

July 2016



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Pastor's Pen

BY CHUCK CARLSON, INTERIM HEAD PASTOR

(chuck.carlson@firstchurchchampaign.org)

I have been pondering a lot on Paul's comment to the Galatians. As usual he is reflecting with a community trying to sort out what it means to get along with each other. He tells them that "the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (*Gal. 5:6*).

How is Jesus asking me to love? That is the question that I keep coming back to. Love and grace transcend the justice of the law. That is what the woman caught in adultery discovered in her interaction with Jesus. Speaking of her condemners, Jesus asks, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir". "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (*John 8:10-11*).

Once again, our church is in a cultural transition. Sometimes children annoy us by grabbing a donut hole while we are having coffee or banging the piano during the coffee hour. I believe love calls us to tolerance and understanding. God has placed these children among us. How can we show love and hospitality so that their experience of church is a place they can hardly wait to come and enjoy the presence of Jesus through us? Our job is to get out of the way and allow Jesus to be Jesus who tells us, like he did the disciples when they sternly ordered the children not to touch him and said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Luke 18:15-16*).

Of course we must set appropriate boundaries. But our main goal is to do it through love and a spirit of hospitality. This is true in everything we do in our relationships with people in community, children and adults. The question is how we welcome others different from us into our communities and churches. How do we create spaces where those different from us feel the welcome love of Jesus?

Jesus loves to challenge us. In the spirit of what I mentioned last Sunday, as we pray for our church to grow and attract families, God will

YOU'RE INVITED!

Sholem Summer Festival

Food, games, swimming and
musical entertainment

Let's share an evening in Centennial Park on August 14. Please invite your friends, extended family and neighbors. This is an all church time for fellowship and fun.

We will start with a potluck at the pavilion north of Sholem Pool at 6:30 PM with some music. Bring a salad, side or dessert to share and a folding chair if you wish.

Some of us will continue to "chew the fat" and just relax and others will have free access at 7:30 PM to all the water park to splash and scream. This is an all generational, all congregational, all community event and it is all just for fun. And it will be all the more wonderful if you are there!!

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Pastor's Pen continued

give us opportunities to do so. How will we handle and respond to what God does? The profile of what we meant by that request looks a lot different from what we imagined. As we look ahead to acquiring a new pastor I expect God to continue to surprise us. What do you think?

Like T.S.Eliot asked, "What life have you if you have not life together?" And once we are called by Christ into his community of the church our common life is going to be sustained by our ability to practice confession when we offend or hurt each other. Our ability to forgive as Christ has forgiven us will test the depth of our faith and willingness to follow where Christ leads us, even to loving our enemies.

Easy? Jesus never intended it to be. But he said to trust and follow him and he will be with us providing the motivation and ability to do so. That is how we know that we are his people.

Betty and I are hopefully in Montana by the time you read this. So have a great July and enjoy some of God's surprises that are in store.

Session Notes June

HR Reported...

- **Joe Grant** to chair a search process to replace the youth music director;
- **Kristen Plemons** maternity leave following FLMA policy;
- Approval and appointment of continuing support group for new senior pastor will be considered at July meeting.

Adult Education Reported...

- Series of 9 AM Sunday morning classes during July and August.



Sean, Debra and Miriam Miller

Chuck. And ESL, Debra loves teaching ESL.

Tell me about your family.

Well, we adopted Miriam from Ethiopia when she was 8 months old. She loves music, PE, swimming and science and she loves making friends. As a family we love to travel, try different foods, garden, read and camp. And we enjoy all kinds of sports. For work, Sean is the Senior Ethanol Trader at ADM. Debra used to teach English in high school and college but now she is a full time mom and teaches ESL at the church.

What are your favorite Bible characters? For Sean, it's Moses. He was a strong leader for his people. Debra likes Esther, and Miriam likes? Who do you think? Miriam likes Miriam.

Face to Face

FACE TO FACE INTRODUCES YOU TO YOUR FRIENDS IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH COMMUNITY.

What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

We had been church shopping when **Linda and Don McKay** suggested we try this church. We liked the diversity for Miriam. We had to make some adjustments. Debra's dad was a pastor of a nondenominational church and Sean grew up Mennonite. So we have had some fun getting used to infant baptisms and robes. But we are now members and we are happy in this congregation.

What has been the highlight of your church experience?

For Miriam it is making new friends. She just finished 1st grade at Westview school and she loves Ms. Carlson. Miriam was excited to learn that the pastor at this church was Ms. Carlson's husband,

How can the church best be the church?

Serve the community. That's what we do here, helping our neighbor in need.

Happening the Last Sunday In August!

BY JEANNIE SNOEYINK
JEANNIE.SNOEYINK@GMAIL.COM

August 28, 2016 from 3-7 PM in beautiful Hessel Park of Champaign the 19th consecutive fund raising effort for the **Men and Women's Safe Houses** here in Champaign-Urbana.

We solicit your prayers, ideas, etc. for making this a banner year spiritually and financially. Please send your suggestions to **Jeff Johnson** or **Jeannie Snoeyink**, asap. August 28, is just around the corner. We are accepting additional volunteers to help in this year's effort; and please let us know of any successful grant writers to assist us in this great venture.

Prayer Corner



Independence Requires Dependence

On July 4th we celebrate our nation's independence. In John 8:31-32 Jesus tells us, "If you hold to my teaching, — you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Here we learn that independence requires living according to God's word. This is true for both individuals and our nation.

Pray that the people of the United States will see a need to be "One Nation Under God," and live according to his word.

Summer Study

The Spiritual Formation Team would like to invite you to our Summer time offerings of Bible study and reflections. We will meet starting on July 10 in Mae Chapin at 9 AM for our one-hour drop in studies. This provides an opportunity to study a topic provided by our excellent leaders. Our first topic is "Connecting with Women in the Bible" taught by **Betty Hollister**. As Betty says, this is not for women only. Everyone is welcome!

Please Join Us

August 4, 2016, 1:30-3 PM in Westminster Hall, You are invited to a special gathering ...**JOY...Just Older Youth** sponsored by the Congregational Care Deacons a social event with long-time church friends.

The General Assembly called on the United States government and other international bodies to join together to promote credible, fair and transparent elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The overture, which also calls for the United States and other nations to offer encouragement and financial and technical support to the Congolese government to provide quality education for its children and youth, passed by a vote of 48-1.

Jays & Concerns

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Phyllis Richmond** who died June 4, 2016 in Naples, FL. Burial will take place at a later date in Hoopston, IL.
- the family and friends of **Carol Hobbs** who died June 24, 2016. A Memorial Service will be held at the church on Thursday, July 14, at 10 AM.

Congratulations to...

- **Kelly Knox** and **Brian Deis** who were married Saturday, June 25, 2016.

Your Church At Work

Company Is Coming July 17

BY STEVE GRITTEN, WORLD MISSION COMMITTEE

Visiting us from Yogyakarta, Indonesia are our friends and PCUSA Co-Workers, **Bernie and Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta**. Since 2008, they have developed a close partnership and theological understanding as they have spread Christian ideals to a nation of 220 million Muslims. Eighty-five percent of the total population is Muslim and Christians account for 10%. Through their efforts and others, Indonesia, for the most part, finds these two religions at peace with each other. While they have more Muslims than all of the Middle East put together, very few of them are going to Syria to fight with ISIS, far less than those from the European countries.

On Sunday, July 17, Bernie will preach, Farsijana will work with the church school youth, and both will participate in a joint presentation in Centennial Hall following a luncheon. They have many stories to share about how they are leading various projects where Christians and Muslims work and learn together about each other's faiths. Through their efforts and projects, many of the women and extremely poor are finding ways to elevate themselves from the deep poverty in which many live.

We are celebrating the work of Bernie and Farsijana through this year's Rain Drop offering. As it takes many drops for a beneficial rain, so it is with multiple individuals supporting this project. The program that Farsijana has developed helps struggling women becoming self-supporting. Our financial support will help Farsijana acquire the necessary equipment and ser-

vices. Instead of an offering, we ask that you stop by a table in Westminster next Sunday to look at one or more rain drops that you would like to purchase for this effort. There will be more specific information provided at the table.

Back to School

Salt and Light needs our help for their Back to School Week, August 1-6. Lists of needed school supplies will be available in Westminster Hall starting July 17 as well as a box for leaving supplies or a donation to help purchase supplies. All supplies will be delivered to Salt and Light on or before July 31.

Our Story Told by Plants

Did you know our church now has a "Story Garden" planted on the southeast side of the Christian Education Building by members of our Environmental Stewardship Committee?

The garden actually tells a story of our church, beliefs and a little about the mid-west prairie.

The "anchor" plants that reflect our prairie roots are: Swamp Milkweed, Butterfly Milkweed, Purple Coneflowers, Northern Dropseed grass and Little Bluestem grass.

The elements that tell our own story include three pots representing the Trinity.

Our church is the oldest church in Champaign/Urbana and the pots contain ancient plants referred to in the Bible and found around the world, representing our multicultural congregation, the age of our church and our global mission. These

plants are dill, lavender and mint. They also are used for healing and soothing in other cultures.

The colorful Zinnias reflect the diversity of our congregation.

We mounted the "Story Garden" sign on a re-used post (part of our environmental mission to re-use, reduce and recycle) and in such a way as to represent the cross.

All of the flowering plants were chosen to attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies (and humming birds) and the grasses produce seeds to help feed small birds in the winter.

Finally, the birdbath provides life-sustaining water for God's smallest creatures.

Courageous Conversation

Join us for a **Courageous Conversation** on Tuesday, July 26. **Rev. Alonzo Johnson** PC(USA) from the Educate a Child Initiative will lead a discussion on the "School-to-Prison Pipeline."

Workshop by invitation starts at 12 noon in Westminster Hall; public presentation will be held at 6:30 PM in the Sanctuary.

Kemmerer Village 5 K Walk/Run Saturday, July 16, 2016

Kemmerer Village, Assumption IL
Race Day registration begins at 7 AM
Race at 8 AM

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

We Want You!

We are still looking for new volunteers to train with us this summer in preparation for the 2016-2017 school year. Have you been looking for a way to get involved with Children/Youth ministry but don't feel like you have the experience to teach a class? Well, summer is the PERFECT time to train with one of our seasoned teachers in their class. If you would like to know more please email **Kristen Plemons** (kristen.plemons@firstchurchchampaign.org)

Transportation Team

Are you looking for a way to support our Children, Youth and Families but haven't quite found the best place to volunteer? Have you considered becoming one of the drivers or ride along adults who serve on the transportation team? These dedicated individuals help get families to church on Sundays, get students to youth group on Sunday nights, and help kids get to various midweek events. If you are interested in serving Families in this way, please email **John Muirhead** at j.muirhead@comcast.net for more information.

Staffing Changes

As we approach saying "hello" to a new staff member in August when **Mindy Watts-Ellis** joins us as the new CYF Director, we are soon saying goodbye to **Daudet Illunga** who has been our Associate Director of CYF for the last year. Daudet has accepted a new position in Los Angeles, California and will begin his work there at the end of July. His last day

with us here at FPCC will be July 17. We are sad to see him go but we are thrilled for his next new adventure in California! Please be praying for Daudet and his family as they make this exciting transition into a new city and a new job.

A Note from Daudet

Changes are afoot in my family. We're moving to California where I have received a very exciting and great career opportunity. This is a new chapter in my life that I'm excited about, but first, I want to reflect on my experience at FPCC.

My time here has been incredible and worthwhile. With all of the friendly people and welcoming environment I was exposed to, I have made many lasting friends. Considering what I have learned here makes me feel a debt of gratitude to you all.

I would especially like to thank the FPCC congregation for making this experience fun and unique. Thanks also to the FPCC Staff, CYF Team, and Volunteers for always making this place lovable, instructive, and enjoyable. Last, but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to the CYF Kids, the reason why I was here.

Please know that I will think about you whenever I recount my time in Champaign, as you all are part of my life story now. I will be missing you!

Daudet

Noisy Offering

This summer on July 10 and August 14 our youth (Preschool-5th grade) will be collecting a separate offering on Sundays for support Restoration Urban Ministries. The kids will be collecting this offering in coffee tins they have decorated, which is what makes it noisy. Their summer goal of \$250 (we have already met \$196 of this goal!) will help with the renovation of one whole room at the renovation Urban Ministries facility.

How can YOU help? Bring your loose change on these Sundays and drop them in the containers the youth will be coming around with. Your extra change will help the kids make a joyful noise for the Lord in the form of an offering.

High School/Middle School Summer Series

Beginning July 3, **Sabrina Hwu** will be offering a wonderful series on the Parables for our High School and Middle School students. This class will meet from 9:20-10:20 AM in the high school Sunday school room. The class will be held on July 3, 10, 17, and 31.

If you have any questions please email Kristen.plemons@firstchurchchampaign.org



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Change Service Requested



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Sunday:

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

Saturday:

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

Pastors:

- Chuck Carlson..... Interim Head Pastor
- Eric Corbin.....Covenant Associate Pastor

Staff:

- Kristi CorbinMission Coordinator
- Ritchie Drennen Facility Maintenance
- Patty Farthing..... Receptionist
- Marcia Franks Administrative Assistant
- Joe Grant Choir Director
- Daudet Ilunga..... Associate Director CYF
- Chris Penny..... Facilities Manager
- Ann Petry Accounting
- Kristen Plemons.. Interim Director Children, Youth & Family
- Andrea Pope..... Contemporary Worship Director
- Richard Rossi..... Church Musician
- Linda SimsESL Coordinator

The newsletter is published monthly. Deadline is the last Monday of the month for the following month's publication. Send submissions to marcia.franks@firstchurchchampaign.org.