

September 2021



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

A Message to My Granddaughter

BY ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

Dear Mackenzie:

IT BEGINS TO LOOK as though you'll make it. I wouldn't have dared think so, let alone say so, a few days ago. But I do now, cautiously, realizing that a single setback could cancel out a dozen incremental gains. I want to believe that God doesn't play cat and mouse with us, at least not interminably. All those who love you have been on a psychic rollercoaster ever since your birth. Joy and fear have been all tangled up together and difficult to unravel. I want to try a bit of unraveling even so, and record a few of the things you have already done for those of us who love you and who will continue to love you, whether your lifespan is to be a few weeks or many years.

First of all, you have widened the circle of love. All sorts of people who never laid eyes on one another before are working together to save your life. They may not all use the word "love" for what they do, but they embody love. Some of them you'll never see again, and others will be focused on your life, and you on theirs, as long as you draw breath. If you are ever tempted, later on, to think of your "family" as only a few relatives, we will remind you of this extended family who fought for your life.

Who could have foreseen that 30 of your father's students, when they learned you were

continued on the next page

Faith in the Real World

Our fall "Faith in the Real World" series starts
THIS Sunday, September 12, at 10:15 AM in the Sanctuary.

These speakers have been asked to share how their work and their life is influenced by their faith. Join us for these refreshing talks from members of our church and community.

September 12 – Matthew Storie

Jazz and faith? Sacred music and saxophones? Matthew is working on his music DMA at the University of Illinois.

September 19 – Rob Dalhous III

As outreach director of CU at Home, Rob is close to our neighbors living without an address.

September 26 – Elizabeth Ainsworth & Andrew Leakey

Renowned Plant Biologists at the University of Illinois, who work to improve crops for adequate food production in the future.

October 3 – Bryant Seraphin

The Urbana Police Chief is active in his church and our community.

October 10 – *Simply This* Jazz Quintet

During the Sunday School hour, Matthew Storie's quintet, *Simply This*, will play. The idea was that we'd have music while we enjoyed coffee, tea, and donuts. Thanks to Covid concerns, we're nixing the food and drink, but not the song! *Simply This* reinterprets the classic two tenor sax jazz ensembles of the 1950's and 60's in a modern jazz through original compositions.

October 17 – Ken Chapman

A member of our congregation and science groupie, "How I've Changed My Mind".

October 24 – Betty Hollister

Betty will lead a discussion of a talk by Kate Bowler, "Everything Happens for a Reason (and other lies I've loved)."

October 31 – Spiritual Formation

The committee leads a discussion of All Saints Day, what it is, how did it come to be, what it means to those that mourn.

And more to follow in November and December.

in intensive care and needed blood, would independently go to the Oakland Bloodbank and offer theirs? Who would have thought that a 14-year-old black student in your mother's class at Berkeley High, hearing that you were having kidney trouble, would go to another teacher and ask, "How could I give one of my kidneys for Ms. Felix's sick baby?" Who could have expected the loving care given by the entire staff in the pediatrics and intensive-care unit? Or the phone calls, the cards and prayers? All we could have expected for sure was that your mother and father would pass an unexpected crash course in parenthood with flying colors.

All that has happened because you—simply because you are in need and you matter, and the love you represent calls out to be returned. Since we'd just as soon have experienced the love without the pain, maybe this will teach us to exercise love toward one another without needing a crisis to sensitize us.

The widening circle of human love reaches out beyond us to include a new awareness of God's love. God's healing work is done through human hands, Mackenzie; the laying on of hands is sacramental, whoever does it. When Rich, the large male nurse, tenderly lifts you from the bed where you are still attached to what seem like a dozen machines and monitors, and places you in your mother's or father's arms, saying that their embraces are as important as all the technology in restoring you to health, God is present.

To most of us, God's presence is unspectacular; only a few are granted visions. It is so unspectacular, in fact, that we usually miss it. The breath of God has breathed over you and into

you by every loving touch and gesture, whether or not those administering it are conscious of God's spirit in what they do. God takes whatever lies at hand and fashions it into something fresh and new.

Part of what has been keeping you alive is the incredible number of tubes and machines that are hooked up to you. I spend a fair amount of my professional time making caustic remarks about how technology deforms our lives. But when I first saw that mass of tubing encasing your tiny body I was not aggrieved but grateful, since I knew its role in keeping you alive. This technology's function is to render itself unnecessary by helping your tiny body begin to function by itself.

Not only have you widened the circle, but you have deepened the mysteries of love. There are things we will never understand, but within which we live. Here is one: What has happened to you is bad, and yet good has come of it. We can't make the bad good, but we can do things to alleviate it, as your parents' students did. Instead of making us bitter, suffering can make us tender, and help us to focus on others who are going through comparable experiences: those other babies in intensive care, their parents, their doctors and nurses, and (perhaps especially) those millions for whom no hospital care or life-prolonging devices are available.

Another of love's mysteries is this: What has been happening to you changes how we think of time. In those first days in the hospital, when your parents were sleeping on the floor to be on hand and nobody knew whether you would make it through the next 24 hours, we discovered that every day is a gift. The words "Mackenzie is still alive," or the announcement that there

had been a slight gain in your struggle were sufficient to make us feel like dancing in the streets. Though we have to think not only about today, but to plan for next week and next month, in the pediatrics intensive-care unit we have learned to savor the moment.

W. H. Auden, one of your grandfather's favorite poets, once gave the commencement address at Harvard University. He concluded a long speech with the words, "If thou must choose Between the chances, choose the odd, / Read the New Yorker, trust in God, / And take short views." Taking short views means remembering that every day is a gift to be accepted for what it is, a set of boundless new possibilities. I hope that we will never forget what we learned in the pediatrics ward: the sheer wonder of a single day in which you, Mackenzie, and those we love, and others elsewhere, are doing nothing more spectacular than breathing regularly.

You have also exposed the vulnerability of love. This is the hardest one of all, for to juxtapose love and vulnerability is to acknowledge the fragility of everything we hold dear. Simply by being, with the unavoidable possibility of not-being, you force us to examine things we would prefer not to confront. To be vulnerable is to be woundable, to be susceptible to harm, and there is no way to avoid recognizing that to love you is to open ourselves to the possibility of loss.

It seems unfair that love, the greatest thing of all, should open us to so much potential pain. Some people shield themselves from pain by avoiding commitments, on grounds that their price might be too great, creating wounds too deep. But love means taking those risks, and saying with our lives that they are worth taking be-

cause the rewards are so great. Better to possess love briefly than never to possess it at all.

Finally, Mackenzie, you have affirmed the reality of love. Would I be able to write these words if things were going badly? I hope I could, but it would be a severe test. "Why," I would be asking myself, "does all this happen to a tiny, newborn baby?" I know that there is one answer that does not tempt me: the pious statement that "whatever happens is God's will and we must accept it." It is not God's will that you or any of God's children should suffer or die in infancy. It is God's will that you live joyously and fully. And that's what all the doctors, nurses, orderlies, machines, and monitors are trying to bring about. If you live, Mackenzie, we'll all give thanks to God in whatever way we think of God. And if you don't live, we will refuse to be acquiescent and blindly accepting. We'll have to believe somehow that God is present in the defeats as well as in the victories—a God who has chosen to be as vulnerable as we are, who feels pain as we do, who would mourn your loss as we would.

I know that to affirm the reality of love is to look its opposite in the face and do our best, throughout a lifetime, to stare it down. That activity is called hope, and we usually invoke it when things are rough and our spirits are sagging rather than soaring. Sometimes we are almost afraid to hope, for fear we will somehow put a hex on things, or that it will lead to a letdown that is worse than never having hoped at all. Sometimes we have the crazy notion that we must bargain with God or fate in order to gain ground for hope.

I get my own hope, Mackenzie, from others—people stronger than I am,

who have gone through the worst and, amazingly are still able to affirm life. A long time ago some of those people compiled a song book, the Psalter. The songwriters are important because they are so honest. In one of those songs the writer says, "God, out of the depths have I cried to you." The songwriter doesn't waste time griping, "Why did you let me get into this mess?" but instead utters a cry for help: "I wait for God with longing, I put my hope in God's [promises]." These words, or words like them, have been encircling your bed these past weeks, Mackenzie. But that's not all, for the same writer who has spoken from the depths and waits in longing goes on to say in trust, "For in God love is unfailing, and great is God's power to deliver" (Ps. 130:7). I believe that the psalmist's "depths" also stand for the deepest and firmest realities we know, the place where the great assurances as well as the great questions are found. If we identify with the writer's cry of affliction, maybe we can also identify with his cry of affirmation.

(Years after this article first appeared in The Christian Century, Dr. Brown, now deceased, gave Matt Matthews permission to reprint it during Matt's ministry. At that time, he reported that Mackenzie was an active six-year-old.)

Fall Music Opportunities

As we move into early fall and activities ramp up at First Pres, please remember that you are welcome to participate in Chancel Choir and Upper Room Ringers, our bell choir.

If you simply enjoy singing and are willing to put in some Wednesday evening rehearsal time, come and join either or both of these groups. Choir meets from 7-8 PM.

We now have a new bell director, Libby Sternhagen. Libby is an experienced player and has subbed in our group in the past. She will have the first meeting of the group on Wednesday, September 8 from 6-7 PM. If you have some fundamental music reading skills you can drop by and see what "ringing" is all about.

Finance

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

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Contributions

Contributions in August to the Operating Fund were \$26.9K more than in 2020 but \$4.0K less than the budget at \$67.1K. The Year to Date total is below last year by \$13.5K and below the budgeted amount by \$17.5K. 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 66.7% through the year we have received 73.0% of the expected year's revenue.

Expenses

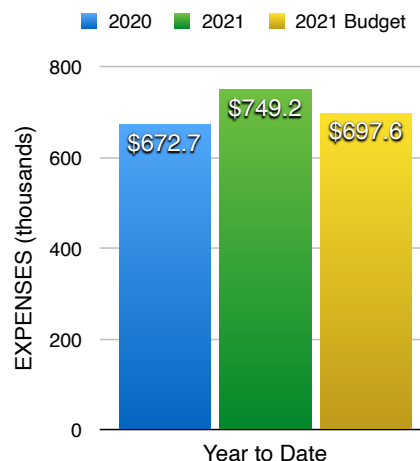
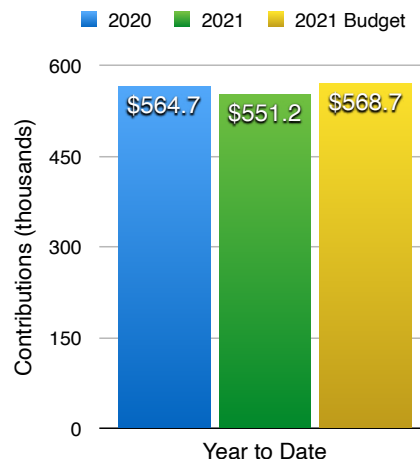
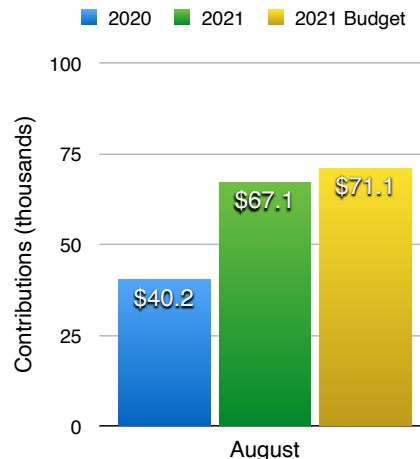
Year to Date expenses are \$51.6K above the budget at \$749.2K and more than in 2020 by \$76.5K. At 66.7% through the year we have experienced 71.6% of the expected year's expenses.

Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$45.8K which is \$103.7K less than at the end of August in 2020.

Restricted Funds

In addition to contributions to the operating fund there was \$5,125 donated last month to special offerings and funds restricted to specific purposes such as missions supported by our church.



Presbyterian Women

BY BRANDI LOWE, MODERATOR

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Presbyterian Women would like to invite you to come to one of the Circles where we nurture faith, build community, support mission, bring hope to those around us, and just get to know one another better. We laugh with each other, comfort one another, and sometimes cry together. And we always come away better after a meeting.

This year our study is based on Matthew 1 and is called *What My Grandmothers Taught Me: Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy*. We are so excited to be talking more about these women of the Bible. There are three times on the fourth Thursday of the month in which our circles are meeting. Each PW Circle will meet in Mae Chapin with the use of the OWL so that you can choose to come in person or use Zoom at home.

Circle of Joy: 10:30 AM
Led by **Kathy Schoeffmann** and **Brandi Lowe**

Circle of Faith: 1 PM
Led by **Julie Shult**

Circle of Peace: 7 PM
Led by **Diane Mortensen** and **June Cullum**

**** Note:** Zoom codes will change each month. Please contact the leader or church office if you need the Zoom link or password.

Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth, Family

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

Sunday School begins September 12!
We can't wait to see you!

We could still use some additional helpers and teachers. Please prayerfully consider and contact samantha@firstpres.church or mindy@firstpres.church to join our team.

Youth Fellowship Event

Our first youth fellowship event will be September 10 at 5 PM. We will be meeting at Old Orchard Links for some fun and fellowship as we play mini golf. Hope you can join us!

Sunday School Update

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

September 12 is the first day of Sunday School! Classes will gather in Westminster Hall after the 9 AM worship service before walking together to West Side Park. Class concludes at 11:05 AM when teachers will lead their students back to the alley to be picked up.

This semester, we have three classes: Preschool - Kindergarten, 1st Grade - 5th Grade, and 6th Grade - 12th Grade. This first week will be all about getting to know each other and adjusting to various safety precautions related to Covid-19. We'll play games and each student will receive an individually wrapped snack before they go home. Each class will begin a new unit on September 19:

- Preschool - Kindergarten: *I Learn About God* (Introduction to the Bible)
- 1st Grade - 5th Grade: Exodus
- 6th Grade - 12th Grade: Epistles

Classes will be held outside at West Side Park unless it is too cold or rainy in which case classes will be moved to either the cafe where we have an air purifier or gym where we can open the windows. When indoors, masks will be required. All adult volunteers must be vaccinated. Families also have the option of requesting at-home materials instead of attending in person.

Thank you so much to the wonderful volunteers who will be teaching and helping this year!

Please contact me (samantha@firstpres.church) if you have any questions or if you'd like to sign up to receive at-home materials.

Sholem Fest Fun in the Sun 2021

Our annual summer outing at Sholem Water Park in Centennial Park on Sunday, August 15, brought a beautiful

summer evening filled with fellowship and excitement. Over one hundred people from First Pres and DREAM enjoyed a carnival with games and prizes. **Eric Stickels**, **Mindy Watts-Ellis**, **Samantha Nichols** and **Pastors Matt and Rachel** supervised games while **Blaise Zamena** supervised active children. **Bill Stout** and **Lola Ruthsmansdorfer** were at the popcorn machine while **Andreas Coleman** was Mr. cotton candy man. Thanks to **Kurt Ruthsmansdorfer**, **Andreas Coleman** and **Andrew King** for transporting equipment between the church and park and **Ritchie Drennen** for organizing it. **John Muirhead** drove our church van. Kudos to **Cornicha Henderson** for coordinating with DREAM families through the planning team. Thanks to **Mary Gritten** and **Claudia Kirby** for staffing the prizes table and to **Gary Peterson** for leading the planning team and much more. **Sylvie Gambuli** helped with set up.

"Can we go in the water now? Please!" After great anticipation the water fun began as the sun set and supervision turned to young life guards. "No running! No splashing"; energy, smiles, screams of glee uncontained with a few shivers at the end.

Nurture and outreach committee members responsible for this event were **Greg Cozad**, **Bob Kirby**, **Tom Gilmore**, **Matt Matthews**, **Diane Mortenson**, **Gary Peterson**, **Linda Peterson**, **Eric Stickels**, **Jane Tock** and **Virginia Waaler**.



"Hope begins with the heart of God. As you grasp what the Father's heart is like, how He loves to give, then prayer will begin to feel completely natural to you."

Psalm 147:11 The Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love.

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer..."

1 Peter 5:10, 11 And the God of all Grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen

Bible Puzzle

THANKS TO LELAND ANDREWS FOR THIS SUBMISSION

Rev. Robert St. Clair, a retired United Methodist minister in Lancaster, OH included this Bible puzzle in his newsletter. The game was to find the 16 books of the Bible hidden in the following paragraph. Answer on page 10 of this issue.

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu. Kept people looking so hard for facts, and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam. Especially since the names of the books were not capitalized. But the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit that it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and, there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now for there really are 16 names of the Bible in this story!

Jays & Concerns

Sympathy to...

- The family and friends of **Arthur Robert "Bob" Twardock** who died September 3, 2021. Memorial Services will be held Sunday, September 12, at 1 PM at the church.
- The family and friends of **Ralph Sacket** who died August 18, 2021.
- The family and friends of **Chuck Kelly** who died August 5, 2021.

A **Prayer List** is sent out weekly on Tuesdays. If you know of someone who would like to be included in prayers, contact the church office. If you would like to receive the weekly email of prayer concerns, email marcia@firstpres.church.

Men's Prayer Group

The men of the church pray Mondays at 8 AM. For a zoom link contact our church office.

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

Free Little Pantry

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS, MISSION COORDINATOR
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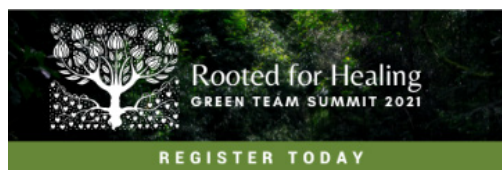
You will notice on the south side of the Christian Education Building facing Church Street is a Free Little Pantry. **Declan Pate** has installed this food supply as part of a project he is doing for his Eagle Scout designation.

Declan approached Building and Grounds about doing a small food pantry across from West Side Park several months ago. **Ritchie Drennan, Mindy Watts-Ellis, and Tom Ulen** met with him and his mother, and went over the site and what would be involved. Building and Grounds happily approved it.

We will monitoring it to keep it filled with food and essential items. Anyone can take from it and anyone can give to it. Here are some suggested items: small cereal boxes, self opening cans, protein bars, granola bars, water bottles, small Kleenex packs, wet wipes, nuts and dried fruit.

News from the Green Team

BY PAT PHILLIPS
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The Environmental Stewardship committee invites you to the Faith in Place 2021 Green Team Summit, "Rooted for Healing", from September 12 through 14. It's online, free, and registration is required. You can do that at <https://www.greenteamsummit.org/>. A schedule of events is posted at that site, and you can choose any or all that interest you. On Tuesday, one of the highlights will be The Sola Gratia farm in Urbana.

Recycling opportunities here at church continue, including

- 1) batteries, with both ends taped with clear tape;
- 2) Prescription pill bottles with labels removed;
- 3) eyeglasses (not cases); and
- 4) Clean Styrofoam with a #6 surrounded by 3 chasing arrows. The first two may be left in the Missions Closet in the hallway, and numbers 3 & 4 have receptacles in Westminster.

In mid-August a new water cooler with a bottle filler was installed on the second floor of the Education Building, replacing the old drinking fountain.



The Green Team thanks Presbyterian Women (PW)

for making this possible by providing the funds and the church maintenance staff for purchasing the unit and arranging for its installation. We're excited about this new purchase because it means disposable plastic cups and single-use bottles of water will no longer be needed. DREAMERS, ESL students and tutors, Sunday School teachers and students and anyone else can bring their own refillable water bottle to church activities.

This helps the environment by reducing the number of plastic cups and single-use bottles that go into our landfill. In addition, the water is filtered for any impurities that may occur due to the age of the water lines in the building. Please use refillable water bottles.



ESL Program

BY JEANETTE PYNE, ESL DIRECTOR
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In-person Classes

After 18 months of only offering online English courses, we finally opened our doors to in-person instruction on August 23rd. Many tutors were excited to begin teaching in-person classes and seeing their students face-to-face again. So far, we have 14 students registered for in-person class and everyday I am inviting new students to join us. These students come from the following countries: China, South Korea, Mexico, Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Poland, Guatemala and Venezuela. As you can see, we have a very diverse group of students.

Due to the delta variant ramping up, we have taken extra precautions to keep our students and tutors safe. Everyone is fully vaccinated, wearing masks, and social distancing in class when possible. We have reinstated contact tracing and unfortunately, removed our beloved Café Time to reduce the likelihood of exposures to COVID. However, once the virus is under control, we'll be able to enjoy Café Time again.

Online Classes

Even though we're offering in-person classes, many of our students want to take classes online because of the resurgence in COVID cases. This presents a bit of a quandary for me as the director. Most tutors want to be in-person because online teaching is much more time-consuming when it comes to instructional preparation, and most returning students want to be online. So, right now, we have about 25 students taking online class and 4 tutors teaching them, **Harry Bremer, Mike Havey, Tessa Dalton,**

and myself. Though online instruction certainly is a safe and convenient option for our students, it's not as easy to provide. There is a longer waiting list for the online option than the in-person option.

Call for More Volunteer Tutors

If you or anyone you know would like to engage in fulfilling volunteer work, then please contact the ESL Director at jeanette@firstpres.church to learn more about volunteering. We are in need of tutors for the online and in-person class sections.

The Republic of Cuba

Pre Colonial History

BY BOB KIRBY, CUBA PARTNERS
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The Republic of Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean and the second most populated country after Haiti. Cuba is a multiethnic nation whose culture reflects the cultures of indigenous people, Spain, Central Africa, China, The United States and the Soviet Union.

When Columbus discovered Cuba in 1492 there were 50,000 indigenous people. The Cibony and Taíno people originated in South America and the Guanajatabey people in Hispaniola. The name "Cuba" probably comes from the Taíno language word, "cubao" meaning where fertile land is abundant or "coabana" meaning a great place.

Diego Velázquez, the first Spanish Governor of Cuba (1511-1524), pacified the island within eleven years and died the richest Spaniard in the Americas. Native people were enslaved and converted to Catholicism. Among atrocities employed against native

people were Irish greyhound hunting dogs (a breed of slave dog) bred to track down, tear apart and bury their prey. Enslavement, small pox and measles ravaged the original people. By 1522 the native population was so small that African slaves were required to sustain a workforce. Decades later the native population had been exterminated. Interaction between Spanish warriors and native women had assured "mestizos" an enduring place among Cuban bloodlines.

There is little influence of indigenous people on modern Cuban culture. A few words in Cuban Spanish remain. Tobacco farming was indigenous and later important to the Cuban economy. One name has been immortalized. Hatuey was the hero of the indigenous people. He was able to slow conquest by the Spanish. The popular beer, "Hautuey", carries his name. It was Cuba's first premium beer introduced in 1927 and now produced in South Florida. One remnant of early native history is thus acknowledged. In general however native history has been long suppressed.

Cuba remained a colony of Spain for four hundred years except for an eleven month occupation by England in 1762. As a result of the Spanish American War in 1898 Cuba was occupied by the United States which continued to dominate Cuba until the revolution of 1959. The US continues to occupy 45 square miles of Cuban territory at Guantánamo Bay in south-eastern Cuba.

Next month: Early Colonialism

References: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba>; The History of Cuba, Clifford L. Staten, St. Martin's Press Griffin, 2003; Cuba: A New History, Richard Gott, Yale University Press, 2004

I Was In Prison and You Remembered Me

BY BOB KIRBY

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"Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

(Hebrews 13:1-3)

I can only imagine the suffering of incarceration. The isolation and loss of relationships, the dissolution of life's dreams, living with guilt. Things once loved and seen and heard and smelled and tasted gone. Boredom and the fear and long days and the years. Connection with friends and family wane as time is served. Cell mates come and go and prisoners are often moved within and between prisons making it difficult to form friendships.

For many, God's word and prayer provide refuge from fear and loneliness and hope through Christ. God protects, forgives, loves unconditionally and forever.

We have two young men with a relationship with First Pres who are incarcerated. Both will be deported on completion of their sentences after the next seven and eight years. Both would find joy in a Christian friend.

Jean Augustín Fukama Kabika (DOB 02/02/84).

"Fukama" means to kneel and Fukama-Kabika means "if you kneel you will be blessed" (humility). He practiced family medicine in Congo and immigrated to the United States to build a better life. He left his parents

and three siblings in Kinshasa. He is single.

On arriving in Champaign Fukama learned English through Parkland College while working two factory shifts. He served as the sponsor for his cousin's family of seven when they immigrated. He took Parkland training to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA), was licensed and had just been employed at a local nursing home at the time of his arrest.

Fukama participated in our Franco-phone worship at First Pres, attended the Men's Tuesday Morning Bible Study and our Health Professions Study Group. He was about to obtain his citizenship and bring his parents to the US.

During incarceration Fukama completed University of Illinois courses and wrote a book about the color of Jesus' skin. He attends chapel and a bible study and exchanges letters with several members of the First Pres community. He cherishes notes and visits from members of his church community.

Fukama is now known as Y25555 an inmate at the Illinois River Correctional Center in Canton, IL.

Toti Tatu Commis (DOB 09/30/79)

Toti completed college in Industrial Electronics and Computer Science. He had his own business in Congo repairing computers and play stations. His parents died when he was a teen. He has five living siblings. Toti adopted a niece who remains very close to his heart and then married and was blessed with three other children now ages 10, 7 and 6.

On arrival in the US Toti worked factory shifts to support his family and participated in our First Pres relocation ministry. Several First Pres families met him then. He had been approved for citizenship a month before his arrest. Since his incarceration he and his wife divorced and he has become estranged from his children.

Toti has long been a faithful Christian. He looks to God for support through bible study and a strong prayer life. He has worked hard to improve his English and has recently mastered several grammar books. He is also learning Spanish. He values highly his friendship with the First Pres Community particularly those who have written letters, visited and mailed Christian literature.

Toti is now known as Y33284 an inmate at the Danville Correctional Center.

"I was in prison and you came to visit me ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."
(Matthew 25:36, 40)

For rules on communicating by mail, text or video conference:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/aboutus/Pages/faq.aspx#qst8>

For visitation in person see individual prison guidelines here: <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/facilities/Pages/AllFacilities.aspx>

Someone Cares

NAOMI REMPE

Our Monday Women's Bible Study group first reached out to Fukama through **Miriam Chenault** who is a member of our Bible Study. He is her "adopted" son. We typically each write a little note on a card to him each time we meet.

Bob Kirby made us aware of Toti after he knew we were corresponding with Fukama so we began writing notes to him each time we meet also. Our co-ordinator usually adds to the notes to let them know what we are studying.

Others in the group send cards for special occasions or send copies of a daily devotional. One member of our group sent Toti a copy of the book we had been studying. Toti writes to us quite frequently, and has shown great improvement since Bob has shared grammar books with him.

A small gesture on our part is very important to them - someone cares. And our lives are enriched by them. Carrying on and growing in their faith while in prison is no small accomplishment.

Ladies of Faith

MIRIAM CHENAULT

Several years ago, Woody and I learned that one of our congregation who was in prison could benefit from letters written to him. I began writing a couple letters each month and we loved the letters he wrote to us. Little did I know that this would turn into a deep friendship between Fukama, Woody and myself. We started visiting him in prison and we now consider

him part of our family, he calls us Papa Woody and Mama Miriam. The Monday Night Bible Study also began writing encouraging notes to him. He loves their letters and refers to them as The Ladies of Faith. Fukama is a wonderful person and we love him.

My Heart Breaks

JANE TOCK

I write regularly to Toti and Fukama and they write often. Letters are long and heart-felt. They appreciate mail and are so happy to "practice" English writing skills. My heart breaks for these men and their unforgiving situations. They need our care and our prayers. I am thankful for the loving efforts of our congregation to ease their pain and heart ache.

Bible Puzzle Answer from Page 6

I once made a **remark** about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a **lulu**. **Kept** people **looking so hard for facts**, and for others it was a **revelation**. Some were in a **jam**. **Especially** since the names of the books were not capitalized. But the **truth** finally struck home to **numbers** of readers. To others it was a real **job**. We want it to be **a most** fascinating few moments for you. **Yes, there** will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require **judges** to help them. I will quickly admit that **it usually** takes a minister to find one of them, and, there will be loud **lamentations** when it is found. A little lady says **she brews** a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can **compete**. **Relax now** for there really are 16 names of the Bible in this story!



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

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Change Service Requested



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Sunday:

9 AM Worship/Sanctuary

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. All Sunday School and Adult Education opportunities are through Zoom.

Contact the church office for more information.

Pastors:

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
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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.