

March 2025



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Entering the Passion of Jesus

Our theme for Lent is *Entering the Passion of Jesus: Picturing ourselves in the story.*

The events of Christ's Passion, which take place during the last week of Jesus' life, often don't receive enough time in our worship and study. These stories are important to our faith journey and our identity as followers of Jesus. And yet we often move too quickly from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday with little time to take in the dramatic story of that last week.

How might taking a closer look at the ancient story open us to deeper conviction for our role in its ongoing message?

Ash Wednesday Service – Wednesday, March 5, 5 PM

Begin your Lenten journey with a contemplative Ash Wednesday service featuring Taizé music and the solemn disposition of ashes. This important service invites worshipers into a sacred space of prayer and introspection, focusing on themes of repentance, humility, and renewal. Meditative chants and moments of quiet reflection provide a deeply spiritual atmosphere, helping us center our hearts on God's mercy and prepare for the season of Lent. Join us for this meaningful and peaceful start to a season of growth and transformation.

**2nd Sunday Brunch
March 9th**

**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.**

**SPRING
FORWARD**

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

BEGINS SUNDAY MARCH 9

continued on the next page

**Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 13, 9 AM**

Palm processional as we lead into the events of Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday – Thursday, April 17, 5 PM

We will hear the Word proclaimed, share a light supper and fellowship with Communion as Jesus did that Last Supper. The choir will join us before their rehearsal. Join us in Centennial Hall that evening.

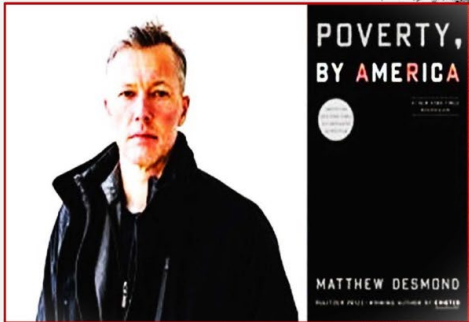
Good Friday – Friday, April 18, 7 PM

Join us for a powerful Good Friday Service featuring Henrich Schutz's *Seven Last Words of Christ* – a 20 minute Baroque masterwork that brings Jesus' final words to life with profound emotion and depth. This moving setting will be performed at 7 PM at First Presbyterian Church by the combined choirs of First Presbyterian and First United Methodist, along with soloists and orchestra.

As we conclude our Lenten series, *Entering the Passion of Jesus*, this service serves as a meaningful capstone, drawing us deeper into the gravity of Christ's sacrifice. Through the expressive power of Schutz's music, we will reflect on the depth of Jesus' final moments. Join us Good Friday for an evening of contemplation, beauty, and spiritual reflection.

Easter – Sunday, April 20, 9 AM

We celebrate the risen Christ at our morning worship with brass and special music.

POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

You are invited to join this discussion to learn more about how systemic poverty in America traps those without economic means and to reflect together about the ways we can serve our neighbors caught in cycles of systemic poverty. In this Lenten season, we gather to reflect on how God calls us to serve to end poverty, how we can witness to the debilitating effects of systemic poverty, and how we can illuminate hope to create communities of well-being.

Every Friday from March 7 through April 18 on Zoom
6:30 pm CT/7:30 pm ET

Email statedclerk@gmail.com for the Zoom link

LENTEN BOOK STUDY
HOSTED BY THE PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHEASTERN ILLINOIS AND THE PRESBYTERY OF WABASH VALLEY

The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages? --Matthew Desmond

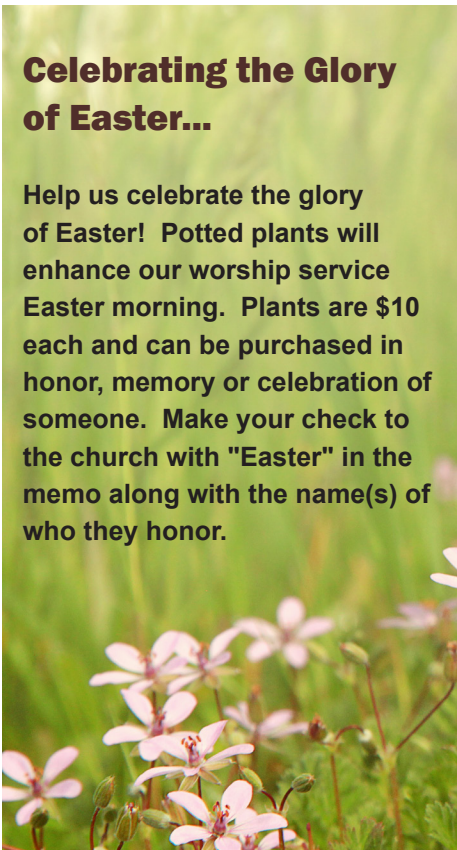
Lenten Book Study

Sociologist Matthew Desmond observes that

"The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages?"

You are invited to join this discussion of Desmond's latest book, *Poverty, By America*, to learn more about how systemic poverty in America traps those without economic means and to reflect together about the ways we can serve our neighbors caught in cycles of systemic poverty. In this Lenten season, we gather to reflect on how God calls us to serve to end poverty, how we can witness to the debilitating effects of systemic poverty, and how we can illuminate hope to create communities of well-being.

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Celebrating the Glory of Easter...

Help us celebrate the glory of Easter! Potted plants will enhance our worship service Easter morning. Plants are \$10 each and can be purchased in honor, memory or celebration of someone. Make your check to the church with "Easter" in the memo along with the name(s) of who they honor.



Coffeeshop Hours in March
 Wednesdays, 10 am - 12 noon
 at Espresso Royale
 2401 Village Green
 Champaign

Come enjoy conversation, coffee and/or tea with Beth.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

One Great Hour of Sharing is the single largest way that Presbyterians join together to share God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world. Each gift helps to improve the lives of people in challenging situations through three impactful programs:

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance...
 32% of the offering works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters.

Presbyterian Hunger Program...
 36% of the offering takes action to alleviate hunger and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed.

Self-Development of People...
 32% of the offering invests in communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, poverty, and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these societal ills.

While gifts may be made at any time throughout Lent, the One Great Hour of Sharing will be received on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

Part-time Bookkeeping Position at Church

First Presbyterian Church is seeking a part-time Bookkeeper (20 hours per week) to administer and oversee all accounting functions of the church. The ideal candidate has experience in nonprofit or church financial management and is detail-oriented, organized, and aligned with our mission. Position is open to working hybrid (mostly remote but with one day in office.)

Responsibilities:

- Manage financial software and data, ensuring accuracy and compliance.
 - Process accounts payable, including invoices, reimbursements, and vendor records.
 - Reconcile bank accounts and prepare financial statements.
 - Oversee payroll processing, including tax reporting and employee benefits administration.
 - Maintain records for unrestricted, restricted, and endowment contributions.
- Qualifications:
- Associate's degree or higher preferred.
 - Experience in church or nonprofit bookkeeping, including financial statement preparation.
 - Familiarity with accounting systems such as ACS or QuickBooks.
 - Strong organizational, analytical, and communication skills.

This role reports to the Office Administrator. If you are interested in joining our team, please submit your resume and a cover letter to info@firstpres.church. A full job description can be found at <https://firstpres.church/employment-opportunities/>



Face to Face With Tanya Deckert



Tanya sings in the choir, serves as a liturgist, works with our kitchen team and helps serve communion.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

When our family moved to Urbana, we sought a Presbyterian church that was large and had a good program for children. We found it here. Previously we were at Bel Air Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles- Ronald Regan's church. First Pres has been a joy over almost 32 years.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

Well, I've had many opportunities to serve but I think the most important to me is singing in the choir. Just behind that perhaps is our mission possible adventures traveling to work on church camps. I continue to join that travel group as a Monday Muncher.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

I am a nurse and almost retired. Currently I help nurses in Urbana schools and retain a few clients as an insurance agent. I have two grown children. Paige works in the US embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia and Sean is a photographer in Los Angeles.

What do you do in your free time?

Tennis, exercise at the gym and bridge. And I love reading books.

What are your favorite Bible characters?

John. He was one of Jesus's closest disciples and is identified more than once in as the "one whom Jesus loved." I am often reminding myself of the words of John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me".

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

The church is best when it nurtures its members in acts of compassion. We need to keep seeking out those with need and responding even if in simple ways by comforting those with illness, those mourning and acknowledging the gifts of others.

Opportunity to Help With DREAM Bible Club

The DREAM middle school youth and staff will again join us on our campus for fun activities, a Bible study, and to share a meal. We'll meet twice a month on Wednesday from 3:30 to 5 PM.

The remaining dates are March 26, April 16 & 30, and the last date will be May 14.

For more information, contact **Peter Yau** pmyau@illinois.edu (217-621-0448) with questions or to sign up to help in the kitchen, or **Holly Ewan Nordheden** hnordheden@gmail.com (217-621-3450) with questions or to sign up to serve as one of the 4-6 table partners we need to greet our guests and facilitate conversation with

prepared questions during our shared meal.

Put the dates on your calendar and sign-up NOW!



Presbyterian Women of
Synod of Lincoln Trails
invites you to our

2025 LENTEN SERIES

Women of Courage

Four Part Zoom Session at 6:30pm
CST Tuesdays During Lent

March 11

Midwives Shiphrah and Puah
Rev. Lisa Lopez-Meyer
First Presbyterian Church
of Winnebago, IL



March 18

Abigail
Pastor Karen Williams
Westminster Presbyterian
Church of Joliet, IL



March 25

Esther
Rev. Jerusha Van Camp
Presbytery of Ohio Valley,
southern Indiana



April 1

Syrophenician Woman
Rev. Beth Wagner
First Presbyterian Church
of Champaign, IL



Register

Internet access is needed for Zoom sessions. There is no cost, but registration is required for one or all sessions.

To register, visit

<https://tinyurl.com/pwlenen>



facebook.com/pwsei



You call us and we ignore your whisper, listening to the voices of this world. You call us and we choose a different path, following our own devices. You call us to be your voice in this world, to be your hands in this world, to be your feet in this world, to proclaim your peace, your comfort, forgiveness, healing, love and grace.

Forgive us, open our ears, call us again, and use us.

Adult Discussions –Lent 2025

- March 2 – The Parable of the Sowed Seed – Rev. Joe Lundy
- March 9 – No Discussion/Second Sunday Brunch
- March 16 – The Parable of the Widow and the Judge – Betty Hollister
- March 23 – The Parable of the Talents – Ken Chapman
- March 30 – The Parable of the Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep – TBA
- April 6 – The Parable of the Prodigal Son – Rev. Joe Lundy
- April 13 – No Discussion/Second Sunday Brunch
- April 20 – Easter

Jays & Concerns

We express sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Bernie Dunn** who died February 13, 2025. A private family memorial will be held at a later date.
- the family and friends of **Richard “Itch” Jones** who died February 17, 2025. A Celebration of Life will be held later this Spring.
- the family of **Gary Peterson** whose brother Lyle died February 22. Services will be held in Iowa on Friday, February 28.
- the family and friends of **Ginny Tutje** who died January 26, 2025. A Celebration of Life will be held in late March or early April.

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.

The **Memorial Service for Ginny Tutje** will be held this **Saturday, March 1, at 11:30 AM** at Morgan Memorial in Savoy. A reception will follow at the Windsor of Savoy retirement home.

The Heart of Mission

Prayer for the Refugee

by Mark Koenig, Director, Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations

God of the journey,
 We remember that Mary and Joseph
 Had to flee to Egypt,
 Taking Jesus to safety,
 Leaving home behind.
 Remembering,
 We pray for sisters and brothers
 Around your world
 Who are forced to leave their homes.
 We pray for brothers and sisters who are
 Driven from home by natural disasters.
 We pray for sisters and brothers who are
 Driven from unnatural acts of violence and persecution.
 We pray for brothers and sisters who are
 Driven from home because of inadequate responses to natural events.
 We pray for those who leave their countries and cross borders.
 We pray for those who are internally displaced,
 Finding new places to live within their own country.
 We pray for those who are exposed to freezing cold and searing heat,
 Those who lack food, water, shelter, and other necessities of life,
 Those who are exploited, violated, and abused, and
 Those who mourn the loss of place and all that brings.
 We give thanks for the strength, courage, and grace of our sisters and brothers
 Who are refugees or internally displaced.
 We give thanks for the contributions they make in their new places
 And for the ways in which they enrich our lives.
 Guide the leaders of the world to find creative ways to respond,
 To extend protection and provide safe haven,
 To care compassionately and respectfully for the needs of our sisters and brothers,
 To address the situations and circumstances that force people to leave their homes.
 To do justice and to seek peace.
 Show us ways that we can support our brothers and sisters whom we encounter.
 Inspire us to engage in the efforts to create a world
 In which all have a safe place to call home.
 We pray in the name of the refugee Jesus,
 Amen.

Welcoming the Stranger

Welcoming the stranger (the immigrant we would say today) is the most often repeated commandment in the Hebrew Scriptures, except for the imperative to worship only one God. And the love of neighbor (especially the most vulnerable neighbor) is doubtlessly the New Testament's constant command... Whatever the cause of immigration today, there can be no doubt as to where the church must stand when it comes to defending the immigrant. Theologian Orlando O. Espin.

In the 1960s First Pres nurtured two Vietnamese families and more recently we collaborated with The Refugee Center to host two Congolese families. All these of our brothers and sisters continue to be faithful, productive citizens of our nation.

Our Presbyterian Disaster Assistance produced this [17 minute video](#) sharing the story of a refugee family from Syria welcomed by Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC.

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” *Leviticus 19:33-34*

Economic Blackout Day, DEI, The Bible & the PCUSA



“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) remains committed to diversity and representation as stated in our hiring policies and demonstrated in our employment practices. Furthermore, DEI (Diversity, Equality, Inclusion) policies align closely with the Christian faith, particularly considering the core Christian teachings on love, dignity and equality. DEI policies affirm Christian values of love for all people (*Matthew 22:39*), all are created in the image of God (*Genesis 1:26-27*), equality and justice (*Micah 6:8, Isaiah 1:17*), welcoming the stranger (*Matthew 25:35-40*) and unity in diversity (*1 Corinthians 12:12-14*).

In essence, DEI policies align with a Christian understanding that God has called us by name (*Isaiah 43:1*) into this work and how God created each of us (*Psalms 139*), and thus, how we are called to treat others.” (<https://www.pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/cessation-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-programs-united-states>)

DEI is not a set of policies, but rather suggestions for practices aimed at enforcing and complying with existing anti-discrimination protections in workplaces. It does not ensure certain groups have preferential treatment, but rather that none do.

Your Compassion Peace and Justice Team stands with the PC(USA) and organizations supporting DEI. To demonstrate our Christian values we encourage you to join us in observing Economic Blackout Day on February 28. Make no purchases for non-essential items.

Food to Cuba – Thanks Be To God



The Cuba Partners Network announces that a large shipping container of food has been delivered to the Iglesia Presbiteriana en Cuba and that the contents are quickly being distributed to each of the congregations. This was made possible by a partnership of many. The container contains red beans, black beans, cooking oil, rice, pasta, tuna, coffee and powdered milk.

We Welcome You!

Not only are you welcome at First Pres but we encourage to join one or more of our ministry teams here at the church. Here is a list of some of our active groups.

Interested? Contact the church office at 217.356.7238 or email info@first-pres.church to connect with someone who can tell you more.

- Adult Spiritual Education
- Amateur Preachers
- Building and Grounds
- Children, Youth and Family
- Classic Book Study
- Compassion, Peace and Justice
- Cuba Partners Leadership
- DREAAM Youth Bible Club
- English Tutors for Adults
- Environmental Stewardship
- Men’s Bible Study
- Men’s Prayer Team
- Nifty Knitters
- Nurture
 - Kitchen Team
 - Sunday Hospitality Table
 - Letter Writing
- Outreach
- Presbyterian Women
- Tech Team
- Transportation
- Women’s Bible Study
- World Mission
- Worship Sunday
 - Choir
 - Greeters
 - Ushers
 - Liturgists
- Worship Saturday French Language
 - Music
 - Bible Study
 - Prayer Group

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total January contributions: \$73.2K from plate and pledge plus \$7.9K from prepaid= \$81.1K This is \$4K less than last year and \$16K over budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$ 81.1 K which is \$4K less than last year and \$16K over budget. At 8.3% of the year, we have 19.4% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

Expenses

January expenses were \$64.9 K, which is \$5.2K less than last year and \$14.1K under budget. Expenses YTD are \$64.9K, which is \$5.2K less than last year and \$14.4K under budget. At 8.3% of the year, we have spent 6.9% of the budget.

Balance YTD

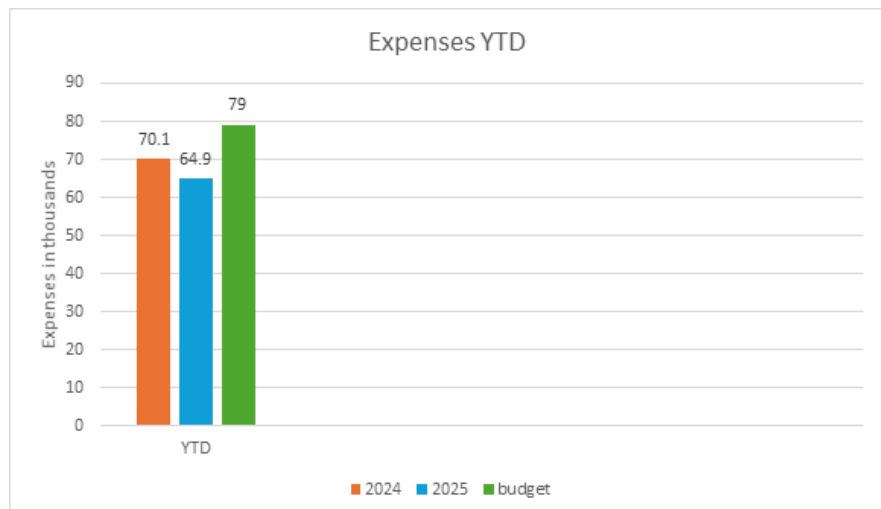
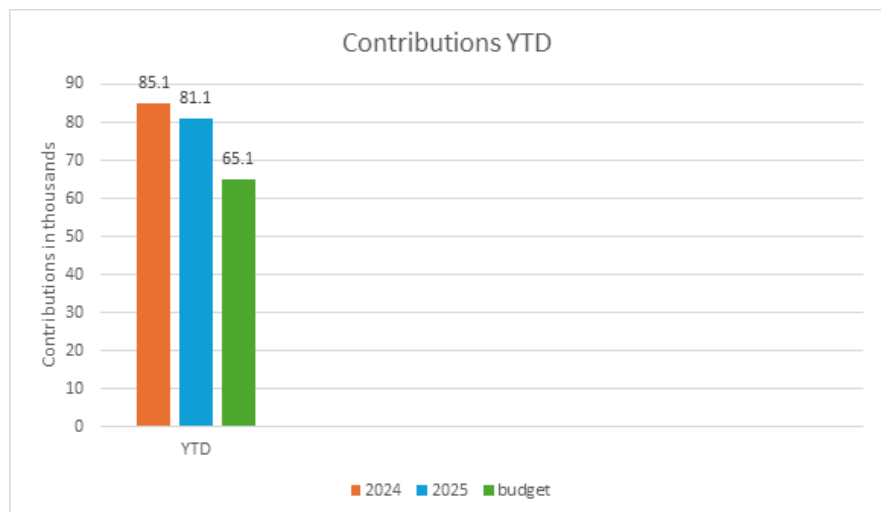
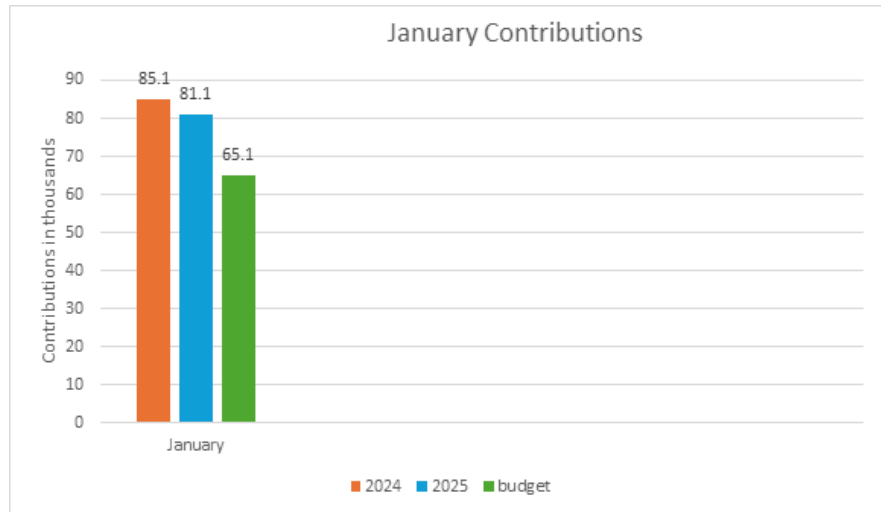
Revenue from all sources exceeded expenses \$104.5K which is \$26.2K less than last year at the same time.

Session Designated Funds

\$1,223,237 which is \$88,295 less than last month.

Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$450 was donated to PDA and \$1400 to designated missions.





Tropical Vacation Bundt Cake (More recipes to come in April...)

FROM Joanne Walther

Ingredients:

8-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained and juice reserved
 2 cups coconut flakes
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 4 large eggs
 1/2 cup vegetable oil
 1/2 cup pineapple juice (from the can of crushed pineapple)
 8-ounce (by weight) tub of sour cream (I used Knudsen.)
 1 teaspoon pineapple extract (if you can't find it, use vanilla extract instead)
 1 teaspoon coconut extract (if you can't find it, use vanilla extract instead)
 1 box spiced cake mix, the kind that makes a 9-inch by 13-inch cake or a 2-layer cake (I used Duncan Hines Spice Cake.)
 5.1-ounce package of DRY instant coconut cream pudding and pie filling (I used Jell-O)
 5.1-ounce package of DRY instant banana cream pudding mix (I used Jell-O)
 12-ounce (by weight) bag of white chocolate or vanilla baking chips (11-ounce package will do, too -- I used Nestle.)

You'll need a Bundt Pan that has been sprayed with Pam or another nonstick cooking spray and then floured

To Make the Cake Batter:

Drain the crushed pineapple and reserve the juice in the bowl. Measure out a 1/2 cup of the crushed pineapple juice. If you don't have enough in the bowl, use canned pineapple juice to make up the difference. Set aside.

Measure out 2 cups of coconut flakes (pressing them down in the measuring cup). Set aside.

Place HALF of the flour in the bottom of a food processor with the steel blade attached.

Scatter the coconut flakes over the flour.

Sprinkle the second HALF of the flour over the top of the coconut flakes and process, using an on-and-off motion, until the coconut flakes have been chopped into much smaller pieces.

Crack the eggs into the bowl of an electric mixer. Mix them up on LOW speed until they uniform in color.

Pour in half-cup vegetable oil and mix it in with the eggs on LOW speed.

Add the half-cup of pineapple juice and mix it in at LOW speed.

Scoop out the cup of sour cream and add it to your bowl. Mix that in on LOW speed.

Add the pineapple to your mixing bowl. Mix that in on LOW speed.

Add the flour and chopped coconut flakes mixture to your bowl. Mix them in at LOW speed.

Add the teaspoon of pineapple extract and the teaspoon of coconut extract. Mix those in at LOW speed. Continue to mix until everything is well combined.

Sprinkle HALF the box of dry cake mix on top of the ingredients in the mixer bowl. (You don't have to be exact -- just guesstimate.)

Turn the mixer on LOW speed and mix until everything is well combined.

Sprinkle in the rest of the dry cake mix. Mix that in on LOW speed.

Add DRY coconut cream pudding and pie filling. Sprinkle it on top and mix it in on LOW speed.

Add DRY banana cream pudding and pie filling. Sprinkle it on top and mix it in on LOW speed.

Sprinkle the white chocolate or vanilla baking chips on top and stir them in by hand.

Use the rubber spatula to transfer the cake batter to the Bundt pan you prepared.

Bake your cake at 350 degrees F. for 55 minutes.

Test it for doneness by inserting a cake tester, thin wooden skewer, or long toothpick. Insert it midway between the outside edges of the pan and the metal protrusion that makes the crater in the center of the pan.

If the tester comes out clean, your cake is done. If there is still unbaked batter clinging to the tester, shut the oven door and bake your cake in 5-minute increments until the tester comes out clean.

Once done, take it out of the oven and let it cool in the pan for 20 minutes and then pull the sides away from the pan.

Tip the Bundt pan upside down on a platter

Cover your Tropical Vacation Bundt Cake loosely with foil and refrigerate it for at least one hour. (Overnight is even better).

This cake is very rich. If you don't want to frost it, an alternative is to sprinkle it with powdered sugar and call it good. You can also dot it with sweetened whipped cream and decorate with seasonal fruits. Strawberries cut in half and raspberries are pretty on top of the whipped cream, and so are peach slices. If you like, you can get more exotic and decorate with mango, papaya, and kiwi and/or nuts.



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302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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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:

Martice Chapple..... Facility Assistant
Ritchie Drennen..... Facility Manager
Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant
Robert Ferrer..... Audio-visual Technician
Fred Foster..... Evening Custodian
Marcia Franks..... Office Administrator
Ann Petry..... Accounting
Matthew Shepard..... Director of Music
Sora Shepard..... Organist/Pianist
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.