

November 2025



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



Getting a Head Start on our 2025 Advent Study

Our Spiritual Formation Committee has chosen the devotional titled: *A Surprising God – Advent Devotions for an Uncertain Time* by Tom Long and Donyelle McCray. Copies will be available soon in Westminster Hall.

Come join us as we gather in Mae Chapin Parlor after Worship to discuss and follow-up on various topics related to our devotional.

November 16	Introduction and Getting Started
November 23	Looking Forward to the Second Week of Advent
November 30	Anticipating the Third Week of Advent
December 7	Waiting for the Fourth Week of Advent
December 21	Longing for the Coming of Christ

Spiritual Formation Committee:

Dave Bauer, Ken Chapman, Betty Hollister, Joe Lundy, Carol Penka, Pat Phillips, and Peter Yau



Clarinet Recital

Sunday, November 9

3 PM

Sanctuary

**Gary Winder
and clarinet students
from the U of I**

All are welcome!

**Please join us for an
afternoon of music.**

PC(USA) Grant Awarded

First Presbyterian Church received a seed grant from the PC(USA) to establish a new worshipping community. The \$10,000 gift will support a planning process for the future development of Francophone Bethesda Fellowship as a designated New Worshipping Community.

The definition of a New Worshipping Community is:

New

- o Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ
- o Taking on innovative forms of church for our changing culture

Worshipping

- o Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word

Sacrament

- o Sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world

Community

- o Practicing mutual care and accountability
- o Developing self-sustainability in leadership and finances

Your **New Americans Ministry Team** applied for this grant. The team consists of **Gabriel Mboyo** (moderator), **Joe Lundy** (staff), **Nissi Lembelembe**, **Bob Kirby** and **Solange Mboyo**.

Sacred Spaces

Drive around Champaign Urbana and see church buildings with empty parking lots much of the week. We are blessed with full spaces both inside and out.

Alcoholics Anonymous, Bible studies, choir practices (both First Church and Christ Community Korean Church), DREAAM, Francophone Bethesda Fellowship, GROW, English Language Learners, F&T Desserts, small groups and team meetings – all serve others through our space. And these do not include our busy Sunday mornings.

Transportation

Do you have empty seats on your way to Sunday worship? Can you make some extra time? Would you like to drive someone to and/or from worship? Let us know info@firstpres.church.

Are you able to safely walk a block? Leave space for our fellow worshippers with walking insecurity by parking on Church, State, Elm, Hill, Washington Streets or the parking garage on Randolph.

2nd Sunday Brunch November 9th

**Come, enjoy brunch
Centennial Hall
Today we celebrate our
sister church in Cuba!**

**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.**



Church Office Hours

The church office is open:

Mon-Thurs 8:30 AM - 2 PM

Friday 8:30 AM - noon

Contact the church office during these hours at 217.356.7238.

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



Coffee with Beth in November Mondays, 10 - 12 noon

Coffee RX in downtown Champaign

Enjoy coffee and conversation

The Heart of Mission



This year, your Community Mission Deacons (CMDs) chose the children residing at Courage Connection (CC) as the recipients of our Angel Tree gift donations. **Matthew Fletcher** at CC is delighted to partner with us this year at Christmas. He and his staff are working hard to ensure that all of the children living at CC receive gifts this Christmas.

Please look for the Angel Tree in Westminster Hall in a few weeks. Details with directions for how you can make Christmas a bit brighter for the children at Courage Connection will be included in upcoming Sunday bulletins.

In advance, thank you, thank you for your generous support to help brighten a child's Christmas!

Blessings, **Sarah Laufenberg**, Deacon liaison to Courage Connection;
Kathy Schoeffmann, Community Mission Deacon Moderator

Warm Winter Compassion Collection November 2-16

Many of our immigrant neighbors live in poverty and are not eligible for public assistance available to others. They struggle to provide their often young families with basic human needs. ISCU* invites us to help stock their winter clothing closet and food pantry.

Most needed are winter blankets and winter wear: coats, hats, gloves and socks for people of all ages and sizes. Used items are welcome if in good shape and clean. Salt and Light or Goodwill might be smart first shopping spots.

Also, welcome are feminine hygiene pads, baby wipes, toothbrushes and toothpaste, acetaminophen (children and adult). Foods most needed are canned vegetables, fruit, tuna, salmon, chicken and sardines; bagged rice, lentils, flour, cooking oil; tostados, tortillas and seasonings.

Financial donations are happily accepted *.

Bring your gifts to the church office or the mission table on the alley side of Westminster Hall before November 17.

*Immigration Services of Champaign-Urbana is housed with The Refugee Center at the Champaign Public Health Department at 201 Kenyon Rd, Champaign, 61820. This not-for-profit agency provides comprehensive services to recent immigrants in Champaign Urbana. For a more comprehensive list for the pantry see: <https://mailchi.mp/6a8f6338528c/help-families-in-our-community-prepare-for-winter?e=bc563ed5dc> Make checks payable to ISCU. For more information about this collection contact us at info@firstpres.church.



English Language

Learners

BY BONNIE WARD, DIRECTOR
BONNIE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH



The ELL program is going strong this semester. We have 110 students registered and a waiting list of about 25 students. We don't need to do any advertising as word of mouth is much more effective. Our students are our best advertising.

Our students come from 23 countries, including Thailand, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Ukraine. The majority of our students come from Brazil, South Korea and China. It is a diverse group that is full of energy and joy.

This fall we are having a Halloween Party and look forward to the Thanksgiving Potluck on November 19th. I am so grateful for our 21

teachers who show up each week to help everyone improve their English and build connections with others.

For all the teachers and me, our time here each morning is often the

highlight of the week! In the midst of the chaos and darkness around us, the ELL program is a beacon

of light and hope. If you need some hope or joy, please join us some morning for coffee at 9:15. You will be blessed!

Environmental Update

BY PAT PHILLIPS, ENVIRONMENTAL TEAM
P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.COM

A fourth "R"

Environmentalists often emphasize Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. A fourth R might be the verb "Refuse": Refuse to use plastic water bottles, single serve coffee pods, plastic bags, plastic straws and disposable utensils, and, of course, styrofoam.

We hear that much of the stuff we put in recycling ends up in landfills. So let's block it at the source by carrying our own leftover containers, refillable water bottles, cloth bags, even straws of metal, glass or a bunch of paper ones.



Mission Studies and What Happens Next!

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

Did you know that 75 members of the church have been attending one of eight Small Group Studies in connection with our Mission Study? That is impressive. Well over 50% of worshippers, according to the Mission Study organization, New Beginning suggests.

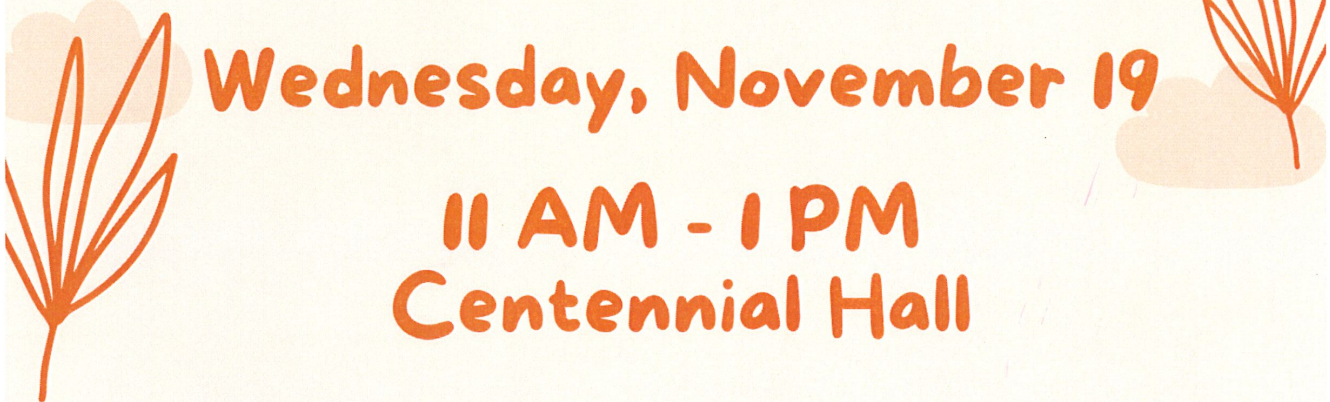
So what happens next? The transition team — **Peter Yau, Mark Schoeffman, Bruce Rainey, Brandi Lowe, Linda Sandquist, Pat Philips, John Muirhead, Beth Hutchens, Claudia Kirby and Betty Hollister** — will begin to sift through the incredible amounts of data we are collecting at each of these meetings and identify common themes. These common themes will help form a future story for First Pres.

Once the transition team creates the future story, it will be shared with the congregation, completing the Mission Study phase of the transitional journey and indicating that we are ready to ask Presbytery for permission to form a Pastor Nominating Committee.

There are some exciting times ahead.

Blessings,
Pastor Beth

Join us for
**THANKSGIVING
DINNER**



Wednesday, November 19

11 AM - 1 PM
Centennial Hall

We invite the congregation to gather with the
ELL classes for a Thanksgiving Luncheon.
Food provided by members of ELL
and the Nurture Committee.



Outreach & Nurture

Community Engagement and Fellowship

All One in Christ

There is no longer Jew or Greek;
there is no longer slave or free; there
is no longer male or female, for all of
you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

A just society is that society in which
ascending sense of reverence and
descending sense of contempt
is dissolved into the creation of a
compassionate society

B.R. Ambedkar
“Annihilation of Caste”

God, may we live into the truth that
we are one in Christ, dissolving
all hierarchies of reverence and
contempt, and building a society
rooted in justice and compassion
for all.

Sojourners

Compassion, Peace and Justice

We are a small group focused on
our congregation's commitment to
our designation as a “Matthew 25
Congregation”. We take our call from
Micah 6:8, Isaiah 6:8 and Matthew
15:31-46.

If your call is to compassion, peace
and justice in this life we share, join
us. Need more information? Contact info@firstpres.church

We Are a Matthew 25 Congregation

We have accepted the challenge.
Presbyterians are called to be a
missional people, actively engaging
the world in the name of Jesus Christ.
Our focus is in three areas: building
congregational vitality, dismantling
structural racism and eradicating
systemic poverty. These actions are
consistent with our belief that we are
“saved to serve”.

The themes of our Matthew 25
initiative are grounded in the gospel.
Jesus calls us to serve the “least of
these” (*Matthew 25:40*) – not as a
group to be pitied, but as people who
are deeply loved by Jesus. They de-
center our assumptions about what it
means to be a beloved child of God.
They challenge the authenticity of our
faith and remind us that what we do
matters to God.

Our confessions clarify our deep
concern for the flourishing of all
people. God is calling us to be
outwardly focused, mission oriented
and actively engaged in proclaiming
our faith in Jesus through our words
and deeds. The Matthew 25 challenge
is enormous, yet we affirm that God
is always immeasurably greater. God
“is able to accomplish abundantly far
more than all we can ask or imagine”
(*Ephesians 3:20*).

*Adapted from PC(USA) 223rd General
Assembly affirmation of 2018*

Two Special Weekends

An unusually beautiful late October
weekend brought large crowds to us
at Pride Fest on Saturday, October
25, and our Trunk N Treat on Sunday,
October 26.

Our Pride Fest booth in downtown
Urbana had the best location among a
multitude of participants. We met many
people, both friends and strangers,
greeted and shared stories with some
of our other Presbyterian church
families and many other community
organizations serving our community.
We marched in the parade holding
high our banner and enjoyed some
amazing talent on the stage.



Mark and Kathy Schoeffmann at our booth.

Trunk N Treat brought a diverse
crowd to fellowship and laughter. Pi
Lamda Chi, a Latina service group
on campus, brought youthful vigor
to our space. Hot soup and games
in Centennial Hall provided a more

intimate space for greeting and meeting. A huge thanks to all among us whose creativity and energy leads to important community engagement.



Stephen Kemboi assists a family with a game.



Wynda Wormack is a UI student from Chicago anticipating a career in the hospitality industry.



Nicole Miller poses at one of three trunks from the Miller family. Books were given to children twelve and younger as well as sweet treats. Nicole is the planning leader for Trunk N Treat.



Pi Lamda Chi is a UI Latina service sorority focuses on community engagement and culture.



Stephen Kemboi, Dennis Arthur, Isaac Love and Kay Oke pose for a Halloween photo. Their UI studies focus on mathematics, urban planning, computer science and law.



Naomi Rempe with her granddaughter Veronica. Naomi is a regular trunk and treater.

Sunday, November 2, we will remember the saints that have gone before us this past year.

Gary Bowen
Mamie Drennen
Morris Huck
John Lammers
Jack Waaler

Stuart Clark
Bernard Dunn
Carole Ann Hunter
Katie Parkhill

Mimi Cozad
Judy Gamble
Richard "Itch" Jones
Ginny Tutje

Newt Dodds
Dottie Garrett
Joanne Kelly
Mary Twardock



Verse of the Day

Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

- Deuteronomy 15:10

Voice of the Day

I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.

- Maya Angelou

Prayer of the Day

God, let us mirror your unabashed generosity as we lift up our gifts in service.

Sojourners

Sharing Our Lives Together



We have wonderful fellowship at First Pres. Sharing important life events we lift each other in voice and prayer.

Congratulations to **Anne Craig** who was recently honored as an Illinois Library Luminary. She was director of the Illinois State Library for eleven years and since serves as director of Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois. Anne volunteers as a Parkland College certified English as a second language tutor in our Sunday Easy English Fellowship.

Applause for the **Laufenberg family** for bringing the Princeton Tigertones to our space on October 13. And, happy 22nd birthday to Henry and brother Sam celebrated on October 20. Their sister Eleanor will turn twenty on January 13.



Keep us informed by contacting us at info@firstpres.church.

Jays & Concerns

We extend sympathy to...

- The family of **Jeannie and Vern Snoeyink** on the death of Vern's brother on October 20.

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.

Face to Face with Dave & Nancy Whitford



Dave has served as an Amateur Preacher for 30 years and now serves on our Human Resources and Finance Committees. Nancy helped edit both our church history book and content on our current website. She will serve next year as a Community Mission Deacon.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

We are long-term Presbyterians. When we moved to Champaign in 1977, we visited several churches. We were moved by the sermons and the music that made this our church home.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

Seeing our sons baptized and nurtured through Mother's Morning Out and the youth programs.

Tell me about your family? Your work?

Andy and Ed each have two children ranging in ages from 10 to 17. We keep connected by technology as they live some distance away.

We are both retired. Dave taught Finance at the U of I and Nancy had a marketing and advertising business.

What do you do in your free time?

We love golf and we stay busy with volunteer work. Among their numerous volunteer commitments, Dave serves as President of the Champaign Public Library Foundation Board. Nancy is the current President of ARCS (Achievement Rewards for College Scientists) Illinois Chapter, which awards research grants to U of I, University of Chicago and Northwestern University graduate students in the fields of science, engineering and biomedicine.

What are your favorite Bible characters?

For Dave, it's Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were the foundation of our faith. And then, in the New Testament Paul. And for Nancy it is the author of Proverbs because ancient wisdom is about eternal truths.

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

For both Dave and Nancy, the Sunday worship service is the focal point of the church week. To be its best there must be an impactful sermon, one that stays with you, and high quality music. They believe we have been blessed in our relationship with the University of Illinois School of Music. Throughout the years the sermons and music have made them feel very much at home in this church.

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM
ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total September contributions: \$43.2K from plate and pledge plus \$7.9K from prepaid= \$51.1K This is \$8.2k less than last year and \$14K under budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$ 569.6 K which is \$7k less than last year and \$16.3K under budget. At 75% of the year, we have 76% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

Expenses

September expenses were \$67.4 K, which is \$9.1K less than last year and \$11.6K under budget. Expenses YTD are \$702.6K, which is \$26.1K less than last year and \$8.4K under budget. At 75% of the year, we have spent 74% of the budget.

Balance YTD

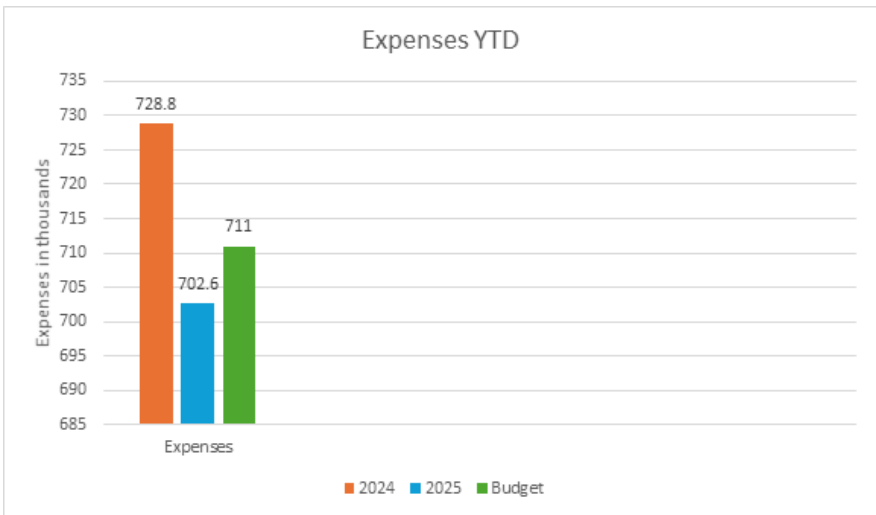
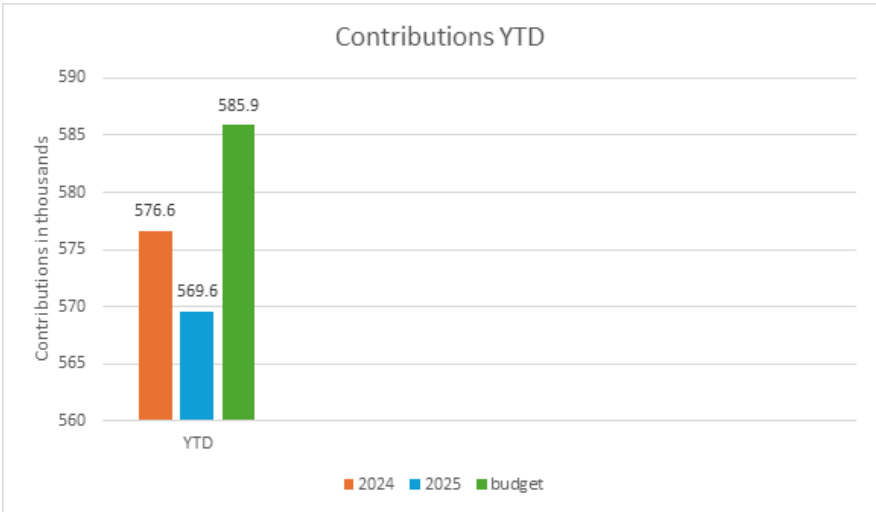
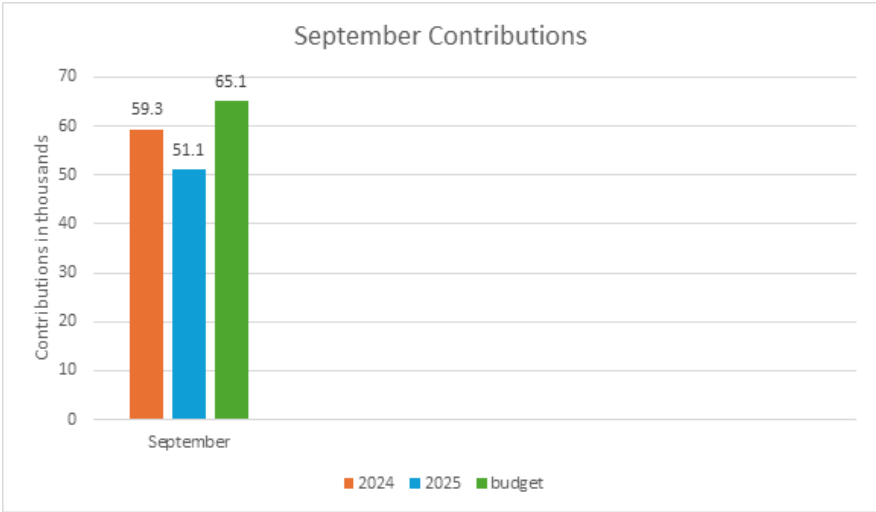
Expenses exceeded revenue from all sources by \$29,860 in September.

Session Designated Funds

\$1,006,843 which is \$64.6K less than last month.

Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$1100 was given to the general memorial fund and \$2604 to missions.



Celebratory Letters for the 175th Anniversary of FPC Champaign, Illinois

Message to the 1st Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois

Good morning, Church,
This is Musafiri Amani and Elysee
Mushengezi.

Even though we are far away from you, our hearts and minds are with you during this World Communion as the congregation celebrates its 175th year of worship and service.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is with a grateful heart that I speak before you today through this video to offer my family sincere thanks for welcoming us with joy, love, empathy, and for the tireless service you have shown and done during our time living in Champaign-Urbana and while worshipping with you.

The first church was not only a place for us to worship, but it was also our home. Since 2011, we have come to understand the impact of the fellowship you have had and continue to have on our African community and on international Christians.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we do have so many souvenirs and support from you. You not only fulfilled the words of the Gospel of *Matthew 25:35-40*, but you also opened doors for our integration and success in America.

We are particularly grateful for the opportunity to serve in various ministries and committees, traveling alongside World Mission members. Church, we will never forget your support and comfort that you provided to my family when my father passed away. Also, the inspiration that Sunday school ministry, activities, and worship brought to our children and youth group.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, your dedication has not gone unnoticed, and your efforts have touched so many lives in Champaign-Urbana, as evidenced by your successful agreement to launch and provide total support for a French worship ministry. You have truly made a significant multicultural interaction in church and in our community.

Church, my family and I, pray that God continue to bless you, surround you with His love, and grant strength to Pastor Mathew and to all our ministry and committee team as you celebrate these 175th years of worship and service. We are blessed to be a part of your congregation.

From former Senior Pastor Rick Snyder

Dear Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

Mary Ann and I will not be able to join you for your 175th anniversary celebration, but we send our love and hearty congratulations. FPCC has had a remarkable history and there is so much to celebrate. Its missional outreach has been astonishing.

FPCC has a long commitment to inclusivity. It advocated for women's suffrage. It commissioned laywoman Mae Chapin as a missionary to China in 1913, and well before most other churches, in 1944, ordained six women deacons. During World War II, it spoke out against anti-Semitism, and after the war assisted European refugees. In the early 1970s, FPCC became intercultural, welcoming Korean students and families, and sponsoring a Korean language service. This led to the formation of the Korean Presbyterian Church, one of the nine churches FPCC had planted. Recognizing the importance of student ministry at the U of I, it helped form McKinley Presbyterian Church.

FPCC has had an optimistic, "can do" faith. With only 137 members in 1867, church officers resolved to build a sanctuary seating 400. Each Saturday, the church treasurer had to solicit funds to pay the workers for the coming week. But the workers completed a spacious sanctuary and building. The same resolve was evident during the Great Depression, when the Rev. Adolph Bohn solved a problem of overcrowding -- not by building up -- but by digging out a basement that became known as Centennial Hall.

When Parkland Community College was founded in 1966 and needed space, FPCC opened its doors for Parkland's

classes. FPCC launched a program to unite area churches in a shared mission to support low-income families and has supported mission coworkers in China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Russia, parts of Africa, and South America. Mission Possible provided thousands of hours of labor for underfunded church camps. Youth Mission Trips provided ministry while planting seeds of faith in the participants. We adopted sister churches in Havana, Cuba and Lisanjala, Malawi and supported the Sangala Hill Presbyterian School near Lahore.

Members of First Church have made notable contributions. FPCC was the church home of a US Senator, three US Congressmen, three University of Illinois Presidents, and hundreds of U of I faculty, including an Agronomy professor who established the oldest continuous agricultural experiment field in the world. But its over 5000 members, well-known or not, have all helped transform Champaign and beyond. I was always moved by this eloquent conviction of 19th century FPCC pastor, Rev. A.J. Leyenberger:

The real history of a church can never be written. The real history is the inner history, the self-denial, the struggles, the prayers; how many here, through the instrumentality of the Word, have been born again; what strength has been added to Christian life; what lessons for life have been fixed in youthful minds; what higher and nobler purposes have been stimulated; what aid has been brought to the cause of public morals and education.

So Mary Ann and I again send our heartfelt congratulations and prayers for an equally exciting future. May our Lord's commendation bless you, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Grace and peace,
Rick and Mary Ann Snyder



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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:

Yuxi Chen..... Organist/Pianist
Ritchie Drennen Facility Manager
Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant
Robert Ferrer Audio-visual Technician
Fred Foster Evening Custodian
Marcia Franks Office Administrator
Samuel Stephenson..... Director of Music
Jill Stewart..... Accounting
Bonnie Ward..... English Language Learner Director

Staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by
[@firstpres.church](mailto:info@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.