

July 2025



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

175th Anniversary 1850-2025

Plans are underway for the 175th Anniversary Celebration of First Presbyterian Church. We are organizing various events on Sundays from September 14 through October 12.

Please contact **Nancy Martin**, chairman, at nemartin81@hotmail.com or text 217-359-0753 or contact **Carol Ann Green** at cadgreen@comcast.net or text 217-621-4933 if you are interested in helping with the celebration of our historical church.

To celebrate our church's 175th Anniversary there will be a bulletin board to display pictures that document special events that members of the church have celebrated.

If you have pictures that celebrate events at the church and would like to share them on the bulletin board, send or take them to Marcia in the church office by August 15. Please include the name of the event, the year if possible, and again, if possible, names of people in the picture. Pictures will be returned to you. Please put your name and return information on the back of the pictures.

If you wish to share digital images, please send them directly to Marcia at marcia@firstpres.church and include the same information in your email.

2nd Sunday Brunch July 13th

**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 Carol Ann Green,
(cadgreen@comcast.net), Gary
Peterson (amer_swede@yahoo.com) or the church office.**

Keep It Going!

And they'll know we are Christians by our love...

Way to go, First Pres!! You have already done an amazing job making people feel special with your *Because You Matter* Acts of Kindness.

So far, we have made people feel important with personal contacts to re-establish relationships, compliments, coupons, donations, lots of food, helping people move, and much more. **But don't stop now!**

Kindness isn't limited by a calendar. Remember people never forget how you made them feel. If we want to spread God's love outside our four walls, let your actions speak loudly.

Thank you,
Your Outreach Team

Reaching Out To Welcome In

We have siblings in Christ who want to worship in person on Saturdays and Sundays but have no transportation.

Would you join a list of volunteers who might offer a ride from time to time?

Need some help around the house? Remember that we have young people looking for hourly work. info@firstpres.church



Benefit Concert Wednesday, July 16 7 PM Sanctuary

Music performed by **Debora Pedigo**, Soprano; **Wilson Burnett**, Cello; **Andrew Gagliu**, Cello; **Jace Kim**, Piano and more.

100% of the proceeds will go to Strides Shelter in Champaign. Tickets are free, but guests are encouraged to make donations as they are able.

A QR code for Venmo or Paypal donations will be set up that guests can donate to if unable to make donations in the form of cash or check.

Strings and the King

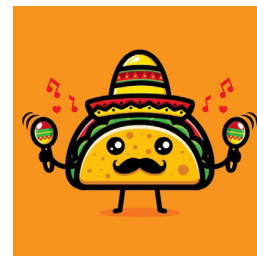
David LaMotte and **Dr. Tom Trenney** offered up a [family concert](#) at the Worship & Music Conference at Montreat on June 16.

Taco Tuesday 4:30-5:30 PM Guido's

Join Pastor Beth for Taco Tuesday July 1, 8, and 15!

Maybe it's the heat, but we will change Coffee Shop Office hours to Taco Tuesdays. Join me at Guido's Bar and Grill, 2 E Main, for their 1/2 price tacos. I'll be dining from 4:30-5:30.

Email me at beth@firstpres.church so I can get a big enough table.



Hearing Assistance During Worship

With our return to the sanctuary, we have access to our hearing assistant loop. This technology allows people with hearing aids equipped with **T-Coil technology** to hear the service through their hearing aids. If you know you have T-coil technology, plan to turn on the T-coil via your phone on Sunday morning. You may have to ask your audiologist if you have this technology and how to turn it on.

Let Pastor Beth know about your experience.

Face to Face with George Johnston, Laura Aull-Johnston & Betty Meisner



Pastors George and Laura Aull-Johnston of Monticello with Laura's mom, Betty of Champaign in the church library.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

When Laura retired as pastor at Westminster Presbyterian we needed to step away for new leadership. We checked out a couple of congregations and felt most comfortable here.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

Laura: I will say the wisdom and compassion that Beth brings to interim ministry and the many resources this congregation shares with others. And Sora's ministry from the piano!

George: After years serving from the front of congregations, I like relaxing in the back.

Betty: I feel welcome and at home.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

Laura: George and I married late and have no children. Most of my work has been as a pastor, most recently at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Champaign.

George: My work has included a variety of things including serving as a commissioned ruling elder in Rantoul for thirteen years. I have served the Presbyterian Church in the synod and presbytery as well as the General Assembly. I worked at Parkland College for 30 years as an administrator and as a teacher of electrical engineering technology and computer science and public speaking.

Betty: I have two children and three stepchildren, 15 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Much of my life has been caretaker of family and as a teacher later in life.

What do you do in your free time?

Laura: I enjoy reading and writing, and I play tennis three times a week.

George: I am involved with Master Gardeners and Rotary.

Betty: I also love to write and in recent years have published articles in Guideposts magazine.

What are your favorite Bible characters?

Laura: Jeremiah the "weeping prophet". He was young when God called him, he suffered, and he loved his people. I also like Barnabas, the disciple known as an encourager.

George: Those that start with the letter "J".

Betty: David, a person flawed like me who was "the apple of God's eye". And Ruth was faithful to the family she married into.

How can the church best be the church?

Laura: Supporting each other as we come together to do more good than we can alone.

George: Address the things that make Christ cry the most.

Betty: Prayer. A praying church is a robust church.

The Heart of Mission

2025 Raindrop Offering

BY KATHY SCHOFFEMANN,
MODERATOR COMMUNITY MISSION DEACONS
KSCHOEFFMANN@YAHOO.COM

This year, Community Mission Deacons (CMDs) are responsible for organizing the Raindrop offering that the church collects each July. CMDs decided that The Refugee Center will be the beneficiary of the project this year.

The Refugee Center (TRC) assists immigrants from all over the world, but is currently serving people from the following countries: Guatemala, Vietnam, China, DRC, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Angola, Afghanistan, Honduras, Nicaragua and Ecuador. Languages provided in-house are Spanish, Q'an'jobal, French, Lingala, Pashto, Dari, Vietnamese, Portuguese and Mandarin. The Center provides social services including referrals for health care and legal services, helping clients find housing, and assisting with job searches. They also accompany clients to job interviews, doctor and school appointments and other meetings requiring an interpreter. The Center has been doing this for 45 years!

Your Community Mission Deacons learned that the office of The Refugee Center is seeking funds for a security system to help keep clients and staff safe. Right now, staff does not have any way to see who is walking into the building before they are actually in the office area.

We would like to help the Center purchase the components for a security system, including security cameras for four entrances, computer monitors, and the necessary software and server to operate the system. This would be similar to the system we have here at the church.

Check out the Raindrop display in Westminster Hall. Take a raindrop with the amount you would like to donate, write a check to the church with "Raindrop" on the memo line and put your check in the offering or drop it off in the office. You can also donate online through the church's website under "DONATE" and indicate Raindrop in the comments box.

We will be collecting donations on two Sundays, July 6 and 13, and our goal is to raise \$5,000 for this security system. Please give from your heart and pray for the safety of the staff and clients at The Refugee Center.

Presbyterian Church Advocacy Hour

Topics from poverty to public education to guns and Palestine and beyond are addressed on fourth Wednesdays at 11:00 am by PC(USA) staff and other experts. Register [here](#).

Taste a Bit of African Presbyterian Culture Sunday, July 13

"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done." *Proverbs 19:17*

Your African friends invite you to bring gifts for the poor to our worship service on July 13.

We live in community with all God's people. We are enriched by cultural diversity. African Presbyterians have ways to respond to God's grace with offerings differently from those in America.

At the time of the offering, we give not only money, but also other gifts. These may include rice or semolina, fruits or vegetables, cooking oil, eggs or bread and even used or new clothing and shoes. We bring these to the front of the sanctuary in song and dance expressing the joy of giving. Later, we distribute the nonmonetary gifts among the poor in the community.

We are also hoping to sing in worship and to provide a recipe for our following brunch.

Your New Americans Ministry Team

The Humility of Service

John 13:16-20

"I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them" *John 13:16* (CEB)

Humility in service is a call to live a life focused on others, imitating the example of Jesus. It challenges us to put our selfishness aside and to commit ourselves to the well-being of those around us. Doing this, we don't only honor God, but also we find a goal and a satisfaction that transcends worldly rewards.

This act shows us that true greatness in the Kingdom of God is measured by the disposition to serve others and not for positions of power that we can possess. It is necessary today to reconsider our priorities and to value service as an expression of genuine love toward others, considering that the act of serving not only benefits those who receive help, but also it transforms the minds and hearts of those who serve.

Prayer: Lord, may our service not be a "should" but a sincere expression of our faith in You; show us how to be true servants, following the example of Your Son who washed the feet of his disciples and showed us how to act with humility. Amen.

Su Voz is written by the people of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. You can receive this daily devotion free. Subscribe at <https://www.cubapartnersnetwork.org/home>



We Are a Matthew 25 Congregation

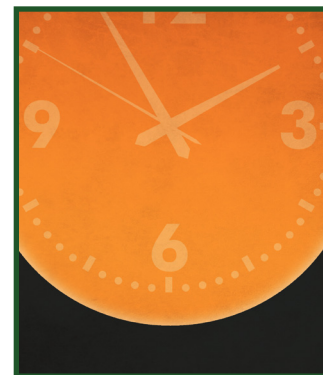
Rooted in Jesus' teachings in *Matthew 25:31-46*, we are invited to engage in three core pillars: build congregational vitality, dismantle structural racism, and eradicate systemic poverty.

We are called to build, cultivate and create with God in lives and communities welcoming abundant life, equity and hope. We are about healing and restoration of relationships, systems and societies that reflect God's peace, justice and love.

Building congregational vitality. We challenge our members to deepen and energize their faith and grow as joyful leaders and disciples actively engaged with their community. We encourage each other to engage in ministry and develop in faith as the word of Jesus Christ is shared in word and deed. Dismantling structural racism.

We apply our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices, and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice, and oppression of people based on color and ethnicity. Eradicating systemic poverty. Acting on our beliefs we work to change laws, policies, and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of the poor.

Learn more about what we can do together [here](#).



Church Office Hours

The church office is open:

Mon-Thurs 8:30 AM - 2 PM

Friday 8:30 AM - noon

Contact the church office during these hours at 217.356.7238.

You can also send an email to info@firstpres.church.

Caribbean Journey

Journey with others through a study of Cuba: the people, the history, the culture and the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. We will meet Monday evenings from August 25 to September 29 in person and on Zoom. The study will prepare you for a visit to Cuba during spring break in March. Need more information? Contact Bob at 217-621-5915 or rwk3213@gmail.com.



DREAAM Big Together!

Dear First Presbyterian Church of Champaign,

I am writing to invite you to invest in the families of Champaign County by supporting DREAAM's parenting programs. As COVID-related funding expires this month, DREAAM is prioritizing and striving to fund core programs, such as our parenting classes, through non-governmental sources. We need your help to continue this vital work.

Why DREAAM Parenting Programs Matter

Empowerment Through Education: DREAAM provides comprehensive workshops and resources that equip parents with additional knowledge and parenting skills.

Building Stronger Families: We believe that strong families are the foundation of a thriving community. DREAAM fosters increasingly resilient family units.

Positive Community Impact: Parenting programs create a support system that

parents and caregivers can lean on during challenging times.

Our Impact

Here are some key achievements our program has accomplished and will continue with the generous support of donors like you:

Enhanced Parenting Skills: 100% of participating parents report learning at least one skill that they can use with their children.

Improved Mutual Support: 91% of our parents and caregivers have a stronger sense of community and plan to keep in touch with at least one person from their class.

Overcoming Barriers

DREAAM parents and caregivers work hard every day to meet the needs of their families, so adding an evening class can be a challenge. To support them, DREAAM has taken the following steps:

Childcare: DREAAM staff watch the children while their parents/caregivers are in class.

Family Meals: Over the past year, 680 meals were provided to our parenting program students and their children.

Transportation: Each week, an average of 28 parents/caregivers and their children utilized this service to attend the program.

Stipend: To promote good attendance, participants can earn a \$250 stipend at graduation.

How You Can Help

Your support is crucial in allowing us to continue providing resources to DREAAM parents and caregivers. By donating to the parenting program, you are investing in the future of our community.

\$75 can provide educational materials for a parent attending our workshops.

\$125 can sponsor a parent/caregiver to attend a single parenting session, including a meal, transportation, childcare, and a stipend.

\$250 feeds all participants and their families for one workshop.

\$750 can sponsor a parent/caregiver to attend a parenting program, including meals, transportation, childcare, and a stipend.

Join Us in Making a Difference

We invite you to join DREAAM on this important mission by donating today. Your generosity helps ensure that DREAAM parents and caregivers have the opportunity to learn from experts and their peers, resulting in a new community of ongoing support. Together, we can create a brighter future for the families in our community.

Let's DREAAM big together!

The Church in the Community

Ngoma African Festival Saturday, June 28

The church is not just a building but its people in the community being His hands and feet. We had a great time of fellowship and outreach greeting friends and strangers, distributing bottles of water, laughing as we played games together and enjoyed an evening of joyful music.



Noni Ledford, Brittany, Pastor Joe Lundy, Dennis Arthur Amoako, Bob Kirby, Pat Tarr, Kayode Oke, Ian Njoroge with Felix, Marsha Barrett with Felix' friend and Pastor Beth Wagner. Also present but not pictured were Tracy Dace, Carol Ann Green and Jerry Jahn.



Let the little children come unto me.

School Supplies for Local Families

Let's make a generous gift through our Champaign Park District on behalf of local families and teachers by donating school supplies during the month of July. Our goal is to provide supplies for one hundred families. We will be recognized for our contribution with a presence at CU Days at Douglass Park on August 9 where we will greet people, play some fun children's games and share our faith.

Bring gifts to Westminster Hall or the church office between July 6 and July 31. If you'd rather not shop, then consider a financial donation and we will shop for you. Memo "School Supplies". We suggest the following:

For Students

Inexpensive headphones for Chrome Book (less than \$10 each)
 Inexpensive back packs (less than \$10 each)
 Crayola crayons boxes of 24
 Unscented glue sticks
 Ticonderoga # 2 pencils
 Personal handheld pencil sharpener
 Paper mate pencil erasers

For Teachers

Large boxes of facial tissue
 Wet wipes unscented

With gratitude we will then see you at the park.
 Your Outreach and Church Growth Team



You asked for my hands, that you might use them for your purpose. I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard. You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice. I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused. You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty. I closed them, for I did not want to see. You asked for my life, that you might work through me. I gave a small part, that I might not get too involved. Lord, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you – only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it easy to do so. God, forgive me, renew me, send me out as a usable instrument, that I might take seriously the meaning of your cross. Amen.

Sharing Our Lives Together

We have wonderful fellowship at First Pres. Sharing important life events we lift each other in voice and prayer. Keep us informed by contacting us at info@firstpres.church.

Congratulations to **Anna Siju** who will begin her dream job for the city of Jacksonville, Florida. She will work in the Transportation Planning Division of the Department of Planning and Development. Anna completed her master's degree at the University of Illinois in May after obtaining her undergraduate degree in architecture in her home city of Bangalore, India. We will miss her at worship and in our Easy English Fellowship where she assisted others in learning English.

Welcome to the **Smith Kama family** who will return to our congregation at the end of July after a decade in Nebraska. Smith will be here with wife, **Pride**, sons **Robert** (11), **Mariana** (7) and daughter **Myriana** (10).

Prison Ministry

Our congregation stands with two incarcerated brothers from our congregation through regular prayer, letter and card writing, phone conversation and person to person visits. The men respond in gratitude.

Jays & Concerns

We express sympathy to...

- to the family and friends of **Morris Huck** who died June 1, 2025. We especially pray for his wife, Doreen.

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.

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total May contributions: \$47.3K from plate and pledge plus \$7.9K from prepaid= \$55.2K This is \$7K less than last year and \$9.9K under budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$ 359.3 K which is \$4.1K less than last year and \$33.8K over budget. At 41.7% of the year, we have 53.1% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

Expenses

May expenses were \$123.8 K, which is \$8.3K more than last year and \$44.8K over budget. Expenses YTD are \$441.7K, which is \$5.3K more than last year and \$46.7K over budget. At 41.7% of the year, we have spent 46.6% of the budget.

Balance YTD

Revenue from all sources exceeded expenses by \$79.8K which is \$26.2K less than last year at the same time.

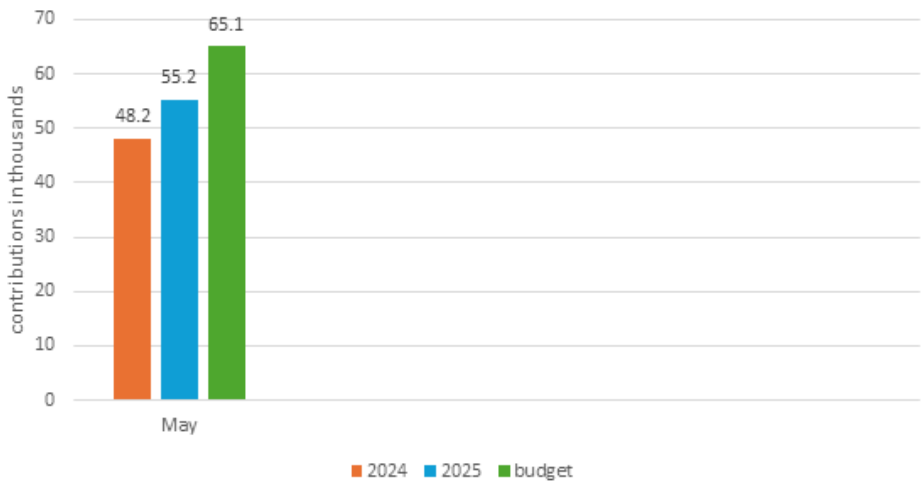
Session Designated Funds

\$1,063,278 which is \$39.7K more than last month.

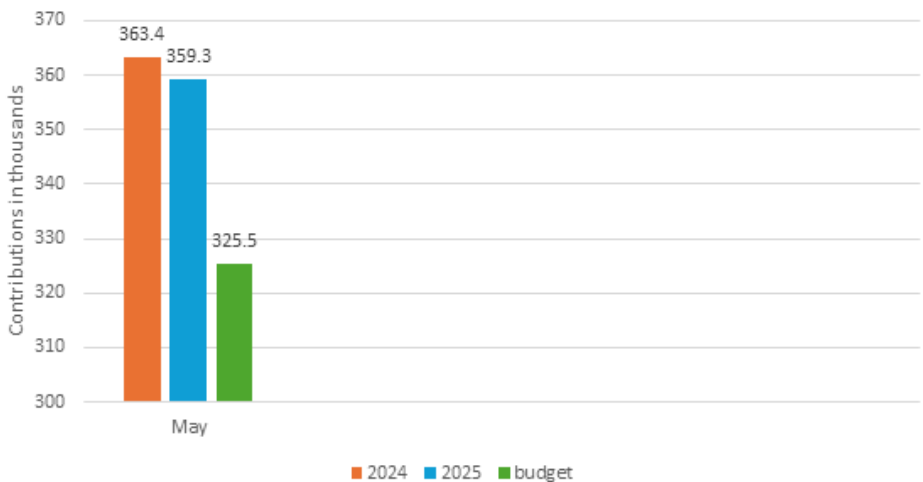
Summary of Restricted Accounts

The church van was sold to DREAM for \$12,000. \$1500 was given to the benevolence fund.

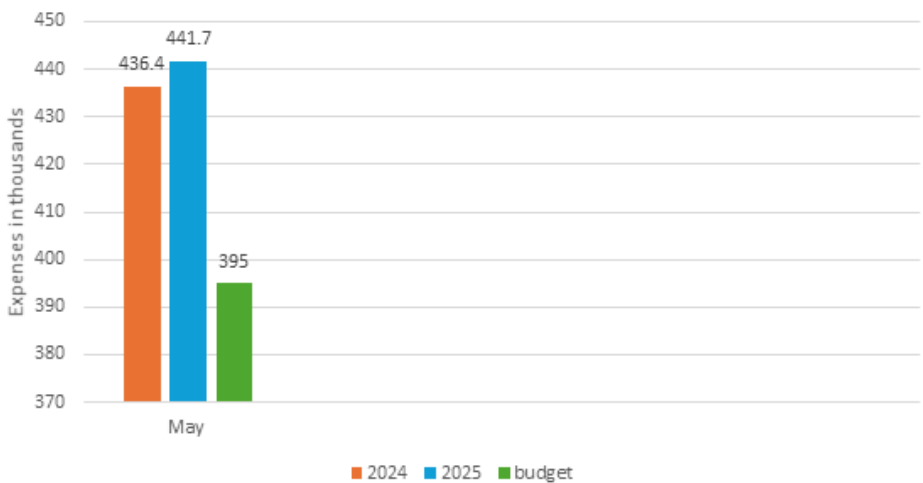
May 2025 Contributions



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

E: info@firstpres.church

www.firstpres.church

Sunday:

9 AM Worship

10 AM Coffee and Fellowship

10:10 AM Sunday School/Adult Discussions

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.

Pastors:

Beth Wagner..... Interim Pastor/Head of Staff
Joseph Lundy..... Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Staff:

Ritchie DrennenFacility Manager
Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant
Robert FerrerAudio-visual Technician
Fred Foster Evening Custodian
Marcia Franks Office Administrator
Jace Kim..... Summer Music Director/Pianist
Jill Stewart..... Accounting
Bonnie Ward..... English Language Learner Director

Staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by
@firstpres.church For example, beth@firstpres.church

Church Office hours:

Mon-Thurs 8:30 AM - 2 PM

Friday 8:30 AM - noon

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.