

November 2021



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

If You Build It, They Will Come

BY LINDA PETERSON, NURTURE COMMITTEE
LINDAKPETE@GMAIL.COM

A very true statement, I saw it in the movies! Gary and I got to walk through the cornfield while we visited the movie site. If only it were that easy.

Our church, of a few members, in 1867 built a 400-seat sanctuary. Did they believe if you build it, they will come?

Today we are one quarter full. Yes, we are still in a pandemic, but measures have been taken to keep the congregation safe. Vaccination, masks and keeping our hands clean has worked well. Think about it; because of precautions there was no flu season last winter.

I know it is so much easier to stay in your pajamas with a cup of coffee and watch the service on a small screen. Where is your community? How can we relate to one another?

How are we sharing our love? Are we serving others, are we attending church functions?

There are opportunities for growth, to serve, for socializing, to have fun. On October 24th, we had hoped to have the chance to greet your friends, chat, laugh and eat. Yes, eat! Sadly Mother Nature had different plans... we had to hand out bags of goodies as people left church.

Lots of planning is in the works for future events. We are building, will you come? Will you invite others? Will you spread the words of love through action? Let's build together.

We hope to see you often.

Faith in the Real World" this Sunday finds Pastor Matt having a conversation with our very own Harvey Hodges about his WWII experience.

Please bring your questions for Harvey (and your own family stories) during the Sunday School hour for discussion. Harvey brought music--of all things--to the front lines of the European Theater. He crossed the English Channel with an M-1 and the Rhine with a trombone.

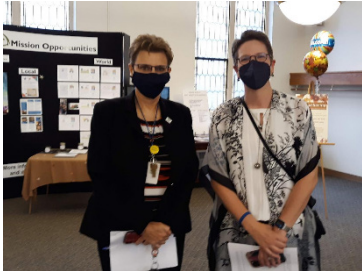
This conversation will be one way we can think about and thank all of our Veterans. Remember, Veterans Day is Thursday, November 11th.

**All Saints...We will be remembering our church family
who passed away the last couple of years
the first Sunday in November.**

Did You Miss It?

BY PAT PHILLIPS

P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET



Did you miss it? Presbyterian Women held a creative pandemic-style Fall Gathering on October 7, featuring **Julie Pryde**, head administrator for the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, a woman who has been much in the news of late. Her topic, “What Is a Covid-Resilient Community?” was especially inspiring as she told us that we are!

She has connections from coast to coast and rates us at the top. In fact, she was asked to participate in a White House panel to talk about partnerships. We couldn't do a fraction of what we're doing in this community without the amazing support from doctors and nurses on the front lines, the innovative saliva test, churches and volunteer groups, she said.



Her talk at First Pres can be accessed on YouTube https://youtu.be/zs_5eQACkCE or at <https://firstpres.net>

[church/women/](#) Of course, you'll miss the sacks of treats that the 40 or so who were present enjoyed—a sort of pandemic-style “tea”.

Please save the date of December 2 at noon, for a special Christmas Tea, an interactive meeting featuring stories--told, acted or sung by women's circle members themselves about love, joy, faith, and peace. There will be cookies, such a seasonal tradition; some may find their way into sacks to enjoy at home and others will fill decorated 8 oz. Cool Whip containers (donations of these are welcome) to be given to church members who are confined to home.

Advent Is Coming Up!

Advent starts November 28. We are planning a month of thoughtful preparation during our worship services around the theme of Close to Home, including Advent candle lighting, special music (including the return of Music Sunday and youth cookie sale on December 12), and more.

When something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. During the Advent and Christmas season, we journey through scriptures and rituals that are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts.

We will be worshipping around the theme of “Close to Home,” acknowledging the “already but not yet” tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God's promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. It names our deep longing for God to come close to us. This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May

we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home—wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.

Mark your calendars now for the week before Christmas. December 21 is the Winter Solstice and we will be holding a Longest Night special service just after sunset, to hold space for grief of all we have lost and hold our brothers and sisters in prayer. This lovely service will be filled with music, poetry, prayer and light as we move towards longer days and the nativity of our Lord. Plan to join our brothers and sisters for whom this season can be hard, in this uplifting worship service. Christmas Eve services will be at 4 PM (Family Friendly) and 8 PM Traditional candlelight service.

Worship Committee Needs You!

If you have an interest in making worship time meaningful, the Worship Committee could use your help. The worship committee helps with many details including, scheduling liturgists and French scripture readers, ushers, tech help for slides, camera work and sound during worship, liturgy planning, decorating the sanctuary with banners/paraments, communion preparation and servers. As my mother used to say, many hands make light work. Please share your gifts and bring worship to life. Contact **Carol Miles** to get connected.

Darkness

BY KEN TRAVERS
KTRAVERS@UIUC.EDU

'The woods are lovely, dark and deep'
*Stopping by woods
on a snowy evening* (Robert Frost)

Philosophers and the like ponder the lasting impact of events that at the time may seem insignificant. Some turn out to be game changers. Theologian Karl Barth's granddaughter reportedly asked: 'Grandpa, why are there trees instead of no trees?' *Good one, Gramps*. Out of the mouths of babes.

Present at the creation

Why indeed is there something instead of nothing? Genesis reports that in the beginning, 'God created the heavens and the earth' (1:1) Out of nothing, something. The text then continues, 'Darkness was upon the face of the deep'. (1:2) Some commentators (see for example, The New Jerusalem Bible) note that the text does **not say that God created the darkness**.

Here we are, on a pleasant day. Mind-ing our own business. Or trying to. Then darkness. The verse seems to simply throw in this major pronouncement, for no extra charge, as it were. God did not create darkness. It was there. Part of the deal. Present at the creation.

Why, God, why?

Down through the ages we have struggled with a great mystery of life. Darkness. Often unannounced. In the 1800's, Horatio Spafford, a prominent Chicago Presbyterian elder, suffered a devastating loss when his four daughters were drowned at sea. Spafford penned these words:

*..Lord, hasten the day
when my faith shall be sight
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll..
(It is well with my soul, Spafford)*

Some ancients represented death as a ghostly figure perilously brandishing a massive scythe. We are often caught off guard. When the scythe encounters a grandparent, or parent, as grievous as that is, there does seem to be something rational about end of life. The scythe then strikes a spouse. A teenager is killed in a highway accident. A young child is diagnosed with a terminal disease. A beloved partner. An unspeakably precious child. An irreplaceable childhood friend. We are stopped breathless in our tracks. 'Where are you God when we most need you?' Darkness. 'Why God, why?'

A eulogy for Alex

William Sloane Coffin was senior minister at Riverside Church in New York City. His twenty four year old son, Alex, was killed when in a storm when he drove his car off a bridge. Dr. Coffin then preached, 'A Eulogy for Alex'. (The sermon is available in such sources as www.beliefnet.com).

In summary, Coffin's message was, 'Please do not try to console us in our grief by saying that Alex's death was God's will'.

He continued, When a person dies, there are many things that can be said, and there is at least one thing that should never be said. ... "I just don't understand the will of God." For some reason, nothing so infuriates me as the incapacity of seemingly intelligent people to get it through their heads that God doesn't go around this world with his fingers on triggers, his fists around knives, his hands on steering wheels. God is dead set against all unnatural deaths.

Maybe the best form of condolence is to simply be there. As St. Francis of Assisi has advised, "Preach the gospel at all times. And if necessary use words". Darkness on the face of the deep..

A contemporary doxology

It was Sunday morning at Westminster Presbyterian Church in downtown Minneapolis. A Rabbi from a local synagogue spoke about the Holy Spirit. He mentioned key passages from what we call the Old Testament such as: 'The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'... (Gen 2:7); or, 'When the people saw Moses' shining visage he (Moses) covered his face with a veil' (Exodus 34:33). The Rabbi concluded unceremoniously with a recording of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah.

There's a blaze of light in every word
It doesn't matter which you heard
The holy or the broken Hallelujah
(Cohen)

The church hall remained in holy silence.

The Grim Reaper

Jeff Buckley's rendition of Cohen's Hallelujah resonates with the advent of the Grim Reaper. The youthful singer was drowned in a swimming accident. My imagination might be working overtime, but I find his presentation riddled with terrifying premonition. Maybe irrationally, as I hear Jeff sing, he seems to be in dreadful anticipation of his own death. The Grim Reaper, scythe poised, approaches unrelentingly on the Mississippi. Darkness upon the face of the deep.

There was light

The Genesis text goes on:
Then God said,
Let there be light,
And there was light. (Gen 1:3)

Life is riddled with mystery. Would we really want it any other way?

I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep. (Frost)

Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth, Family

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR
MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH



Trunk or Treat Was HUGE Success

Thank you to all of you who contributed to the Trunk or Treat event this year. Our first date of choice was rained out, but thankfully we were able to reschedule it for October 31.

We had a record turnout and had over 100 kids in the first 15 minutes! We had so many children visit that despite the very generous mountain of candy donated, we ran out of candy before the hour was up as well as the pencils and other non-candy items.



Thank you to the following people for donating candy: **Clemmie Ackermann, Kathy Schoeffmann, Holly Nordheden, Betty Hollister, Ginny Waaler, B. Smith, Diane Mortensen, Ann Webbink, Rachel Matthews, Patty Farthing, Cathy Schowengardt, Amy Born, Joyce Wittler, Bob and Claudia Kirby, and Vern and Jeannie Snoeyink.** Thank you to the following who decorated cars and greeted children: **Gary and Linda Peterson, Sandy Carr, Judi Geistlinger, Naomi Rempe, Brandi, Jason, and Heather Lowe, Samantha Nichols, Jim Berger.** We also had guests **Jill Quisenberry** and the **U of I pre-dental club** decorate cars and provide treats.

Youth Fellowship Outing

November 7th will be a fellowship outing to Hardy's Reindeer Ranch in Rantoul to enjoy the corn maze and possibly a reindeer tour. We will gather at the church parking lot at 1:30 PM and car pool/caravan up to the Ranch. This year's maze image is inspired by the Day of the Dead Mexican celebration. Contact **Mindy** at Mindy@firstpres.church for more information.

Youth Serve Community

December 5th will be a chance to serve the community together by volunteering at Salt and Light as a church group. All ages are welcome. We will be serving at the Philo Road location from 2-4 PM. We will learn more about what Salt and Light offers those in need in our community and we will be sorting and processing donations. Contact **Mindy** at Mindy@firstpres.church for more information and to sign up.

Youth Triennium is coming!

Once every three years the Presbyterian Church USA sponsors a nationwide gathering of high school youth to worship and learn together. Our presbytery sends a delegation of youth each time to participate in this one of a kind event. The next one takes place July 24-27 of 2022 in Indianapolis, Indiana. I would love to see all of our eligible youth take part in this inspiring event. Our estimate for the amount of youth interested in coming is due by December 6th, so let **Ms. Mindy** know if you would like to attend Triennium. Registration opens in February for a firm commitment.

We will begin fundraising for this in December. Here is a link to highlights from the last triennium from 2019.

[Youth Triennium 2019 video](#) Here is the website for the coming triennium 2022. [Youth Triennium 2022](#)

Youth Christmas cookie sale

It will be December 12 at 10 AM in Westminster Hall. This year we will provide pre-assembled varieties in half pound, one pound, and two pound amounts. Get your name on the list early if you know you want a certain size. The price will be \$10/pound. Contact **Mindy** at Mindy@firstpres.church.

Sunday School Update

BY SAMANTHA NICHOLS, SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR
SAMANTHA@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Between rain and the arrival of cooler temperatures, our Sunday School program has moved indoors. In an effort to keep all participants safe, masks are required, snacks are distributed as students are leaving to be eaten outside or at home, and we practice

social distancing. Depending on what activities each class will be doing, classes meet in the cafe, room 201, or the gym. These rooms are larger and have windows we can open. The cafe and room 201 also have air purifiers.

This month, our elementary school students will explore the story of Esther while the middle and high school students reflect on their relationships with God and peers.

We are always looking for adult volunteers who can serve as teachers and classroom helpers. We especially need a helper to serve in the middle and high school class. Please reach out to **Samantha** or **Mindy** if you are interested in serving! All adult volunteers must be vaccinated.

Thank you for supporting our Sunday School program!

A Letter from Our Middle and High School Sunday School Students

After a few weeks of exploring Paul's theology and biblical epistles, students in our middle and high school Sunday School class worked together to write a letter of their own. Just like one of Paul's letters, this epistle includes ideas about God and faith, encouragement, prayer, and guidance for the church. Please read and take seriously the ideas shared in this letter. Thanks be to God for the young leaders who wrote this letter!

To Pastor Matt and the friends and families that we love at First Presbyterian Church of Champaign.

And to all Sunday School students. Welcome to our church. We are happy to have you. You guys are amazing.

We the middle and high school students and teachers thank you all for your hard work and your encouragement through sharing the Word of God.

And thank you, God, for all you do for us each and every day. Thank you for accepting our doubts and forgiving our sins no matter what. Please be with us as we continue trying to make a positive difference in our world. Amen.

Our Sunday School class compiled this list of beliefs we'd like to share:

- We believe that God will forget our sins and we can always trust God.
- Even if we do harm, we can apologize to God and He will forgive us.
- We believe that God gives second chances.
- We should be thankful for everything we have.
- We believe we should interpret the Bible and not take it literally.

And now, we put together a few ideas that we feel could help First Pres:

Though the church has been very strong at community involvement and stewardship, we have a few suggestions about how to better be God's representatives in our area.

Something our church, and many churches, often struggle with is a lack of children and families at both church and Sunday School. We must make sure to do more outreach to young families and college students, perhaps through social media posts that can attract young people or through a partnership with campus Presbyterian organizations.

Our church's environmental team is wonderful and we are one of the most "green" churches in our area. One idea we have with regards to this team is to include high schoolers and other students on these committees because our generation is passionate about climate change and global warming. A meeting time that does not conflict with school times would be a great first step.

As it is written in *Jeremiah 2:7*: "The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it." God gave us the earth to protect and cherish, so let's build on our church's progress.

Outreach is as important during our ongoing pandemic as it has ever been. People might be struggling because they have lost a loved one. Maybe they just got laid off. Maybe they can't pay the rent. People may need to hear comforting words of God's message. We know that God is at work amid our struggles. God makes grieving easier. God helps us expand our faith in times of struggle. We should welcome all beliefs and ideologies into the church, knowing that everyone needs God's message.

As is written in *Philippians 4:13*: "I can do everything from him who gives me strength." God's strengthening love sustains us and makes all things possible. It's important for our church to strive to spread this strengthening love whenever we can.

There are so many teams and organizations that we must thank for their work that makes the church what it is today. The pastors and prayer team are always there for both the adults and kids of our church. The staff, the tech crew, and the custodial teams help the church operate and allow people from all over the world to worship with us.

We also want to thank the Sunday School teachers and leaders who work hard each and every week to help guide us as we explore and shape our faith. Finally, of course we wish to obviously thank Jip for growing in his faith with us each week.

Thanks be to God for this opportunity to share our thoughts with the

church. Please help our congregation take and implement our ideas, and all ideas, that can help us better serve our community and our God. May our congregation find a way to realize these ideas and may all of us better understand God's charge to us through these ideas. God, please bless this congregation. Be with us throughout the week and help us keep your message in mind every step of the way. Amen.

Small Groups Make a Difference

In August/September we rolled out all of the Small Groups identified in our church for you to see and join. We identified about 35 groups WOW!

With the August/September effort, several people stepped forward to join a group. Each person added a special talent and helped groups grow stronger. These groups are always welcoming new members so take the opportunity to explore your special desires or expand into new territories and come enjoy and learn. **Join a group!**

The "Small Groups Leaders Support Group" is here to provide encouragement; help with group "hiccups"; how-to's and glitches. Use us – email Sallie.hutton@gmail.com or call 217-356-5765.

For your information, Small Group Brochures are in the kiosk in Westminster Hall.

**No one can
whistle a symphony;
it takes an orchestra.**

Finance

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE
MSCHOEFFMANN@MCHSI.COM

Contributions

Contributions in October to the Operating Fund were \$21.4K less than in 2020 but \$20.4K more than the budget at \$91.5K. The Year to Date total is above last year by \$4.1K but below the budgeted amount by \$3.8K. These figures include prepaid pledges (those paid in the year prior to the budget year) that are prorated over the year with 1/12 added to each month's contributions. Including all revenue sources, at 83% through the year we have received 88% of the expected year's revenue.

Expenses

Year to Date expenses are \$27.5K above the budget at \$899.5K and more than in 2020 by \$71.4K. At 83% through the year we have experienced 86% of the expected year's expenses.

Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$60.0K which is \$82.5K less than at the end of October in 2020.

Restricted Funds

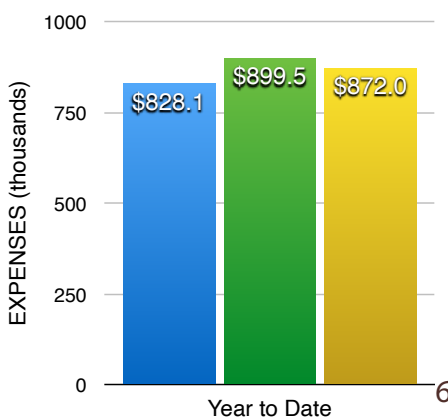
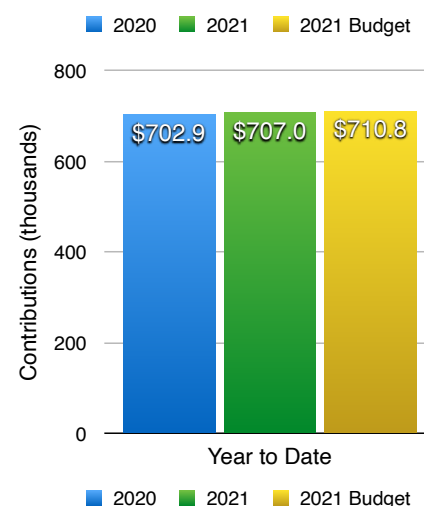
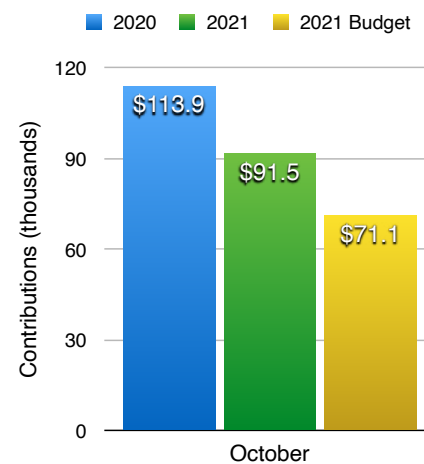
In addition to contributions to the operating fund there was \$4,752 donated last month to special offerings and funds restricted to specific purposes such as missions supported by our church.

Stewardship

We have received 108 pledge commitments for the 2022 budget in the amount of \$557,610. This compares with \$780,118 in commitments for the current year. The draft 2022 budget is based on our commitments for 2022 equaling those for 2021.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted their commitment for 2022.

If you have not yet submitted your pledge commitment please prayerfully consider your ability to support the continuation of our programs and ministry. You may respond by completing and mailing a pledge card or online at <https://www.firstpres.church/pledgecard>.





"If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek His grace."
—Max Lucado

Psalm 100 Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness, come before Him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with Thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and His faithfulness continues to each generation.

Men's Prayer Group

The men of the church gather for prayer Fridays at 8:30 AM on Zoom.

Easy English Fellowship

A Christian fellowship for English learners meets Sundays on Zoom. We worship God in prayer, song and study of the Bible. The gospel of Mark is our current focus. This fellowship welcomes English learners from all faiths and denominations.

Ring, Ring, Ring

The **Bell Choir** is looking for new members! If you enjoy hearing them, imagine the fun of playing in the group. No prior experience is required. If interested, please contact **Libby Sternhagen** at ecsternhagen@gmail.com.

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.

Joys & Concerns

Congratulations to...

- **Anand Swaminathan and Jennifer Nelson** on the birth of **James Manickam Nelson** on October 11, 2021.

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Jean Hinton** who died November 3, 2021. A Memorial Service is planned at the church for Saturday, November 13, at 11 AM.

A Memorial Service for **Adella Hodges** will be held at the church on Tuesday, November 16, at 10:30 AM. Earlier plans for a service were put on hold due to COVID.

Mission Updates

The Heart of Missions Newsletter has been revived. Our local and global mission agencies have made changes due to COVID restrictions, as well as food and medical supply shortages. The newsletter helps summarize some of what has been in the mission news for our mission workers and agencies during the past week in case you missed it. You can access The Heart of Missions on the church website under the SERVE tab at firstpres.church/heartofmissions

Ministry With Vulnerable Children

BY SALLIE HUTTON
SALLIE.HUTTON@GMAIL.COM

This is the Raindrop Project which we help sponsor several years ago *Ministry with Vulnerable Children*. The following comes from **Jeff and Kristi Boyd**.

Last year, I reported on the envisioning and development of a new de-centered approach for the Presbyterian ministry for vulnerable children in East Kasai. These plans are now being rolled out.

Through host families, Presbyterian congregations have started to welcome and care for at-risk children while their biological family is traced back and a reunion mediated. The church seeks to sponsor these children's education throughout elementary and secondary school.

Congregations are further becoming child advocates to prevent and denounce neglect or abuse in the local community. The shift renders the

ministry more sustainable and child friendly. It prevents child abandonment and helps more children find a home.

The reorganization is not possible without training the congregations. Thanks to gifts from PC(USA) churches and individuals like yours, we have already accomplished trainings for 99 congregations in the first two Synods. Next month there will be the training for 51 congregations in the third synod, and any new gifts will go towards the training for another 42 congregations in the fourth and final Synod of East Kasai.

At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, this month, over 175 children will receive a school kit for them to be at an equal footing with their peers. The accompanied children are all officially recognized and documented by the State Social Services as vulnerable children.

Convinced by the work in East Kasai, the national Presbyterian leaders are now seeking a similar shift for West Kasai, where the Church's headquarters are located.

Because we are not allowed to travel, our accompaniment of this shift has happened through WhatsApp, e-mail, telephone and zoom to prepare this overhaul.

News from the Green Team

BY PAT PHILLIPS
P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET

The weekly Styrofoam collecting is a great success, but after the holidays, there may be an abundance of packing materials as well as take-out, so



a special collection in Doxology Lane is set for January 8, 2022 from 9 to 11. Remember that 6 with the chasing arrow.

Six intrepid Green-teamers turned out Saturday, October 30, for the Adopt-a-highway litter pickups. The chilly drizzle in which they arrived amazingly cleared before they set out, and West Side Park, and State and Randolph Streets look much better now.

And members of the Environmental Committee visited the Copper Creek campus on October 18, to see and hear about the native plantings and the oak grove they've established on their 10 acres. Much planning for sustainability and beauty has resulted in a beautiful area!



Members of the Green Team appreciated a presentation by **Stephanie Jones** who is an attorney in Washington D.C. for Climate Risk and Financial Regulations for the Environmental Defense Fund, as well as being **Katharine Jones'** granddaughter. The EDF has 2 national, 6 regional, 4 international offices and 2.5 million members in 28 countries.

It was founded in 1967 by "a scrappy group of scientists and a lawyer" fighting to save osprey in Long Island Sound from DDT. EDF is a website so worth checking out: <https://www.edf.org>



Another great website is Faith In Place <https://www.faithin-place.org> with so many tips, events, and freebies, such as the Waste Toolkit which is a guide for assessing your waste production and ideas for dealing with it. A timely zoom event is coming up: Sustainable Celebrations November 17, 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM Add a little “Eco” to your holidays this season by reducing waste and energy. Learn how with **Cindy Shepherd** and **Christina Krost**. It will be fun and helpful!

The Republic of Cuba

Cuban Wars for Independence
From Spain

The Ten Years’ War 1868-1878

BY BOB KIRBY, CUBA PARTNERS

RWK3213@GMAIL.COM

Cuba Libre (Free Cuba), the struggle for independence from Spain, was fed by the islands’ economic elites hungry for control of their political and economic future. War opened a path for the United States to gain increasing economic, political and cultural influence.

Creole, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes proclaimed independence in 1868 listing grievances of taxation without representation, corruption, lack of religious freedom, suppression of the press and denial of rights of petition and assembly. The movement developed in eastern Cuba (Oriente) where farms were smaller and wealth less. The rebel leadership was divided on the issue of slavery, slowing the direct intervention of the US. However Cuban exiles in the US supported the rebel government with weapons, supplies and money. Spain controlled the

seas and maintained a large ground presence forcing the rebels into protracted guerilla warfare that ended in 1878. An ineffective “little war” initiated by rebels who had fled to the US lasted just two years ending in 1880. Spain prevailed.

The “Ten Years’ War” was followed by the collapse of the sugar industry. The Spanish government seized the property of separatists. Wealth was increasingly in the hands of fewer Cubans and more and more US investors who built miles of private railroads with cheap US steel. Investors bought up bottom priced sugar and tobacco plantations and the era of the Cuban landed aristocracy declined. Nationalism rose including the appearance of the first Cuban flag and the text that would become the Cuban national anthem. By 1894 eighty-seven percent of Cuba’s exports and 40 percent of imports were with the US.

Next month: *The Second War*

Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team

“The Presbyterian Church commitment to justice is core to its identity and understanding as followers of Jesus Christ. Beginning with the ancient texts of the faith, God’s people have given both voice and witness to the prophet Micah’s calling to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.” (PC-USA).

We meet on Zoom the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM and the third Wednesday at 10:30 AM. Guests are welcome to attend either or both sessions. Join us this month as we begin to work through “Jesus and the Disinherited” by Howard Thurman, a

“brilliant and compassionate look at God’s work in our lives as we struggle with issues of poverty, racism and spiritual disengagement.”

Valerie Smith, New ESL Program Director

First Church is pleased to welcome **Valerie Smith** as its English as a Second Language Program Director. Val began work for us on November 1, filling the position vacated by **Jeanette Pyne** when she and her family moved to Bloomington, IL.

Val holds a BS degree in elementary education from Wheaton College, an MA degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) from Lincoln Christian College and MA in Learning Disabilities from Bradley University, and has extensive teaching experience in schools located in central Illinois and the Rochester, MN area.

She retired earlier this year from the Champaign Unit 4 school system and lives in Savoy with her husband Tim Smith, a retired pastor. She has a wide diversity of background experiences in addition to teaching, including involvement in short-term missions to the Ivory Coast and involvement in church women’s and children’s programs.

We are indeed fortunate to have her become our ESL Program Director.



**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

F: 217.356.7242

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:

George Almasi Facility Assistant
Brendan Barker..... Organist
Ritchie Drennen Facility Manager, Ext. 237
Patty Farthing..... Receptionist, Ext. 211
Robert Ferrer Audio-visual Technician
Marcia Franks Administrative Assistant, Ext. 210
Judi Geistlinger..... Commissioned Lay Pastor
Joe Grant..... Director of Music
Sam Haupt Director Contemporary Worship Band
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Associate, Ext. 219
Samantha Nichols..... Sunday School Coordinator, Ext. 216
Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216
Ann Petry..... Accounting, Ext. 224
Val Smith ESL Director, Ext. 235
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director
Mindy Watts-Ellis..... Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

All 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 last Monday of the month for the following month's edition. Send submissions to marcia@firstpres.church.