

April 2017



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

*The passion of Holy Week leads us
to the joy of Easter!*

Palm Sunday, April 9

- 8 AM Contemplative Worship/Sanctuary
- 9 AM Traditional Worship/Sanctuary
- 9 AM Contemporary Worship/Centennial Hall

Maundy Thursday, April 13

- 7 PM Communion Service/Sanctuary

Good Friday, April 14

- 12 NOON Worship/Sanctuary
(combined service with First Methodist)

Easter Sunday, April 16

- 8 & 9:30 AM Worship/Sanctuary

Spring Music Sunday May 7

Songs of Prayer and Praise

8 and 9:30 AM services

Note the time for the services! Both will feature a selection of sacred music from a wide variety of periods and styles. Included will be works by Handel, Fauré, and two movements from Mozart's *Missa Brevis in D*. Choir, soloists, orchestra and organ will perform as part of our worship services.

Pastor's Pen

BY CHUCK CARLSON, INTERIM HEAD OF STAFF
(chuck@firstpres.church)

Lent is a poignant reminder of sacrificial love and its power. Jesus calls us to release all attachments to those things impeding our attachment to follow him on that path. That is why Lent becomes a self-reflective time. St. Augustine offers a perceptive observation; "We are hopeless creatures, and the less we concentrate on our own sins, the more interested we become in the sins of others. We seek to criticize, not to correct. Unable to excuse ourselves, we are ready to accuse others."

That explains the power of forgiveness Jesus calls us to embrace not only for others, but for ourselves. Receiving the gift of salvation is receiving the gift of forgiveness, God's forgiveness of us through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. We forgive one another and ask God to forgive us. Why? Because we are all in this together.

The journey of Lent is a process continuing throughout our lives. That is because it takes the forgiving, grace-filled love of Christ to take shape and be formed in us over a lifetime. Are you having difficulty forgiving someone today? You are not alone. It is not instant because we first have to acknowledge the hurt of what has happened when we were treated unfairly. What the willingness and intention to forgive does is open the door for both us and the other to begin again. Space is created for redemption to occur. That is what Jesus did for us. He opened the window of God's love, allowing us to breathe

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Pastor's Pen Continued

in that love and be transformed by it, all judgment released. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (*John 3:17*). The 'might' part is up to you and me. In any relational transaction, I must offer the possibility of forgiveness and the other must step forward to receive it. Then the Holy Spirit can breathe in new hope and life.

Of course, without forgiveness, resentment builds in us. We all know resentments turn into hostility and anger. Hatred, not love, is formed, and eats away at our hearts, destroying our sense of shalom. The path of forgiveness Christ calls us to follow lies at the core of Lent. He leads us in the light of his love through a cross and resurrection, sustaining us along the way. Perhaps this is why Jesus has so many admirers and so few followers. We like the idea of forgiveness, but not the reality of it. Hard work is demanded of us, like the work of Christ's sacrificial love on our behalf as he followed God's call to Jerusalem.

One of the opportunities we are offered in Lent is the choice to support the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. Through this offering we bring hope to the most vulnerable in our world. From disaster assistance to the Self-Development of People we stand with those in need. Helping a person

reform a life after prison with job training and assistance, supporting a host of environmental issues, assisting refugees including education of refugee children, emergency supplies, and assistance for congregations receiving refugees into their communities, One Great Hour brings the light of Christ's love into our world. You will be hearing more about this offering in worship, and it will be received on Easter Sunday. If you are interested in learning more of what this offering does in the lives of people, visit the One Great Hour of Sharing website (www.presbyterianmission.org/oghs) to find out more information.

Worship opportunities for Holy Week include our Maundy Thursday worship and communion at 7 PM in the Sanctuary. Our joint Good Friday worship with First Methodist will be held at 12 NOON in our sanctuary this year. Worship services Easter Sunday will be held at 8 and 9:30 AM.

I pray that you experience our Lord's blessing as you follow Jesus throughout the remainder of Lent.

With gratitude,
Chuck

Spring Opportunities

Peter Yau has chosen for his next book study *Pilgrims Regress* by C. S. Lewis. The first week, starting April 23, will be an overview of the book and the first chapter. This class will meet Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM for 10 weeks in the Parlor. If you cannot make all of them please come as each week will be a chapter discussion. Books are available for \$10 on April 9 in Westminster Hall and also during class.

SAVE THE DATE: for our next Courageous Conversation on May 30 with a workshop from 12-2 PM and a program in the evening 6:30-8 PM. Our guest speaker is **Dr. M. Daniel Carroll** who is a Old Testament scholar. The topic is "What can the Bible teach us about immigration?"

Hope you will all come and bring a friend. Punch and cookies afterwards. Sign-up for the workshop by contacting **Claudia Kirby** at claudia.a.kirby@gmail.com.

A Glimpse Into Our Past

In September of 1850, a farmer by the name of Robert Dean, traveled some 83 miles, probably on horseback, to the Palestine Presbytery meeting. He delivered a petition signed by him, his wife, and 9 of his neighbors, seeking to organize a Presbyterian Church in their area.

On May 1, 1851, the Presbytery reported the organization of a church in Urbana of 8 members which later became First Presbyterian Church of Champaign.

Prayer Corner



Look, the Lamb

What will your mind's eye see as you worship on Easter? When John the Baptist saw Jesus walk by he said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) The sacrifice of a lamb was made every morning and evening in the Temple for the sins of the people. John recognizes Jesus as God in the flesh whose death would be the final perfect sacrifice to remove the sin of the world.

Pray that seeing Jesus as the Lamb of God slain for us will enrich our understanding of his death.

Pastor Don Follis, director of Pastor-to-Pastor Initiatives and our FPCC summer pastor in 2015, will offer his popular and poignant seminar on grieving on April 29 at First United Methodist Church of Rantoul.

Grieving in a Forward Direction

8:30 AM to 12 NOON

Saturday, April 29

First United Methodist Church

200 South Century Blvd., Rantoul, IL

Jays & Concerns

Congratulations to...

- **Timothee Pukuta** and **Jolina Ntambwe Mujinga** who were recently married;
- **Alain and Nadeige Ngenzi** on the recent birth of son, Destinee.

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Nadine Sutton** who died February 18, 2017. A memorial service is planned at a later date.
- the family of **Eric and Kristi Corbin** on the death of Eric's stepfather, **Walter Rich**, on March 10, 2017.

Promote Justice, Build Stronger Communities, Seek Economic Equity...Sunday, April 2, was **Justice Sunday** for Presbyterians when we prayed for our Self Development of People Ministry.

You can support this ministry, as well as the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, through our denomination's **One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)**. OGHS will be received on Easter Sunday.

Easter lilies and flowers will adorn our Sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 16. Plants, \$13 each, may be given in memory or honor of someone. Either mail your check to the church office or drop in the offering plate on Sunday mornings. Be sure to include a note for who the plant is in memory or honor of.

Children, Youth and Family Ministry



Congratulations to these young disciples who have completed their Bible class and received the gift of a Bible from the church; **Marleoange Mondebele, Willy Brindel Kuignou, Mike Musasa, Charlie Wixson, and David Kabeya.** We pray that the Lord helps them continue to grow in understanding of God's word as they continue on their faith journeys. Be sure to share your favorite scripture passage with them and encourage them to look it up in the days ahead.

Sunday School Mission Work

The children created 31 bean bags that were donated to the DREAAM House. We hope the DREAAM children are enjoying games with them! We are currently collecting school supplies for our Cuban church partners for use in their Sunday school program and creating a special Lord's Supper tablecloth for their worship space. The children will be making two tablecloths, one for the Cuban church to use, and one for our own church to use during communion. Each tablecloth will consist of long purple and yellow panels. The purple panels are painted with dark purple images of grapes and the yellow panels are painted with golden images of wheat. The panels for our sister church tablecloth are almost finished!

Children have the fish banks to start collecting coins for the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. Fish banks will be collected on Easter Sunday. The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering supports Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Self Development of People, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program of the PCUSA. Please give what you can. If your child was absent and did not receive a fish bank, just stop by the CYF office in the education building and Mindy will get one for you.

Sunday School News

We are continuing the theme of God's word to build upon what the children learned last semester. The word has become flesh and is dwelling among us now in our story line. We will be listening closely to the words Jesus had to share with us. We will especially be spending time with the words of Christ during the Last Supper. **There will be no Sunday School or child care on Easter Sunday, April 16.** Please be prepared to have your child present with you in worship for this holy day.

In March we focused on the *Shema*, the greatest commandment to love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, and might, and the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. The children explored how Jesus had a way of saying the unexpected and turning our perceptions upside down. Our middle school class made a video about the beatitudes that was used during children's church to help teach the younger children. Children engaged with the scripture through games, art, and drama.

In April, we will be studying the Lord's Supper. As part of this study we will be learning of the last night Jesus spent with his disciples celebrating the Passover, as well as the sacrament of Communion, in

which we continue to remember Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. A special celebration of the Lord's Supper has been approved by Session and will conclude our unit of study on April 23. A personal invitation will be sent to all families regarding this special children's church time and parents are encouraged to take part. All of the Sunday School children in attendance on April 30 will be in worship to share the experience of communion with the greater congregation.

The high school class is continuing their study of the many facets of Jesus as teacher, healer, shepherd, servant, miracle worker, and savior. We have a great group of young people meeting regularly for brunch and discussion at 10:30-11:30 AM Sundays on the second floor of the education building.

We have a healthy population of children eager to hear the word of God. We need loving, caring adults to share their love of God with them. If you would like to get involved in this ministry, please contact Mindy or a member of the CYF team; **Kristi Carlson, Lizz Pippin, Patty Farthing, Mel Leichter, Sabrina Hwu, Simao Nhoca, or Joyce Wittler.** Perhaps you would like to help one of our current teachers in the classroom; **Claudia Kirby, Marjorie Wixson, Judy Hendrickson, Beryl Forewah, Mel Leichter, Joyce Wittler, Lizz Pippin, and Sabrina Hwu.** If classroom teaching is not for you, you could help in other ways. Be a door greeter, help prepare snack, be an adult helper for the choir rehearsal, be an adult presence at the church van loading after Sunday school, or help drive some kids to and from church. Your time commitment can be tailored to your needs. Can only do it once or twice a month? We can still find a role for you in the ministry!



SAVE the DATE!
 Saturday, April 15, 2017
 East Central Illinois Refugee
 Mutual Assistance Center
 (ECIRMAC) fundraiser...

Round Barn Center kicking off
 at 6 PM with a silent auction
 and entertainment followed by
 a dinner at 7 PM.

Tickets are \$75 each or a table
 of 8 for \$550.

Contact ECIRMAC for more
 information.
 (<http://ecirmac.weebly.com>)

Forward 150 Pledge Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, FINANCE CHAIR
 (mschoeffmann@mchsi.com)

We are now in the last year of this 3-year capital improvement program. To ensure sufficient funding will be available for the remaining projects, all members with outstanding balances in their pledges were contacted. I am pleased to report that based on the response to this communication we expect to receive more than adequate donations for the scheduled work.

Of the 184 pledging units, 114 have completed or exceeded their commitments as of the end of February and an additional 24 have responded that they expect to complete their pledge this year. This results in over \$854,000 available for approved projects.

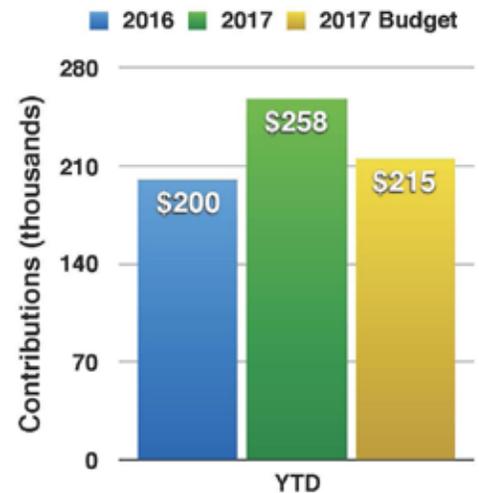
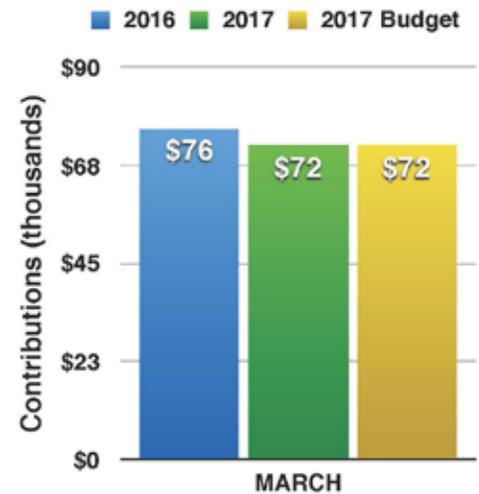
These projects are: restoration of the sanctuary stained glass windows (\$700,000), outdoor signage (\$40,000), air conditioner replacement in the education building (\$62,000), and missions (\$4,730).

The completion of all pledges will allow for the consideration of projects beyond those currently approved. The pace of receipt of contributions for this program has exceeded expectations. This eliminated the need to temporarily borrow any funds for the work, saving anticipated interest charges.

Monthly Contributions

Contributions in March were \$4K less than 2016 but right on budget at \$72K. The Year to Date totals continue our strong start in 2017. This exceeded last year by \$58K and the budgeted amount by \$43K. The increase in this year's contributions continue to offset the decrease in prepaid pledges (those paid in the year prior to the pledge year) for 2017 compared to 2016.

These prepaid pledges are prorated over the year with 1/12 added to each month's contributions.



Session Notes

At the March Session meeting, the Session approved...

- ♦ Extending an invitation for Dr. M. Daniel Carroll to present the next Courageous Conversation on Tuesday, May 30;
- ♦ To move the May 7 Communion to Sunday, April 30, due to May 7 being Music Sunday;
- ♦ A revised Building Usage Policy;
- ♦ A special Session meeting on March 26 to consider a proposal from CYF to serve Communion during Children's Church on April 23;
- ♦ A Session Retreat on Saturday, April 1.

Your Church

Church Wide Survey

Late in 2016, the Membership Team of First Presbyterian Church conducted a survey of participants in the life of First Pres. There were 117 responses to the survey. Below you will see the responses to the rating-type questions posed, as well as summaries of the long-form questions. We are pleased to see that our church is rated by most as friendly and welcoming, as well as effective in engaging volunteers. The areas for growth mentioned are very helpful to the Membership Team, and to Session, as we strive to help our church be the church God intends it to be. To view the survey results in chart form, please visit <https://goo.gl/KD4Cba>

How friendly is our church?

Very Unfriendly				Very friendly
0	6	25	51	33

How connected do you feel to this congregation?

Very disconnected				Very connected
5	18	31	35	28

Does the church provide enough opportunities for fellowship?

Definitely no				Definitely yes
0	9	25	44	37

How well do people in the community know who we are?

Not well at all				Very well
6	27	45	28	4

How well do people in the community know where we are located?

Not well at all				Very well
2	17	40	36	16

How well do people in the community know what our mission is?

Not well at all				Very well
15	40	39	15	1

How welcome do we make everyone feel?

Very unwelcome				Very welcome
1	10	33	51	21

Overall, how satisfied are you with this church?

Very unsatisfied				Very satisfied
1	20	28	46	21

How well do we balance worship styles to attract new members?

Not well at all				Very well
5	11	38	37	22

How effectively does this church engage volunteers in various ministries?

Very ineffectively				Very effectively
3	9	34	38	27

In the last six months, how often have you been involved in worship and/or church activities?

Once or twice				Multiple times a week
15	10	29	33	27

How has your commitment to First Presbyterian changed in the last year?

Much less				Much more committed
13	16	57	19	8

Summary of responses to long-form questions:

What suggestions do you have for engaging more people?

1. Make children, youth and young adults a priority.
A young adult group would attract students from Parkland and U of I.
Make kids visible in worship services again.
Make volunteering to teach our kids a priority

2. Worship
Dual services at 9 does not seem to

- be working. (strain on pastors, parking, distraction)
Offer traditional service at 10:30
Make sure all services are "time efficient"
Make services more participatory
Blend music styles at services

3. Music
Publicize music Sundays better
Strong music component at traditional service appeals to University community
4. Volunteers
Expand the base by matching talents and opportunities
More training for volunteers
Offer a 4 - 6 weeks small group session with emphasis on fellowship and exploring God-given talents
Provide opportunities for people to do specific jobs instead of long-term commitments to committee meetings
Ask for help more frequently for both short and long term opportunities to accommodate people's varying schedules
PERSONALLY INVITE people to participate

5. Narrow focus
Provide core services to our church members
Clarify "who we are"
More people needed in pastoral care
Make some "tough decisions" to decide what services can/should we offer

6. Outreach/hospitality/communication
Expand our presence on social media
Offer more opportunities for fellowship
Have "greeters" stationed at every door before and after services

7. Hire a senior pastor

Are you interested in more volunteer opportunities? If so, what kind of opportunities?

It was generally felt that many were already involved and could not take on more. Suggestions offered:

1. More short term projects.
2. Other go and serve opportunities.
3. Promote community wide projects.
4. Support immigrant community.
5. Assist in promoting community awareness of our church.

What is one thing we as a church could do better?

1. Find a new pastor ASAP
2. Better communication
3. More unity and agreement; support one another.
4. Be less money focused.
5. Welcome young families and the 20-40 age group.
6. Follow the Book of Order and Session approvals.
7. More blended services.
8. Do some things great rather than many not as well.
9. Ensure that the ministries of the church follow the principles from the book *Toxic Charity*.
10. Get out of your comfort zone, greet and contact.
11. Assimilate new members.
12. Publicize, let the community know who and what we are.

13. Utilize facilities for more outside groups.

14. More small group involvement.

15. Reach out to those not attending.

16. Embrace diversity.

How can you help the Membership Committee?

1. Ask for a real commitment from new members, not just membership.
2. Be open to new ideas recommended by all members.
3. Encourage volunteering and appreciate any amount of time members can share. (There were some saying I can't give time or I don't want to be a member.)
4. Use email to members about church events to encourage participation.
5. Establish a new committee for church growth and evangelism.

New Email Addresses

As mentioned in February's newsletter, we are now using a new domain name: firstpres.church. You can now reach our church's website at www.firstpres.church and you can email any staff member at [theirfirstname]@firstpres.church. For example, Eric Corbin's address is now eric@firstpres.church. This is much shorter and simpler than previous addresses. The old addresses will still work just fine if you wish to use them. However, we will be promoting only the new addresses in correspondence, and emails you receive from the staff will soon come from these new addresses. If you have any questions, feel free to call or email eric@firstpres.church.

Stephen Ministers want to be of service. They train for over 50 hours in basic counseling and ministry as well as actively participate in their own Christian growth and effective sharing with others. They know how to listen, provide perspective, maintain total confidence and privacy, and walk with you through turbulent times.

If you would like to meet with a Stephen Minister, call **Linda Sandquist** or **Chuck Carlson** at 356-7238. If you are interested in training to be a Stephen Minister, we have a training class beginning May 3 to be held successive Wednesdays from 10-12 through September of 2017.

Welcome Robert!

Please welcome to the staff our new part-time A/V Technician, **Robert Ferrer**. Robert comes to us with many years' experience with audio-visual systems. Most recently, Robert worked at Grainger Engineering Library at the U of I, providing support in using audio-visual and computing technology. He has a strong desire to use technology to support spiritual formation.

Eric will be working to train him on the systems we use here at First Pres, and then he will take over the responsibility for audio-visual system on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings, in particular. He will also be available to manage audio-visual needs for special events, such as Courageous Conversations and memorial services.

Please continue to communicate needs for audio-visual services through the church office, and Eric will schedule Robert for special events, as needed.

Face to Face with the Lukau Family



Parcle Lukau, (3 years) Parfait Lukau, Nadeige Lumbu and Kermelis Lukau (7 months)

Who are your favorite bible characters?

Nadeige- Mary. She was young and poor but she had great faith and was obedient to God.

Parfait: I think Peter. He had courage and great faith to follow Jesus and he kept trying to learn and grow in his faith. Ultimately he was a favorite of Jesus who led the church.

What brought you to First Presbyterian?

Well, we came because we heard about the church. But, more important, is why we consider this our church family. And that is because we are Christians and people here are very friendly and kind as Christians should be. We grew up in the Baptist Church but we love being members of the Presbyterian Church.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

Worship. Yes, for sure. We like the litany and the rituals. We agree with the doctrine that is preached.

Tell us about yourselves.

We are from Bas-Congo and the city of Mbanza-Ngungu in Southwest Congo. Our town is about the size of Champaign-Urbana and is also very friendly. We are mostly

known for our caves.

We have large families. Each of us has seven siblings and parents in Africa. We are living with Parfait's younger brother, Peguy and cousin, Tresor. We both work at Hearthside Food Solutions in Gibson City now. In Congo, Parfait taught high school history and geography before he served as principal while Nadeige stayed at home.

At church, Parfait volunteers in the relocation and transportation ministries and we both attended the ESL Bible Study.

What do you do in your free time?

When we are not working or at Parkland we do our shopping, play with the kids, visit friends and watch some TV.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

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Change Service Requested



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

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Allegra Martin..... Director of Children’s Music
Debra Miller..... ESL Coordinator, Ext. 235
Chris Penny Facilities Manager, Ext. 237
Ann Petry Accounting, Ext. 224
Andrea Pope..... Contemporary Worship Director, Ext. 215
Richard Rossi Church Musician
Mindy Watts-Ellis .. Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

Sunday:

- 8 and 9 AM Traditional Worship
- 9 AM Children and Youth Education
- 9 AM The Gathering (Contemporary Worship)
- 10:30 AM High School Youth Education

Saturday:

- 6 PM Praise & Prayer Gathering
(French-English Service) Centennial Hall

The newsletter is published monthly. Deadline is the last Monday of the month for the following month’s publication. Send submissions to marcia@firstpres.church.