



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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CONTENTS

FROM YOUR PASTOR

Matt Matthews 3

FACTS AND FIGURES

Budget 6

Staff 7

Membership Report 14

2020 Church Officers 23

SNIPPETS FROM YOUR PASTOR/ A PASTOR'S FINAL SERMON

BY MATT MATTHEWS

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If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today . . . then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you . . .

—Deuteronomy 30:15-20

When my friend the **Rev. Dr. Jim Shiflett** was dying in his 89th year, the family gathered, and two by two, they leaned over his long body in his bed in the ICU. Bending their ear to his mouth, he spoke to them. It is likely that some of what he whispered was garbled by his stroke. But they got the gist of his important message. By way of his touch and final words, he was blessing them, commissioning them to continue love's story that God had begun in them, a story that, in part, was nurtured by Jim's faithful parentage. They knew something holy was passing hands on that long December night, and all that Jim had been a steward of was now falling to their care.

Moses is doing a similar thing in these later chapters of Deuteronomy. His last sermon is recorded in what the compilers of Deuteronomy number as the 29th and 30th chapters. These are his polished, last words. He's passing the faith along.

For generations, we have leaned in closely to listen to his aged voice. *Don't put anything above God, he says. And love God by following God's law. Build your communal life on this truth, and you'll be building on a strong foundation.*

The world is filled with distractions that hinder us from following God's will and God's way. That was as true

then as it is now. But stay true to God's call and follow God's law of love. *"If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you."*

If you don't follow?

"You shall perish."

So, Moses, figuratively on his death bed and nearing 120-years-old, urges the children of God to *"choose life so that you and your descendants may live."* Loving God, obeying God, and holding fast to God—this means life. Choosing lesser things will yield little good. So, follow God closely, "cleave" unto God (says the King James Version), thereby

choosing life.

Members of First Presbyterian Church have been distracted by many things. But again and again, we've returned our focus to God. When focused upon God, we have become most fully alive as children of God.

This congregation was formed in the 1850s in what was then known as West Urbana. Historian and minister **Dale Robb**, in a church history that he and **William Widenor** edited not too many years ago, reported that a "vast new stream of immigrants arrived to populate the grasslands in the central and eastern parts of [Champaign] county" (p. 9). They were from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Some came from Canada and Europe. On July 25, 1854, when the first Illinois Central Railroad passenger train arrived in town, Chicagoans poured



out, as well as come-heres from New York, Pennsylvania, and New England. Urbana's population jumped from 500 souls in 1850 to 3,000 in 1856.

Ephraim K. Lynn was installed as pastor in October 1854. A new frame structure was erected on this ground soon thereafter. The lots on State and Hill streets commanded a purchase price of \$400. We shared our worship space with Baptists and Methodists until they secured their own buildings in town (p. 13).

As town and church grew, so did controversy. The church weathered a Civil War fought on battlefields afar and another sort of civil war fought in the pews where they squabbled over the methodology of mission, theology, slavery, temperance, Old School and New School Presbyterianism, and revivalism (p. 11). Presbyterians of Scottish descent had trouble getting along with Presbyterians of English descent (p. 11).

It seems **Robert Dean**, the church's first and, for some years only elder, became the center of controversy and was censured from the church along with his wife Martha. Church minutes are not clear as to reasons.

People left to form churches in Mahomet (Salem Presbyterian/Middletown), downtown Urbana (First New School Presbyterian), and closer to campus (McKinley Presbyterian Church and Foundation).

But this congregation, despite seeds of discontent, grew as the town grew. People came to study scripture together and to worship. That flock, as we are doing today, leaned in and listened carefully to Moses' last sermon about following God, first and foremost, and thereby living the life of service and of love that God had in

mind for all creation.

Under the steady tenure of **Rev. George McKinley** (whose son would become a successful local businessman and senator), the cornerstone of our current sanctuary was laid in 1867. The building wasn't completed until 1869. The financial troubles were so dire, the church treasurer went out on Saturday to collect donations to pay for the next week's construction workers. One member sold 40-acres of Champaign County farmland to raise money. The building cost some \$30,000, and within five years the church had fully paid its mortgage.

Ministers came and went. Paul planted. Apollos watered. God gave the growth. **Rev. John S. Frame** died in 1874 after serving only four years—and commanding the huge annual salary of \$2,500. He was only 36-years-old when he uttered his last recorded words, "The laborers fall, but the work goes on" (p.35).

And, so it did—and does.

Rev. E.W. Clippinger travelled to Cuba in 1905. In 1915 the church purchased a new Presbyterian hymnal, even as the General Assembly sent our very own **Mae Chapin** to China as a missionary. After WWI, there was a falling out in the congregation when the Session changed the time of the evening worship service. In the 1920s there was a successful father-son banquet. After the Depression of the 1930's worship attendance fell off due to what our local historian **Paul Van Arsdell** called a "malaise of uncertain origin." In 1935, the Session surveyed the congregation about low giving, low attendance, and high debt from the construction of a new basement.

Through these years, disciples were nurtured here. Paul and the likes of **Mal Nygren** and **Dale Tutje** planted. Apollos and **Bertha Jean Berger** and **Tracy Dace** watered. God—and God alone—gave the growth.

I'm reminded of a story about Jesus' first disciples; they were in a boat, and through the stormy waves they mistook Jesus for a ghost walking across the water towards them (Matthew 14:22ff). Jesus said, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come." So, Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when Peter noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and began to sink.

When we focus on Jesus, our lives take on new vitality. With him, we are able to do more than we could ever do alone. We can practically walk on water. When we allow our focus to shift to lesser things, however, our lives become desperate.

This, I believe, is how this church—how any church—becomes and remains vital. We find our vitality only in God. When we follow Moses's advice and stay focused on God, we live. When we focus on other things we begin quickly to sink. When our efforts are rooted on anything other than God, we are workers building a house on the shifting sand. That house will fail. When we build on the promises of God, we build on solid rock.

Our founding history sounds oddly familiar to me.

• **The selling of farmland to further the causes of this church is not unique to the 1860s; Copper Creek, our newest daughter church, is literally rising out**

of farmland right now in West Champaign.

- The influx and influence of immigrants to Champaign County is, likewise, nothing new; then, the immigrants came from New England. Now brothers and sisters come from China, Korea, Scotland, Taiwan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Cameroon, the Congo, and South Carolina.

- Not only did the Session take a survey in 1935, but we've taken other surveys, including the one we took just last year. We're always curious about what our membership is thinking.

- Worship is lifted on the wings of song. The church continues to update hymnody, having bought the *Glory to God Hymnal* in 2018.

- Over the years, we've changed worship times—again, and again, and again. And each time, some of us grumbled. Why? Because we've never been fond of change.

- In 2020 we are still filling our church with the dust of construction; this year, we're renovating our old kitchen and building a ramp to Centennial Hall so that everyone can get down to it.

- As we fret about budgets, programs, and worship attendance, it helps me to know that this church has fretted about such things before. As God has heard our prayers in the past, why would we doubt that God will hear our prayers now? God has helped us before and will again. (And again, and again.)

- Our church shared its worship space with Baptists and Methodists in the 1850s, and in these recent years we shared our space with a Saturday evening fellowship of French-speaking Africans; this Saturday fellowship has just recently found a new home in their own space across town



where they can meet, pray, and worship all week long.

While I've been your pastor for only two years, your history sounds oddly familiar to me. The struggles and joys our church faced long ago are the same sort of struggles and joys we face now. All the names have changed, but the principle is the same. We strive to build a congregation that looks a little like heaven—where everybody, all races and peoples, every political and sexual orientation, every person is welcomed, loved, and challenged to serve. We keep turning, again and again, to God for help, guidance, and forgiveness. The Spirit encourages us, holds us accountable, challenges us, sends us out, and, thank God, welcomes us home. This God-centered journey walking in the manner of Jesus thrills me, and I'm glad I am called to share it with you.

Interim pastor **William Wimberly Jr.** wrote about our ancestors. "They

met fire, world wars, economic chaos, theological shifts, and post war social changes with calm, good sense mixed with rebounding can-do spirit (p. 43)." I would add that our ancestors faced tough times with confidence because of God's grace, the Spirit working through them (and sometimes despite them) to achieve lasting good.

I have no idea what the future will bring. I only know that as we choose to stay focused on God, the future will be one of hope, vitality, and life. Can you imagine making any better choice?

NOTES:

The page number references come from *Heritage, Vision, and Mission: The First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois, 1850—2000*, **William C. Widenor & Dale Willard Robb**, eds, 2005.

If you would like a copy of the church history book, please contact the office.

ADMINISTRATION

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

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Operating Funds

In 2019, total revenues for the operating fund were \$1,001,672, about 2.7% below the budgeted amount but \$39,996 more than in 2018. Revenue for 2019 included \$896,597 in contributions compared to \$843,142 in 2018. Total Expenses for 2019 were \$1,023,058, about 3.7% below budget and \$17,748 more than in 2018. The net result was a negative balance of \$21,386 compared with a deficit of \$43,635 in 2018. Contributions in 2019 were about 87.6% of church expenses with other funds accounting for 10.3% resulting in the 2.1% deficit. Other revenues include payments from the Cannon Trust which amounted to \$77,705 in 2019 and \$9,250 in transfers from other funds.

Other Donations

In addition to the generous commitments to our operating fund through pledges and plate donations our members have donated to a variety of designated purposes during the year. A total of \$73,965 has been donated by our congregation for missions and programs beyond the annual operating budget.

Property Sale

In July of 2019 an approximately 9.5 acre portion of our southwest farm property was sold to Copper Creek Church. The \$567,848 proceeds from this sale was added to our investment portfolio. The use of these funds are restricted and will be designated by Session.

Endowment/Strategic Reserves

Total invested funds at the end of the year were \$2,934,078 compared to

\$1,996,509 at the end of 2018. The large increase in 2019 is due to the proceeds from the sale of a portion of the southwest farm property and significant investment returns. In addition to the sale proceeds the invested funds include \$1,673,986 in strategic reserves and \$543,205 in permanent endowment funds. Investment returns were 18% for 2019 compared to -7.7% in 2018.

2020 Budget

For 2020, projected total revenues are \$1,033,800. Pledges of \$ 840,000 are anticipated for 2020 which is 6.3% more than pledges budgeted for 2019 but only 3.8% more than actual pledged contributions received in 2019. Expenses are budgeted at \$1,072,368 which is about 4.8% more than the actual expenses in 2019 but

only 0.9% above the 2019 budget. This results in a projected deficit of \$38,568, compared to a budgeted deficit in 2019 of \$33,416. The projected deficit represents 2.3% of our strategic reserves. The budgeted level of spending allows for the continuation and expansion of programs to grow our church.

Thank You

God has entrusted much to our care; in fact all we have comes from God. Being faithful stewards of all our gifts is an essential part of our grateful response to God's amazing grace. Thank you for all the ways you contribute to the financial strength and vitality of God's church through the ministry of this congregation.

Summary of Budgets for 2019 and 2020

Revenues

	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2020 Budget
Pledges	\$790,000.	\$809,611.	\$840,000.
Plate	126,000.	86,986.	90,000.
Cannon Trust	81,000.	77,705.	80,000.
Restricted Funds	9,750.	9,250.	17,750.
Other	22,500.	18,120.	6,050.
Total Revenues	\$1,029,250.	\$1,001,672.	\$1,033,800.

Expenses

Clergy	\$256,124.	\$260,214.	\$265,658.
GA Per Capita	25,452.	25,452.	25,000.
Staff Miscellaneous	11,700.	6,555.	10,900.
Music	66,700.	67,916.	76,770.
Contemporary Worship	20,000.	16,508.	19,000.
Worship	13,000.	6,286.	7,900.
Mission	130,100.	118,493.	129,640.
Children/Youth	108,800.	98,854.	112,402.
Adult Education	4,100.	1,165.	3,950.
Office (Administration)	186,490.	183,533.	183,596.
Building & Grounds	219,600.	225,033.	228,552.
Congregational Care	1,000.	0.	1,000.
Hospitality	19,600.	13,049.	8,000.
Total Expenses	\$1,062,666.	\$1,023,058.	\$1,072,368.

Revenue-Expenses	(\$33,416.)	(\$21,386.)	(\$38,568.)
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Human Relations (aka Human Resources)

BY ANN STOUT, CHAIR
MRSAS2003@GMAIL.COM

During the last year, your HR Team has been working quietly behind the scenes to ensure that all things related to our wonderful staff are working smoothly. These things may include (but are not limited to) overseeing the hiring process when necessary, evaluating the policy manual and making changes when necessary, checking in with staff to determine if there are needs or if there are improvements that need to be made, and offering support and appreciation to all of our employees.

Changes happen periodically and are to be expected. And it is sometimes difficult to say goodbye to employees who are moving on to different circumstances. But, in spite of the fact that we miss having them on the

staff, we celebrate their new challenges and joys with them. In 2019 we said farewell to **Kristi Corbin** (Mission Coordinator) and **Pierre Tang** (Organist and Children's Choir Director). We also happily welcomed **Richard Rossi** back into our Music Ministry, **Connor Stout** became our new Children's Choir Director, and **Rachel Matthews** is now serving as our Temporary Mission Coordinator.

During the last few months, we have highlighted one or two employees in the church's monthly newsletter. Be sure to check this out – the articles include some fun facts that you might not be aware of.

A big "thanks!" goes to the people who serve on the HR Team – they very quietly, cheerfully, and thoughtfully invest time and energy into ensuring that things are working smoothly for our staff. They are: **Jeannie Snoeyink, Ann Webbink, Nancy Whitford,** and **Dave Whitford.** And a

special thanks to **Bill Marble** who has faithfully chaired this committee for several years and will continue to contribute his wealth of knowledge in the year to come.

2020 Church Staff

Pastors:

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
Eric Corbin.....Associate Pastor

Staff:

George Almasi Facility Assistant
Ritchie Drennen Facility Manager
Patty Farthing..... Receptionist
Robert Ferrer Audio-visual Technician
Marcia Franks Administrative Assistant
Joe Grant..... Director of Music
Rachel Matthews Temporary Missions Coordinator

Blaise Pascal..... CYF Connections Assistant
Ann Petry.....Accounting
Lizz Pippin..... CYF Associate Director
Jeanette Pyne..... ESL Coordinator
Richard RossiChurch Musician
Mindy Watts-Ellis..... Director, Children, Youth & Family

CONNECT

Children, Youth, Family

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN,
YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES,

MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH;

LIZZ PIPPIN, LIZZ@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH;

BLAISE PASCAL,

BLAISE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Personnel Changes

Pierre Tang resigned as the Children's Choir Director June 2, 2019.

Connor Stout began work as the new Children's Choir Director on October 6, 2019. **Patty Farthing** resigned as Child Care Supervisor.

Erika Motley was hired to take on additional child care room supervision duties. 3 child care workers resigned and 3 were hired to take their place.

Sunday School Winter/Spring

The schedule of having the 9 AM and 11:15 AM worship services fully include all ages continued. The education hour took place from 10:15-11:05. Sunday school curriculum for January continued with Power

Express, We Believe, and Deep Blue curriculum units for the elementary students. Bible subjects taught were Jesus' Big Words (sermon on the mount), the healing of the ten lepers, feeding the 5,000, Jesus in Jerusalem (holy week events), Women at the Tomb, and Peter and John.

The preschool class used Bible Learning Folders curriculum by Karyn Henley with the topics; I Learn about God, I say thank you, I take care of my body, Jesus is my friend, Jesus is alive, and I take care of the earth.

The Third Grade Bible class was held March 24-April 7, with presentation of the Bibles on April 14. Recipients were: **Hazel Leakey, Allison Young, Blessing Mulumba Ngalamulume,** and **Ariel (David) Kabongo.** The Bible class was taught by Nancy Pippin and Kathy Schoeffmann.

The Middle School class continued units of study with the reform: Ancestors curriculum. They studied the

Centurion, the 12 disciples, references to sheep in the Bible, Simon Peter, Sadducees and Pharisees, Mary & Martha, Judas Iscariot, Pontius Pilate, Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Saul/Paul, Lydia and worked on Bible skills.

There was no confirmation class for this semester.

The high school class studied the Feasting on the Word curriculum for youth, which followed the lectionary, and a Lenten series of studies based on the videos by The Bible Project. Mindy created a labyrinth for use by the upper level Sunday school classes as part of their Lenten experience. There was a special Earth Day Sunday celebration on May 19 in which two children, Prunella Tembo and Vainqueur Nana, prepared a special message for the congregation about pollution. Earth Day activities were offered to all ages in the café with poster and button making, learning about plastic alternatives, and planting the church pollinator pocket.



photo by Charles Ledford

Summer

Mindy created an Artful worship experience for all ages June 2 at 11:15 AM. This involved several large projects; the prayer weaving, the question chandelier, and the outdoor rock garden in the shape of a dove.

Vacation Bible School was held four Sundays of June (9-30) in the afternoon from 1:00-3:30 PM. The theme was Neighbors Near and Far. The curriculum was based on four countries of the church's world mission partners; Cuba, Pakistan, Malawi, and Indonesia. Scripture topics were loving your neighbor, the Good Samaritan, the Great Banquet parable, and the early church.

CYF provided game equipment and supervision for its use at the Sholem Fest picnic August 11.

Sunday School Fall/Winter

We hosted the Austin Activators for a special Sunday school presentation on September 15. The elementary children studied the following topics; Abraham and Sarah, Samuel, Ruth, Esther, and the Christmas story. Preschool curriculum was Karyn Hendley's Bible Learning Folder Series for Early Childhood. The topics of study were God made plants and animals, God made food, I trust God when it rains, I listen to God, and Jesus is God's son.

The Middle school class studied the reform: Core curriculum studying the following questions; Who wrote the Bible? Is the Bible true? Why does the Bible contradict itself at times? Is the New Testament more important than the Old Testament? Why are there so many versions of the Bible? Can it be proven that God exists? Is God male? How can God be three-in-one? Does God still create stuff today? Am I really supposed to believe Mary was

a virgin? Is the Holy Spirit a person or wind or fire or what?

A confirmation class began for interested students led by Eric Corbin, Judi Geistlinger and Kathy Schoeffmann using the co*lab*orate curriculum Presbyterian History and Doctrine. There was a confirmation retreat held on November 3rd.

The high school Sunday school studied the Old Testament using the co*lab*orate curriculum for the following topics; Canon, The Hebrew Bible, Genesis, Exodus, The Law, Judges, Kings, the Babylonian Captivity, Prophets, and the Psalms.

Sunday School Mission

The children collected coins in fish banks for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering which was received by the church on Easter Sunday. The confirmation class collected money and walked in the CROP walk on October 13. The children created tags for the angel tree in November. The children and all ages were invited to assemble 120 hygiene kits for the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance warehouse on December 1st in Westminster Hall.

Children's Choir

Children's choir sang February 24 and May 5 at the 9 AM traditional worship service.

The children's choir met regularly for rehearsal on Sunday mornings 11:00-11:30 AM. There was no choir offered in the summer. Children's choir sang November 17 and was featured as part of the December 22 Christmas pageant presentation at the 9 AM worship service.

Family Events

October 27 was the annual Trunk or Treat event from 5-6 PM complete with treats, trunks, and a bouncy

house! A soup supper was offered afterward from 6-7 PM in Centennial Hall. We had over 200 participants for a fun filled evening. A candy house making event was held December 22nd in Westminster Hall with about 38 child participants.

Christmas Eve service at 4 PM featured a worship service based on the Jesse Tree. Ornaments for the tree and the concept outline were organized by CYF.

Special Youth Events

The youth had a fun outing at Elevate on February 24. **Audrey Mfulama** attended the Lux Theological Institute for youth at Monmouth College in June. This year's youth trip was to attend the Presbyterian Church Youth Triennium at Purdue University on July 16-20 along with other delegates from our presbytery. Participants were **Audrey Mfulama, Sephora Moanda, Destin Lembelembe, Emilio Kabakele, Keny Mayele, Carter Lowe, Miriam Tutu, Mindy Watts-Ellis, and Rachel and Matt Matthews.**

Youth fellowship events for the winter and spring were an overnight retreat January 20-21, swimming event at the Crystal Lake aquatic center on June 25 for High school, and a swimming event for Middle school on July 9.

Professional Development

Mindy Watts-Ellis, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry attended the national conference for the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators February 6-9 in Galveston, TX. **Lizz Pippin** attended the Presbyterian Youth Workers Association Conference in Seattle.

From Lizz Pippin, Associate Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries

January-May the high school met every other Sunday night for youth group. Each time we would meet together for a meal, have a bible study and games. In February, the youth group went to the Matthews' home for a Superbowl party. We usually had between 2-4 high school students attend.

On June 1 CYF partnered with Mission Possible for a stay and serve event and went to Taylorville, IL to help in the clean up after the tornados that hit in December. **Mindy Watts-Ellis, Lizz Pippin, Dave McNattin, Dave Bauer, Itch Jones, Sabrina Hwu, Vasele Nana, Carter Lowe, Heather Lowe, Fortunel Nana, Miriam Tutu, Monique Masengu, Plamedi Lembelembe and Goelle Mboyo** participated in the Stay and Serve event. On our way home we stopped at a local place for dinner in Decatur where the manager stopped to talk with us and we told him what we had been doing. He was from Taylorville and was grateful for our work and thanked the kids.

September-December we decided to offer a broader youth group opportunity. We started to offer youth group twice a month for middle school and twice a month for high school students. The middle school has had an average of six students for each activity. The high school youth group remained small with an average of two students attending.

In December, the high schoolers had special Advent Fridays in lieu of Sunday evening events where we met at the home of Sabrina Hwu after school during the three Fridays of Advent. We met for fellowship and did a word

study focusing on love, hope, joy, and peace. 4-6 students met each week for this study and had a robust discussion. Since there were a few recent graduates still in our congregation staying local for college we discussed forming a young adult group. I worked with spiritual formation on starting this group. We have had an average of three young adults join the group as we have met on Thursday evenings.

From Blaise Pascal Zamena, Connections Assistant

I dealt with all translations needed from the CYF department and from pastor Matt's office. Sometimes I was part of the new American meetings as a French translator. I was also asked to be part of a special Session meeting to help French speaking new church members with translation and paper work.

Every weekend **John Muirhead** and I planned Sunday School transportation by calling and texting parents to let them know about transportation and the time the van will arrive. I planned all transportation for CYF Special youth events such as VBS, Crystal Lake aquatic center swim days and Elevate.

Sunday school check-in is held every Sunday from 8:30 to 9:00 AM at the Welcome Center and I am in charge of it. I worked as a storyteller and crew leader during Vacation Bible School.

I was in touch with French speaking families each week to let them know about any event which was happening in our church. Calling them or talking to them face-to-face was the better option since most of them don't have the habit of going through their email accounts.

Many thanks to the CYF Team CYF Committee: **Joyce Wittler, Sabrina Hwu, Karin Vermillion, Cathy Schowengerdt, and Claudia Kirby.**

Sunday School Volunteers: **Celeste Kim, Rachel Matthews, Joyce Wittler, Sabrina Hwu, Jay Geistlinger, Thethe Kidimbu, Noni Ledford, Sarah Laufenberg, Naomi Rempe, Nancy Pippin and Karin and Rob Vermillion.** The following resigned their volunteer duties in May: **Dionne Goodman, Lisa Ainsworth, Andrew Leakey, Laurie Dey, Mary Gritten, Ensung Kim, David Evensen, and Rachel Matthews.** Volunteers that joined in Fall: **Jan Wittler, Judy Hendrickson, Nancy Pippin, Sean Miller, Jason Lowe, Kathy Schoeffmann, Judi Geistlinger, and Mary Lou Bauer.** Subs: **Rachel Matthews, Jeannie Snoeyink, and Pam Hadley.**

ChristCare Groups

BY RITCHELL YAU, RYCONNECTSEND@GMAIL.COM

ChristCare small groups are among the many opportunities First Presbyterian Church offers adults to support spiritual formation and growth. Our ChristCare groups are based on a model developed by the Stephen Ministry. The Stephen Ministry, based in St. Louis, is a one-on-one support ministry which has been implemented in our church and other churches. The ChristCare ministry at First Pres began in 2009.

Nine small groups at First Pres participated in the ChristCare ministry in 2019. Some groups met for as few as 8 weeks, some met for the school year with holiday and winter or summer breaks. Some are ongoing, meeting year-round. Groups choose their own Bible study curriculum, meeting times

and locations, and their own particular focus. While each group is unique, each intentionally aims to incorporate four elements:

- Growing spiritually through prayer & worship
- Developing stronger caring relationships with others in the group
- Seeking a stronger relationship with God through Biblical Equipping
- Serving God in the community through missional service

The ChristCare ministry at First Pres is committed to providing solid preparation and ongoing support to ChristCare leader/facilitators and the groups. Those who serve as leader/facilitators have participated in workshops using materials designed by the Stephen Ministry and adapted for use at First Pres to meet the needs, interests and schedules of our church family. As part of the ongoing support, a monthly small group called SEA group is offered.

SEA Groups

Ongoing support for ChristCare leader/facilitators is provided in part through a monthly small group called a SEA Group. SEA groups aim to provide ongoing Support, Education/encouragement and Accountability for one another, hence the name SEA group. Like other ChristCare groups, the SEA group incorporates prayer and worship, care for one another and biblical equipping. The SEA group builds on the content and processes of the ChristCare workshops to explore concepts more thoroughly and introduce additional topics based on the interests of those in the group.

In 2019, the SEA group met the 2nd Thursday morning of the month from 8:30- 9:30 AM. Each meeting included time in Scripture, prayer, sharing,

and discussion of readings and topics related to small group leadership training based on the ChristCare education materials. From January to May, **Pastor Eric Corbin** led the group. Following a summer break, **Pastor Matt Matthews** led from September through December. **Rittchell Yau** served as coordinator providing logistical support for the SEA group and for the ChristCare ministry. Both Pastor Matt and Rittchell plan to continue their roles in 2020.

All who are interested in exploring and applying the ChristCare approach in small group settings are welcome to participate.

Compassion, Peace and Justice

BY RITTCHELL YAU, RYCONNECTSEND@GMAIL.COM

Statement of Faith and Purpose

“The Presbyterian Church commitment to justice is core to its identity and understanding as followers of Jesus Christ. Beginning with the ancient texts of the faith, God’s people have given both voice and witness to the prophet Micah’s calling to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.”

The Confessions of the church, especially the Confession of 1967 and A Brief Statement of Faith, challenge the church to follow Christ into a broken and fearful world:

- to pray without ceasing,
 - to witness among all peoples
 - to unmask idolatries in church and culture,
 - to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
 - and to work with others for justice, freedom and peace.
- A Brief Statement of Faith 10.4

The Book of Order also makes it clear that “the whole church gathers in worship and its corporate life for the purpose of being sent out into the world to engage in the reconciling, healing work of God through Jesus Christ. God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to share with Christ in establishing God’s just, peaceable and loving rule in the world.” (W-7.4000)

Organization

The Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Team (CPJMT) is a ChristCare small group guided by *Micah 6:8* and *Isaiah 6:8*. **Tracy Dace, Bob Kirby and Rittchell Yau** served as moderators. We met twice a month on the first and third Thursdays of the month. Meeting dates and times are decided by the group and may change in 2020 depending on the needs and interests of the group. Our time together includes prayer, Bible study, fellowship, topical book discussion, information sharing and planning service and community activities of interest to the group. Our principal mission partner is DREAAM House. We partner with other groups as we have opportunity.

We work with the leadership of the denomination in The Presbyterian Mission Agency’s Compassion Peace and Justice Ministry. Within our congregation, we report to the Adult Spiritual Formation Committee. Our work is education of ourselves, our congregation and community and includes taking thoughtful action when we believe we are called to act where we can make a practical difference.

Our group members’ diverse interests are evident in our focus and activities. For 2019, the group chose to build on our work from previous years to focus on understanding and addressing systemic racism, the “school-to-prison

pipeline,” comprehensive immigration reform and getting more deeply acquainted with our community and neighbors.

Activities

In 2019, we:

Completed three book studies, *One Blood* by John M. Perkins, *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo and *Between the World and Me* by Nehisi Coates.

Partnered with New Covenant Fellowship in a viewing of the documentary, *Harvest of Empire*. The film details the history of the USA and Central American relationships that have resulted in migration from Central America.

Began developing a section on our church website to memorialize Presbyterians who have modeled courage in working for justice <https://www.firstpres.church/compassion-peace-and-justice/>.

In November, led an action learning activity with the participation of C-U @ Home staff to meet the homeless in downtown Champaign.

Participated in community forums on justice system reform and immigration reform.

Nurtured supportive relationships with two incarcerated men.

Supported DREAAM House fundraising efforts.

We welcome all interested persons to participate in any and all of our meetings, book studies and activities.

Courageous Conversations

BY RITTCHELL YAU, RYCONNECTSEND@GMAIL.COM

The Courageous Conversations Ministry Team met and developed programs and events for the church and community over the course of several years on a variety of topics and issues, many of which require thoughtful courage to address. Past topics included human trafficking, racism, immigration and sexual identity. The programs usually included a daytime workshop and an evening event with a speaker and/or panel. Sometimes these were held on weekdays and other times on weekends. The events provided education and opportunities for dialogue and relationship building among the congregation and community. The interactions generated some classes and small groups within the church and brought together some in the church and community for more sustained action to address local and national issues.

Several members of the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry who had participated in these events would like to revive the Courageous Conversations in 2020 and would like to extend an invitation to all who are interested to participate in planning one or more events in 2020. Interested? Contact the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry or the Adult Spiritual Formation Team.

Nurture (Hospitality, Fellowship & Membership)

BY GARY PETERSON, CHAIR,
AMER_SWEDE@YAHOO.COM

It has been my pleasure heading the Nurture Committee this past year. I couldn't have done it without great help. Committee members included **Bob Kirby, Betty Hollister, Beth Hutchens, Ginny Waaler, Tom Gilmore, Linda Peterson, Lola Ruthmansdorfer** and **Pastor Eric Corbin**. Thank you all.

Over the past year our Hospitality and Fellowship committee has planned and organized 7,8 or 9 dinners, International Taste of First Pres, Sholem Fest, Taste of C-U Booth, provided a continental breakfast and ice cream social for the John Williams Event, an evening meal for Young Lives, greeters at the doors on Sunday morning, coffee and donuts in between services and host at the Welcome Center.

Membership has tracked church attendance, collected friendship pad information, contacted those who were visiting and followed up on those that have not attended church over a certain period of time.

Sabrina Hwu will be leading Nurture beginning this year. We wish her all the best and we wish all a very blessed and Happy New Year!!!!



Presbyterian Women

BY MARY LOU BAUER, MODERATOR
MARYLOU100@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Presbyterian Women, or PW, is an organization that promotes study and service and is open to all the women of our church.

Our service continues in those traditional ways such as providing receptions and meals when requested. We also support more than 20 local and national projects. In 2019 our local mission was with EICRMAC, now called The Refugee Center. As the Center moved into its new facilities, we made possible the bright, cheerful “children’s corner” with appropriate furnishings and books. Knitted hats and scarves for children at Kemmerer Village, knitted items and yarn sent to Cuba, money allocated for hygiene kits, cribs and layettes to empty tomb, and new shades for the lamps in Mae Chapin Parlor were also among our 2019 projects.

Our Bible study continues every 4th Thursday of the month in the Circles Joy, Faith, and Peace as announced in the bulletins and newsletters. Although the Fall Gathering, Christmas Tea, and June Gathering are publicized as PW events, we welcome everyone to attend and enjoy our fellowship, refreshments, and programs.

Spiritual Formation

BY BETTY HOLLISTER, B.HOLL@MCHSI.COM

Your Spiritual Formation Team has had another busy year in 2019. Our goal is to provide opportunities for growing your faith through study, discussion, and fellowship. We offer classes on Sunday mornings at 10:15 for adult education as well as at various times throughout the week. The Compassion, Peace, and Justice Committee, small groups, the ChristCare Ministry

and SEA group, and the Adult and Children’s Libraries try to coordinate activities and materials through the Spiritual Formation Committee to meet the needs of our congregation.

The committee published two Small Group and Adult Education brochures in 2019, one edition for the winter/spring and one for the fall. These brochures, produced with able assistance of **Marcia Franks** and the church office staff, listed the various classes and small groups offered throughout the year. In 2019 team consisted of **Pastor Matt Matthews**, Elders **Ron Deering** and **Ken Chapman**, and members **Peter Yau**, **Rittchell Yau**, **Pat Phillips**, **Carol Penka**, **Sandy Carr**, **Dave Bauer**, and **Betty Hollister**. **Pastor Eric Corbin**, **Claudia Kirby** and **Judi Geistlinger** continued to offer guidance and assistance. We met and plan to continue to meet the first Thursday of every month.

In 2019 the Sunday morning adult education curriculum covered a wide array of topics and authors. Books studies addressed social justice issues with the book, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* by Dr. John M. Perkins and theological challenges with books by C. S. Lewis and William Barclay. Our Faith in the Real World lecture series shared insights about how faith and professions intersect in the realms of economics, science, child advocacy/mentoring, love languages, and education in the prison systems.

A Lenten devotional, *Forgiveness* by Marjorie Thompson and an Advent study, *Christmas in the Four Gospel Homes* by Cynthia Campbell, kept us focused on deeper understanding of our most holy holidays. Bible study based on the Nativity in the Gospel of Luke and prayer stations also kept our hearts and minds focused on the sacred. To appeal to different learning styles and passions, the Spiritual For-

mation Team offered a series of classes and discussions featuring faith-based TED talks. For those whose passions include music, we planned classes around hymns singing and some historical and theological context of the lyrics. In the Fall, **Cliff Dykstra** led a Wednesday afternoon study of *The Ten Commandments for Today* by William Barclay, and the Wednesday evening Covenant Bible Study group led by **Judi Geistlinger** finished their two-year study of the Bible.

Your Spiritual Formation Team looks forward to another rewarding year of growing and living our faith in community in 2020. We invite your suggestions for studies and welcome your participation in classes or on the committee.

Stephen Ministry

BY LINDA SANDQUIST, RLSAND2@COMCAST.NET

Stephen Ministry is a ministry in which trained and supervised lay persons, called Stephen Ministers, provide one on one Christian care to individuals facing life challenges or difficulties. It has enrolled over 30,000 congregations from more than 180 Christian denominations across the US and Canada and in 130 other countries. It was founded in 1975 in St. Louis and maintains its headquarters there.

Since becoming a Stephen Ministry Congregation in 2007, we have had 40 individuals complete 50 hours of training to become Stephen Ministers (including 3 from other churches). Of the 24 who remain members of First Pres, 13 are active in the program. 9 are currently serving a care receiver. Stephen Ministers are requested to make a 2 year commitment to serve after their training. However, a good number have continued to serve for many years longer. Also, some who have been inactive would return to serve if the need arose.

As a group we meet on the second Wednesday of each month from 11:30-1:00 in Mae Chapin Parlor for continuing education and supervision. Supervision is a process where the Stephen Minister confidentially presents a brief or in-depth summary of their relationship with their care receiver and any difficulties they may be experiencing. Their peers may then give guidance and support that can improve the quality of caregiving the Stephen Minister can provide.

Pastor Chuck Carlson served as clergy liaison from 2007 until his retirement. **Pastor Eric Corbin** attended Stephen Ministry Leadership Training in St. Louis and assumed these responsibilities after Chuck's departure. In the fall of 2019 pastoral duties were reorganized and **Pastor Matt Matthews** took on the Stephen Ministry clergy liaison duties. **Linda Sandquist** has been the lay Stephen Leader 2007-present, having attended Leadership Training in 2007. Linda is the coordinator of referrals, continuing education and supervision.

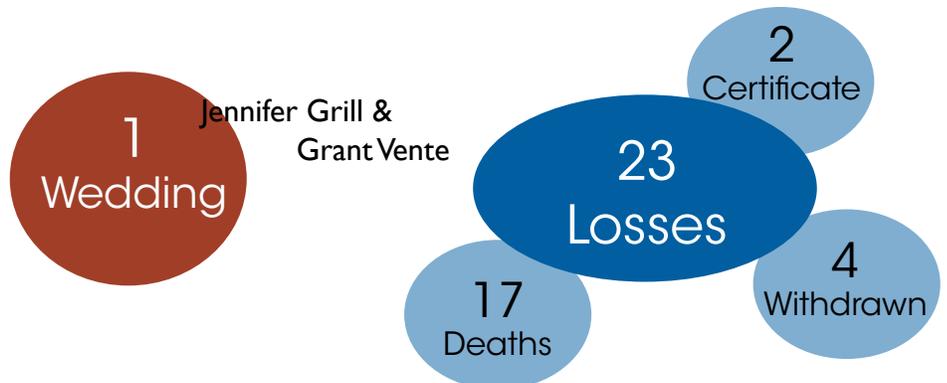
Anyone who might be interested in having a Stephen Minister to walk with them through one of life's tough times should contact one of the pastors or **Linda Sandquist**.

Membership Report



New Members

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Rosalie Balanda | Solange Bosomba |
| Michael Cervone | Ginette Mukoko Dikombo |
| Michael Hogue | Mary Jane Kelley |
| Charles Masengu | Gabriel Mboyo |
| Norma Osorio | Hector Osorio |
| Emilie Panzu | Nancy Pippin |
| Jose Pukuta | Bruce Rainey |
| Rachel Rose | Jacqueline Ouauel Seyi |



Members Who Joined the Church Triumphant

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Lois Allhands-Harpst | Charlotte Bash |
| Don Fischer | Joe Garza |
| Anne Hickenbottom | Howard Hobbs |
| Rich Johnson | Georganne Marty |
| Max Reid | Shirley Rittenhouse |
| Wayne Rittenhouse | Robert Shimkus |
| Pat Summers | Robert Tuchel |
| Louise Turpin | Lee Ann Wilder |
| Larry Wingate | |

SERVE

Mission Team

BY DEBRA MILLER, CHAIR
DCASEYMILLER@GMAIL.COM

Mission Team is a group of church staff and lay leadership who do mission work in some form through our church. The group meets monthly to communicate, plan, and organize. Members of the team include: The Mission Team Session Elder, Amateur Preachers, Community Mission Deacons moderator, Cuba Partner Steering moderator, Children Youth and Family staff, ESL staff, Environmental Stewardship moderator, Mission Possible leader, Presbyterian Women representative, Transportation Ministry leader, World Mission moderator, Mission Coordinator, and a Pastor.

The Team entered 2019 without a Mission Coordinator. They were highly aided by a transition document produced by **Kristi Corbin** the former Mission Coordinator. **Rachel Matthews** joined the Team in April as a temporary Mission Coordinator. Mission Team allots money received by the session in the Mission Undesignated and various other mission funds to the various mission committees each year.

The Mission Team receives reports from the Benevolence subcommittee and the Forward 150 Mission fund subcommittee. Two Forward 150 requests were approved and funded this year: The Women in Need of Recovery Program and the East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center.

Amateur Preachers

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD, COORDINATOR
J.MUIRHEAD@COMCAST.NET

Amateur Preachers serve pastors who are away for vacation, or other forms of leave as well as their congregations by leading their Worship services. We have enjoyed another active year of assisting churches in our Presbytery. We provide an "Amateur Preacher" to give the sermon and lead worship services. In some of these visits we also bring our own liturgist.

In 2019, 5 Amateur Preachers served 6 different churches a total of 17 times on 14 Sundays with the highest number for one church being 5 Sundays. This past year represented a significant drop in the number of Sundays that we served. Among the reasons for the decline is the fact that a number of churches that we have served in the past have closed.

We would like to increase our number of Amateur Preachers for the coming year. Perhaps you have been thinking of a message you would like to share? You may also consider serving as a liturgist for an Amateur Preacher as a way of being introduced to this mission of our church. Please feel free to talk with one of the Pastors or contact **John Muirhead** (j.muirhead@comcast.net or phone 398-1048) to discuss Amateur Preachers.

Benevolence Fund

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS,
TEMPORARY MISSION COORDINATOR
RACHEL@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The Benevolence Committee was formed to act on financial requests to the church for emergency assistance. It provides help only to those who have a significant relationship with First Pres. That includes members, regular guests at worship, employees, members of our small groups or regular participants in church activities.

Normally, no gift may exceed \$500 and no family may receive more than one gift per calendar year. Applications are submitted and reviewed by the Benevolence Committee. Assistance is only available for what the committee sees as emergency relief that meets a basic need.

This past year two families were helped with a total of \$1165 distributed. Benevolence Committee members include **Sandy Carr, Mike Havey, Matt Matthews, Rachel Matthews** and **Naomi Rempe**. Individual donations support the Benevolence Fund. Donations are always welcome and at times very much needed. Simply mark your check/contribution "Benevolence Fund."

Community Mission Deacons

BY MIKE HAVEY, MODERATOR
MIKE_HAVEY@HOTMAIL.COM

Deacons (CMD) supported 12 different agencies located in Champaign-Urbana, some financially, some with physical assistance, and some through

both means. Each agency has its own liaison from the committee in order to more effectively share needs and concerns with each other and with the congregation. One deacon, **Itch Jones**, was a “roving” deacon who helped more than one of our agencies with renovation and construction needs.

The agencies are the Canteen Run, Courage Connection, Crisis Nursery, C-U at Home, Refugee Center (formerly ECIRMAC), DREAM, empty tomb, Faith in Action, Jesus is the Way, RUM (Restoration Urban Ministries), SAFE House, Salt and Light.

In honor of his commitment to the agency \$2000 from our restricted account was donated to SAFE House in the name of **Don Fischer**. Money from the restricted account was also donated to Salt & Light to help them with their financial difficulties. Contributions received through the summer’s Raindrop Project went to assist Salt & Light with their school supplies collection project.

The PC(USA) Pentecost Offering was taken this year to help the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also address the needs of at-risk children. 40% of the Pentecost offering is retained by First Presbyterian Church with two-thirds going toward scholarships to Camp Carew for our young people and a third of it will be going toward DREAM. The remaining 60% is used to support ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency for young adult volunteers (YAV), ministries for youth and children-at-risk, an agency supported by our own World Mission Committee.

The Advent Offering this year was designated to go to Restoration Urban Ministries. Again this year the purpose of the Advent Angel Tree was to collect items for our local agencies. This effort was very successful as the tree was replenished with angels after all the original angels were taken. The many gifts were delivered to the agencies before Christmas.

Thanks to new Mission Coordinator, **Rachel Matthews**, for her efforts to keep us organized and for helping us to identify and focus on what our mission is.

We were sad to lose the service and friendship of two deacons this year: **Don Fischer** through death and **Jeannie Murray** through her sudden and very serious illness. The members of CMD for 2019 were **Sandy Carr, Don Fischer, Steve Gritten, Linda Tauber-Olson, Kathy Havey, Mike Havey, Nancy Brombaugh, Barbara Fuller-Curry, and Barb Clark, Lola Ruthmasdorfer, Itch Jones.**

Following Don’s death, **Steve Gritten** and **Ritchie Drennen** teamed up to continue his work with SAFE House. We had a volunteer liaison, **Carol Arnould**, help with Courage Connection since we did not have a deacon for that agency. Mission Coordinator **Rachel Matthews** provided invaluable service to the committee and the agencies we serve.



Cuba Partners

BY LIZZ PIPPIN, CHAIR

LIZZ@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Background

Champaign First Cuba Partners (Cuba Partners) is the sister relationship between the congregations of First Presbyterian Church, Champaign and The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba at Luyanó. Twelve congregants made the first trip to Cuba in October 2010. Our respective sessions signed a sisterhood agreement in 2012 and renewed it in 2015 and again in 2018.

Purpose

The purpose of the relationship is:

- To create a partnership between our two churches embodying our unity in Christ.
- To strive to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ in our families, our communities, our countries and the world.
- To sensitize both church families to critical situations in our societies, and cooperate in the projects to which the Church, as part of the Body of Christ, can make a substantial contribution.
- To explore various areas for joint mission.

Our objectives are to:

- To share a worship service, using common hymns, responses and messages by the pastors in order to celebrate our unity in Christ twice a year.
- To regularly share prayer concerns and congregational news via email, bulletins, and photographs.
- To promote shared Bible Study between the women's organizations of both congregations.
- To develop an active sharing of faith concerns and projects through correspondence and visits between the women committed to

the intercessory knitting groups of both churches.

- To encourage and support the exchange of information about their families, schools and faith communities between the children of our two church schools via email letters.
- To develop opportunities for exchange visits of the youth of each church to foster the deepening of individual faith, as well as knowledge about the reality of life in the sister church community.
- To develop an intentional exchange between pastors of study, pastoral concerns and projects.

Organization

The First Pres Cuba Partners includes 54 people who have completed a study of Cuba. Most have traveled to our sister church. A meeting of the Cuba Partners is held when needed, but at least yearly at which time a business meeting and election of the steering committee occurs. Currently, this is held in the Spring and combined with the Annual Cuba Forum. The Forum is an informational congregation wide meeting.

The Cuba Partners adopted by-laws which call for election of a seven-member rotating steering committee which then elect four officers. The steering committee meets monthly on the fourth Thursday from 5:30-7:00 PM. Meetings include worship and education. Steering Committee members and officers in 2019 were: **Mary Lou Bauer, Tracy Dace, Carol Miles** (treasurer), **Elizabeth Pippin, Nancy Pippin, Peter Yau,** and **Rittchel Yau** (vice- moderator). Ex officio members with voice but without vote are **Elizabeth Pippin**, who stepped down as moderator and secretary at the end of 2019, **Rachel Matthews**, and **Eric Corbin**.

At an international level, our congregation is a member of the Presbyterian Cuba Partners Network. This group works closely with PC(USA) World Mission and mission coworkers to supports the Presbyterian entities in both the U.S. and Cuba who have formal mutual relationships.

2019 Activities

In February, four visitors traveled to Luyanó with three having never gone before. In May 2019, we hosted a Cuba Weekend with the Cuba Forum, annual meeting, shared Sunday morning worship, and a meal and silent auction fundraiser for the church at Luaynó. In January 2019 Luyanó was hit by a tornado and the money raised went to support the recovery efforts that the church supported for the surrounding area. In June, two people represented First Pres at the Cuba Partners Network meeting in New Orleans where they met many other partners and connected with some former First Pres partners who now live in other parts of the country. In July, two members went to Luyanó to help support their Vacation Bible School. This trip was done with the help of the Covenant Presbyterian Church of Austin, Texas with which we have been building our cooperation to better support our sister church in Luyanó.

We also celebrated with the congregation of Luyanó at the announcement of their pastor's marriage. And, we will rejoice again when their new child is born in a few months. As a congregation we sent down three Spanish language Presbyterian Women Bible study guides in order to strengthen the connection between the Women's Groups in both congregations through a mutual study.

The Cuba Study small group met October – December. A Cuba Study

group has been offered annually since 2009. This year the group included 3 new participants and 4 returning participants. The time together includes worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible study and basic information about Cuba, the Church in Cuba and Luyanó. The group is open to all in the congregation who are interested in deepening their knowledge and understanding of Cuba and our sister relationship with Luyanó.

Su Voz, a daily devotion written by laity and ordained Presbyterians in Cuba is emailed daily to a list of 155 people. This has been a valuable tool to connect members of the congregation with the partnership in a practical way.

Activity Calendar 2019

Visit to Cuba by FPC

February 25-March 4

Cuba Weekend

May 4-5

7th Annual Cuba Forum

May 4

Speaker: Professor **Ellen Moodie**,
U of I

Annual Meeting

May 4

Shared Sunday Morning Worship

May 4

Cuba Fundraiser

May 5

Cuba Two Step with salsa lessons,
silent auction and dinner

Cuba Partners Network

June 19-22, New Orleans

VBS Trip

July 16-21

Cuba Study Group

October 14-December 2

Budget

The following financial support was provided to the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba:

Congregational gift to Luyanó \$1000.
Cuba Synod for national camp and

retreat center (CANIP) \$1,250.
(Operations). This is a priority of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba.

JoElla Holman, mission co-worker
Caribbean \$4,600. yearly (Operations-
World Mission).

Presbyterian Cuba Partners Network-
\$100. dues (Operations)

Congregational gift to Luyanó for
\$3300 (Cuba Partnership restricted)

Extra gifts for storm damage \$350

The Fall trip carried down money by
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Austin,
TX for storm relief of \$3650

Recommendations

We will continue to focus on building relationships, deepening our understanding of the Cuban experience and growing together in our faith with our Cuban sisters and brothers. We recognize that circumstances of daily living and travel have become more challenging for the Cubans. We desire to learn and respond in a manner that is practical and sensitive to the evolving conditions. We need to follow-up on what we learned from our Cuban brothers and sisters to more diligently develop regular effective communication with our church at Luyanó and with our partners at Covenant Presbyterian in Austin, TX. Also, we will seek ways to broaden and deepen our communication within our own congregation and identify additional ways we might partner with other congregations, particularly those within our synod.

In the future, we want to explore ways to identify and address the needs of our congregations, especially our children and youth, and we nurture unaccompanied children and youth in our congregations. We also hope to identify ways our experience with DREEM House might be applicable in the Cuban context.

We are thankful for the ways our Cuban brothers and sisters embrace us as family. We appreciate their example of open-hearted hospitality to us in all circumstances, their mutuality in care for one another, and their joyful daily practical expressions of confidence in God's goodness. We are reminded of Paul's words to the Colossians: "We always give thanks to God the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. We've done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all people." *Colossians 1:3-4*

Environmental (Green Team)

BY KATHY SCHOEFFMANN, MODERATOR
KSCHOEFFMANN@YAHOO.COM

Committee Members: **Clemmie Ackermann, Tim Bartlett, Dave Bauer, Nancy Brombaugh, Tanya Deckert, Ron Deering, Barb Fuller-Curry, Rachel Matthews, Liz Miley, Pat Phillips, Ginny Waaler,** and **Kathy Schoeffmann** (chair)

Meetings: Third Monday of each month from 3:30-4:30 PM in the church library

Purpose: Responding to a call from PCUSA to make environmental stewardship of God's creation a central mission of our congregation.

On-going Activities:

- Adopt-a-Highway - Cleaning litter and recyclables from our roadways quarterly
- Re-using coffee cups after worship services and other activities
- Recycling paper, aluminum cans, and plastics
- Encourage the use of compostable cutlery for church activities (cutlery from the ESC budget)
- Education - Maintain an Environ-

mental bulletin board and provide articles in the church newsletter and Sunday bulletins

- Earth Care Congregation recertification - renewed annually since 2012
- Pollinator Pocket designation and Certificate of Appreciation (U of I Extension)
- Story Garden upkeep
- Advocacy - participated in Faith in Place sponsored clean energy advocacy activities
- Attended the Green Team Summit in Chicago
- Attended the Faith in Place annual fundraiser

New Activities and Highlights

• Include Youth in Environmental Activities - For our Earth Day celebration two youth gave the Minute for Mission. Sunday School classes (K-5) planted sunflowers and zinnias in the Pollinator Pocket. In coordination with the Adult Ed series, **Maggie Roberts**, Master Naturalist and Gardener, gave a talk on pollinators. The June 8th Adopt-a-Highway clean-up was scheduled later in the morning and included refreshments to encourage families. Confirmation class picked up trash and recyclables in Westside Park.

• Participate in area hazardous waste disposal event

- Worked with Building and Grounds (with direction from **Tim Bartlett**) to plant 252 native pollinator plants on the south side of the Christian Ed building. The committee mulched and weeded the bed. Young adults from the church and DREAMers helped with this project. (Money came from the Rose Fund and ESC budget.)

- Attended the "Pollinator Party" sponsored by Faith in Place at the U of I Pollinarium to become better educated about the importance of pollinators.



- Received the Faith in Place "Earth Champion" award

Budget - \$250 (\$100 toward pollinator plants & \$150 donation to Faith in Place)

2020 Goals

- Explore additional ways to educate the congregation and help the environment
- Encourage greater congregational participation in environmental activities
- Continue to enhance the church landscape design with native wild flowers and grasses
- Plan for the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day Celebration (April 26, 2020)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

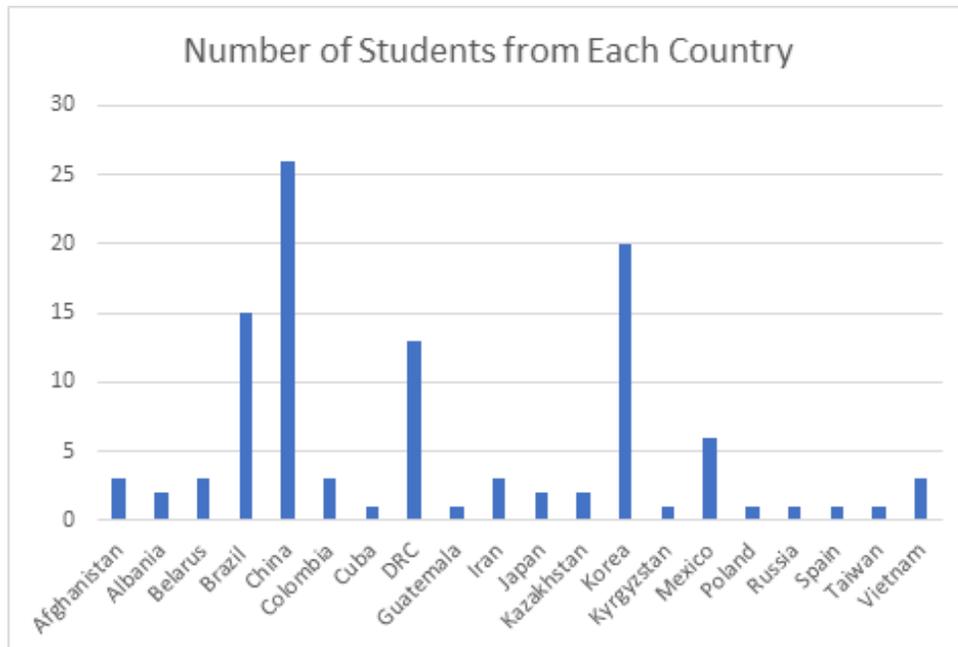
BY JEANETTE PYNE, COORDINATOR

JEANETTE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Volunteer/Committee Activity

The First Pres ESL Program is sustained by and thrives on the hard work and dedication of volunteers. The First Pres ESL Program has 20+ volunteer tutors who provide English instruction to immigrants, refugees, and international visitors. About one third of the tutors are associated with First Presbyterian Church; the remaining tutors have other (or no) church affiliation. Three new tutors joined our ESL tutor team this year, and we have two other volunteers who help with administration work and event planning.

Demographic Data



Most tutors volunteer for two 2-hour sessions per week. However, a few commit to one day per week, and a couple serve the program 4 days per week. These very dedicated tutors consistently model friendship, hospitality, openness, patience, enthusiasm, and flexibility.

Because different people volunteer on different days, it is difficult to get all the tutors together for a “tutor/committee meeting.” To facilitate communication, **Jeanette Pyne**, ESL Coordinator, sent a weekly email update, and regularly discussed important issues with the tutors in person. Jeanette also maintained an ESL Tutor Calendar on Google Spreadsheets and gave the link to all the tutors so they can check when they are volunteering, when the units would change, and when special events would occur. Often tutors have a co-teacher in the classroom, so everyone has a chance to volunteer. This also gives Jeanette a backup tutor in case a tutor is unable to show at the last minute.

Significant Accomplishments/ Highlights in 2019

- Piloted a night class from January 2019 to May 2019. On Wednesday from January 16th to May 22nd, 2019, Jeanette and a few tutors--**Christie Roszkowski, Eugenia Fitzgerald, and Xavier Traenkenschuh**—started the beginning level class. We wanted to serve more immigrants and international visitors who have a beginning level of proficiency. This was in an effort to alleviate the long waiting list and serve a different demographic of students. After a semester of the Wednesday night class, the ESL Advisory Committee and the ESL Coordinator decided to not continue the class because of low student and tutor numbers. We had about 5 regular students, who really needed the ESL class, but wanted more class times. Unfortunately, we did not have the tutor numbers to support this at this time.
- ESL Coordinator trained volunteer tutors and administrative assistants.
 - Three new tutors were added and trained: **Ruth Chung, Xavier Traekenschuh, and Mary Davis.**

- Two volunteer administrative assistants were added and trained, **Dan Chen** and **Pamella Freschi**. These two assistants did the majority of the administrative work during the summer of 2019 while Jeanette was on maternity leave. They were trained in the spring and given a volunteer administrative assistant handbook to guide them and future volunteer administrative assistants.

- **Mike Havey** and **Vern Snoeyink** were head tutors in the summer while Jeanette was on maternity leave.

- Featured on the front page of the News-Gazette. Purely by happenstance, one of the editors of the News Gazette, **Jim Rossow**, was walking by when the ESL Program was doing a fire drill. He became curious about the ESL Program and wanted more information. He sent a reporter, **Debra Pressey**, to interview the ESL Coordinator, two tutors, **Mike Havey** and **Vern Snoeyink**, and two students, **Patricia Zhong** and **Yudisley Cabanzo Wiedmann**. She observed one class and brought a photographer with her. On September 29th, 2019 the First Pres ESL Program was featured on the front page of the News Gazette. The article was titled, “Volunteers Help Americans Learn the Language, American Customs.” From this positive publicity, four new volunteers are being trained to tutor with us.

- ESL Thanksgiving Potluck.
 - This was the first year that the ESL Program invited the members of FPCC to celebrate Thanksgiving with us at our annual ESL Thanksgiving Potluck.
 - Many people from FPCC joined us. About 80 people, including students and tutors were in attendance. This was the first time that such a big event had been planned between FPCC and the

ESL Program.

o Once again the ESL Program was featured in the News Gazette. **Jim Dey**, a member of FPCC, wrote an article titled, “Giving Thanks—In Many Languages”, which was published on November 21st, 2019.

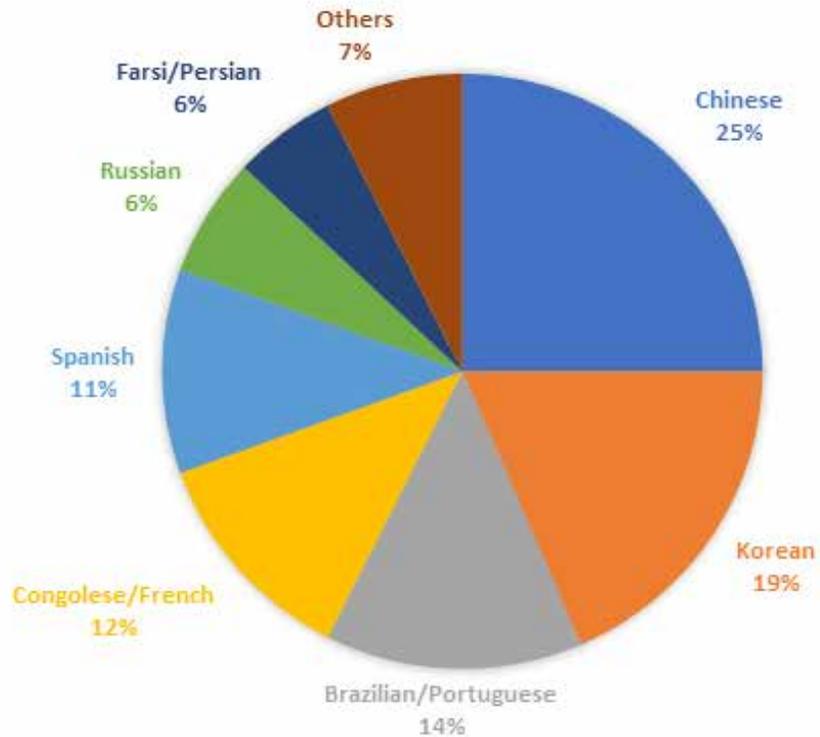
• Expanded ESL Program by Adding Another Level. Since the ESL Advisory Committee decided the night class was not currently sustainable, the ESL Coordinator began looking for another way to expand the classes and serve more immigrants, refugees, and international visitors. Because of the extra publicity in the News Gazette, the ESL Program finally had enough tutors to add another class in the morning. The ESL Advisory Committee and the ESL Coordinator decided that it would be best to add a more advanced level (Purple) and retest Green (Intermediate) and Blue (High-Intermediate-Advanced) to move the students into more appropriate proficiency levels. In December 2019, 9 students were moved to the advanced Purple class from the Blue class. This eventually opened up space in all the levels. Our number of students that attend classes each day has increased.

• Maintained communication with First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. Jeanette sent out a monthly update on the ESL Program in the church newsletter to keep the congregation abreast of what has happened at the ESL Program. Jeanette also continues to present a Minute for Mission once a semester.

• Maintained full classes at all levels. Our enrollment numbers continue to be high. We averaged about 30 happy, energetic students per day last year.

- o Enrollment data from January 2019 – December 2019
- o Number of students that were newly registered – 68
- o Number of students enrolled

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS BY LANGUAGE



throughout the course of the year —116

- o Number of immigrants are 56% of the student body
- o Number of countries represented this past year: 20 (Afghanistan, Albania, Belarus, Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Spain, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam)

2019 Budget Expenditures

The bulk of the ESL Program expenditures included such things as instructional resources (workbooks, instructional texts, teaching idea books, dictionaries), photocopies of materials for student use, and organizational/office supplies (folders, paper, office supplies). Other expenditures included things like transportation costs (we occasionally provide bus tokens for students in need), field trip costs, food costs (snacks, tea, coffee,

juice, and miscellaneous food for end-of-year picnics and holiday gatherings). We spent all of our budget on items and materials necessary for the ESL Program to continue.

2020 Goals

Looking ahead, we would like to:

- Work to insure continued funding for this amazing program!
- Continue to provide a supportive environment where students can learn English and feel part of a caring community, and where volunteers can help others while learning just as much as they teach!
- Curriculum Development.
 - o Based on the student needs assessment, it became clear that a curriculum needed to be developed to improve the instruction at the ESL Program. **Jeanette Pyne** will be working on creating curriculum for all five levels based on research and input from the appropriate stakehold-

- ers. This is a long-term project.
- Teacher/Tutor Training.
 - o From the tutor needs assessment, **Jeanette Pyne** intends to continue to develop workshops for the current tutors to give them further support in instruction in various skills and cross-cultural teaching.
 - Making the ESL Program accessible to the communities who most need it.
 - Continue to communicate with FPCC on a regular basis by submitting a monthly entry to church newsletter and presenting a Minute for Mission once a semester during church services.
 - Continue to problem-solve and improve the ESL Program.

Transportation Ministry

BY JOHN MUIRHEAD, COORDINATOR

J.MUIRHEAD@COMCAST.NET

The Transportation Ministry of First Presbyterian Church Champaign had an active year of providing transportation to Sunday Church, Sunday School and special programs such as Sunday Evening High School Youth group and the Annual Go and Serve program. While the church van was a key part of this ministry it is important to note that a number of church members provided transportation on a regular basis bringing worshippers in their own car or van. The Church van carries up to 14 passengers and on a typical Sunday we transport 30-35 persons to church and Sunday School.

Over 55 different persons were transported at least one time in 2019. So, you can see the importance of volunteers who assist by driving their own vehicles. We have seen a reduction of the number of riders due to two main reasons; some of the families have acquired their own vehicles and now provide their own transportation, and

we have had some families move away from the community.

We have eight drivers who have taken the Road Test at the Secretary of State's Motor Vehicle facility in order to be an approved driver of the church van. They earned a special endorsement on their license to drive the 15 passenger van (driver plus 14 passengers). Additionally, 11 more drivers have participated in the Transportation Ministry by bringing parents and children to church.

Operation expenses for the church van are a separate line in the church budget and run approximately \$2,800 per year.

Bob Kirby and **John Muirhead** have shared the responsibility for organizing transportation on any given Sunday or Special Event. We have been joined in this work by **Blaise Pascal** who works part-time in the Children, Youth and Family ministry of the church. Please feel free to contact us or the church office if you would like to learn more about this ministry of our church.

World Mission

BY LIZZ PIPPIN, CHAIR

LIZZ@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The World Mission Ministry (WMM) had a busy 2019. As an active part of the mission team of our congregation, we spent the year actively educating ourselves on the work of our mission partners. Our congregation supports 19 unique mission partners outside of Champaign County. Our partnerships include five PC(USA) mission co-workers around the globe.

We endeavor each month to learn more about the work of our partners and also about the communities in

which they serve in order to be better partners and to come to a better understanding of how the work of our congregation here in Champaign impacts their work as well as how what is global becomes local and seeing how their work impacts us here in Champaign. This was most noticeable this year in our work partnership with Ten Thousand Villages.

On behalf of First Presbyterian Church, the World Mission Ministry worked with Ten Thousand Villages to use our congregation as a host for their Rug Event. These rugs were made through Pakistan and our members who visited Lahore, Pakistan in 2018 were able to meet the owners of Bunyaad that coordinates and works with the artisans. We opened our space to the local community and gained more insight into a place where many in our congregation support girls in their educational pursuits. It was beautiful to see this event come full circle.

In 2019 we endeavored to create a mission statement that would help guide our discussion and focus us on our financial support on your behalf. The fruit of our efforts is the following statement: "Sharing God's love and message of salvation with people in need around the globe through support, empowerment, education, and relationships."

World Mission also hosted **Veda Gill** from the Presbyterian Board of Education in Pakistan who came to speak with our children during Vacation Bible School as well as the **Boys** and the **Rices**, our mission co-workers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, respectively. During our meetings, we were also visited by representatives of different partners such as **Lillian Covington** from Opportunity International and

Rev. Lee Hasty-Hinton from the Theological Education Fund who both provided invaluable information about the work of their organizations.

World Mission Ministry is open to any active participant to join. We meet on the third Tuesday of the month from 4:30-6 in the evening. Our current members are **Jim Berger, Steve Gritten, Sallie Hutton, Elizabeth Pippin** (Chairperson 2019), **Jeannie Snoeyink**, and **Ann Stout**. **Debra Miller** is the session Elder who moderates the Mission Team with the support of **Rachel Matthews** (Mission Coordinator) and **Eric Corbin** (pastor). World Missions reports to session through Mission Team. At the end of 2019, **Lizz Pippin** stepped down as chairperson of World Mission Ministry and starting in 2020 **Sallie Hutton** and **Jeannie Snoeyink** will be the new co-chairs. We always enjoy having new members join us and hope that in 2020 our ministry will continue to grow under their guidance.

May God bless the work of this ministry as we continue to support the global mission work of First Presbyterian Church in 2020.

2020 Church Officers

2022

2021

2020

Session Elders Moderator: Matt Matthews

Ken Chapman
Sabrina Hwu
Celeste Kim
Ann Stout

Ron Deering
Debra Miller
Mark Schoeffmann
Eric Stickels

Judi Geistlinger
Steve Tock
Karin Vermillion
Tim Young

Community Mission Deacons Moderator: Sandy Carr

Michael Hogue
Bruce Rainey
Leslie Thomas

Sandy Carr
Richard "Itch" Jones
Jeannie Murray
Lola Ruthmansdorfer

Barbara Clark
Steve Gritten
Mike Havey

Congregational Care Deacons Moderators: Amy Born & Pam Knox

Sue Fischer
Mary Jane Kelley
Kathy Kinser
Buddy Selin

Amy Born
Jean Brunson
Nancy MacGregor
Jean Smith
Julia Ulen
Tom Ulen

Jean Brunson
Katharine Jones
Pam Knox
Marge Olson



DREAM participants, parents and staff traveled from Champaign, Ill. to participate in Big Tent on August 2, 2019. Photo by Angela Stevens.

WORSHIP



photo by Kristi Corbin

Worship

BY JUDI GEISTLINGER, CHAIR
 JUDIGEISTLINGER@OUTLOOK.COM

Taking our direction from the classic statement from our historical church documents: "The chief end of [humanity] is to glorify God and enjoy God forever," the Worship Team aims at providing opportunities to glorify God as a community in worship. To achieve that end:

- we worship on Sundays, traditional and contemporary
- we worship quarterly in services of Wholeness, usually on Sunday evenings
- we observed Holy Week
 - Ash Wednesday in the Sanctuary
 - Maundy Thursday soup supper and worship, including choir around tables in Centennial Hall.
 - Good Friday service was held at 7 PM with the First Methodist church in the Sanctuary
- We worshipped via special music Sundays:
 - Mother's Day with orchestra Mozart's *Missa Brevis in C*

- December with Vivaldi's Magnificat
- Our children led us with the telling of the Christmas Story in pageant and song the Sunday before Christmas

We said farewell to **Pierre Tang** and welcomed back **Richard Rossi**, adding **Leslie Thomas** as choir rehearsal accompanist. Section leader **Connor Stout** became the children's choir director. **Jean René Balekita** continues to provide music once a month. In order to be more welcoming to our Francophone congregants during our services of worship, the worship committee:

- Hired a translator to broadcast live French translation to congregants.
 - Share a French translation of scripture often read from the pulpit and displayed on the screens.
- Communion was celebrated the first Sunday of the month during the 9am service, every Sunday at the Gathering, and additional services throughout the year, including Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve.

We updated our funeral and wedding policies and hired a new wedding coordinator, **Bruce Rainey**.

The biggest change to our schedule this fall is reducing the traditional services to one at 9 AM, per suggestion from several 8 AM attendees. Worship committee is evaluating attendance, working with the membership committee and evaluating feasibility of all the services.

The Gathering Worship

BY BILL STOUT, CHAIR
 CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP TEAM (CWT)
 W-STOUT1@ILLINOIS.EDU

Committee Purpose and Functioning. The CWT is charged with developing strategies to maintain, execute, and grow the 11:15 (note time change!) worship service, aka The Gathering. Current committee members are **Pastor Matt, Jason Pope** (our new worship leader in 2018), **Gary and Linda Peterson, Bill and Ann Stout, Don Dixon** (more members desirable, a 2020 goal!),

We are pleased to report **Jason Pope** has very effectively led the band all year, with the result often being spontaneous clapping by congregants as one indicator. Our lead singer **Melinda Rodriguez** has served all year; she adds a wonderful and worshipful voice to the band.

The CWT meets monthly, with our meetings consisting of planning the general structure of the service and planning publicity/outreach. This includes planning special events like luncheons, often with an invitation to all at First Pres, but sometimes smaller luncheons with an outreach focus, especially to reach out to recent Gathering visitors. This included in 2019 successful art and jazz services and providing support for the Sunday **John Williams** visit. We were the impetus for a redesigning of our web site with a special outreach focus, completion date of Spring 2020. We will continue in 2020 to try to increase worship service attendance. CWT also has a representative on the Worship Committee, whom CWT reports to.

CWT's central mission includes (1) maintaining and modifying The Gathering so that it provides a family friendly (there is a children's activity area in Centennial Hall) contemporary worship experience that is spiritually meaningful for those who prefer a more relaxed yet worshipful service, (2) attracting new members to First Pres (something we have had success with), and (3) taking a lead in proposing and/or facilitating First Pres Sunday activities such as the 2018 Big Event (proposed by and co-led by The Gathering,

but with a LOT of help from others, especially **Kristi Corbin** in her role as Mission Coordinator).

CWT has an important church growth purpose, noting that almost all of our local churches offer a "contemporary" service, with some of these churches growing quite rapidly. CWT has a fixed budget to carry out its various functions, including a modest line item to pay outside musicians, as needed.

Distinct elements of the Gathering service. We provide Communion every Sunday, provide an extended prayer time where those present can offer prayers of concerns and joys, have minimal liturgy, and the band leads us in song (a mixture of contemporary worship songs but especially including traditional hymns sung up-tempo). We continue to work on the general structure of our worship service.

Snacks of various kinds, including fresh popcorn, cheese and crackers, vegetables with dips, homemade cookies/

brownies/cupcakes, etc. have been, and will continue to be, provided virtually every 2019 Sunday for after service visiting.

We expect to provide non-standard worship experiences a few times in the year, such as combining worship with lunch by having the service with congregants seated at tables blending into lunch, something that was done successfully a couple times. Because our service is of modest size we are able to try "new things" periodically and are working hard to do this effectively. (Note: We are worshipping in the Chapel while the kitchen remodel is happening.)

We look forward to 2020!

Traditional Music

BY JOE GRANT, CONDUCTOR/DIRECTOR
JOEGRANT@ILLINOIS.EDU

The traditional music program includes the Chancel Choir, Upper Room Ringers, and Children's Choir.



photo by Charles Leford

The Chancel Choir has 22 volunteer members and four paid section leader/soloists. It provides music for the 9 AM traditional service on a weekly basis and features two Music Sundays per year in which a master work or series of anthems are performed with chamber orchestra. It is conducted by **Joe Grant**.

We were pleased to learn mid-year that long-time colleague **Richard Rossi**, would be returning to his position at Eastern Illinois University and his former position as our church organist. **Pierre Tang** who filled the position in Richard's absence took a position leading the instrumental program at Pepperdine University in California. **Leslie Thomas**, a church member, was hired as the rehearsal accompanist for Chancel Choir and has also subbed for services when Richard was not available.

The Upper Room Ringers consists of 6-8 players and plays in services once per month. It is led by **Karin Vermillion**.

The Children's Choir serves jointly as part of the CYF ministry and meets following Sunday School at 11 AM. It performs quarterly in the main traditional service and is featured in the Christmas season. **Connor Stout**, our bass section leader, took over as conductor in September.

The Mozart *Missa Brevis in C* was performed for Spring Music Sunday and the Vivaldi *Magnificat* was sung for Christmas Music Sunday. This was preceded by an introduction to the piece and its text in an Adult Ed class presented by **Joe Grant** two weeks prior to the presentation.

Jazz Sunday provided another musical highlight to the worship calendar.

Traditional Music Staff:

Joe Grant,
Conductor/Director
Richard Rossi,
Organist
Karin Vermillion,
Bell Choir Conductor
Leslie Thomas,
Rehearsal Accompanist



photo by Charles Ledford

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

February 17, 2019 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

Quorum: Yes

Moderator: Pastor Matt Matthews

- Pastor Matt Matthews delegated Celeste Kim, clerk of session, to serve as secretary.
- Pastor Matt Matthews briefly reviewed the 2018 Annual Report with the congregation.
- Pastor Matt Matthews entertained a motion to approve the report.
- Congregation moved to approve, and seconded the motion.
- Vote proposed and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.

- Pastor Matt Matthews invited Mark Schoeffmann to speak as chair of Finance Committee, in regards to approving the terms of call for Pastors Matt Matthews and Eric Corbin.
- Mark Schoeffmann entertained motion to approve terms of call for Pastors Matt Matthews and Eric Corbin.
- Congregation moved to approve, and seconded the motion.
- Vote proposed and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.
- Mark Schoeffmann closed in prayer.
- Meeting adjourned at 10:20am.

Celeste Kim
Clerk

October 20, 2019 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Quorum was met.

Meeting commenced at 10:01 AM.

Pastor Matt Matthews opened the meeting by announcing that CNC Chair Eric Stickels would announce the nominated candidates for Ruling Elders, Congregational Care Deacons, and Community Mission Deacons.

Eric Stickels announced the following candidates, and Pastor Matt Matthews opened up nominations from the floor.

Session

Ken Chapman
Sabrina Hwu
Celeste Kim
Ann Stout

Community Mission Deacon

Michael Hogue
Bruce Rainey
Leslie Thomas

Congregational Care Deacon

Sue Fischer
Mary Jane Kelley
Kathy Kinser
Buddy Selin

Congregational Nominating Committee

John Seiler
Bill Stout

All nominees are for the Class of 2022.

Pastor Matt Matthews made a motion to close nominations.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 AM.

Celeste Kim
Clerk