put the pedal to the metal and get going. If we don't know how to put love into gear, we probably aren't thinking very hard.

Our hope and help is Jesus. Jesus says abide in me. The branch can't make it without the vine. The disciple can't make it without the teacher. Love can't make it when it is cut off from its source. Abide in me, Jesus says. Walk humbly and closely.

Dare to love the world in the name and manner of Jesus, our Lord. We can do it. We must do it. And with God's help, we will.

AMEN.

[1] *America Has a Scorn Problem*, Rev. Tish Harrison Warren, May 15, 2022, NY Times opinion.
<https://www.nytimes.com/column/tish-harrison-warren>

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[2] Editorial, The News-Gazette, Champaign, IL, Wed. May 18, 2022, p. A-4.

Worship With Us Sunday, July 17



Join us Sunday, July 17 at 9 and 11:15 AM for a special worship service.

Our guest preacher will be Dr. Rebecca Blair, Lead Presbyterian for Transformation and Stated Clerk for our presbytery. She will bring us a word of hope for our times.



Nourishment for the Mind and Soul

"Food brings people together on many different levels.
It's nourishment of the soul and body, it is truly love."

Chef Giado de Lourentiis

The Dinner for One group will meet at Silvercreek on Wednesday, July 13 at 5:30.

Note: Lunch group will not meet during the summer months; they will start again in September.

MIA

If you have taken any of the white tablecloths or communion napkins home to wash, thank you BUT we need them back! Several are missing.

Face to Face With Ann & Bill Stout



Ann is a ruling elder who serves our Human Relations Committee and Mission Team. Bill serves on our Worship and Nurture Committees.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

In 2008, they were searching for a new church. Bill had grown up Methodist and Ann was Presbyterian, so they were looking for a mainstream Protestant church. They began attending the southwest campus of FPCC and eventually migrated to FPCC downtown.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

They both love their small group, Friday Night Lights. The group has been meeting for thirteen years for fellowship and bible study, growing with others in faith. And then, too, they love The Gathering on Sundays.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

Ann and Bill married late in life and became a blended family of five adult children and ten grandchildren. Ann was a Child and Family Therapist and

is now happily retired. Bill retired from teaching at the University of Illinois in 2002 but continues to do research there. His field is in statistical analysis related to improving learning in the classroom.

What do you do in your free time?

They both like to travel to visit family scattered across the country and have also been very blessed to have seen much of the world. Bill plays tennis and enjoys photographing birds. Ann enjoys gardening in the nice weather and scrapbooking during the "inside" months.

What are your favorite Bible characters?

For Ann, it's the Old Testament Joseph. She admires his integrity and enormous capacity to forgive. Bill? Well, he likes the Book of James because James does the work of the church in both word and deed.

How can the church best be the church?

They agree on this one. First is internal - nurture others and be disciples within the congregation. Second is external - nurture others through mission and be obedient to the Great Commission by making new disciples.



Can We Borrow Your Talents?

As Dietrick Bonhoeffer says, "Your life as a Christian should make a nonbeliever question their disbelief in God" We agree and see each of you as a leader to help others on their faith journey.

The Small Groups Support Team is looking for ideas and leaders for Small Groups. Do you have any interest/passion that would be of value to others as we continue to build new small groups?

Here are some ideas we have:
A group for...

1. seekers, doubters, those who have questions about current Christian actions in the world. Our Support Group has study guides and books that would be used; we also will lend our assistance for getting started.
2. studying the history of our church at Church and State.
3. similarities in different religions
4. freedom of religion in America
5. praying
6. Being good; doing good

The Small Group Support Team is here to help you get started, publicize for interested participants; supply appropriate material; support along the way.

Contact **Sallie Hutton** sallie.hutton@gmail.com or **Jim Berger** jim@jeberger.net

Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth, Family

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR

MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Won't You be my Neighbor?

Join us for a special Sunday series in Centennial Hall after the 9am worship service on July 10, 17, and 24. This intergenerational program is based on the popular television show by Mr. Rogers. We will share with one another what our neighborhood looks like, talk about welcoming strangers, reinforce that we are loved just the way we are, and contemplate how acts of kindness have a ripple effect.

Montreat Youth Conference

We had a very full week of worship, small groups, and fun. Our youth will be sharing about their experiences soon in worship. We learned that we are more than enough because of God's love, and that together we can make a difference in the world.



Sholem Fest

August 14 6 PM

Sholem Aquatic Center

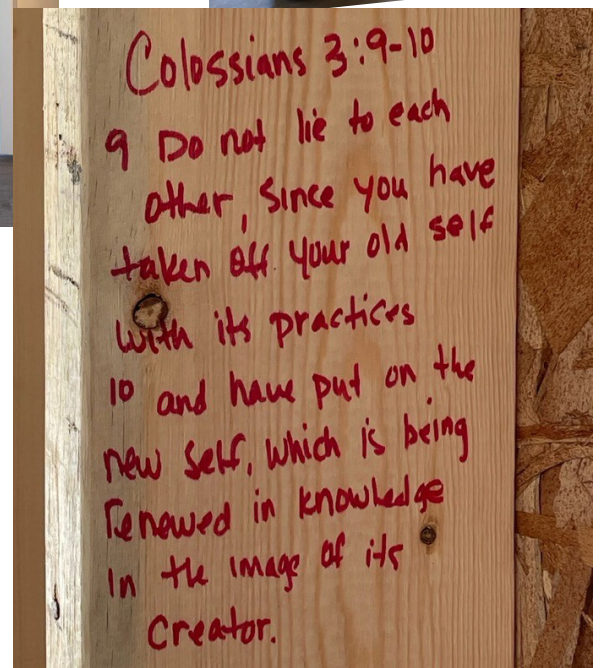
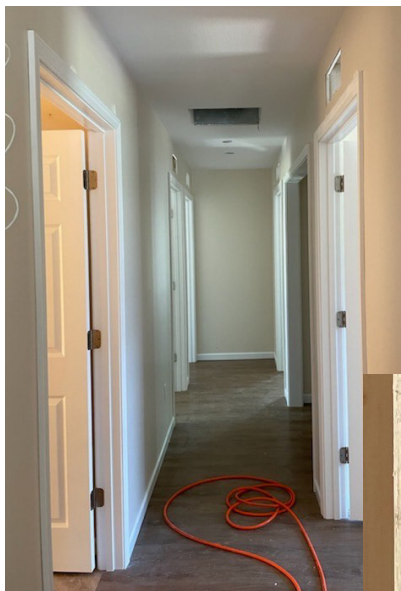
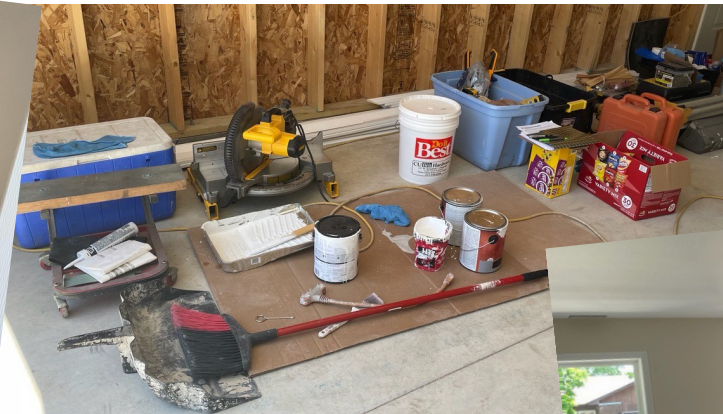
Fun, food & swimming

Watch for details

The Heart of Mission

Habitat for Humanity Build

On Saturday, June 18, Community Mission Deacons Jane Alsberg, Leslie Thomas, her friend Amir and Rachel Matthews worked almost 6 hours on a Habitat inside build. We were so excited to help Kim get her new home move in ready!



Compassion, Peace & Justice

Matthew 25 -

Dismantling Structural Racism

BY BOB KIRBY, CPJMT

But what can I do ?

1. Check out a business owned by people of color. Stango Cuisine <https://www.stangocu.com/> on the south side of Lincoln Square Mall serves food from Zambia. Owners **Mubanga Chanda and Betty Phiri** offer a short menu for dining in, delivery or carry out. They also cater.

We ordered curry chicken with jasmine rice, greens and plantains. We enjoyed each bite. The restaurant is clean. The decor is dated. Service is prompt and courteous. Most menu choices are in the \$12 to \$14 range. We rate it ***.

2. Watch the documentary film, "13th" free on YouTube.

3. Support DREaaM generously with your time or treasure.

Compassion Peace and Justice Ministry Team is an open small group. You are welcome.

Environmental News

Thanks to all those who came for our Adopt-A-Highway event June 11. It was a busy weekend for everyone and we had just enough people to cover our territory. Thanks to Liz for following up and calling people and collecting and returning our vests and supplies to the city.

I Was in Prison and...

BY BOB KIRBY

"When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" *Matthew 25:39*

Jesus Is the Way Prison Ministry (JITW) housed in Rantoul, serves the incarcerated and the recently incarcerated. It is a long-standing mission partner. Bible study and prayer are offered at Champaign County Jail and Illinois prisons. The "New Beginnings" residential transitional program provides Christian support, counseling and education as men readapt to life "on the outside" and enter the workforce.

New executive director, **Brian Ziefang** and board member **Roy Davis** discussed their ministry with an audience of fifteen in Mae Chapin Parlor on June 9. Brian offered a devotion reminding us that Apostle Paul was a prisoner and never looked back but looked forward accomplishing his remarkable ministry for Jesus. Residents at JITW are similarly encouraged to keep their eyes on the future glancing back occasionally to reinforce what they have overcome. Two current residents shared their life stories and described the Christian love and direction they are receiving. Mr. Davis closed the meeting with a moving personal testimony.

A rich ninety-minute conversation included discussion of the JITW Miracle of Christmas gift program. Gifts are wrapped for children. Mentors by Mail is a pen pal program. A garden program on site is in process. Residents value invitations to dinner out or prepared food brought to them. Transportation is a needed contribution. These and more serving opportunities are detailed at <http://jesusisthewayprisonministries.org/>



Roy Davis, formerly incarcerated and a JITW graduate, now serves on the board

This testimony was shared by a formerly incarcerated client of Jesus Is The Way Prison Ministry. It is shared with his permission.

My Short Testimony

Between the ages of 3 to 4 1/2 years old I was repeatedly molested by a man my mom was seeing. When I was 5 my mom went to prison for being involved in the murder of said man. I wouldn't see her again until I was 12 years old.

I was 9 years old when I had my first beer. I remember thinking, this is what I've been missing. It enabled me to come out of my shell, it made me feel good about myself for once in my life. My dad would get a kick outta me taking beers out of the fridge.

By the time I was 13 I was a black out drunk. I would steal bottles of liquor from the grocery store and skip school to hang out in abandoned buildings. It was about this time that I began using marijuana and breaking into cars. My alcohol and drug use grew worse

and worse. It ruined relationship after relationship. It ruined my career in the Army. It only brought devastation on myself and those around me. By the time I was 29 I was a full blown Meth addict. I was using needles and committing burglaries on a nightly basis to keep up with my habit.

I was a miserable mess. I remember hearing the enemy telling me to load up a fatal dose. It'll be over quick. Nobody wants you around anyway. I was living in a trailer at the time, no water, no electric, no gas.

It was winter, January 29 2017. As I lie on the floor buried under dirty clothes attempting to stay warm. I did what I should have done long before. I cried out to Jesus. I said, Jesus I can't go on like this. I need your help. I can't quit this alone. Jesus, if you'll get me clean and give me another chance, i will live for you for the rest of my life.

I fell asleep that night believing everything was going to be ok. The very next day I was arrested for felony theft and drug possession, but as i sat in the back of that police cruiser a sense of peace rushed over me. I knew that it was over. I knew God was going to use this to get me clean.

In jail I found that I had an insatiable taste for the word. I could not get enough. I read every bit of Christian literature I could get my hands on. Including reading the bible front to back. God took the desire to use completely away.

As I was coming up on my release date, I learned about Jesus Is The Way Prison Ministry In Rantoul Illinois. A place for Christian Men coming out of prison to have a fighting chance at a real fresh start. Jesus Is The Way Prison Ministry prevented me from being paroled back to my hometown

where I was nearly lost to drug addiction.

I'm so very grateful for this ministry and the work its doing. Today Im over 5 years sober. I have a relationship with my 12 year old daughter. Im learning to be an Auto Body Technician. The family that disowned me is now proud of me. And Im proud to say that Im on the Board Of Directors at Jesus Is The Way Prison Ministry. I also serve as Northern Illinois State Rep, for Celebrate Recovery Inside, helping to take Gods healing back into the prisons and jails. I remember the deal I made with God. And I have every intention on keeping my word.

Thanx for listening.

The Republic of Cuba

The Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón)

BY BOB KIRBY, CUBA PARTNERS

The Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, is celebrated in Cuba during June. It is a David and Goliath story. Cuba won decisively. The United States was embarrassed and condemned by the world. Castro captured 1,180 US fighters.

The victory of the Cuban military over would-be liberators funded by the United States enhanced support of Cuba's nascent government. Political opposition to Fidel Castro faded. Castro declared the country a socialist state inviting closer ties with The Soviet Union. Cubans rallied in victory by volunteering to cut cane and joined the Cuban military to defend against future invasions. The stage was set for the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

Next Month: The Cuban Missile Crisis

DREAAM Grows

DREAAM is off to a strong start this summer! We will be serving 500 children and young adults through many different programs, including a Music & Arts Camp with Banks Bridgewater Lewis Fine Arts Academy, Flag Football Camp, and a Little Engineer Camp!

Did you know this July marks 7 years for DREAAM in the community? Many THANKS to First Presbyterian Church, Champaign for helping us get started and for the continued support. So celebrate! And what better way to celebrate than to dine at Hamilton Walker's! On July 12th, Hamilton Walker's will be donating a portion of the day's sales to DREAAM! See the flyer on the next page.

In partnership with



DINE FOR DREAM

****RESERVATION REQUIRED****

On July 12th, take this flyer with you to Hamilton Walker's* or let your wait staff know that you're dining for DREAM, and Hamilton Walker's will donate 15% back to DREAM!

*Good for Dine-In or Take-Out using promo code DREAM at checkout



DATE:
July 12, 2022

TIME:
4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

LOCATION:
Hamilton Walker's
201 N. Neil St. Champaign

Make reservations by calling (217) 350-0363, through the Open Table app, or go online to <https://www.hamiltonwalkers.com/reservations>.

For more info:

Call/Text
(219) 808-5308

or
Email

jacqueline@dream.org



English as Second Language News

BY VAL SMITH, DIRECTOR
VAL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

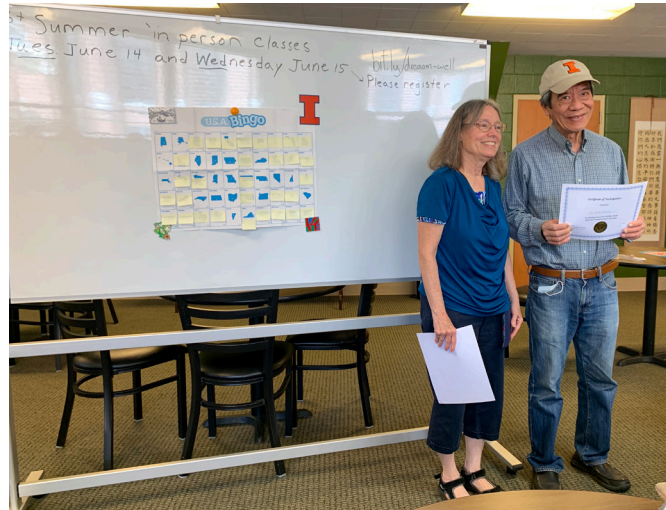
One of the names for God is 'Jehovah Jirah' which means the Lord will provide and He has! This summer He has sent many new volunteers in place of some of our regular tutors who are taking a break this summer. He has encouraged us with new equipment, technology assistance, and many willing hearts and hands.

We celebrated the past year of classes with two breakfast brunches for our faithful volunteers. It was a wonderful time of refreshment, getting to know each other better, and fun conversations about the differences in English in different parts of the country. Can you guess the meaning of the term 'redd up' and where that expression is most often heard?

Monday through Thursday and beginner classes in the evenings for those persons who work during the day.

Russ Henagan, a former 'in-person' tutor is back with us 'in-person' and he put together a cart for the new TV so that it can be easily moved around. Thank you, Russ and James! I am

thankful to the Lord who has supplied all of our needs.
(*Philippians 4:19*)



Most of our new volunteers are young people eager to support English language learners. These tutors are adept with technology. One volunteer has already created a PowerPoint

for our beginning students to help them navigate more easily on zoom! We are grateful to the Refugee Center for all their volunteer referrals.

We're also appreciative of our seasoned volunteers and the experience they bring to the table. They have welcomed the new

volunteers to observe in their classes. One regular tutor who is off for the summer came in just so the new volunteer could observe her in action.

This summer we have 'in-person' classes for all levels on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 9:30-11 here at the church. We have two levels of morning zoom classes



Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total May contributions: \$34K from pledge and plate plus \$10.2K from prepaid = \$44.2 K

Total contributions YTD: \$394.9K which is \$42K more than last year
Contributions YTD = 53.7% of the budget

Expenses

May expenses of \$75.3K were \$9.9K less than the budgeted amount and \$22.2K less than last year at this time.
Expenses YTD were \$460 K which is \$5.9K less than last year
At 42% of the year we have spent 45% of the budget

Balance YTD:

Revenue exceeds expenses by \$44.7K which is \$82.3K less than last year

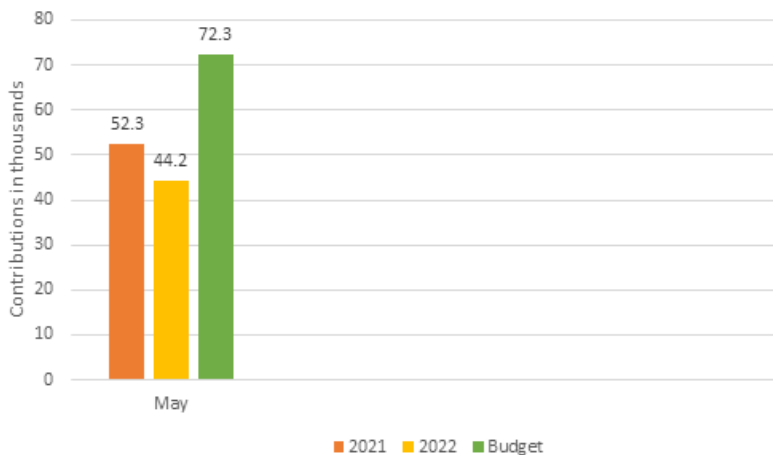
Restricted Funds

\$4312.93 was donated to various funds in May

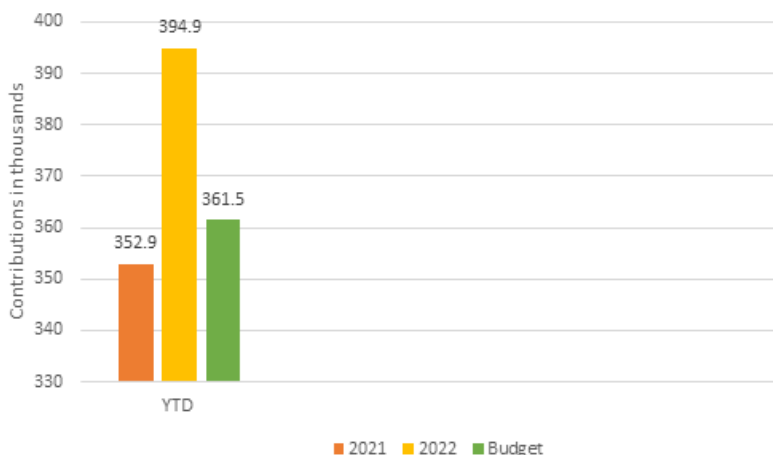
Session Designated Funds

\$1,819,927 which is an increase of \$9399

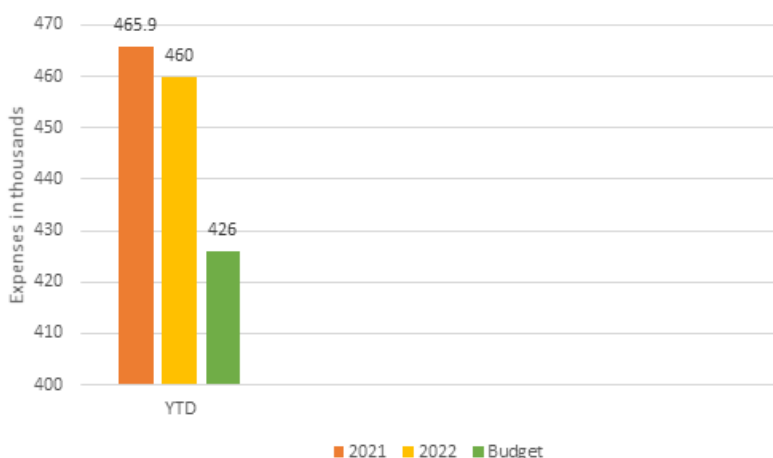
May 2022 Contributions



Contributions YTD May 2022



Expenses YTD May 2022





I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

And, May you have the power to understand as all people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now to Him who is able to rank do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us. Ephesians 16-20

Jays & Concerns

Men's Prayer Group

The men of the church gather on Zoom each Friday at 8:30 for prayer. Each prays in his own way and his own language. We pray for the world, our nation, our local communities and our congregations. We celebrate joys and pray for those challenged by illness and loss.

For a link please contact marcia@firstpres.church.

We celebrate...

- a great and life-changing trip for our youth group and leaders who attended the recent conference in Montreat!

We extend sympathy to...

- the family of **Bill Marble** whose brother died in Alaska;
- **Gene Morgan** whose wife **Lorna** died June 6, 2022;
- the family of **Todd Sackett** who died June 18, 2022;
- the family of **Barbara "Babs" Suter** who died June 12, 2022. A Celebration of Life for Babs will be held later this summer.

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

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Change Service Requested



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E: info@firstpres.church

www.firstpres.church

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:

Ritchie DrennenFacility Manager, Ext. 237
Patty Farthing.....Office Assistant, Ext. 211
Robert FerrerAudio-visual Technician
Fred FosterEvening Custodian
Marcia FranksOffice Administrator, Ext. 210
Judi Geistlinger.....Commissioned Lay Pastor
Jason Gordon.....Technology Support
Joe Grant.....Director of Music
Sam HauptDirector Contemporary Worship Band
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Associate, Ext. 219
Blaise Pascal.....CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216
Ann Petry.....Accounting, Ext. 224
Shane Redmon.....Facility Assistant
Val SmithESL 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.