

May 2024



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Spring Music Sunday May 5 9 AM

Save Sunday, May 5, at 9 AM for a special music presentation!

Our Chancel and Bell Choirs will be featuring a combination of familiar and new works including an arrangement of "Shall We Gather at the River" by Aaron Copland and an up-beat arrangement of a Kenyan folk song, "African Psalm."

During worship, we will pray for our sister church in Luyanó, Havana Cuba. Following worship, please join us in Mae Chapin Parlor for a presentation from our recent delegation to Cuba.

Hope to see you then!



Light BRUNCH for Mother's Day May 12th

**Come, enjoy brunch
Centennial Hall**

We will have fruit and fresh baked scones and a special gift for Mom right after the 9 AM service.

Donations appreciated!

Volunteers are needed to help with the brunches. If interested, please contact Carol Ann Green, Gary Peterson or the church office.



Crabcakes, Oysters, Okra

BY MATT MATTHEWS

MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

I cannot contemplate this trinity of delectables without remembering my late mother. She was a good cook, and when she made this meal, she almost always fried it. To eat this spread regularly would require you to place yourself on the heart transplant list at the local hospital.

She pan-fried the crabcakes in butter in the iron skillet. These cakes were mainly blue crab palmed into patties with flour—not bread. Some recipes called for mustard, mayonnaise, or Old Bay Seasoning. That's the sort of crime they'd commit in Maryland, not Virginia. She used a little chopped onion, eggs, and as many pounds of crab as she had. Fresh lemon was at the table, but no garnish, no fuss, and, of course, lots of butter.

She chopped the okra and put it in a paper bag with flour, salt, and pepper, gave it a vigorous shake, then dumped it into hissing oil. She'd drain the okra on paper towels and slap any hand trying to steal the batch piece-by-piece. She could not condone spoiling your dinner with too many handfuls of what many call southern popcorn. She prepared the precious oysters the same way, except more gently. And though she protected them more vigorously, she could not keep the tasters from liberating one or two as she watched over batch after small batch in the Fry Daddy. We came at her from all angles.

Mom wasn't a fancy cook. She was interested in neither French sauces

nor anything raw. She served no coq au vin with clafoutis for dessert and definitely no seaweed-wrapped sushi. We all wear cultural blinders and her travels were limited by a tight family budget and the practical need to nourish hungry people inexpensively. These were the days before ubiquitous cooking shows on television, much less whole channels of them. She was a pro at tasty, no-frill cooking.

AnnieLaura Jagers, a dear old friend who had traveled the world and was known, sometimes, to be a culture snob, was impressed by how Mom could whisk a big meal to the table all at once for my dad's perfectly-timed prayer. The hot stuff was hot, the cold stuff was cold, and the ice hadn't yet melted in the rose point water glasses—not even in July. It was a feat of temperature and timing, and AnnieLaura was impressed if not a little astonished.

Laid upon Mom's dining tables were what Dad often called a superfluity. There's always room for one more, was my parents' mealtime philosophy, and there was plenty of good eats to go around. Every meal was another of my mom's routine grandes merveilles. It was not until I started cooking myself that I realized Mom's gift.

Mom didn't understand the idea of "portions." Filling one's plate was a "serving." Going back for thirds was the ultimate compliment. While there was enough okra to feed the proverbial army, she doled out the oysters like pirate treasure. Sometimes the okra was so abundant in the grocery, you could buy enough to fill a swimming pool.

Not so the oysters. Mom got those from Helene Phelps, our next-door neighbor who doubled as Mom's hairdresser. These transactions happened by the glass quart jar by way of a Styrofoam cooler and a waterman who had a boat somewhere near Deltaville on the Piankatank. Dad and I always loved it when Mom announced she was going to get a haircut. Perhaps to her chagrin, we were more interested in the possibility of blue point oysters on the menu than the perm on Mom's beloved head.

On our recent trip to the South Carolina coast, our family of kids, dear cousins, and significant others piled into the bistro at the Brookgreen Gardens for lunch. I wasn't expecting much. The place was air conditioned and the waiter kept the waters glasses full. That was success enough on an exceptionally hot afternoon. Rachel and I agreed to get a salad and split an order of fried oysters and okra. Again, we weren't expecting much. Restaurant-okra is often battered so thickly, one can't even find the actual okra, much less taste it. Oysters often are ruined by over-battering in cornmeal.

Not these.

Rachel and I agreed that, somehow, Mom was back in that kitchen. We nearly broke down into tears.

A good day is made better with friends gathered around a table of food. All the better when the food tastes good. We returned to this garden lunch spot later in the week and ordered the same thing. It was still good, and we almost wept again. Good food does that, particularly when it reminds you of

the long-lost chef or table companion. Of the thousand photographs we snapped on this fortunate vacation, a picture of this meal made it to a prominent place in our vacation photo album.

The sharing of food is the holiest of communions. Jesus is with us when we share a meal. And sometimes he brings along the people we miss the most to share it. Blest be the tie that binds.

And, please, pass the okra.

Face to Face with the Jason Ebaugh



Jason is active in our men’s Bible study and volunteers at our Sunday hospitality table.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

I had been to First Pres periodically over the years for funerals and other events and I had friends who were connected here. When I moved downtown coming to worship here was an easy choice.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

Worship of course but second would be the fellowship. I love meeting people and hearing their stories.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

My parents and brother live in Minnesota. I left Minnesota to attend the University of Illinois. After finishing my PhD in neuroscience, I taught at the university and at Parkland College.

What do you do in your free time?

Recently I have become interested in making art. It can be sculpture, collage and whatever comes to me. Currently it is photography.

Who are your favorite Bible characters?

Since you say I can’t say God or Jesus, I will say the prophet, Jeremiah. He was a complicated man with a tumultuous ministry. He warned us about idolatry, social injustice, and moral decay. Do you agree that we need to listen to his words today?

How can the church best be the church?

Preach peace and love and be a church that focuses on human concerns such as poverty and justice. Be a church that follows God and not the ways of the world.



Church Office Hours

Office hours have been adjusted.

The church office is now open:

Mon-Thurs 8:30 AM - 2 PM
 Friday 8:30 AM - noon

All Are Invited

Spring Gathering

Thursday, May 30 Noon

Westminster Hall

Lunch to follow

Continuing Sacred Encounters
 Pat Phillips

Hosted by Presbyterian Women
 RSVP Church Office
 217.356.7238

Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba and First Presbyterian Church of Champaign

... though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other. “

Romans 12:5

“A partnership embodying our unity in Christ, to faithfully witness to Jesus Christ in our families, communities, countries, and the world, to sensitize both churches’ families to critical situations in our societies....”

This statement is part of our covenant relationship with our sister church in the Luyanó neighborhood of the city of Havana, Cuba.

On May 5 come celebrate with us in worship as partners before we gather in Mae Chapin Parlor to hear the report from our recent delegation to Cuba.

Ngoma African Arts Festival

Celebrate our African friends as they honor our community with a festival of music, photography, public dance, food and fashion on Sunday, June 23. Venues will include the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Community Center for the Arts (C4A) and Lincoln Square. Our friend **Jean René Balekita** is coordinating this community wide event. Donations are accepted now at First Presbyterian Church (memo “Ngoma”) and at Community Center for the Arts, 202 West Main Street, Urbana IL 61801.

Bells in Motion of Central Illinois Present

MAY THE FOURTH BE WITH YOU

Saturday, May 4, 2024 at 7PM
 First Presbyterian Church
 204 W Prairie Ave
 Decatur, IL 62523

AND

REVENGE OF THE FIFTH

Sunday, May 5, 2024 at 4PM
 Faith Lutheran Church
 1385 W Walnut Street
 Jacksonville, IL 62650

Suggested donation \$15 for attendees over 13
www.BellsInMotion.org



We celebrated the Installation of Associate Pastor for Discipleship Joe Lundy on Sunday, April 14.



O God, forgive our wanton waste of the wealth of the soil and sea and air; our desecration of natural beauty; our heedlessness of those who shall come after us, if only we be served; our undue love of money; our contempt for small things and our worship of what is big; our neglect of struggling peoples, for such wrongs to our natural and human heritage, and for many things left undone, forgive us, O God.

Forgive Us adapted from Willard L. Sperry

Upcoming Sunday Adult Education Classes

April 28 - We will have a discussion about the Sangla Hill Girls' School in Pakistan and our congregation's involvement.

May 5 - A report from our Cuba delegation.

May 19 - Pentecost Sunday - There will be a joint class of the Easy English Fellowship with Adult Spiritual Formation.

May 26 - **Cathy Emanuel** will talk about her faith journey and involvement in public issues regarding nursing home care.

Jays & Concerns

We celebrate...

- the baptism of **Violet Ann Cole**, daughter of **William and Kathryn Cole**, on Sunday, April 21.

We extend sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Lowella Biddle** who died Friday, April 19.
- the family and friends of former member **Sandra Jean Moore**, daughter of the late Tom and Shirley Morgan, who died April 2.



It's time to celebrate graduates! We will recognize ALL grads on Sunday, June 9 during worship and the brunch following the service. Contact Pat Tarr at pat.tarr@icloud.com 217-427-5203 with your information including degree and what you have planned for the future. If you have a graduate in your family, whether a church member or not, we would love to recognize them. Please submit their name, relation to you, information on future plans, and a picture.

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 Heart of Mission



Habitat
for Humanity®
of Champaign County

Anyone Can Volunteer...
No muscle needed; just food!

It is that time of year for HABITAT FOR HUMANITY FAITH BUILDS!! We need volunteers from First Presbyterian!

I heard that! You said you are not able to help? Yes, you can! First Presbyterians are going to FEED LUNCH to Habitat for Humanity Build Participants (FOR 20 PEOPLE) on the third Saturdays for May, June and July. Community Mission Deacons will have sign up sheets out on April 28 for you to sign up to provide a main dish (sharing with another person), side or dessert for 20 people on one of those Saturdays or you can call the church office and tell whoever answers the date and what you would like to cook and or donate. Thank you!

May 18 (FILLED)

1. A MAIN DISH (COOKED BY TWO PEOPLE) - Sloppy Joes (FILLED) and Veggie Joes (FILLED)
2. A SIDE such as fruit or chips (FILLED)
3. A DESSERT such as brownies. (FILLED)

June 15

Sign up needed for

1. A MAIN DISH (COOKED BY TWO PEOPLE) such as Chicken and Rice casserole _____ and Macaroni and Cheese, _____
2. A SIDE such as Fruit salad, _____
3. A DESSERT such as cupcakes, _____

July 20 (FILLED)

1. A MAIN DISH such as Sub sandwiches (turkey and veggie) (FILLED)
2. A SIDE such as chips or whole fruit (FILLED)
3. A DESSERT such as pound cake. (FILLED)

We will be using paper products so they can be composted. If you can donate these, that would be great too!

Drop donations at church Deacon's Kitchen at 10:30 AM on your assigned Saturday.
Jane Alsberg will be at the North church door closest to parking lot to receive your food items.

Many articles in the monthly newsletters contain online links.
If you are unable to access or need the link sent to you,
please contact the church office at info@firstpres.church

Cuba Partners...Luyanó-Austin-Champaign

Before our first congregational visit to Cuba fourteen years ago, the Covenant Presbyterian Church of Austin, Texas had established a partnership with the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba at Luyanó.

The Covenant Church in many ways paved the way for us and has continued to generously advise and encourage us in our relationships. This short [video](#) of their 2023 visit reminds us very much of our relationship.

Presbyterian Peacemakers Visit Border



Memorial on the wall at Agua Prieta

Environmental Events Coming Up

BY PAT PHILLIPS
P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Environmental Stewardship events in the near future:

Monday, April 29,
6 to 8 PM at

McKinley Presbyterian Church, sponsored by their Green Team, Sierra Club, and others, the film "Food, Inc." will be shown and discussed. Local popcorn will be served. Free.



May 9 will be Climate Action Lobby Day in Springfield; a bus will leave from the Mennonite Church in Urbana

at 8, returning about 3:30. There will be a rally and a chance to speak with legislators about issues such as more EV charging stations and enabling the co-ops of rural communities to reduce reliance on coal and gas and increase access to renewable energy sources. Registration is at www.faithinplace.org, Events.

May 15 will be an online way to contact legislators to ban Styrofoam and single use plastic. Let's Kick Single-Use



Plastic and Waste NOW (ilenviro.org) Since DART closed, we can no longer recycle Styrofoam and encourage you, when you eat out, to take a container to use for taking leftovers home.

If you missed the Adopt-a-Highway event April 20, you can plan ahead, for June 22, September 21 and November 2.

Pentecost Offering to Help Young DREAMERS Dream BIG

Pentecost is Sunday, May 19. The Pentecost Offering this year will be presented to [DREAM!](#)

We Are a Matthew 25 Congregation

Learn more about what it means to be Matthew 25. Valuable resources are available [here](#).



The Matthew 25 logo

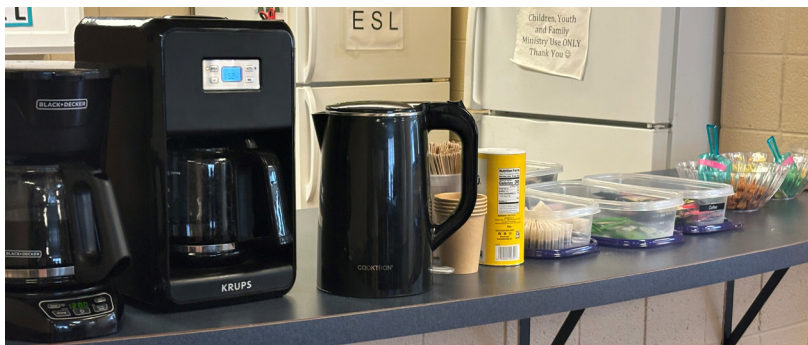
English Language Learners Update

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR
 BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The semester is winding down here on the second floor of the Education Building. Most of our students will be returning for summer school June 10-July 24. A few will travel back home to visit family and friends, returning in August to resume classes.

Below are a few pictures from Cafe Time. I believe that it is one of the best parts of our program. It allows time for people to make new friends, for teachers to correct English mistakes in real time, and for many to gain confidence in their English speaking abilities. We know that good things happen when people gather around a table with food and drink!

I am so grateful for the church's support of this ministry. It allows us to offer coffee and tea and snacks each day. I am especially grateful for the teachers who volunteer their time to offer welcome and practical language learning help to newcomers in our community. In our polarized world, Cafe Time and the ELL program at First Presbyterian Church are a little taste of heaven!



Easy English Fellowship and Adult Spiritual Formation will be one on Pentecost and Intercultural Sunday, May 19. Join us in Mae Chapin Parlor at 10:15 AM.

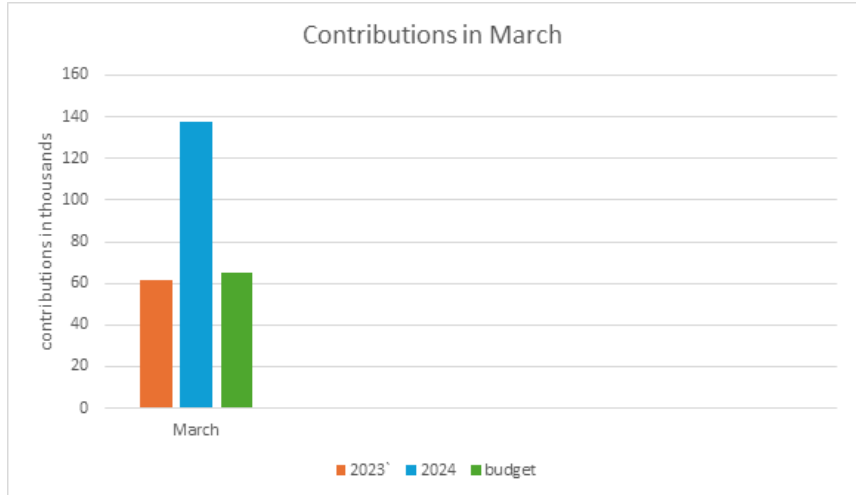
Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

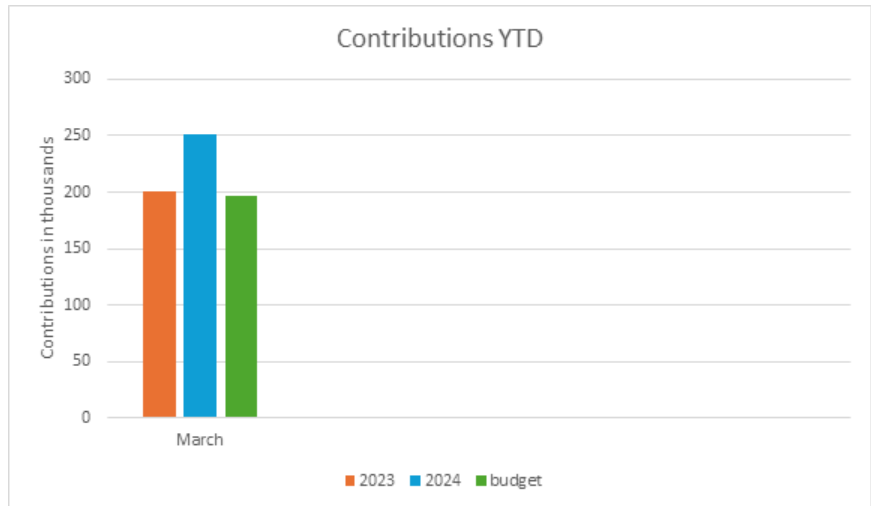
Contributions

Total March contributions: \$127.2K from plate and pledge plus \$10.3K from prepaid= \$137.5K This is \$76.3K more than last year and \$72.1 over budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$ 251.1 K which is \$50.2K more than last year and \$54.9 K over budget. At 25% of the year, we have 43.8% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.



Expenses

March expenses were \$75.2 K, which is \$22.8k less than last year and \$9.8K over budget. Expenses YTD are \$249.5K which is \$.8 K more that last year and \$9.5 K over budget. At 25% of the year, we have spent 26% of the budget.



Balance YTD

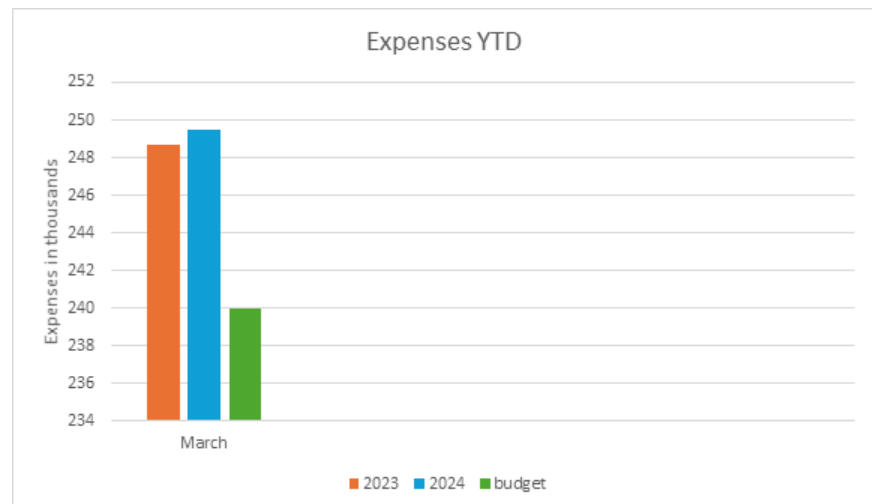
Revenue, including prepaid, exceeded expenses by \$121.3K, which is \$77.6K more than last year at the same time.

Session Designated Funds

\$1,675,892 which is \$34,117 more than last month.

Summary of Restricted Accounts

Among other donations, \$4000 was given to local missions, \$2050 to Cuba Partners and \$3067 to OGHS.





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 AM Sunday School for Youth & Adults

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
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
Joe Grant..... Director of Music
Rachel Matthews..... Covenant Pastor for Mission
Ann Petry..... Accounting
Sora Shepard..... Organist/Pianist
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director
Bonnie Ward..... English Language Learner Director

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