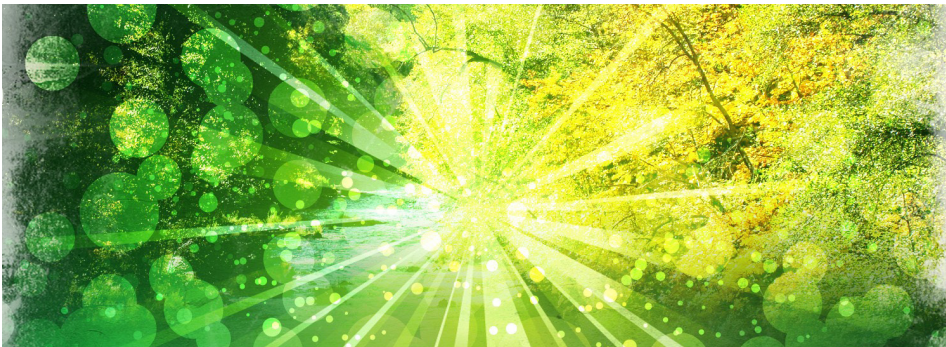


June 2025



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



We're Back!

**Join us for our triumphant return to the Sanctuary
Sunday, June 8th**

After almost a two year hiatus, we will once again be able to worship in our historic Sanctuary. Our antiquated elevator has been replaced with a larger, newer model that we can now get parts for if anything needs repair.

The Sanctuary has been repainted and deep cleaned after the dusty construction process – removal of the old elevator, expansion the elevator shaft and installation of the new equipment.

We are excited to return to the Sanctuary and hope you will join us Sunday, June 8, for a special morning of worship with the sun filtering through the beautiful stained glass windows on the second level.

It's Pentecost Sunday. Special music will be provided by **Gary Winder** on the clarinet. We will say good-bye to **Sora and Matthew Shepard** that morning with Second Sunday Brunch immediately following worship.

Hope to see you Sunday, June 8!

**2nd Sunday Brunch
June 8th**

**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.**

Wandering in the Wilderness

BY BETH WAGNER, INTERIM PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF
BETH@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

We are finally returning to the sanctuary! It has been 22.5 months of worshiping in a space other than our beautiful sanctuary. And so, as we return to the beloved space, I think there are several things we need to remember:

Give thanks that this building had an alternative place to hold worship in. First Presbyterian is blessed with a large church building and another space to create a temporary worship space. Give thanks that First Presbyterian with many generous gifts from the congregation past and present had the financial ability to purchase and install a new elevator and renovate the Sanctuary including new speakers.

Give thanks to the staff (custodial, music, tech and pastoral staff) for all the behind-the-scenes work they have done to make the return to the sanctuary perfect.

Knowing that you may have mixed feelings, Westminster Hall created a warm and cozy worship space, and returning upstairs might shock your emotions. It is ok to grieve the loss of cozy and to figure out how we redefine our worship space to include, if not cozy, least comfortable, friendly space.



100th Birthday Celebration

Harvey Hodges will be celebrating his 100th birthday on Saturday, June 28, at The Windsor of Savoy in the Savoy room from 1-3 PM. All are invited. Overflow parking is permitted at the Baptist Church across the street.

If you are not able to attend and want to send a card with congratulations on this milestone they can be sent to Harvey at: 401 Burwash Ave #159, Savoy, IL 61874.

Harvey has been a member of this church since 1958!

Presbyterian Men

Presbyterian men meet for Bible study on Tuesdays from 8-9 AM in Mae Chapin Parlor.

Our men's prayer group meets on Zoom Fridays at 8:15 AM. We pray in turn in the language and style most comfortable to us. You can also pray in silence.

Know you are welcome.

The Heart of Mission

Frontera de Cristo and Café Justo

Have you appreciated Café Justo at our Sunday hospitality table? You can purchase this coffee for your personal enjoyment at <https://www.justcoffee.org/>

Your purchase supports Mexican coffee growers in Southern Mexico and those who roast and package the coffee at the northern border. This is a ministry of Frontera de Cristo <https://fronteradecristo.org/> and just one of many ways long term Presbyterians, **Rev. Mark Adams** and wife, **Miriam Maldonado** serve at the border.

New Americans Ministry Team

The New Americans Ministry Team met for its second time on May 21. This group consisting of Anglo and Afro congregants provides support for Bethesda Fellowship and weekly French language Bible study as well as outreach to our local African community. Its work may expand to other cultural groups. The team reports to our Outreach and Church Growth Team.

All are invited to join us

Bethesda Fellowship

Bethesda Fellowship is the new name for Saturday worship in the chapel. Presbyterian worship in Lingala and French languages meets each week from 6 to 8 PM. Children worship with their parents. Song, prayer, scripture reading and a message are accompanied by instrumental music.

You are welcome to attend.



Leaders of Bethesda Fellowship Nissi Lembelembe, Solange and Gabriel Mboyo



CARIBBEAN Journey

CUBA STUDY

Mondays 6:30-8 PM

August 21 - September 22

Zoom or In-Person

A Cuba Study is a prerequisite for a trip to Cuba in March 2026

Register at info@firstpres.church

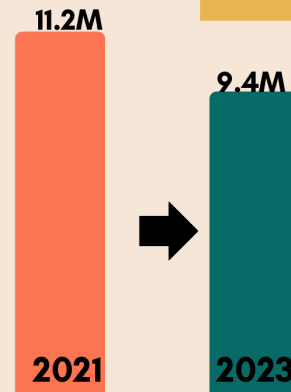


Coffee with Beth
Wednesdays, 10 - 12 noon
Espresso Royale
Robeson at the Crossing

Come enjoy conversation
coffee and bagels.

Facts about CUBA

10-18% Population Decline



Driving Factors:

- COVID aftermath
- Energy blackouts
- Food shortage
- Fuel shortage
- Medicine shortage
- Low birth rate

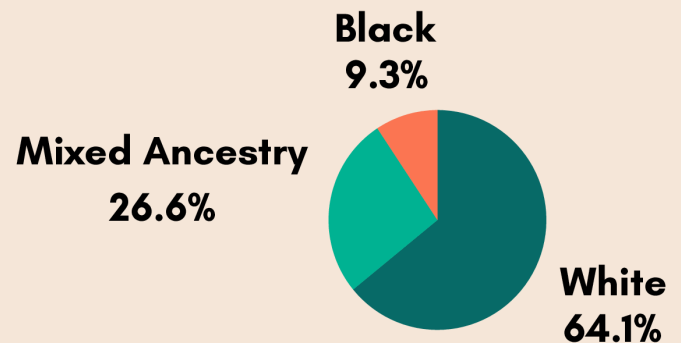
Cuba has an adult literacy rate of **99.5%** one of the highest in the world!



Demographics

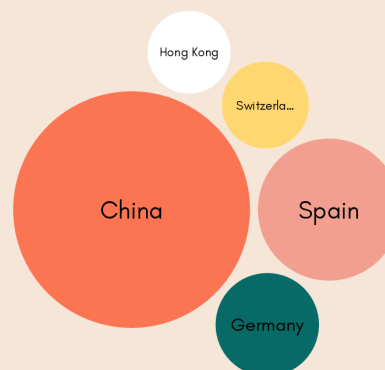
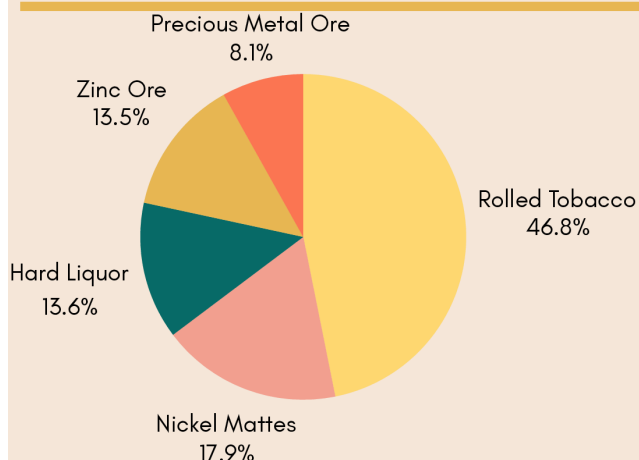
Cuba's African culture evolved as a mechanism of existential survival and adaptation for the African men and women that experienced slavery, dehumanization, and racism on the island. Today, African influence is seen in many aspects of Cuban culture, from foods made with yams and plantains, to words like "bachata".

By the 1550s, the indigenous Taíno and Siboney (Ciboney) Taíno population was largely depleted during the Spanish occupation of Cuba. Today, Taíno culture is most fully preserved in La Caridad de los Indios, nestled high in the Sierra del Cristal mountains overlooking Guantánamo.



Many white Cubans trace their ancestry to waves of migration from Spain that started in the 18th century. A significant number migrated to the US in 1959 following the revolution led by Fidel Castro, settling mainly in South Florida. Some settled in Puerto Rico.

Major Exports & Partners



China (\$358M)
Spain (\$129M)
Germany (\$68.1M)
Switzerland (\$48.2M)
Hong Kong (\$43.7M)

Thought for the Month of June

‘If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.’

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-2

“Beyond the realm of churches, religious blogs, and bible colleges, nobody really cares about theology. What does matter is the way you treat other people.”

- Stephen Mattson, “When Christians Love Theology More Than People”

Prayer

Teach us that no amount of knowledge or eloquence matters without love and help us live a faith that is known not by words, but by the way we treat others with compassion and grace. 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 **Paty Kamenga** who was accepted into the Master of Computer Science-Data Science (MCS-DS) at Grainger College of Engineering.
- Join eight-year-old **Victoria Kamenga**, daughter of **Paty Kamenga** and **Juliana Mbola Bavento** in her piano recital on June 8, 12:30 PM at First Baptist Church, 1602. South Prospect Avenue. A thanks also to Juliana for providing nursery care on Sunday mornings.
- Please congratulate **Dennis Arthur** who is pursuing an MSc in Urban Planning with a specialization in environmental and land use planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has then been accepted to continue into the PhD program.

Jays & Concerns

We express sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Stuart Clark** who died May 12, 2025. Stu has been a member of the church since 1952. Please keep his wife Barbara and family in your prayers.

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.



Ngoma African Arts Festival

Celebrate our African friends with us on Friday, June 27, and Saturday, June 28, and join your Outreach Team for this second annual festival.

Friday June 27

6 – 8 PM Community Center for the Arts (C4A), 202 W. Main, Urbana. Open house and exhibit.

Saturday June 28

2 – 4 PM Spurlock Museum, 600 S. Gregory, Urbana. Awards Ceremony

6 – 8 PM Lincoln Square Parking Lot, Community Concert and Sepelas food truck.

Stop by our First Pres table and say hello.

Sunday Hospitality Table

We all enjoy the fellowship of our Sunday Hospitality Table. We have a generous group of ten who regularly volunteer helping to set the table at 8:15 and cleaning up at 10:30. The only requirement is a smile. We have easy to follow directions. Would you like to join in the rotation? It's fun, it's easy, it's good and we need you.

Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70aOc4eafad29a0f94-sunday/75632732#/>

Because Kindness Never Goes Out of Style

Fashions, cars, entertainers, politicians – even political ideologies come and go. People can be on board one moment and diametrically opposed the next. Like just about everything else these days, trends can divide the generations. Common ground can be hard to find. But no matter what the decade is, surely one thing that never wavers is a universal need for kindness. That is why your Outreach Team would like to sponsor a “Because You Matter Acts of Kindness” Campaign.

We would like to suggest that during the month of June each of you choose a recipient – maybe a neighbor or a stranger or someone marginalized, invisible, with little or no agency to speak for themselves. Your choice should be easy because **everyone matters!** Get your kids or your grandkids involved. Think of something – big or small – that you could do for that person. (or choose an action from a list of suggestions.) If it is appropriate, leave a *Because You Matter* card to let people know the act of kindness is associated with First Presbyterian Church.

Enjoy a holy moment being God’s hands and feet. Repeat as many times as you like. Cards and suggestion list available at Welcome Center or church office.

The Invisible Tattoo

This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other. John 13:35(CEB)

In a world obsessed with external markings, attention grabbing tattoos, clothing designed by famous designers, luxury autos, Jesus proposes a new identification for us: an “invisible tattoo” of love and mercy that can be seen in concrete actions.

This love is visible when:

- You choose to defend that coworker who everyone else makes fun of, acting for justice.
- You forgive your adolescent child who messed up again or made a mistake for the umpteenth time.
- You take hot soup to your elderly neighbor who lives alone.
- You smile patiently at the bank cashier or the clerk at the store who is inundated with work and is not the one to blame for failures in the bank system nor the long line to purchase items.

Prayer:

Lord, today I recognize that at times my love tattoo fades. When it costs me to love, remind me how you loved me first.

Su Voz daily devotions in English and Spanish mailed free [here](#).

Thanks!

A heart felt thank you to those of you who have hired young people from our congregation to help you out. Whether it has been yard work, driving or elder care it has been a blessing for those who had the opportunity to earn some extra cash.

Please remember our siblings in Christ when you have odd jobs to offer. info@firstpres.church



Looking for Free Books to Explore?

Browse our collection of donated books at our Little Book Exchange located between our Sunday hospitality table and library.

Looking for a space on your book shelves? Give some books you no longer want to keep. Here are a few adult and children’s books that were recently available: “Jesus and His Times”, “What Would Jesus Do?” “The Treasure Tree”, “The Purpose Driven Life”, “Building a Healthy Multi-Cultural Church” and six books by C.S. Lewis.

You may return a book, pass it on to another or add to your home collection. Both secular and faith informed books are welcome.

Face to Face with Marsha Barrett, Ian Njoroge and Felix Gitata



What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

I (Ian) was raised in the Presbyterian church in Kenya as well as First Presbyterian Church in Durham, NC after my family emigrated to the United States and as such, I have a strong affinity to worship with a Presbyterian congregation. After moving to Champaign during the pandemic, I found First Presbyterian online and chose to worship here due to the diverse congregation.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

We feel that the congregation has been welcoming, and we have enjoyed the fellowship and friendship we have experienced during events such as the chili

cook-off and Sunday brunch. Additionally, we find the church provides an environment for Felix to learn, grow, and be a part of a church community.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

I (Marsha) am a history professor at the U of I. My area of research is US political history, and I recently wrote a book on Nelson Rockefeller, the four-time New York governor and US vice president, titled "Nelson Rockefeller's Dilemma". I (Ian) am a research scientist at CSL in Kankakee. I have a PhD in chemical engineering, and I enjoy furthering innovation especially in the field of biotechnology. We have one son, Felix who is three years old. We all have birthdays in the same week in May, which can result in a lot of cake!

What do you do in your free time?

Our free time is spent entertaining and creating memories with Felix, whose current fascination is trains. I (Ian) also enjoy playing and watching soccer, in particular Arsenal of the Premier League. We also enjoy reading, cooking, and traveling.

What are your favorite Bible characters?

I (Ian) would say Moses. He was chosen, not perfect, but grew into the person he was meant to be and endeavored to fulfill God's will. I (Marsha) am drawn to the Old Testament stories that can be dramatic, mysterious, and exotic.

What advice can you give on how to be the church?

We love the fellowship and how people care for each other and for the community creating an environment where everyone feels welcome.

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total April contributions: \$75K from plate and pledge plus \$7.9K from prepaid= \$82.9K This is \$18.8K more than last year and \$17.8K over budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$ 304.1 K which is \$11.1K less than last year and \$43.7K over budget. At 33% of the year, we have 47% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

Expenses

April expenses were \$84.2 K, which is \$12.8K more than last year and \$5.2K over budget. Expenses YTD are \$317.9K, which is \$2.9K less than last year and \$1.9K over budget. At 33% of the year, we have spent 33.6% 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

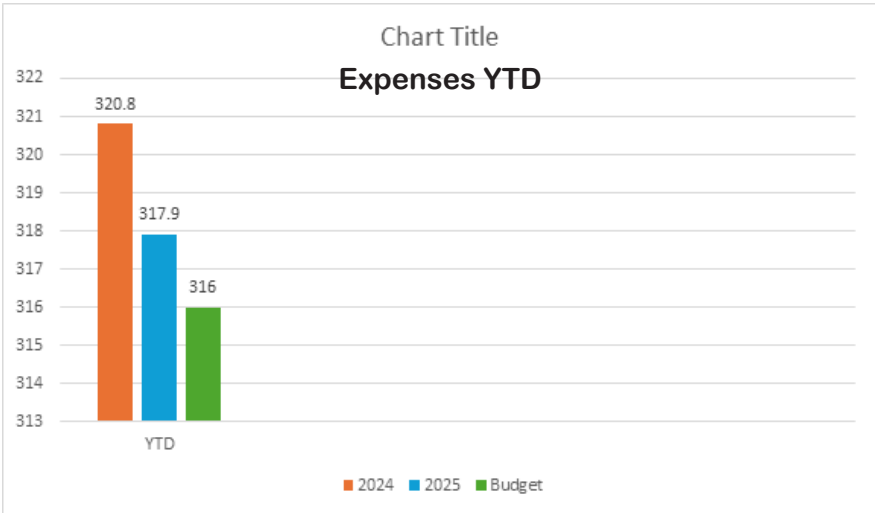
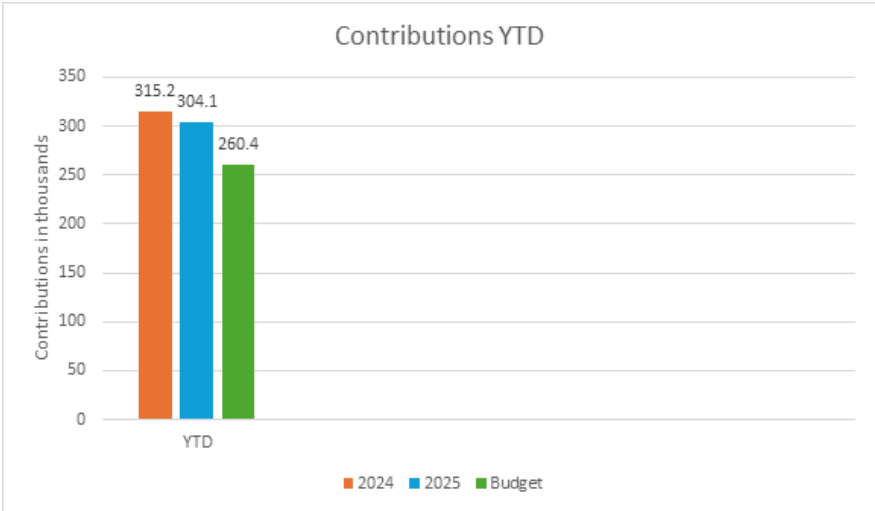
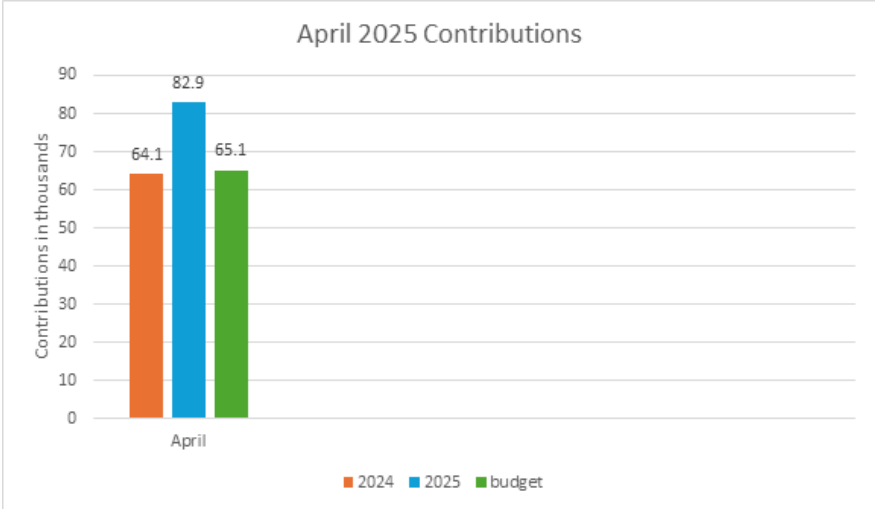
\$1,023,590 which is \$118,192 less than last month.

Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$3835 was given to OGHS, \$600 to DREAM, and \$179 was given at the brunch

Notes

\$20,611 was received from the Cannon Endowment Fund





**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.