

March 2020



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

What's Up At First Pres?

BY BYRON KEMPER
BYRONKEM@ILLINOIS.EDU

A member was wondering how much the Church spends on utilities each month. Due to the late arrival of the query, What's Up did not have time to do much research so just the facts this month with a follow-up next month on how the church manages its HVAC needs.

In 2019, we paid \$41,082 for gas and electric, \$10,023 for water and sewer, and \$4,013 for telephone, which works out to monthly costs of \$3,424, \$835, and \$334, respectively. In 2018, we paid \$1,260 and \$1,485 less for gas/electricity and water/sewer, respectively, and \$295 more for telephone than we did in 2018.

Are you curious about anything at First Pres, financial or otherwise? If so, send along your questions to info@firstpres.church with "What's up" in the subject line or call the office with your questions. Look for answers in the next Newsletter.

Mark your calendars for the Lenten service of wholeness which will be held March 15 at 6 PM in the Sanctuary. The service is designed for people who are grieving, hurting, or in prayer for others who grieve and are hurting. Some come to these services to pray for a friend and to be in prayer for the world. Some come because the world worries them. Others come with burdens and personal pain.

Snippets From Your Pastor/ Lots of Grace in Small Things

BY MATT MATTHEWS
MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

I've blessed houses, boats, rings, food, families, fairs, concerts, surgeons, teams, soybean fields, sailors in the Navy, babies, dying people, a message in a bottle, and more. This is the sort of thing ministers do.

Years ago, I got a call about blessing a Labrador Retriever. But "blessing" wasn't the word used.

When Mickey and Keith phoned me to say their kindergarten son wanted me to baptize their new chocolate lab, I told them Jesus instructed us to baptize nations not dogs, and doing the latter in the Presbyterian World would be highly irregular. As I was turning it over in my brain that just because dogs don't vote doesn't mean they aren't part of nations, they clarified what Bobby actually said. Young Bobby's exact quote asked if Pastor Matt would "bath-a-ma-tize" his dog. Ah. Bathamatize. Technically, I was off the ecclesiastical hook. Sure, I could bathamatize a dog. His parents understood the distinction, and one day—if I did a good job as his pastor—Bobby would, also. So, sitting cross-legged on their warm front sidewalk on a kind summer morning in Portsmouth, Virginia, I bathamatized that tail-wagging, bouncing dog with a trinity of words, water, and laughter. For his part, that crazy dog, vibrating with energy, knocked me down in the grass licking my ears with his excited tongue. Bobby, barely able to hang onto the leash, stood dutifully and gladly with his parents during the ceremony, pleased that I was doing my part to welcome this loveable beast into their family fold. Bobby's invitation remains one of the most profound I have ever received.

Congregational Life

Nurture Committee

BY SABRINA HWU, CHAIR
SABRINAHWU88@GMAIL.COM

Sub-committees: Membership, Hospitality & Fellowship

Greetings!

I have just stepped into **Gary Peterson's** very large shoes of the Nurture Committee Chair since he finished serving on Session at the end of last December. I am very thankful that he is remaining on this committee. I'm excited to serve alongside with this group of diligent and passionate members!

We decided to put Dinner 7,8 or 9 on hold this year because we are cooking up something new. Please stay tuned!

Someone on the committee brought this beautiful write-up to my attention and I would like to share it with you.

We Are A Nurturing Fellowship - Letter Writing

"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." – *1 Corinthians 12:26*

My mother and grandmother exchanged hand written letters though they lived only sixty miles apart. The letters were saved and read time and time again. They were notes of encouragement and love. Even in this age of email and text and WhatsApp, we like exchanging notes on paper- something we can hold and save and come back to again and again.

Our congregation is a nurturing, letter writing one. Here are some examples from our Letter Writing Ministry. The members of the prayer team write to

those for whom they pray and as does our men's prayer group. Our session writes in rotation to each of our congregant families and keeps us all informed of the financial health of our church. Small groups write to members of their groups.

Our Children, Youth and Family ministry writes a birthday card to each child. Our Nurture Committee sends birthday cards to older congregants and our Membership Committee invites back those who have not been regularly attending worship. The Compassion Peace and Justice Committee stays in written communication with two prisoners. Many write independently to those who are alone or are ill, bereaved or celebrating a special life event.

In what other ways do we suffer and rejoice together? How can we become more nurturing?

Would you like to join us in this service of nurturing ministry? If you feel God is nudging you, please contact me. I am waiting to hear from you.

International Friendships

"Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it." Hebrews 13:2

Would you like to be a friend to one or more international students or scholars or their families at the University of Illinois? You will meet with them once a month for a semester. Most hosts share a meal in their homes but the program is flexible.

Of the more than 10,000 internationals from over 50 countries many yearn for the opportunity to develop friendships

with Americans as a part of their college experience. By extending Christian hospitality we can build international bridges of compassion and understanding as students return to leadership roles in their homelands.

Through our First Pres Outreach Committee we are partnering with International Friendships (<https://www.ifusa.org/>), a Christian organization that just recently organized on our UI campus.

Bring your interest and your questions to **Noni Ledford** (noniledford@gmail.com) or **Bob Kirby** (rwk3213@gmail.com). We can hardly wait to tell you more about this exciting opportunity.

Men's Prayer Group

Men of the church gather in the chapel Fridays at 8:30 AM to pray. We pray for our world, our country, our city, our church universal and First Presbyterian Church. No experience or preparation is necessary. We just talk with God.

Men's Breakfast Bible Study

Eight to twelve men of the church gather Tuesdays from 7-8 AM in Mae Chapin Dining Room for fellowship and bible study. We are reading the Gospel of Mark. No biblical knowledge or preparation is expected. And.... sorry no breakfast until Centennial Hall reopens.



What are you most grateful for at First Pres? Here are some of the responses...

- Streaming services
- Sunday services – a quiet time
- Chance to hear sermons & music that both helps me worship and brings me back to what it means to be God’s person
- Spiritual support
- Intellectual rigor
- I like the prayer (pray for another person) and intercession service at church
- The focus is on Jesus and His message to us
- Weekly reminder and a chance to reset my direction – a compass
- Inspiring and helpful sermons and Bible studies
- Holy Spirit
- The Message that provides guidance and understanding, praise, and prayer
- Reaffirming our faith each Sunday and encouraging us to grow in our faith
- The excellent quality of the Sunday sermon and worship service
- Ministry
- Worship services
- Feeling presence of God at Sunday worship
- Brings us closer to God
- Food for thought & prayer (great sermons)
- Sunday church service
- After 50 years, now grateful for your ministry by listening to the services on WDWS since I can no longer be there in person
- Worship services and the effort put into these with choir, music, children’s time etc.

Meal Deliveries

Meet some of our Guatemalan neighbors. We deliver food from the Public Health Department to their homes on Thursdays between noon and 1 PM. Email **Bob Kirby** if you would like to help at rwk3213@gmail.com.

Su Voz

Su Voz means “His Voice”. It is a devotion written by the people of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba (see above picture) and emailed each morning. To subscribe contact Marcia@firstpres.church.

Easy English Fellowship

You are welcome to pray with us and sing with us as we worship God in easy English. You can also help us with our brief English learning activity. Be advised that we do give homework. But, we do have refreshments. Room 204 Sundays from 10-11:10. No appointment needed.

The church has recently acquired an electrostatic sprayer which we use weekly to sanitize each area of the church. It provides total coverage of all surfaces, shadowed, vertical and underneath. We also have available in each building wall units containing hand sanitizer. We are taking all precautions in providing a germ-free space for our guests and members.

Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth & Family Update

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CYF
 mindy@firstpres.church

Sunday School

March will bring the unit 'Jesus is my friend' for the preschool and Kindergarten class. The elementary kids will study the story of three women of faith; Lydia, Priscilla, and Dorcas. The Middle School will explore questions about the divine nature of Jesus. The Confirmation Class will study worship and the sacraments. The high school will be studying the books of Luke, John, and Acts.

Bible Class

The Bible Class for our third grade children will begin March 8 and conclude on March 22. The children will receive the gift of a Bible from the church on March 29 at the 9 AM service. A reception for the families will follow the worship service on that day.

Confirmation Retreat

All confirmands are invited to participate in the presbytery confirmation retreat March 27-28 at Camp Carew in southern Illinois. Let **Pastor Eric** know if you are able to attend.

Youth Group

This past month the youth group met on the first and third Sunday of the month. We have enjoyed fellowship together. In March we will meet on the third Sunday of the month. The youth will be discussing issues that they are passionate about as we start to explore them from a biblical perspective and ways that we can make an impact on the world around us.

Session Updates...

- Approved First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, hosting a gallery on our campus for the Boneyards Arts Festival, April 3, 2020;
- Approved the baptism of James Gloe, son of Nancy and Rob Gloe, grandchild of Karen and Jan Miller, on Sunday, March 22, 2020 at the 9 AM service;
- Approved moving forward to continue the fusion of the contemplative and traditional services as one worship service at 9 AM;
- Gave approval to the Finance committee to publicize the opportunity to contribute to the costs of the kitchen renovation and ramp joining another anonymous donor in this endeavor;
- Approved participation in the 2020 Habitat for Humanity Faith Build, including raising funds in the amount of \$ 2000 and providing volunteers for the project;
- Approved Mark Schoeffmann, Eric Stickels, Ann Stout, Steve Tock and Tim Young as elders being authorized to sign for projects approved by Session.



Youth and adults gathered in December of this past year to organize hygiene kits for local agencies.



For Lent, we might "put on" and pray Paul's words in Colossians 3:12:

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

and from Colossians 3:14:

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Jays & Concerns

We express our sympathy to the family and friends of...

- **Joan Dobrovlny**, who has been a member of the church since December 1955, died February 16, 2020. Services will be held at the Mt. Hope Mausoleum on Friday, March 6, at 2 PM.
- **Kevin Chapman**, the son of **Ken and Kena Chapman**, who died Tuesday, March 3, in an airplane accident. Kevin joined the church as a Confirmand in 2004. Arrangements are pending.

Congratulations to...

- the pastor of our sister church in Cuba, **Daniel Izquierdo**, and his wife, **Anatiza Sánchez**, on the birth of their son, **Isaac**, born February 24.
- **Paul Rector** who celebrated his 99th birthday on March 5, 2020.

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday, April 5

9 AM Worship/Sanctuary
11:15 AM Contemporary Worship/Chapel

Maundy Thursday, April 9

7 PM Worship/Sanctuary

Good Friday, April 10

7 PM Worship/First United Methodist Church-Champaign
(combined service)

Easter Sunday, April 12

8 & 9:30 AM Worship/Sanctuary
11:15 AM Contemporary Worship/Chapel

There is no adult or youth Sunday School on Easter.
Childcare will be provided for children 5 years and under in the nursery.

Mission Updates

Mission News

What's Happening at DREAMM?

Since Summer 2019, pre-teen DREAMM-ers have been learning and practicing violence prevention skills through an evidence-based program called YES (Youth Empowerment Solutions).

To celebrate their hard work, DREAMM traveled to Chicago recently. They visited the Chicago Auto Show and attended Black Boy Joy conference, an empowerment gathering for black youth. They met NBA and NFL players, attorney and former Miss America **Erika Harold**, (see picture below). Over 400 boys attended. DREAMM provides several social and cultural experiences that would otherwise be unavailable to many of our young people.



DREAMM stands for "Driven to Reach Excellence and Academic Achievement for Males." DREAMM focuses on preparation

for college and careers for boys placed at risk in Champaign County.

Thank you, First Pres, for seeding this organization and continuing to support us with your prayers, time and treasure. www.dreamm.org

ESL Program Update

BY JEANETTE PYNE, ESL COORDINATOR
JEANETTE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

All About Poland

One of the main objectives in the First Pres ESL Program is to promote cultural exchange between the students and tutors. There is so much we can learn from our students. **Damian** is from Poland and he gave a great presentation about Poland. He talked about the legend of Poland's origin story, famous cities in Poland, famous Polish people and Polish food. Listening him talk about *paczki* (jelly-filled donuts) and *pierogis* (dumplings) just made my mouth water. These presentations have been going so well that I also asked



George is presenting on Carnival in Salvador

the Brazilians to do a presentation about Carnival.

All About Carnival

On February 27th, **George, Selma** and **Matt** presented on Carnival in Brazil. Known as the "Greatest Show on Earth," it begins the Friday before Ash Wednesday and ends at noon on Ash Wednesday. Though Rio de Janeiro is the most well-known Carnival, each state has its own version. The three students talked about Carnival in the cities of Recife, Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro. In Recife, there is a special dance called *frevo* in which the dancers have little umbrellas that they use as props. In Salvador, during the parade, there are trio *elétricos*, or trucks with a high-power sound system equipped with a stage for the musical performance as they are driving through the parade. In Salvador, drums are a vital



Brigadeiro (fudge) in a cup

and significant part of Carnival because they were used by the African slaves during slavery to communicate. Now, all of Carnival throughout Brazil is influenced by Afro Brazilian culture, especially in music and dance. Finally, Rio de Janeiro is a spectacular show, which is actually a competition. There

are samba schools that are competing in the parade with highly decorated floats and thousands of people dancing in costumes. It is truly a hedonistic celebration before the time of penance and repentance of Lent. In addition to talking about Carnival, a few of the Brazilian students brought typical Brazilian food to share. We got to sample Brazilian cheese bread, *coxinha* (fried chicken croquettes), Brazilian corn cake, Brazilian carrot cake, and *brigadeiros* (fudge). We hope that students will feel more and more comfortable to share their culture with us and this type of delicious cultural exchange will be a regular occurrence at the First Pres ESL Program.

also collects and recycles items donated by the congregation like batteries, plastic pill bottles and caps.

- The ESC collects and recycles used eye glasses.
- The ESC was responsible for eliminating the use of Styrofoam coffee cups in the church.
- ESC members are responsible for our coffee hour clean-up.

Anytime ... Bring your used glasses or sunglasses to the church and place them in the Glasses Recycling box in Westminster Hall.

Green Team Update

BY CLEMMIE ACKERMANN, MEMBER
 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
 COLETTA.ACKERMANN@GMAIL.COM

Earth Day 50th Anniversary April 22nd 2020



First Pres Earth Day Facts – Did You Know?

- Jean Smith founded the Environmental Stewardship Committee in 1992
- First Pres is a designated Earth Care Congregation. We are one of 250 churches in the PCUSA with that designation.
- We have been identified as Earth Champions by Faith in Place
- Our church is a designated “Pollinator Pocket”
- We are an “Adopt a Highway” supporter and clean State Street quarterly
- The ESC collects and recycles glass, plastic and paper used in the church. It



Looking Forward ...

Adopt-A-Highway –
 Saturday, April 11th – 8– 10 AM
 Contact **Liz Miley**

Earth Day Church Celebration –
 April 26th

Styrofoam Sunday –
 April 26th 8:30–11:30 AM
 At home ... Start saving any styrofoam with the #6 and chasing arrows imprinted. We’ll collect it at the church on April 26.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event

Saturday, April 4,
 8 AM to 3 PM in Champaign.

Visit hhwevent.simplybook.me for information on site location, acceptable items and to register. Residents **MUST** register for this event!

For information about upcoming Residential Electronics Collection Event

visit www.ecycle.simplybook.me

If you do not have internet access, contact the Recycling Coordinator in your community:

City of Champaign 217.403.4780
 City of Urbana 217.384.2302
 Champaign County 217.819.4127

Daylight Savings Time begins this Sunday,

March 8.

Spring ahead one hour!

Snippets from Matt's Cuba Journal/Winter 2019

As winter slowly creeps away, I invite you to think about the warmer climes of Cuba.

For the next few months I thought I'd share with you passages from the journal I kept while in Havana last year while visiting our Sister Church, the Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Luyano. The church is located at the edge of downtown Havana. Our delegation from First Presbyterian Church Champaign (**Rachel Matthews, Robert Ferrer, Judi Geistlinger, and I**) stayed on the Luyano campus and were treated like beloved family. We were verily treasured. This brotherhood/sisterhood, what our Cuban hosts call a "hermanamiento," is a special bond that is difficult to describe. I want you to know this by taking a trip to Cuba with another team from First Pres.

In the meantime, here are snippets from my journal. These abbreviated notes come without explanation; I think you'll be able to follow.

Come with me!

Matt

Homeward bound:

On the way home, jostling in the church van, I ponder how I'll never be able to utter the word "world" from the pulpit ever again without thinking differently.

Thank you, Cuba.

I'll miss you.

Sweating men cutting grass with machetes as Carlos carts us as gently as he can to the airport. Pay phones. A man on his motorcycle—with his goat. Packs of dogs on sidewalks watching the cars whiz by. Los gatos in sunny courtyards. The man sweeping the gutter of a busy city street with a push broom. Bulls

and horses tied to stakes on the roadside at the outskirts of the city. Palm trees. Packed city buses, standing room only, filled with people of all ages. Trees with enormous leaves, mimosa leaves, shining leaves, hanging brown pods pointing to the ground like wiccan fingers, pink flowers, orange flowers, red shoots, yellow and lime blooms. The sign on the greenhouse hawking plantas medicinales. Fading pictures of revolution on walls, on billboards, on buildings. Old men playing checkers on benches in the small neighborhood parks. Carlos' smile in the rearview as he taps the horn twice and waves generously to another passerby he knows. On these roads with the holes and taxis and zipping scooters one hand on the wheel is a gracious plenty.

Our flight to Miami was uneventful. Upon landing, however, we rushed to customs only to wait in line. Robert had gotten an app a week ago at check-in that allowed him to bypass this step. He told us to get that app, too. We didn't listen. As he sailed through customs, we waited like cattle shifting from foot to foot. Cleared at the last stop, we charged to get our bags, which Robert had gotten for us, then to the gate on concourse H only to discover had we arrived seven-minutes prior we would have gotten our bags on our connecting flight. No worries, the nice lady at the counter said. Flying space available should get us to Atlanta eventually to catch our 9 p.m. connection.

In this unexpected Miami layover, we ate. Heading to our gate, I bought a small fortune's worth of primo chocolate for the beleaguered troops. Swiss milk chocolate with coconut filling makes everything better. It took the edge off. The WiFi worked in Miami, and like junkies we buried our faces in our phones for a fix.

When Paul Simon recorded So Beautiful or So What largely in his Connecticut home, he accommodated the ambient noises common to a less than perfect soundproofed studio.

Acorns, for example, fell on his roof and tapped out their contribution to his guitar passages. He and producer Phil Ramone worked the sounds in. "Everything is music," Simon said, "when you start to listen."

Missed flights, bumpy rides on a cacophonous church van, poison ice cubes, rationed chocolate, migrating at jet speed from winter to summer and back, and dozens of other inconveniences are all part of the song. Everything is music when you start to listen.

Our flight to Bloomington arrived on time. Jay Geistlinger, dressed in a long black coat akin to priestly robes, greeted us with a beneficent smile. He had draped each of our heavy coats over the chair backs at the table near the restrooms near baggage claim. We struggled to get the strange encumbrances zippered onto our reluctant bodies. Our bags awaited us, and, outside, so did the snow. The temperature when we woke up was 95-degrees warmer. But neither wind-chilled, bitter skies nor jetlagged memories of the warm ocean obstructed the bright stars as we stepped into the cold night for the van ride home.

finis

Cuba Partners Invitation to Visit Luyano Presbyterian

Matt and Rachel Matthews and Lizz Pippin will be visiting our sister church, Luyano Presbyterian Church in Havana, Cuba, May 25-June 1. Anyone who has previously attended a Cuba Study can go.

If you want to go, we need an RSVP soon to get a solid number of participants so we can purchase tickets.

If you have not attended a Cuba Study before but really want to go, contact **Rachel Matthews** to explore a possible Cuba study group.

Finance

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE
MSCHOEFFMANN@MCHSI.COM

Contributions

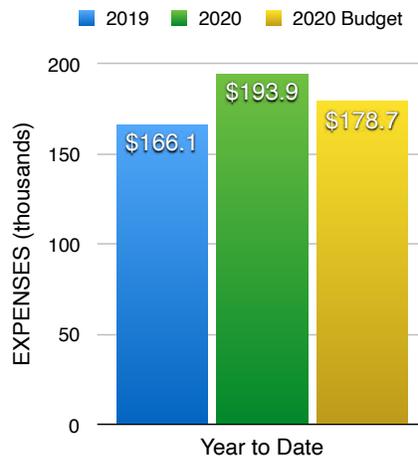
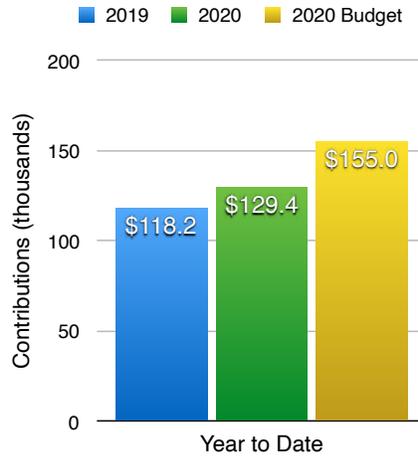
Contributions in February were \$2.6K more than in 2019 but \$9.0K below the budget at \$68.5K. The Year to Date total is above last year by \$11.2K but below the budgeted amount by \$25.6K. These figures include prepaid pledges (those paid in the year prior to the budget year) that are prorated over the year with 1/12 added to each month's contributions. Including all revenue sources, at 16.7% through the year, we have received 26.7% of the expected 2020 revenue.

Expenses

Year to Date expenses are \$15.2K above the budget at \$193.9K and more than in 2019 by \$27.8K. At 16.7% through the year we have experienced 18.1% of the expected 2020 expenses.

Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$81.6K which is \$35.7K better than at the end of February in 2019. This figure includes \$61.9K more in prepaid pledges than in 2019.



in their lives. Indeed, one of our members has already anonymously offered to pay a portion of these costs.

Would you be interested in financially participating in this project, either by a general contribution or by providing funds to purchase a particular piece of equipment? Opportunities for equipment range from the very small to large. Following is a list of equipment on order for the new kitchen. Based on the response to this opportunity, we plan to place a plaque in the kitchen acknowledging each contribution. Please let the office know if you are interested in making a contribution and if so, whether you would like to remain anonymous.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to contribute to this major upgrade to the Church's infrastructure and to lessen the impact of this project on our strategic capital reserves.

The Finance Committee

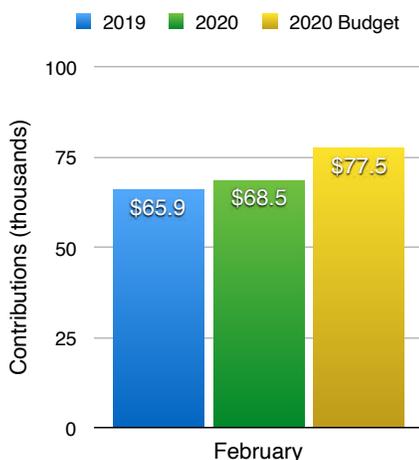
Kitchen Equipment

Three Compartment Sink.....	\$1,158
Dishtable Sorting Shelf (2)	113
One Compartment Sink.....	315
One Compartment Sink, Deep.....	455
Mixing Faucet (3).....	139
Pot Filler Faucet.....	183
Hand Sink (2)	129
Work Table, 36"	415
Work Table, 72" (2)	627
Work Table, 108" (2)	972
Work Table, 84"	1,478
Work Table Drawers (6).....	175
Dishwasher	5,771
Ice Maker	2,590
Range, 72"	10,142
Exhaust Hood	2,475
Exhaust Fan.....	787
Heater Fan.....	2,849
Fire System	1,864
Dishtable, L Shaped.....	3,764
Wall Mount Faucet	339
Convection Oven.....	3,560
Freezer	4,547
Refrigerator.....	2,596

Kitchen Rehabilitation – Update and Opportunity

The major rehabilitation of our Westminster Hall kitchen is well underway. Demolition is complete and the necessary contracts for the remaining work have all been approved. The total cost of this work, including contingencies, is expected to be approximately \$300,000. Funds to pay for the work will come from the remaining F150 funds and reserve funds realized from our sale of part of our farm property.

The kitchen project provides a wonderful opportunity for members to make a lasting and tangible contribution to our church, perhaps in honor or memory of someone who is or has been important





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Change Service Requested



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Sunday:

- 9 AM Worship
- 10:15 AM Sunday School and Adult Education
- 11:15 AM Worship

Pastors:

- Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, Ext 213
- Eric Corbin..... Associate Pastor, Ext. 214

Staff:

- George Almasi Facility Assistant
- Ritchie Drennen Facility Manager, Ext. 237
- Patty Farthing Receptionist, Ext. 211
- Robert Ferrer Audio-visual Technician
- Marcia Franks Administrative Assistant, Ext. 210
- Joe Grant..... Director of Music
- Rachel Matthews Temporary Missions Coordinator, Ext. 219
- Blaise Pascal CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216
- Ann Petry Accounting, Ext. 224
- Lizz Pippin CYF Associate Director, Ext. 216
- Jeanette Pyne..... ESL Coordinator, Ext. 235
- Richard Rossi Church Musician
- Mindy Watts-Ellis Director Children, Youth & Family, Ext. 212

All staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by @firstpres.church. For example, eric@firstpres.church.

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