



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

The Heart of Mission

June 2, 2020



In God hope holds us. Yet, this past week culminating in violence has been a terrible and chaotic time. As if the pandemic was not enough, violence descended upon our cities as protests erupted. Some of us are hearing the voices of people long silenced as if for the first time. Others of us are crying, “How long, O Lord?”

You might wonder why in a word about mission I bring this to light. The heart of mission is the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. And, Love compels us to be prepared to follow God’s call to care for the least of these and then act when there is need. We are a Matthew 25

congregation. Our mission is not just to give a handout, it is to build congregation vitality, dismantle structural racism and eradicate systemic poverty. The violent protests show us that we have a long way to go in dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty. Prayer is all some of us can do but it is not enough. Those of us that can act must.

I think some of you might like to know that in choosing the mission agencies First Presbyterian Champaign has chosen to support, we have been making a statement about dismantling structural racism and dismantling systemic poverty. We seek to support agencies that help allow the individual to have dignity and agency, balance racial power imbalances, care for the immigrant as well as give to the vulnerable – locally and globally. Get to know these agencies. Look for the ways this happens. Open yourself up to being called to choose an agency to adopt and make it your own. We have several people at First Presbyterian, not just our mission deacons, who have done this. They give financially and volunteer at one or more of these agencies even during this shelter in place time. We are all looking forward to when we can be back serving face to face.

Before I close, I want to thank you for your generosity in last Sunday’s Pentecost Offering. 40% went to DREAAM. Thank you for your generosity all during the time of this pandemic. We have helped countless people with groceries and rent who have lost

jobs and income. We will continue to do so as we are able. We have several offerings during the year that go to help the least of these. The next one you will be hearing about is the Raindrop Project in July.

Peace,

Rachel Matthews, Temporary Mission Coordinator
First Presbyterian Church Champaign

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Courage Connection: Donations needed! Courage Connection has been very active the last few months and has been a safe shelter for families who have suffered from domestic violence. They are currently in need of full size shampoo and toiletries (full size), gift cards. They are still providing housing through June for their families. Bring toiletries to the mission deacon's house, Michael Hogue, 1104 W Clark St. He will be delivering to Courage Connection.

Salt and Light has grocery gift cards now so Community Mission Deacons encourages us to utilize this means of giving groceries to people. They continue to take clothing and houseware donations.

Community Mission Deacons will be sending the University Y and CU Fair a one time gift of \$1000 each to meet food and rent concerns among the immigrant communities, the demand for which has risen in the last month.

Presbyterian Women: For 150 years, the women of this church have faithfully served within the church and the community and world. During the present need for "social distancing", we're missing meeting together for study and fellowship, but the ministries continue. So a first step in moving forward is the annual installation of women in the variety of positions in Presbyterian Women. **Yes, we'll Zoom forward, on June 4 at 1:00 p.m.** Every woman in the church is invited to log in to her email account and click on the link provided for PW officer installation, thereby joining in support and embracing all that is to come.

Cuba Partners Network: Here is what Rev. Liudmila Hernandez, leader in the Cuban Presbyterian Church (IPRC) recently told the national Cuba Partner Network Steering Committee last week:

"The pandemic has worsened the baseline situation of shortages. There are long lines to buy food, personal items and cleaning supplies. The government's food ration books have become more important, but still, there is not enough food for the people. The Church continues social projects like Living Waters for the World, but it's hard to get groceries for those we serve. Yet we see miracles every day. We see how people share what they have. "

In light of this, the national Steering Committee is proposing a Network-wide challenge to raise \$25,000 to send to the Synod to sustain the congregations in all three presbyteries as they face difficult economic times complicated by the hobbling impact of the pandemic, and the embargo. To date \$4,000 has been generously committed, and they believe that the remaining \$21,000 can be quickly subscribed if we work together as a network of over 90 partnerships. Our FPCC Cuba Steering Committee will be discussing our response in the next few weeks. Stay tuned.

Frontera de Cristo – We have finished the fifth video coffee and conversation with our mission coworkers at Frontera de Cristo. with FDC Board Member Rosie Mendoza and Author Aaron Bobrow-Strain discussing *The Death and Life of Aida Hernandez: A Border Story*. What a powerful story of the life of a person on the border.

June 4: 4th Anniversary Celebration of Cafe Justo y Mas

June 11: Our PCUSA Mission Co-workers Miriam Maldonado and Mark Adams will be talking on Borders as Places of Encounter

Our mission coworker in Indonesia, Farsijana, in a recent letter to Matt sends Pentecost greetings. She has been fasting as a spiritual discipline during this time of suffering. We keep her in our prayers. She said, *I would like to greet you in my language, Bahasa Indonesia in the present of Pentecost. I am sending you my song titled "You are my refuge" taken from Psalm 71: 3, 17-18, 6-7.*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05Hf5l5Fxlo>)

I have used the reading from Psalm 71 as my reading from Bible every morning to begin my journey of fasting. Everyday I remember each year of God has given me my life since I was born to know. I thought a day of human is a year of God. I share the day with my families and people whom I have encountered. Then I will read other passages from Bible to close the days of fasting.

Today is the end of my long fasting since the Ramadhan to this Pentecost. During the Ramadhan I woke up at 3.30 am to have my breakfast then will have the opening meal at 5.45 pm. The continued fasting was total of 37 days. Before the Ramadhan arrived I have started my fasting on the Wednesday ash in February 26, then every Wednesday I had my fasting to arrive in Ramadhan.

On the day of Idul Fitri I did not fast, but the next morning I continued my fasting from 6 am to 6 pm. I feel like the freedom given my Christ has allowed me to fast in the regular time as the sunlight arrives to the sunset swollen into the earth. After this Pentecost, I will continue 5 more fasting on the Wednesday ash to make up for 55 days.

Compassion Peace and Justice recently received this word on respectful conversations of which you, too, might be interested. Some of you will remember Matt Soerens co- author of Welcoming the Stranger which led to our small groups on immigration and then eventually to engaging the immigrant community.
<http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/may-29-2020-prayer-partner-respectful-conversations-in-a-time-when-tensions-are-high/>

Let us keep all our mission partners in our prayers, those who are waiting to go back to their place of ministry and those who are able to work where they are. Listen for God's call to you in their ministry.

Our PC(USA) Mission CoWorkers:

Mark Adams and Miriam Maidonado Escobar (Mexico)
Farsijanna Adeney-Risakotta (Indonesia)
Jeff and Christi Boyd (Central Africa)
Jo Ella Holman (Caribbean and Cuba)
Bob and Kristi Rice (South Sudan)

Our regional and global mission partners:

Kemmerer Village (and Camp Carew)
Lifeline Pilots
Marion Medical Mission
Mission Aviation Fellowship
Opportunity International
Friends of Presbyterian Education Board in Pakistan Presbyterian Cuba Partnership
Special Offerings of the PC(USA)
Theological Education Fund
Young Adult Volunteers

Here in Champaign – Urbana:

CU Better Together
CU at Home
CANAAN S.A.F.E. HOUSE
CANTEEN RUN
COURAGE CONNECTION
DREAAM
eEMPTY TOMB, INC
FAITH IN ACTION
JESUS IS THE WAY PRISON MINISTRY
THE REFUGEE CENTER
RESTORATION URBAN MINISTRY
SALT & LIGHT

Here at First Presbyterian Church

FPCC Amateur Preachers
FPCC Environmental Committee working with Faith in Place

FPCC Presbyterian Women
FPCC ESL
FPCC Children, Youth and Families
FPCC Mission Possible/Go and Serve



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