

October 2022



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



First Pres will host its annual Trunk or Treat event on Sunday, October 30, from 5 to 6 PM in the church parking lot.

We are looking for volunteers to provide decorated trunks--we can help with decorating.

We also need volunteers to help with games for small children and to provide candy. If you can pitch in, please contact **Nicole Miller** at reservationfor5@gmail.com.

Thanks!

2nd SUNDAY BRUNCH

October 9th

10:10 AM

Come and enjoy brunch
Centennial Hall

2nd Sunday of each month

We will have an array of brunch items each month prepared in our new kitchen by volunteers led by trained cooks. Select from different hot dishes, meats, fruits, pastries and beverages each month. Enjoy the fellowship right after the 9 AM service.

Donations are appreciated to help cover the costs.

Volunteers are needed to help with the brunches for the remainder of the year. If interested, please contact Jan Wittler, Gary Peterson or the church office.



Sabbath:
Hearing and Answering God's Call
By
Rev. Dr. Laura Aull Johnston

**Saturday, October 1
5 PM**

***A Celebration
Through Song
in honor of
Hispanic
Heritage Month***

**Organized by our alto
section leader, Alejandra
Sandoval, it will feature
solos by Prof. Herrera,
and graduate voice
students from UI School
of Music.**

Church School for Children

Sunday, October 2, 10 - 11 AM is the beginning of the fall Christian Education program for the children.

- ❖ Sign in your children at the Welcome Center before church 8:45-9 AM;
- ❖ They will be escorted to their classes in the Education Building after church, at 10 (donut holes will be available for the children in the classrooms not in Westminster Hall);
- ❖ Meet your child or children in the library in the Education Building at 11.

Thanks to the church volunteers who have been working hard to find the pieces and put them together to provide a good, faith building experience for the children!!!

At this time transportation is not being provided. To make that work, more volunteers are needed. Contact **Mary Gritten** or **Rachel Matthews** to offer your services.

**Starting with
World Communion Sunday
in October
we will resume the
traditional passing of the
communion elements.
The prepackaged
communion elements
will also be available.**

Spots of Time

BY KEN TRAVERS, CHICAGO

*There are in our existence
spots of time.*

Wordsworth

The late great Frederick Buechner once told about a visit from a good friend. He writes, 'I don't recall that we talked much about spiritual things. But it was a sacred time. There were moments when it seemed that each of us touched the hem of Christ's garment'.

Spots of time.

A twenty something student answers his phone: 'Can I call you back? I'm meeting with my mentor'. He then continues their time. As they part, he comments, 'You're the only person I can share stuff like this with.' **Spots of time.**

A travel weary airline passenger hears the announcement: 'All are invited to the chapel service in ½ hour in Terminal E'. She slides into a rear seat of the nearly vacant, somewhat tatty, nook. The text has to do with the words of Jesus, the wandering Jewish Rabbi, who quotes the ancient prophet, Isaiah. 'He has sent me to heal the broken hearted', (Luke 4:21) For the moment, the tattered cranny becomes a sacred space. **Spots of time.**

A newly graduated college student left a message in his friend's inbox. Two weeks later he was killed in a motorcycle accident. The student was excited about his new job. He concludes with a characteristic word of witness to his commitment to Jesus Christ. The message remains in the inbox. **Spots of time.**

A child is diagnosed with a deadly disease. Prayers are offered by local churches. Visits are paid by Sunday school and public school teachers. In six months he is well on his way to recovery. Medical teams comment that five years prior, the treatment regimen would not have been available. **Spots of time.**

Loved ones gather in a hospice ward. They have been there 24 x 7. Songs recalled from youth group years ago fill the room and make their way to the adjoining nursing station. The medical team is asked if the singing is a disturbance. 'No', they respond, 'we are here to listen'. **Spots of time.**

Promise Keepers, a men's revival gathering, hosts a rally at Soldier Field, Chicago. Willy is there with his mentor. At one point, the mentor leaves, and Willy is alone in the huge crowd. Simultaneously, the invitation is given for all to renew relationships with their own dad. A stranger approaches Willy and asks if he could be Willy's dad for the moment. They join in prayer for reconciliation. **Spots of time.**

A 50's something longtime friend writes: 'Please tell me about God'. She responds with a favorite parable, a one liner about a guy who when walking across a field, stumbles over a treasure. (Matthew 13:44) **Spots of time.**

*There are in our existence
spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue....--our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired.*
Wordsworth

Quilt Display Sunday, October 23

Quilts made by our artistic, talented ladies, **Becky Grant** and **Claudia Kirby**, will be on display Sunday, October 23.

These quilts are highly elaborate and decorative accomplished with the use of three-dimensional treatments and various fabrics such as wools and cottons, some from Africa and Japan. Some are skillfully made by hand and others with the use of a sewing machine. The artists have incorporated many hand applied shapes and embroidered figures to create the designs, textures and dimensions. The quilts are very beautiful pieces of are not just ordinary quilts.

We hope you will enjoy browsing through their creations they are sharing with you.

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.

Face to Face with Joe and Becky Grant



We have been welcomed and loved.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

I was hired by First Pres as choir director in 1996.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

We both say the people. We have been welcomed and loved here and Joe has been able to continue to work with the kind of music he loves. Our teams such as our worship committee and our chancel choir, bell choir and children's choirs have been a joy. And then I have also enjoyed my truck ministry moving furniture for new immigrants as well as moving grills and other valuable cargo.

Tell me about your family and your work?

Becky and I met at Murray State University and relocated to Danville and then in 1983 to Champaign. We have three married children and five grandchildren distributed in New York, Louisville and Greensboro, NC. We are proud of each one of them. Becky taught elementary music in Danville for thirty-five years. I took a faculty post in the music department at the University of Illinois in music education and taught choral methods and conducting

as well as leading the women's glee club. My official title now at First Pres is Director of Traditional Music.

What do you do in your free time?

Joe is engaged with golf, tennis and recently began weaving. He also reads a lot -fiction, and history, particularly World War II history. Becky also enjoys reading and though she enjoys knitting and weaving she is now focused on quilting. (Some of Becky's quilts will be on display at a Quilt Show at our church on Sunday, October 23.)

What is your favorite Bible character?

I don't think I can pick one character, but the message of love and service moves us both. We have been in churches where the emphasis was on an individual relationship with God. But after worship we all went our own ways and there was little mission, nurturing or learning. Here we have an emphasis on mission and we love that. I guess we call that our Matthew 25 focus, caring for "the least of these".

We both agree on the importance of loving and serving.

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

Continue to encourage the flock to participate. Get involved. Actively reach out to others. And most importantly recruit people to join our great chancel and bell choirs.

**We would love to have
you serve as
a liturgist
on Sunday morning!
If interested, please
contact Carol Miles.**

Ladies Day Out – Second Sunday



Back row from left are Nadeige Lumbu, Chimene Lutayi, Kermelis Lukau and Anne Craig. Front row includes Solange Bosamba, Ouauel Seyi and Judith Sinda.

The Heart of Mission



Dear Friends,

Greetings from flooded Pakistan.

This year the country has been hit by the largest amount of rainfall in three decades. Monsoon rains have caused devastating floods in Pakistan, leaving millions homeless, destroying buildings, bridges and roads. The monsoon rains which caused the floods are unprecedented in scale and scope.

According to the NDMA (National Disaster Management Agency) and the climate change minister, more than one third of the country has been completely submerged by the heaviest recorded monsoon rain in three decades. Many Pakistani schools and health facilities have been destroyed.

Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are the most effected provinces. 66 districts in Baluchistan have been declared calamity by the government, 23 in Sindh, 9 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 3 in Punjab. PEB schools are all in the Punjab province, which has been the least affected so far. These floods (including flash-floods) have effected 33 million people, about 14% of the Pakistan population, causing deaths, displacement and losses whose effects will be felt for months and years to come.

The NDMA data shows that nearly 18 thousand schools/educational institutions have been partially or totally damaged. Due to damage to the infrastructure, communication and reaching out to help and provide food supplies, medicines, and shelter to those in need is very difficult. The PEB staff have pledged one day's salary to donate to flood relief. As a good will, PEB students in all schools are collecting resources and funds to send to the flood-affected areas.*

In 2010, PEB worked closely with the KNH Germany in establishing 10 "Child Friendly Spaces" in Jatoi, Muzaffarabad (South Punjab). We can provide safe places for students during the day while parents focus on rebuilding their homes.

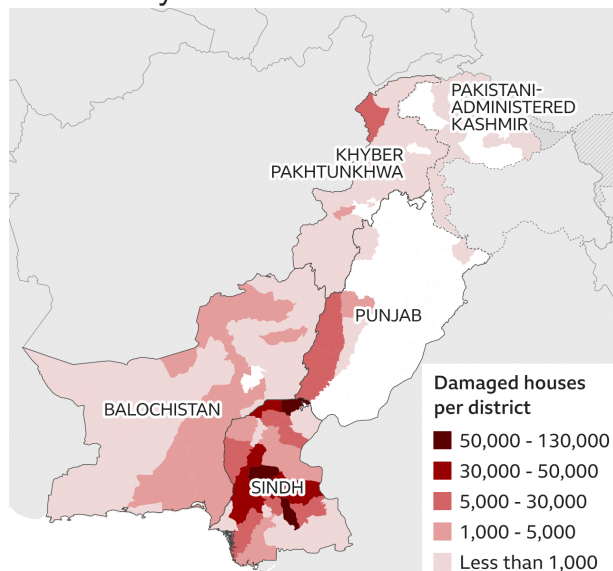
Please remember Pakistan in your prayers, as many people are living in dangerous flood areas and fear. We thank God our PEB students, schools, parents, and communities are all safe. PEB stands committed with our brothers and sisters in this time of crisis.

Many blessings to you,

Veda Gill
Executive Director
Presbyterian Education Board in Pakistan

*If you would like to make a donation to flood relief, please visit UNICEF. Since PEB schools have not been directly affected, Friends of PEB is not collecting funds at this time.

Areas hit by monsoon rains



Source: UN OCHA

BBC

The Republic of Cuba

The Evangelical Theological Seminary at Matanzas

BY BOB KIRBY, CUBA PARTNERS

"The Seminary seeks to provide a high quality, diversified theological education program to prepare young church leaders to meet the challenges of growth in existing local congregations and in pursuing new church developments throughout Cuba.

SET is owned and operated by the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba, together with the Episcopal Church in Cuba and was founded as a Presbyterian institution at Cárdenas in 1920. The seminary relocated to Matanzas when the sponsorship became ecumenical in 1946."

<https://www.cubapartnersnetwork.org/>

Welcomed and Affirmed

- Welcome- "to greet the arrival of a person with pleasure or kindly courtesy"
- Affirm- "to support someone by giving approval, recognition, or encouragement"

We strive to be a welcoming, affirming (nurturing) congregation. We work at it, and we do a good job. We are united in Christ and we are diverse. What do you know about the LGBTQAI+ community? Do you understand what each of those letters mean? Are you comfortable in affirming your siblings in Christ whose gender identity you do not understand?

Join us online for a safe Christian space to better understand how to communicate sensitively and to welcome and affirm. "Affirmed" is a curriculum with the tools we need. The program was developed by Rev Katina

Sharp, pastor of Powell Presbyterian Church near Knoxville, TN and Bee and Whitney Caruthers. Congregants from Powell will lead us. This training uses lecture, discussion, and role play.

Here are some objectives.

- Describe the difference between gender identity, sexual orientation and sex assigned at birth.
- Say the words for "LGBTQIA+". Explain what they mean.
- Use gender pronouns correctly.
- State how you will be an affirming sibling in Christ.

Dates: Mondays 6 to 7:30 PM on November 2, 9, 16, and 30.

To register and obtain a Zoom link: info@firstpres.church or 217-356-7328.

Matthew 25 Dismantling Structural Racism

But What Can I do?

- Watch "Colin in Black and White" on Netflix. This 2021 six-episode Netflix film tells the story of Colin Kaepernick. His high school experience shaped his work as an antiracist activist.

- Take the 21 Day Challenge from the PC(USA) ([21 day challenge](#))

- Read about the life and works of Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr., preacher, prophet and poet. To start you off here is a link to an informative article from PC (USA) Mission Agency ([informative article](#)) and here is a sample of his poetry.



Determined to Be Good Soil

*Lord, I have chosen to be your servant
Forever faithful and forever true,
Determined to be good soil for growing
Seeds of your kingdom that are
breaking through*

*I surrender my body, soul and mind
I yield my life to the spirits control
I'll help build the body of the
beloved community
To make every nation more
just and whole*

*Forces of evil will not deter us
Neither hate, nor greed,
nor lust for power
Will recruit us for demonic measures
To block your plans for
this sacred hour*

*Now you await a bountiful harvest
Where all dwell as neighbors
in harmony
Where righteousness flows
like mighty streams
And the good fruit grows abundantly*

Environmental News

BY PAT PHILLIPS

P.PHILLIPS42@SBCGLOBAL.NET

The Environmental Stewardship bulletin board says a lot. Receptacles



for taped batteries, Styrofoam, and medicine bottles overflow.. Coming up on November 5 at 8 AM is another chance to Adopt-a-Highway, cleaning up streets near the church.

But wait, there's more. We hosted a Watch Party for the opening of the Green Team Summit Event September 11 to hear and see noted



environmentalist **Katharine Hayhoe**.

Learn more at katharinehayhoe.com
24 folks from 5 or 6 churches watched, discussed and shared projects and ideas.

English Language Learners News

BY VAL SMITH, DIRECTOR
VAL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

A hearty thanks to **Gary Peterson** and all who served with him in providing an awesome International Taste event for all the students, their families, our church and community friends. Both students and volunteer tutors were there presenting or welcoming all who came.

New Americans from the on-campus YMCA were also there to welcome the international families with their presence and helpful resources. Thanks to **Pastor Matt Matthews**



who ended our time together with the song and motions to the song, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands", a wonderful truth reminding us that God loves us and guides us wherever we go. (*Psalm 139: 8-10*)

Our first week of zoom and 'in-person' classes was an exciting time meeting new students and welcoming others back. In-person students began their morning in the café for conversation, introductions, and announcements. One of our tutors

discovered that two of the students in the zoom class were neighbors and they didn't even know it! Connecting students to new friends is happening 'in-person' and online and is an important reason for this outreach.

Our next special event is Wednesday, October 5, at Curtis Orchard. Since it is a no-school day for some, the children of the ELL students

are invited to participate. We will have

a self-guided tour at 10 AM followed by various other activities. Would you like to join us? (Contact Val at val@firstpres.church)

We appreciate our new tutor from the church, **Kurt Ruthsmandorfer**. Kurt has driven the van for ELL students in the past and enjoys talking with them. Kurt jumped right in to his first-class last week and we're so glad to have him on board! Thank you, Kurt!



Save the Date!

Members and friends, you are invited to one or more meetings with **Mark and Miriam Adams** on the evenings of December 4, 5, and 6. They are our PCUSA's co-workers serving the boarder cities: Agua Prieta, Mexico and Douglas Arizona. There will be more specific information provided. Please place these dates on your calendar at this time. Since Mark's previous visit in November 2016, the needs for the boarder ministry there have grown significantly. If you have questions, please contact **Steve Gritten**, WMC member at 217-369-7016 or Steve.Gritten@sbcglogal.net.



Snippets from Your Pastor

BY MATT MATTHEWS

MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Friends,

Some of you have asked to see my essay about “A Snowy Wedding” again. With that in mind, and also mindful that not all read my Friday E-mailer, I’m including that essay again in this month’s newsletter.

Also included is a wonderful essay by my friend from seminary Allen Huff. Allen writes songs, poetry, stories, and sermons. He’s pastor of the Jonesborough Presbyterian Church in East Tennessee.

World Communion Sunday—the first Sunday in October—is one of my favorite moments of the liturgical year. I stand at the communion table on that Sunday and, sometimes, can hardly speak. God loves the whole world and the world comes to this table.

That Sunday marks the beginning of Fall for me. This summer was beautiful. I’m certain the coming seasons will bring many graces.

You may also note that this is our church’s emphasis on stewardship. Please remember, we aren’t building a budget, but a church. We aren’t raising a budget, but doing ministry. Gratitude is the attitude. This emphasis isn’t about money, it’s about generosity. Sure, it takes money to run our ministries and pay for the building entrusted to our care. But it takes heart and soul. Thanks for being thoughtful about such things.

PEACE,
Matt Matthews

A Snowy Wedding An Essay by Matt Matthews

The first wedding I officiated happened on a frozen Sunday afternoon in Arkansas. It was a private affair. Everybody fit on the front row.

There was no wedding planner, no organist, no fanfare. Just me and this appreciative elderly couple and their grown kids. It was a sweet gathering and a charming ceremony.

Church attendance that morning was light, but rare snowfall was heavy. I had started two crock pots of chili in the church kitchen for the youth group meeting scheduled that evening. Snow added beauty no wedding planner could have staged. The couple was grateful and happy. The sanctuary smelled of flowers, candle smoke, and chili. Love, gladness, and snow covered any imperfections.

After the wedding, I canceled youth group for that night, spending the afternoon calling the kids telling them to be safe. Snow persisted. I drove home through stilled country at twilight. I pushed my ’76 Chevette too fast in an effort to power up the icy mountain to Skyline Drive. In an instant, the car jerked sideways, launched over a steep ditch, and plowed to a dead stop into a high hedge.

Everything went quiet. I took stock in the perfect silence. The car would need to be winched back onto the road, grabbed as it was by both sides of that ditch in its mid-air leap. None of its wheels appeared to be on the ground. I felt fine, though my heart pounded. Nothing hurt, nothing

seemed broken or bruised. As far as I could tell, I had not hit my head.

Then I noticed the blood: hot, sticky, soaking my lower torso. It was so peaceful, I thought. Is this what dying feels like? Like snow floating down? Like darkness closing in? Calm oozed over me like detached nonchalance. I was slipping into shock, I supposed. I prepared for the probability that I didn’t have long. In a moment, I would open that heavy door, drop to the distant ground, and haul myself out of the ditch onto the slippery road above. I would find a nearby house from which to call an ambulance. If I were still conscious, I’d call my wife. I’d save my last words for her. These were the days when even Navy Seals didn’t have cell phones. She loved me, but it would take her a while to get over the possible loss of her trusted Old Blue. Rachel loved that hatchback.

As I collected these final thoughts in waning light, I noticed my blood smelled a lot like food. On the passenger floor, I had perched a gallon-sized plastic pitcher full of hot chili. It would be our dinner for the week. The crock pots were soaking in the church’s kitchen sink. Another batch of chili was in the church freezer. As my mind cleared, I realized the splatter on the windshield wasn’t my life ebbing away. It was tomato sauce with ground beef and spices.

And I wasn’t bleeding.

I was marinating.

I’ll never forget that beautiful wedding, the day I got my life back. It was a new beginning for all of us.

Bright Wonder/Allen Huff

One ordinary Tuesday afternoon, as I worked in my home study, my wife, Marianne, called me. She all but sang into the phone that she'd forgotten that she'd won a coveted place in the lottery to see the synchronous firefly display at Rocky Fork, the Tennessee state park near our home in Jonesborough.

"It's tonight! Did you remember?" she asked. "Well, no," I said, squirming at the interruption. "But you can still go, can't you?" "Um. Well. When?" "We have to be in Flag Pond by 7:50pm," she said. Flag Pond, TN. That night. Yay.

I went full Eeyore on her. "Okay," I said. "I guess I can go."

"I'm going to call Ben and Elizabeth, and see if they'll join us. We can have as many as five people in the car!"

Ben and Elizabeth, our adult children, live nearby, but scheduling us into their lives takes time, and we didn't have enough of that to wear them down into a "yes." Good luck with that, I thought.

The upshot of all this was that I was going to have to stop writing, eating peanuts, and (when stuck on a sentence) watching old SNL skits on YouTube in order to walk the dog and throw together some kind of snack supper for us, because there was no way Marianne was going to be home in time to help. Then, since it usually happens this way, I was going to have to hustle her out the door so we wouldn't be late and miss the shuttle that would take us out to the state park which closes at dusk each evening.

Call me clairvoyant, but when we got into the car, by ourselves, at 7:20, to make a 45-minute trip in 30 minutes, Marianne looked at me and said, "Speed if you have to."

"You should call the number on the reservation form," I said. "Tell them we're on the way." "Good idea," she said.

When I heard her leaving a message, I said to myself, Crap. We're screwed. No one's going to get that message.

Fortunately, there was only one really slow car on the narrow, winding road to Erwin, and it turned off toward Greeneville. So I started flirting with a speeding ticket, again. "I'm so excited," Marianne said. "We get to see the fireflies!"

We can see lightning bugs from our porch any freakin' night! I said. To myself. The things we do for love, I guess. And I did enjoy driving like a teenaged moonshiner without my wife telling me to slow down. In fact, she said, "This is fun."

We should be late to something you want to do more often.

The directions told us to look for an asphalt parking lot somewhere in the 1500's on Hwy. 352, Flag Pond, TN. When we got off of Hwy. 19W and onto 352, the numbers were in the 4200's, and going up.

"Why are the numbers getting bigger?" Marianne asked. "We're supposed to find 1500. We're going the wrong way!" "We can't be going the wrong way," I Eeyored. "352 started right back there. There has to be some kind of break. The 1500's have to be this way." "But...how?!" Damned if I know!

Yanked from a calm evening at home, flying through curves at expensive-ticket speeds, certain that we'd missed the shuttle, my whole demeanor sucked oxygen from the air and light from the sky. I was a human black hole.

If we have to turn around and go home, I'm going to enjoy making her miserable the entire evening.

We passed the entrance to Rocky Fork State Park and still no 1500's in sight. Less than a quarter mile beyond the turn-off to the park, Hwy. 352 turns right and heads up the mountain and into North Carolina while the Old Asheville Highway runs straight through downtown Flag Pond, TN. In the southwest corner of the intersection, in an asphalt parking lot, we saw a white passenger van next to one of those white canopy tents that vendors set up at festivals to sell homemade trinkets, melting brownies, and bars of goat's milk soap.

"That's got to be it!" said Marianne.

I pulled up to the tent as the van, packed full of firefly watchers, pulled away. We were relieved to see a number of other people standing around and waiting for the next shuttle. Marianne got out of the car to let the people sitting in folding chairs behind a folding table know that we were legitimate lottery winners.

After parking the car, I stuffed my camera, tripod, and a bottle of water in my backpack and joined Marianne at the tent. The tent people knew each other and were laughing and talking loudly about people they knew, but the rest of us didn't. I always find that insufferable, and that night found it especially so. I wandered toward a tall, wooden sign filled with rules about watching fireflies.

Seriously? Rules for watching fireflies? No pets. No bug spray. No flashlights or cameras without red filters.

What's a red filter? And how does it help take pictures of lightning bugs? I moped back to the car and put my camera and tripod away. At least my pack was lighter.

Back at the tent, a man with a girth so colossal he looked like he had swallowed a hay bale was pulling the cord on a Honda generator.

"You trying that again?" asked the lady who had signed us in. "Thought I would," said the man.

The generator sputtered to life and another large, colorful wooden sign lit up with electric fireflies. The man stood in front of the sign with a trying-not-to-be-too-proud grin on his face, arms spreading around his belly, and his hands in his pockets. Half of his hands, anyway. That's all that reached after his arms spread around his belly.

I walked up to the folding table laden with Friends of Rocky Fork bumper stickers, t-shirts, and membership applications. While appraising the offerings, I asked the woman behind the table what the rules meant by a "red filter." "Oh, it's just one of these," she said holding up a 4-inch by 4-inch piece of red cellophane.

"How can you take a picture through that?" I asked. "It's just for your viewfinder," she said. "To keep the artificial light at a minimum. Too much light will affect the fireflies." "Oh," I said, feeling a bit foolish.

I took the cellophane, hustled back to the car, and retrieved my camera before the shuttle returned. Why didn't I just ask about that at first?

Winners of the firefly lottery get assigned to one of several nights of viewing, and our guides for the evening were two state park rangers, Jeff, slender as a sapling, and Carl, thick as an old oak. They were armed with Glocks, radios, electric lanterns covered with red filters, and genuine excitement at the chance to take another group into the woods until 11:00pm to watch fireflies do their

mating dance.

When everyone had been shuttled into the park, Jeff called us together and told us that we'd hike about a mile into the park.

"We'll cross the first little footbridge," he said, "but we'll stop before the second, bigger bridge. That's just so we know where everyone is. When we get there, we should still be able to see, so wander around and find a comfortable place to park yourself. About 9:45 the fireflies will start the show, and by 10:00 they should be in full display. When they start, even a quick burst from a flashlight will throw them off for a cycle or two. So please keep your lights off unless you really need them.

"I'll lead us, and Carl will pull up the rear. So gather up whatever you've brought, and let's go!"

Rocky Fork State Park is a 2000-acre quilt of dense, Appalachian cove forest in the steep, rocky folds of the Cherokee National Forest. The main trails at the park are old logging roads. The Friends of Rocky Fork group is cutting some new, single-track trails here and there, but we stayed on the rough and rutted road next to Rocky Fork Creek, which is just big enough for fishing.

"I really need to come up here and fish this creek," I said to Marianne as we walked.

It's been years since I've been fly-fishing. The fish in this creek wouldn't be very big, but regardless of size, it's hard to look away from any brook or brown trout. All those red and yellow dots on their mossy-green backs and silver flanks create bright constellations that speak to me of the

first stirrings of Creation.

Something in me began to glimmer.

As we walked, I asked Jeff if a firefly's light is bioluminescence similar to what I'd seen in foxfire or, once at Folly Beach, in ocean waves.

"It's bioluminescence," he said, "but the reaction happens because of chemical called luciferin. Fireflies' light is the only cold light." Jeff raised his hand toward the darkening canopy of poplar, oak, and hickory. "On the planet." I marveled at the thought of cold light.

When we reached a small clearing, the logging road bore to the right and began to climb. A narrower trail to the left stayed close to the creek, which was getting smaller the further we followed it.

"The bridge is just up there to the left," said Jeff pointing toward the narrow trail. "Make yourselves comfortable."

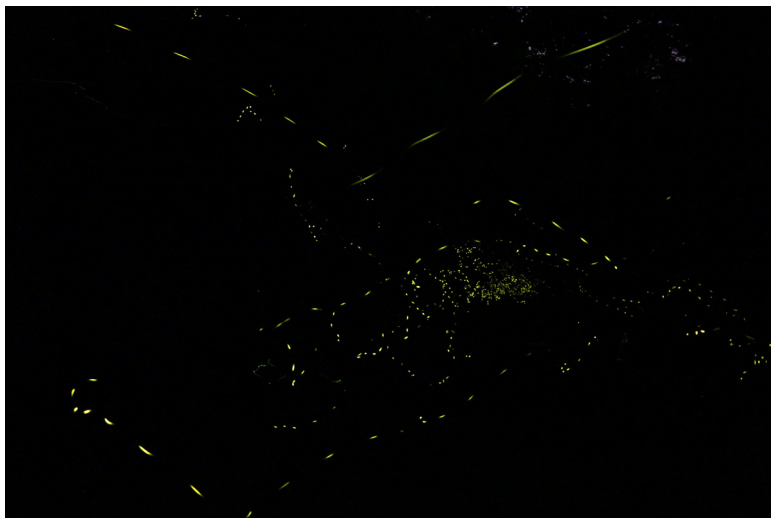
Marianne and I walked toward the bridge. Several of us, including Ranger Jeff, crossed the bridge. A few fireflies were beginning to light up down close to the ground, so I prepped my tripod and locked my camera in place on top of it. Not having done this kind of photography before, I struggled with the mechanics of taking pictures of moving objects in in little to no light.

"How's it going," Jeff asked when he walked past me. "Not so good," I said. "I'm kind of a novice, and I'm not sure how to go about this." "What kind of camera do you have?" he asked.

"Canon 70D." "I have the same camera," said Jeff. "Do you have it on auto or manual focus?" "Auto." "You'll need it on manual."

As I switched the lens to manual focus, Jeff took off his pack. "I'm going to throw a bright light out there for you a-ways to give you something to focus on."

He shined an unfiltered flashlight beam onto a tree limb thirty or forty feet in front of me. I focused on the limb, and he turned off the light.



"Now, just adjust your shutter speed as the light dwindles." "Cool. Thank you."

I set the timer to a two-second delay, the shutter speed for long exposures, and began to play with what little firefly action was already happening. My glimmer got a little brighter.

Marianne had walked past the bridge a hundred yards or so. When she came back, real darkness was settling in, and she was giddy. "There's a clearing up there, and they are really starting to flash!"

A man named Dave, a Friends of Rocky Fork volunteer who comes all the way from Knoxville twice a week to work on trails, was there to help Jeff and Carl wrangle firefly watchers. He came to us from below the bridge and

said, "Come down here! Around the corner it's amazing!"

I gathered my gear, turned on my red-filtered flashlight and eased back across the narrow footbridge. When I looked down the trail, I was looking into deep darkness, and for a moment, I didn't breathe.

The term "synchronous fireflies" had always made me imagine lightning bugs going on and off like Christmas tree lights in regular, monotonous intervals. I learned that in the mating ritual of this species of firefly, the males hover ten to twenty

feet above the ground creating frenzies of brilliant yellow lights. At some point, responding to God-knows-what stimulus, they go dark. All of them. All at once. Poof. This gives the ladies down nearer the ground a chance to respond with their more subtle, coquettish glow. Then the guys get all excited again and – all at once – start flashing, Me! Me! Look at me!

Around the edges of all that, a few smaller, pale blue lights came on, and stayed on for as much as ten seconds. These were blue ghost fireflies, and their light is ghostly, indeed. On photographs, their creeping blue lights create long, eerie streaks beneath the dazzling yellows above them. As we were walking out, a single blue ghost hovered toward me and landed on my shoulder. It stopped me in my tracks. A firefly's adult lifespan is about two

weeks, but I felt like I'd been touched by something ancient and sacred. How do the smallest of physical things evoke such deep and timeless wonder?

As for the total firefly display: Imagine lying on your back in a field where neither light nor clouds dim the splendor of the night sky above you. Above you, the stars shimmer through the last of the day's heat as it rises through the earth's atmosphere. Now imagine that every so often those stars cease to shine. They go dark for a few seconds, and when they appear again, you see entirely new constellations flickering above you. Now imagine this happening over and over, and if you have never seen a synchronous firefly display, you'll have some idea of the experience we were having that evening at Rocky Fork State Park.

Having found my vantage point, I leveled my tripod, wrapped a red filter around my camera's viewfinder, secured it with a rubber band, and draped my bandana over the little orange light that shines on the front of the camera during the two-second delay. I set the shutter speed at thirty seconds, aimed my camera blindly toward the hypnotizing flurry of lights.

When there was nothing to see but fireflies, I noticed the depth of the darkness in that remote mountain hollow. With all other visual distractions dissolved, I smelled the rich aromas of leaves rotting beneath the trees and hard earth cooling underfoot. I heard the rhythmic pulse of crickets, and the gurgle of cold, clear water washing over smooth gray stones. In that numinous, purifying moment, all things converged into a single, otherworldly celebration. And the numbing darkness I had brought with me sloughed off, giving way to bright wonder.



2 Timothy 3:16, 17 Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalms 119:13 The unfolding of your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And, be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Proverbs 16:24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

Jeremiah 33:3 Call to me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.



Flowers For Sunday Worship Service

● You can sign up on the flower chart in Westminster Hall near the Welcome Center to bring flowers in memory of a loved one, for a celebration, or just because.

● Consider buying plants for Sundays instead of flower arrangements.
Remember no lilies!

● Let the flower committee know if you would be willing to have your garden flowers, greens or fall harvest used in worship bouquets.

● You can donate money for the flowers too, make checks out to First Pres, specify that it is for flowers.

The flower committee is **Lola Ruthmansdorfer, Grace Ashenfelter, Nancy Dankle, Judy Nicolette, and Carol Arnould.**

Joys & Concerns

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family of **George Miller** who died August 30, 2022.
- the family of **Rob Vermillion** who died September 9, 2022.

We rejoice...

- in the baptisms of **Isaac and James Nelson**, sons of **Anand Swaminathan and Jennifer Nelson** on Sunday, September 25, 2022.

Finance

Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM

ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

Contributions

Total August contributions: \$31.8K from plate and pledge plus \$10.2K from prepaid= \$42K
This is \$25.1K less than last year and \$30.3K under budget
Total contributions YTD: \$586.5K which is \$35.3K more than last year and \$7.8K over budget.
At 66.7% of the year we have 72.3% of the budgeted contributions.

Expenses

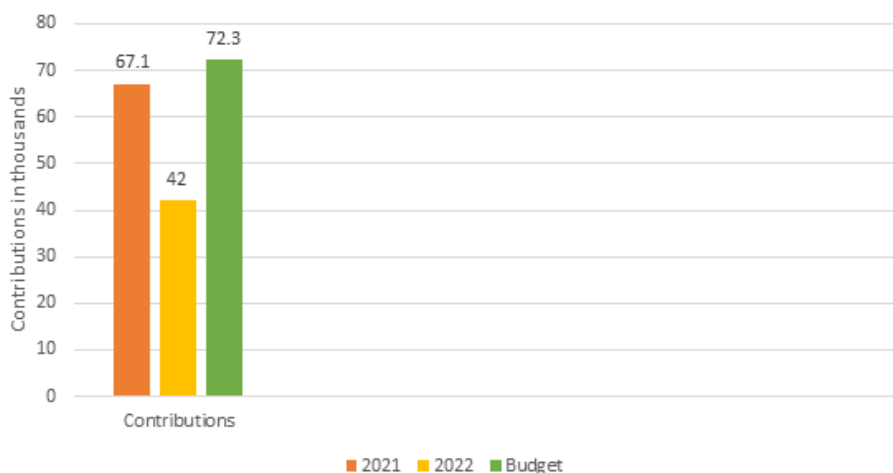
August expenses were \$71 K which is \$20.4K less than last year and \$14.2K under budget.
Expenses YTD were \$692.7K which is \$56.5K less than last year and \$11.1K over budget.
At 66.7% of the year we have spent 67.8% of the budget.

Balance YTD

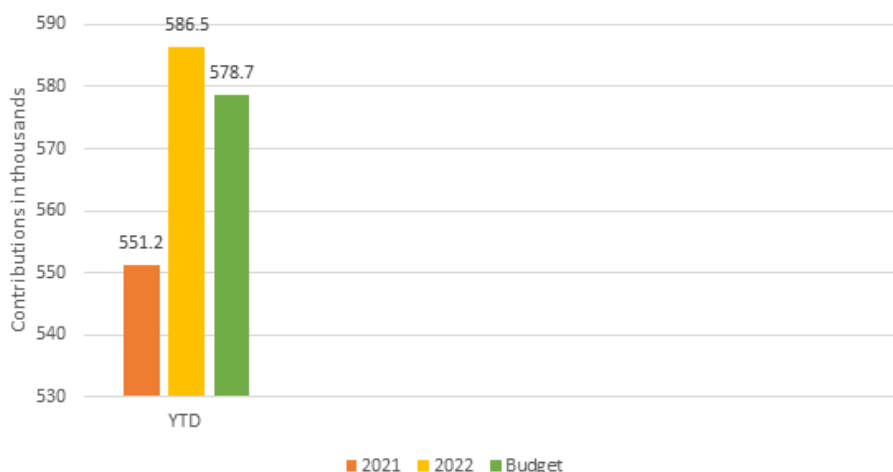
Revenue exceeds expenses by \$3.6K which is \$42.2K less than last year.

Summary of Restricted Accounts:
\$17656.35 was donated to various funds in August. \$6725 was donated to the Benevolence Fund. Also \$5000 was moved into the APNC fund for pastoral search expenses.

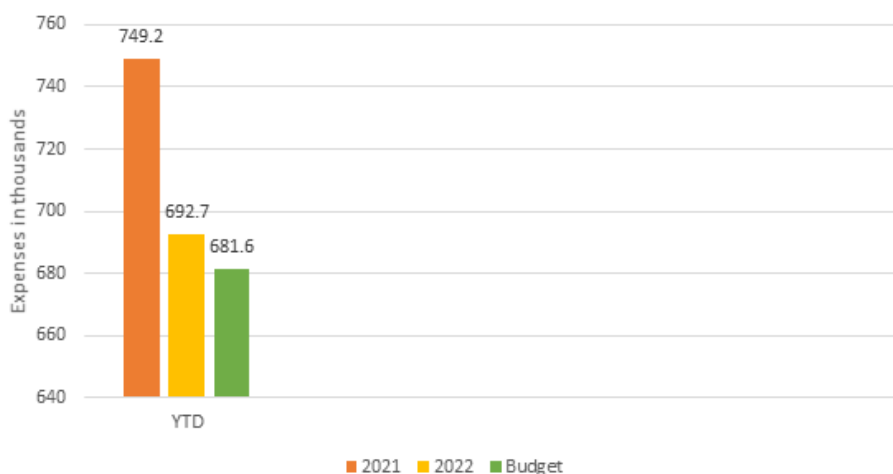
August Contributions



Contributions YTD



Expenses YTD



Narrative Budget - September 19, 2022

Every month in the church newsletter, you get a snapshot of where we are financially: income v. expenses, where we are supposed to be budget-wise v. where we actually are. Your Finance Team wants to keep you abreast of these details. Because financial numbers can be measured, we attempt to measure them well with charts and graphs and columns of numbers. What is trickier to measure is how does our budget bear God's love in the world? How do we harness the finances God entrusts to us to build God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven?

As an attempt to answer that question, consider these stories.

- So far in 2022, you've given \$20,000 in special offerings via Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) to relieve suffering in Ukraine. PDA works with functioning ministries already on the ground, supporting the efforts already underway. How much baby formula, or blankets did your money buy? How much food was purchased with your financial gifts? What about transportation? Shelter? This amount of money given the enormity of the need may seem like a drop in the bucket, but every drop matters, and, thanks to your generosity, our contributions were there when and where needed. Thank you.

- Snow removal from the winter of 2022 cost a whopping \$3,278. New and needed gloves for the Handbell Choir cost \$293. The Gathering Band, which brings vitality and a special vibe, cost \$8,764. New tables for Centennial Hall cost \$479 (and we've still not replaced all of the wornout tables). Gas for the church van cost \$475. Covid expenses (Filters for our air purifiers, COVID tests for staff, and masks for our guests) totaled \$3,369, and were drawn from your gifts earmarked for "Covid." These ordinary expenses are part of the 'overhead' of doing extraordinary ministry. Thank you (and thanks be to God) for your gifts.

- From the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, I've spent \$250 on motels and food for neighbors in need. Every time I visit with a neighbor in need, I remind myself, I'm talking to Jesus. I try to connect them to local resources that can better help them. A confidential pastoral need arose this summer and you generously rose to the occasion. Thank you.

- Our YTD gifts to DREAAM total \$3,511. Additionally, you helped raise over 600-pairs of new shoes in their summer drive. These gifts were appreciated. DREAAM pays us a small stipend to house their CEO and Finance offices in our Education Building, and for various other rooms and spaces on campus for meetings, retreats, after school programing, and more


- At The International Taste of First Pres, our congregation welcomed neighbors from all over the world; you picked up the tab (about \$5.71/person) for a delicious smorgasborg of foods from around the globe. We had a blast. Is this what the Communion of Saints looks like?

- Our YTD income (September 10, 2022) is \$704,132. Our YTD expenses are a little more, at \$742,876. My hunch is your end of year giving will bring these balances closer together.

- \$3,441 went to CU at Home so far in 2022—that's just part of the \$28,550 our Community Mission Deacons will share with our local mission partners. This is part of what being a good neighbor means. Thank you.

- We broadcast an edited version of our Sunday service on the radio (WDWS-1400) each Sunday. This costs \$5,460 per year, not to mention the services of our AV Tech, Robert Ferrer who records, edits, and sends. How many listeners are fed with this choir music and sermon each week?

- How many lives have you touched through your gifts to God through the ministry of this church? Where has your money taken God's love? Most of the money you gave to this church stayed local in the form of utility costs and salaries, music supplies and emergency rental assistance. Last year, your gifts paid for our lift to Centennial Hall; it's about time all of our people can make it downstairs for a congregational meal. Inclusivity matters. THANK YOU. Circles have prayed. Knitters have knitted. Friends in AA have found haven here. Our four paid choir section leaders are making college money and



putting their training to godly use. People who need counselling are getting it. The ministry at S.A.F.E. House is small but mighty; your dollars end up there every quarter.

How do you think God is using your life to heal the world? What good can God do through your offerings to the ministries of the church? Have you ever imagined how God transforms our efforts for good, for glory?

Two years ago, Byron Kemper, parsed our financial numbers and made these observations:

Where does a dollar of income for church programs come from? Most of the income, about 90-cents of the dollar, is derived from contributions, pledged and unpledged, from members and friends of the church. About 8-cents comes from a trust set up by a former member, the Cannon Trust. The importance of a source of funds like the Cannon Trust cannot be overemphasized in maintaining the excellence of our programs. We might all consider such a pay-forward gift to the church that keeps on giving well beyond our lifetime. About 1.5-cents come from transfers from restricted funds and the last 0.5-cent from miscellaneous sources. This dollar of income does not quite match our expenditures, so about 3.5-cents more is projected as a deficit. In terms of expenses, 69-cents of the dollar are spent on personnel and 31-cents on church programs and operations.

* * *

Studies show that we humans want our lives to matter. By investing your time, talent, and treasure in First Presbyterian Church, you help nurture the communion of saints here who serve neighbors near and far. The ministries of our church don't happen only because we have a flush budget; they happen because we have a gracious God calling us to be a caring and generous congregation. God brings hope to the world in part through your generosity. Friends are being made. Lives are being enriched.

Thank you, and, Thanks be to God!

Proposed 2023 Operating Budget

Predicting the financial future of any organization is always a challenge. The impact of COVID and the uncertainties of current economic conditions make this task even more difficult.

After a thorough review of the 2022 income and expenses, as well as plans for 2023, the Finance Committee recommends a modest 6% increase in giving for 2023. The 2022 budget and proposed 2023 budget are on the back of this narrative. Here are key components:

The proposed budget:

- Reflects estimated expenses associated with the addition of an Associate Pastor
- Keeps mission related expenses at the 2022 level
- Takes into account reduced expenses for Children, Youth and Family (CYF), as well as Building and Grounds due to recent resignations

Unfortunately, the budget does not include salary increases that we would like to provide to our staff who are invaluable to every aspect of our operation. A 2% raise would cost \$7,500, and a 4% raise would cost \$15,000. If pledges exceed a 6% increase, raises would be possible.

With this in mind, we encourage those of you who can give more than 6% to consider a higher level.

As always, changes to the budget may occur depending on congregational giving. Once pledges are determined, the Finance Committee will prepare a final budget for Session approval, usually in November.

Once a year we ask you to make a financial commitment to the ongoing financial security of the church and all that First Presbyterian Church does for members, the community and the world at large. Please give generously and know that the financial decisions are made with careful thought and prayerful consideration.

Please direct any questions to the Finance Committee: **Ann Webbink**, chair, **Byron Kemper**, **Mark Schoeffmann**, **Steve Tock** and **Dave Whitford**.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

2022 Budget and 2023 Proposed Budget

REVENUES	2022	2023
CONTRIBUTIONS		
Total Pledges	\$800,000	\$832,100
Total Plate	\$68,000	\$70,000
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$868,000	\$902,100
Cannon	\$80,000	\$80,000
TOTAL OTHER	\$35,340	\$37,340
Total Revenues	\$983,340	\$1,019,440
EXPENSES		
TOTAL CLERGY	\$164,137	\$252,137
PER CAPITA	\$27,500	\$26,000
STAFF MISC	\$5,900	\$5,900
Music Staff	\$84,470	\$82,130
Music Program	\$3,300	\$3,200
TOTAL MUSIC	\$87,770	\$85,330
WORSHIP	\$40,410	\$16,540
Mission staff	\$47,542	\$47,542
Mission program	\$80,700	\$80,700
TOTAL MISSION	\$128,242	\$128,242
CYF Staff	\$106,050	\$54,050
CYF Program	\$9,150	\$6,350
TOTAL CYF	\$115,200	\$60,400
ADULT EDUCATION	\$2,750	\$2,250
Admin staff	\$152,338	\$152,338
Admin Expenses	\$43,900	\$49,900
TOTAL OFFICE ADMIN	\$196,238	\$202,238
B&G Staff	\$104,995	\$82,500
B&G Expenses	\$139,100	\$145,100
TOTAL B&G	\$244,095	\$227,600
CONGREGATION CARE	\$1,000	\$400
HOSPITALITY	\$9,000	\$9,000
Total Expenses	\$1,022,242	\$1,016,037
Revenue-Expenses	-\$38,902	\$3,403

Consecration Sunday October 16

If you have not already returned your Pledge Card for 2023, plan to bring it Sunday, October 16, to the 9 AM service when pledges will be dedicated.



**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

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:

Ritchie DrennenFacility Manager, Ext. 237
Patty Farthing.....Office Assistant, Ext. 211
Robert FerrerAudio-visual Technician
Fred Foster Evening Custodian
Marcia FranksOffice Administrator, Ext. 210
Judi Geistlinger..... Commissioned Lay Pastor
Joe Grant..... Director of Music
Rachel Matthews Mission Coordinator/Parish Associate, Ext. 219
Ann Petry.....Accounting, Ext. 224
Shane Redmon Facility Assistant
Sora Shepherd..... Organist/Pianist
Val Smith English Language Learner Director, Ext. 235
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director
Kelsey Stremplewski.....Director Contemporary Worship Band

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