

November 2016



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Pastor's Pen

BY CHUCK CARLSON, INTERIM HEAD PASTOR
(chuck.carlson@firstchurchchampaign.org)

Change is constant. We don't like it. Life offers little to no rest periods. Often I say to God, "Time out, please". There are occasional moments when I identify with the Israelites who wailed before Moses during the wilderness interim period, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"

The environment of our lives may shift quickly, but we change slowly. More often we change painfully. Change creates pressure to which we must react. Observers of social change in our world today tell us that the tempo of change is faster, it is occurring on a global scale, and happening in less predictable ways.

The political reactions around the world reflect this. There is a rise in warfare, violence and anxiety coupled with unprecedented immigration of peoples from distressed nations. Discontent with government is awakening ultra-conservative political movements calling us back to the Egypt of a time perceived as more stable. We are observing the weakening of morality, institutional exhaustion and breakdown as well as a loosening of religious bonds. These things greet us every day through experience and news reports. Time magazine featured an article in the recent issue on the unprecedented rise of depression and anxiety in adolescents today. Mental and emotional stress drives many of the random shootings in our schools and on our streets.

Dean of Wake Forest University Divinity School Bill Leonard describes twenty-first religion like this: a growing number of non-affiliated, unchurched people, declining loyalty to denominations, a renewed interest in spirituality, drawing people toward the charismatic, the liturgical, and the mysterious in religion; and an increasing of Christian churches and individuals less energized by rational, propositional ideologies (Healthy Congregations, p.29).

As society regresses and the church declines in the face of massive social change we are reminded that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever". Through it all Christ's call upon our lives is remarkably consistent. Listen in on a few admonitions by the author of Hebrews who in his own

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MOVIE NIGHT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2016

6:30P CHAPEL

The House I Live In

{A look inside the criminal justice system and America's failing war on drugs}



**KIDS MOVIES WILL BE SHOWN
BY CYF MINISTRY RSVP TO**

MINDY.WATSELLIS@FIRSTCHURCHCHAMPAIGN.ORG

BY WEDNESDAY THE WEEK OF THE SHOWING



Christmas Music Sunday Festival of Lessons and Carols

December 11 8 and 9 AM

Readings and songs that tell the story of the Annunciation, birth of Christ and the joyous music that surrounds these events featuring Sanctuary Choir, string quartet, flautist, the Children's Choir and Richard Rossi on organ.

Make plans now to worship with us that week.

Pastor's Pen continued

time was living through massive social change:

- Let mutual love continue
- Do not neglect to show hospitality
- Remember those who are in prison
- Let marriage be held in honor by all
- Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you. So we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?'
- Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings
- Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God
- Pray for those in authority, your church, and one another

(Hebrews 13 excerpts).

The disciplines of faith remain consistent. So during this interim time I urge you to stay committed to our Lord and the faith community you are a part of, give as you are led, pray for your leaders, your PNC, the larger mission and ministry of FPC, attend worship, and continually let your lives be an offering of praise to God.

Remember, "So we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?'"

Though things change, some things never change and are enduring.

Odds and Ends

BY BYRON KEMPER, FINANCE CHAIR
(byronkem@life.illinois.edu)

Forward-150 projects are moving forward. With the exception of the windows, nearly all projects have been completed,

including the major projects of the organ upgrade, audio-visual and information technology upgrades and associated electrical upgrades, and the fire sprinkler system. Planning for the new outside sign is in final stages and bids are being obtained for the windows. In addition about \$134,000 have been designated for mission projects. More detailed information about Forward-150 progress will be coming to you later this month.

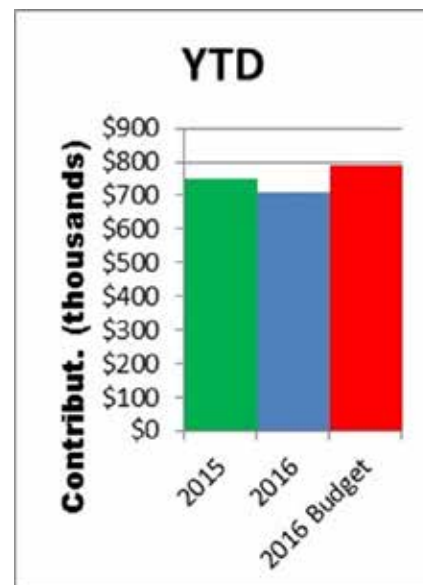
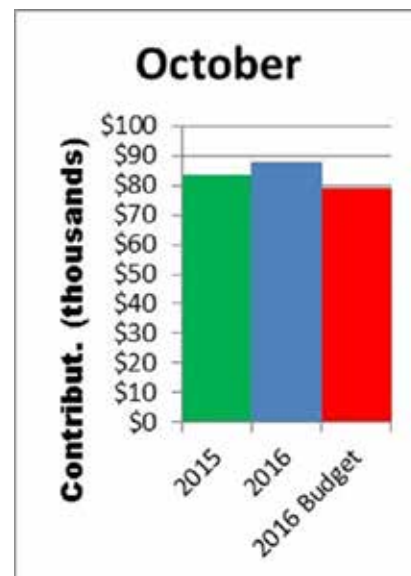
The end of the year is a time when many of us consider gifts to our favorite charities. Please keep our church in mind as you make your decisions. An extra gift to reduce our deficit of 2016 would be very helpful. If you are over 70.5 and have an IRA, you can make a qualified charitable donation to our church to satisfy your minimum required distribution and this distribution is then not reported as income. This is particularly useful if you do not itemize deductions since no income tax is paid on the distribution. If you itemize, you cannot claim a deduction since you do not report the income.

The stewardship campaign was completed in October. Many thanks to the Stewardship subcommittee and staff who made it possible. Thanks also to those that have submitted their pledges. If you still plan to do so, please do so as soon as possible, as the Finance Committee and Session will need to approve the 2017 budget no later than mid-December.

Finally, during this Thanksgiving season, pause for a moment to consider the blessings our church brings to you, our youth, and the local and world community and include them in your Thanksgiving dinner prayers. Happy Thanksgiving!!

Monthly Contributions: October contributions were slightly higher than in Oct. 2015, but YTD still trail 2015 by \$22K and are \$78K behind our budgeted amount. Expenses (not shown) for 2016

to date are about \$42K less than in 2015 so the net balance for 2016, although negative, is slightly improved over that of 2015.



Prayer Corner



Praying Scripture

There are times when we want to pray for someone, but don't know how. Praying scripture can be helpful. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

Three prayers in the Bible that ask God to give us direction when praying for someone are Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-20 and Colossians 1:9-14.

Praying God's words back to him will help us learn scripture as well as connecting us to God.

Jays & Concerns

Congratulations to...

- **Kristen and Dave Plemons** on the birth of their son Luke Timothy on October 21, 2016.
- **Beth and John Hutchens** on the birth of grandson, Henry Benner Hutchens on October 22, 2016. Parents are Christopher and Helen Hutchens.

Our sympathy goes to...

- the family and friends of **Dale Robb** who died October 24, 2016. A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, November 12, at 2 PM at the church.

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• Come with family and friends for a sing-along concert of Handel's *Messiah* on Sunday, November 27, 4 PM at the First Baptist Church of Champaign at Savoy (1602 S. Prospect Ave., Savoy), held by the Baroque Artists of Champaign-Urbana.

• Join BACH music director **Chester Alwes**, organist **Scott Montgomery**, and soloists in the Christmas portion of this festive work. Audience members are invited to raise their voices as the chorus in this annual event to joyously begin the holiday season.

• Bring your own score or borrow one at the door. Free will donation.

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Your Church

Daily Devotions from Cuba

Su Voz is a daily devotion written by the men and women of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. To receive a daily email with Su Voz please email **Bob Kirby** at rwk3213@gmail.com

Cuba Study

The Cuba Study is a prerequisite to visit Cuba with our church which we hope to visit again in April 17-24, 2017. The study is also an opportunity to learn more of our Cuban neighbors and the joy of our sister relationship with our congregation in Havana. We will meet in eight weekly sessions between October 25 and December 12. Notify **Liz Pippin** or **Bob Kirby** if you want to participate.

Cuba Forum Focuses on Partnership



Twenty members and friends of the congregation gathered October 22 for a morning of prayer, learning and fellowship celebrating our relationship with our sister

church in Havana Cuba. We reviewed the affirmations approved by the 222nd General Assembly and discussed how we can play a role in achieving these. U.S. Presbyterians have partnered with Cuban Presbyterians since the 1890's.

Among areas of discussion were:

- mutual mission engagement to continue build people to people relationships and to address important social issues in both countries.
- support the request of Cuban Presbyterians that their church be recognized as a legal entity in Cuba.
- work together on environmental stewardship.
- end the embargo and subsequent impedimentary acts.
- develop a just immigration policy ending practices encouraging Cuban emigration to the U.S.
- return Guantanamo Naval Base to the Cuban people.
- develop an updated interdenominational partnership between the PC-USA and the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba.

Three new members were elected to the First Champaign Cuba Partners Steering Committee. They are **Sandy Carr**, **Mary Lou Bauer** and **Jonathan Mnyampara**. Finishing terms of service were **Judi Geistlinger**, **Paul Schaap** and **Peter Yau**.

Beyond the Border

Mark Adams, our missionary serving the people along the US/Mexican border in Agua Prieta, Mexico, will be at our church on Saturday, November 12, at 10 AM in Centennial Hall to speak about the Mexican's life south of the border, their view of life in the US, the wall, migration issues and related topics.

The next day at 10:30 AM he will speak again in Centennial Hall about PCUSA ministries in Agua Prieta to the thousands of Mexican citizens who have no thoughts about migrating to this country or the few that have tried and failed, or who are disillusioned and returning to Mexico. He has several related ministries that help the people live a better life.

Mark will also be preaching at the three services on Sunday, November 13. Plan to attend and welcome Mark to our congregation.

Adult Education Opportunities

***Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love* Wednesdays, October 19- November 16 5:30-7 PM in Parlor...**

Judi Geistlinger and Chuck Carlson will lead a discussion on Rev. William Willimon's book. Questions can be directed to co-leaders: Chuck Carlson and Judi Geistlinger (judgeistlinger@outlook.com or 217-493-5462).

***Presbyterian 101* Sundays, November 6-20 10:30-11:30 AM in Parlor...**

Curious about Presbyterianism? **Judi Geistlinger** will provide a 3-week overview of the history, theology and practices of the Presbyterian Church. The *Presbyterian Handbook* published by Geneva Press is recommended reading but not required to participate.

Your Church



2016 Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration

Come celebrate, give thanks and give back! Sunday, November 20, at 3 PM at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

Join clergy, dignitaries, nonprofits, friends and neighbors from local houses of worship as we share music, thoughts and prayers of thanksgiving, blessing and peace. Together, let us give thanks.

Please bring a non-perishable food item for donation to the Eastern Illinois Food Bank.

Trunk or Treat

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY
(mindy.wattsellis@firstchurchchampaign.org)

Trunk or Treat was a resounding success thanks to the many volunteers who helped make it happen! We had an estimated turn out of 300 people mingling for treats and soup. We had to close early because we ran out of treats and soup by 7 PM. It was delightful to see so many happy young faces and families enjoying themselves!

I want to give special appreciation to our soup makers and kitchen crew; **Sue Fischer, Leland and Jim Andrews, Patty Farthing, Sallie Hutton, Jan Wittler, Linda Wilson, Nancy Brombaugh, Betty Hollister, Bridget Smith.**

It wouldn't be an event without our fun trunks for the treats! Special thanks to our car volunteers; **Erika and Erin Motley, the Pope family, the Laufenburg family, Mel and Raine Leichter, Beth Born, Lizz Pippen, Nicole Miller and family, Jane and John Seiler, Dave and Mary Lou Bauer, Bob Kirby, Skip and Lacy Pickering, Jim Berger, and Chuck Carlson.**

I was grateful for the assistance of four wonderful U of I Alpha Phi Omega student volunteers who worked our carnival games and even stayed to help with clean up afterward; **Julie Panasik, Bertha**

Mendez, Madeline Hornsey, and Ana Tovar.

Thank you to all who donated candy and anyone I may have accidentally left off the list. The church works because you do. Thank you for giving of yourself to bring this event to the community!



Adopt a Highway...Saturday, November 12, 8 AM
Gather at entry way to CE Building
Contact Liz Miley, 356-5402, with questions

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

Parent's Night Out

The next Parent's Night Out is scheduled for November 10 at 6:30 PM. Bring your kids for some snacks and a movie while you enjoy the movie "The House I Live In" showing in the chapel or have a night on the town. Please register by November 9 to mindy.wattsellis@firstchurchchampaign.org if you plan to have your kids attend.

Christmas Craft Night

Christmas Craft Night will be December 2 for kids in 5th grade or under. The kids will enjoy a pizza dinner and make up to three crafts that can be given as gifts or used as decoration in their homes. Drop off will begin at 5:30 and the evening activities will conclude at 8 PM. Register by November 30 by emailing Mindy Wattsellis at mindy.wattsellis@firstchurchchampaign.org.

Sunday School Highlights

We are well into our academic year in Sunday School and the elementary and middle school students have completed three units of study. We began the year with the study of creation.

The students learned the scriptural account of the making of the world and the universe. They delved deeper into exploring God's creation through tasting new fruits, exploring ecosystem connections, and experimenting with simple chemical reactions (baking soda and vinegar). At the end of the unit, I asked the children to tell me what they learned about God's

word through the study of creation.

This is what they shared.

- God made the day.
- God made the night.
- God made the seas.
- Thank you God for all the things you made.
- The world is God's and everything in it.
- God's word is powerful and good.
- God made water.
- God made me.
- God's word is inventive, big, and beautiful.

The next unit of study concentrated on the Ten Commandments. We reviewed the story of Moses and how God chose him to deliver the law to God's people. We made refrigerator magnets to post in our homes to remind us of God's commandments.

We searched for the different names for God and how all ways of referring to God in our words should be respectful. We discussed how some of the laws are harder to follow than others. We made edible mountains to remind us of God's presence among the Hebrew people as he gave the law to Moses. We made cupcakes and read about what each ingredient does to ensure a good cake at the end, and how each of God's commands help shape our lives to a good purpose in the end as well.

This is what the children shared at the end of this unit.

- I learned that God created the Ten Commandments to give to Moses.
- I learned that God used the Ten Commandments to help mankind do the right thing.
- I learned that God's word is awesome.
- I learned that I should not lie. No

fighting and no hating. You shall not commit adultery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not covet.

- God wants people to be better people like him.

Our current unit is 'How the Bible Came to Be.' The students helped create a timeline of how we have the written scriptures that we read today from early storytellers through modern smart phone displays. The children have been exploring Bible storytelling through puppets, making scrolls, experimenting with trying the ancient writing style of scribes, making books of the Bible paper chains, and learning about the controversy of early attempts at English translation.

Our next unit of study will be of the prophet Jeremiah. The children will be learning about how Jeremiah spoke of a time in which God's people will have the word of God written in their hearts.

High School Sunday School Update

Our high school students have been regularly meeting on Sunday mornings after worship. Since the HS/Young Adults began to meet in September, we have been focusing on 'Developing Our Relationship with God'. We spent two weeks on putting trust in God, two weeks on Love (loving God and loving each other). And last week we started on communication - prayer. We used an example of David's prayers, *Psalm 86* to talk about our attitude in praying, why/what we pray for, etc. Next we are planning on focusing on listening to God's voice.



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302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

P: 217.356.7238

F: 217.356.7242

E: info@firstchurchchampaign.org

www.firstchurchchampaign.org

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

Pastors:

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

Staff:

- Kristi CorbinMission Coordinator
- Ritchie DrennenFacility Maintenance
- Patty Farthing.....Receptionist
- Marcia Franks Administrative Assistant
- Joe Grant Choir Director
- Allegra Martin..... Director of Children’s Music
- Chris Penny.....Facilities Manager
- Ann Petry Accounting
- Kristen Plemons..... Assistant Children, Youth & Family
- Andrea Pope..... Contemporary Worship Director
- Richard Rossi..... Church Musician
- Linda SimsESL Coordinator
- Mindy Watts-EllisDirector Children, Youth & Family

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.