

July 2020



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

A Summer Memory

BY MATT MATTHEWS
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*Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:30-31 (NRSV)

I remember vividly when my nine-year-old sat at the neighborhood pool up the hill from our house, sweating and stuck to a cheap plastic chair, dangling legs too short to touch the ground, chlorine drying into reddening skin. The carnival sound of the ice cream truck sounds like a starting bell, and John Mark bolts to the parking lot at the heels of his ebullient friends.

They wave to the unshaven driver nodding his head to a different beat as the truck lurches from the curb and coughs up the steep hill. Atom Pops melt down their elbows, Klondikes softening to goo before they can be consumed. It is sweltering and even twilight promises little relief.

But the pool does. It's not the cool water that does it, because the water is as warm as a bath. It's climbing out of the water when one notices the faintest breeze stirring over wet flesh. That chill means a moment of respite, and the surprise of that unearned gift etches a line in the brain where the pages of memory are kept. In the remembering, we'll recall that the smell of pine was borne upon that breeze, and fresh mown grass, and the waning song of ice cream truck bells, no less liberating a tune as church bells at Sunday noon. More rode on that breeze: the kerplunk of a chunky boy's cannonball into the deep end, vintage Earth Wind and Fire from the lifeguard's banged-up CD player, the smell of greasy sunblock.

This is summer, all right.

In the days before people sequestered themselves into the air conditioned indoors, rocking chairs wore grooves into wooden porches. People swatted

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to
DREAAM
on
5 great years!

flies with funeral fans. And the sound of ice clinking in tall glasses of lemonade was no small symphony.

People did less because they couldn't do more. The heat was just too much. Old people died in it, and children were made to stretch out for naps in the middle of the afternoon, sprawled in front of oscillating table fans, a baseball game on the radio generating its own heat from a faraway field in Chicago or Baltimore.

People slept outside on sleeping porches. They ate salads filled with the tomatoes and cucumbers they planted at Easter. They did not turn the oven on. Or the lights.

By the time I was a teen, the sleeping porches of the old houses in my neighborhood along Powhatan Parkway and Chesapeake Avenue were being glassed in as Florida rooms. People had long retreated indoors, transfixed by the gray light of television screens in rooms filled with what the old timers referred to as "bought air" being pumped through houses sealed as tightly as tombs.

This is the summer we said all winter that we couldn't wait to come. Now we cower inside, cursed by getting only what we wanted.

Indoors, we don't notice the cold front that steals into town an hour after nightfall knocking off a few degrees every half hour, nor the stars, nor the fireflies dancing in the back woods. Neither do we hear the moving thunder, or see, or feel, or smell the washing rain, or notice how fresh and sure the morrow comes.

By noon, mirages will shimmer in waves above roads paved in asphalt chewing gum, and roofers will glow like Aztec gods pounding nails into designer shingles beneath that sun. "Even youths shall grow faint," the prophet Isaiah intones. He was

talking about summer in the South.

But no manner of heat can diminish a child's waking ecstasy that there's no rush on this hot morning, no running late to the school bus, no hurried breakfast, no homework undone to haunt them. There's no school today because this is summer!

Earth's ice caps might melt by next Tuesday if this heat keeps up. But at least once a day the ice cream truck will crisscross these very streets. The kids in our neighborhoods will hear its bells long before dimming adult ears can. And we should follow their barefooted lead.

Just five quarters will buy something colorful, sweet, and cold.

* * * * *

Lament Is Part of Our Biblical Heritage

BY MATT MATTHEWS
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John 11:35 Jesus began to weep. ("Jésus pleura"/French; "Jesus wept"/KJV; "Jesus began to cry"/CEV)

Consider the tears of William de Fleurville, a Springfield, Illinois, barber, known widely as "Billy the Barber." In the 1840s and 1850s his barbershop had come to be described as "Abraham Lincoln's second home." Billy was a Haitian-born immigrant who met Lincoln in 1831 when he came to New Salem seeking work. Lincoln encouraged him to put down roots in the larger town of Springfield. Nobody in Springfield knew Lincoln longer than William de Fleurville.

After Lincoln was assassinated, his body was put on a train to Springfield where, on May 3, 1865, the hearse carried Lincoln's body to the State House. He

was laid out in House of Representatives Hall, site of his famous "House Divided" speech. Mourners streamed by non-stop until 10 o'clock the next morning when the body resumed its procession to the Oak Ridge Cemetery.^[1]

Billy the Barber was given a place of honor in the procession, but he chose, instead, to walk in the back of the procession with other black citizens of Springfield. It was said upon Fleurville's death only three years later, that "only two men in Springfield understood Lincoln, his law partner, William H. Herndon, and his barber, William de Fleurville."^[2]

We've all made the long processional from church to graveyard. We have all shed hot tears over the loss of someone we love. Billy the barber—William de Fleurville—wept that day over the loss of his friend Abraham Lincoln.

Part of what makes this passage from John's gospel so amazing is that Jesus did the same thing. Jesus trudged to Bethany knowing his dear friend was dead. Jesus met the mourners. Jesus comforted the comfortless family. And Jesus did what so many of us do in such moments. Jesus wept. At the heart of this story of hope is Jesus' tears.

Tears transcend definition. They speak a language beyond words, which is why, I suppose, God gave us both words and tears. Tears often pick up where our words leave off. John the gospel writer—who is enamored by words and is often long-winded, repetitive, and circuitous—doesn't tell us why Jesus cried, only that he did. It's the shortest verse in the Bible.

I have wondered about lament these days. We have so much to grieve. Racial injustice breaks our hearts. Our role in systemic racism turns our stomachs. The proms and springtime milestones our children and grandkids have had to forgo because of Covid-19 sadden us. The world

I know seems to have wrecked. What about yours?

Our culture doesn't allow lament. "Sad is bad," we are taught. My mother wouldn't let me be sad. When I was blue, instead of teaching me to work through it, honor it, and grow from it, she'd say, "Turn that frown upside down and soon you'll wear a smile."

But what about our tears? What can we learn from our lamentation? Getting 'stuck' in lamentation or sadness is problematic. But avoiding lamentation altogether is, too.

Lament is part of our biblical heritage. Working through lament is the passage to spiritual wholeness. Skipping lament—turning our frowns upside down too soon—dodges pain for now but doesn't defuse it. Avoiding lament doesn't lead to the healing and new life Jesus came to proclaim.

When's the last time you allowed yourself to weep?

^[1] p. 54, Looking for Lincoln Philip Kunhardt III, Peter Kunhardt, Peter Kunhardt, Jr, New York: Knopf, 2008

^[2] *ibid*, 132.

Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth & Family Update

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CYF
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Many thanks to the volunteers who made the 2019-2020 Sunday school year possible! Regrettably, we had to stop sooner than we had planned, but we will hope to resume time with our children again soon.

Here are our dedicated volunteers: **Karin Vermilion, Sarah Laufenberg, Naomi Rempe, Destin Lembelembe, Noni Ledford, Mary Lou Bauer, Joyce Wittler, Jan Wittler, Rob Vermilion, Jason Lowe, Judy Hendrickson, Judi Geistlinger, Kathy Schoffmann, Nancy Pippin, Sean Miller, Thethe Mfulama, Celeste Kim, Sabrina Hwu, Jay Geistlinger, Laura Walston, and Julie Young.** **Brandi Lowe** helped in the

children's choir and **Pam Hadley, Jeanie Snoeyink, and Rachel Matthews** helped as a subs. Thank you all so much!

Lizz Pippin has resigned as our Associate Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. We wish her luck in her new position with Charleston Middle School as their Media Specialist. Lizz worked as a volunteer and as a staff member with our youth from Sunday school, to special mission trips, to fun fellowship times and retreats. She will be missed! Lizz remains a member of our church and we still hope to see her from time to time. Thank you so much Lizz!

Our youth zoom series continues on Thursdays at 4 PM. We are talking about systemic racism, and are using materials provided by the Memphis Youth Mission. Check out the weekly CYF e-newsletter for the zoom link and study materials for discussion.



Employee Highlights

BY ANN STOUT, HUMAN RESOURCES
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This month we are highlighting two more of our great employees one of whom we see regularly and the other who works in the background. We see the results of his labor but we don't see him very often.

Joe Grant

Our first "star of the month" is our musical director, **Joe Grant**. We see him in the traditional service every week as he conducts the Chancel Choir and he is busy "behind the scenes" during the week coordinating the activities of the Bell Choir, the organist, and sharing the responsibility of the children's choir with the CYF director. He has been artfully performing these duties for 22 years.

Joe and his wife, Becky, have three adult children and five grandchildren and they are very proud of all of them. The oldest is a teacher and mother of two boys in New York City. The middle is a nurse in Louisville, KY and mother of two girls. The youngest is a glass artist in North Carolina and the father of one daughter.

When he is not working, Joe likes to play tennis and golf and pickleball. He also enjoys weaving and reading. Joe and Becky like to vacation in Outer Banks, NC and are planning to be there in July with the whole family. Joe says that he is not much of a dessert guy but he wouldn't turn away mint chocolate chip ice cream or orange sherbet. He enjoys movies "now and then" and, of course, likes all kinds of music, so picking a favorite style was hard. But he said that first would be classical followed closely by jazz.

Damen Rowell

Another hard worker who is not as obvious to us is **Damen Rowell**, one of our diligent maintenance workers. He has been cleaning the church building and the education building for the last five years. He usually works evenings so most of us don't see him while he is helping to keep things clean and in order.

When not working, Damen likes to lift weights and visit his family in Chicago. Some of his favorite things include listening to R and B music and he said he also "loves helping people".

We are very fortunate to have such a high quality staff in every department of the church.

Organist Search

BY KARIN VERMILLION, ORGANIST SEARCH TEAM
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FPCC will greatly miss **Richard Rossi**, but we wish him all the best as he moves on to his next calling. In order to fill his position, an Organist Search Committee has been formed, consisting of **Joe Grant, Ann Webbink, Mike Havey, and Karin Vermillion**. With guidance from the HR Committee, this group has crafted an updated job description and is currently examining methods of advertising the position.

If you have any questions or input for the committee, please contact either **Ann Webbink** (anweb2@yahoo.com) or **Karin Vermillion** (karinvermillion@gmail.com).

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom!

BY ERIC CORBIN, ASSOCIATE PASTOR
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Do you remember the car commercial with the line Zoom, Zoom, Zoom? That word has a different understanding for many of these days. Zoom, Zoom, Zoom – many of us spend much of our time on Zoom lately. In the month of June, our church hosted 79 Zoom meetings, with a total of 723 participants in those meetings, for a total of 38,631 minutes of meeting time for participants! And those numbers don't include ESL classes, which are also meeting online. We are adapting to this medium, and I am grateful for all those continuing the ministries of God through this congregation in this new way!

Many thanks to **Lizz Pippin** for all of her help in organizing Zoom meetings in the last few months. With her departure, **Marcia Franks** will be taking on primary responsibility for scheduling Zoom meetings for our congregation. If you need a Zoom meeting set up for your committee or group, please email zoom@firstpres.church and Marcia will help get you going. (Using this address for Zoom will help us to organize our Zoom requests, and for me to jump in to help when Marcia is unavailable.) If you need the link to an existing Zoom meeting, please use that same address (zoom@firstpres.church). Our church calendar has not been quite consistent with actual meetings lately, but Marcia is working to resolve that, so check firstpres.church/calendar for the schedule of meetings. Please note that we do not post Zoom links on our website to help keep our meetings secure.

Often, our Zoom meetings are operating without what Zoom calls a "host." The host has special abilities to mute participants, control screen sharing, remove someone from the meeting (if necessary), and a few other miscellaneous tasks. We are shifting to a new strategy regarding hosts for meetings. If you are the organizer of the meeting, you or someone you delegate can have access to the host controls on an ongoing basis. If you wish to have such access, please email zoom@firstpres.church and we'll get you set up.

Thanks so much for learning something new! If you haven't jumped in to a Zoom meeting yet, give it a try. It's pretty easy – after installing the app, you just click a link sent to you for the meeting, and you're in. Let us know if you need assistance! I look forward to seeing you on Zoom!

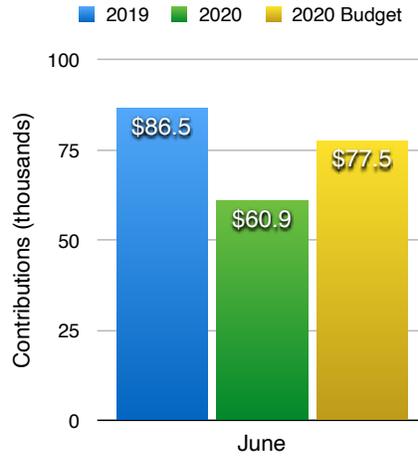
Finance

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE
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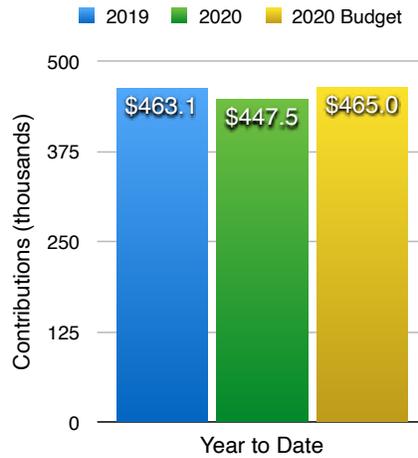
Contributions

Contributions in June to the Operating Fund were \$25.6K less than in 2019 and \$16.6K below the budget at \$60.9K. The Year to Date total is below last year by \$15.6K and below the budgeted amount by \$17.5K. 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 50% through the year, we have received 69.7% of the expected 2020 revenue.



Expenses

Year to Date expenses are \$11.1K below the budget at \$525.1K but more than in 2019 by \$2.2K. At 50% through the year we have experienced 49.0% of the expected 2020 expenses.



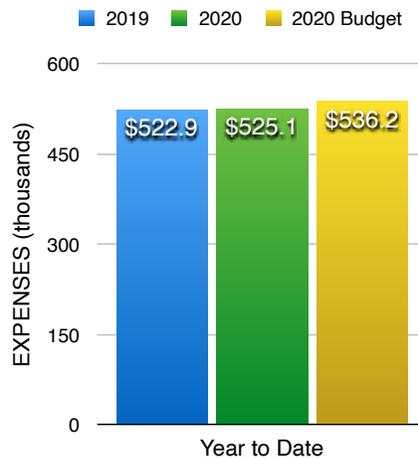
Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$195.5K which is \$142.4K better than at the end of June in 2019. This figure includes \$61.9K more in prepaid pledges than in 2019 and \$134.2K from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program established by the Federal CARES Act.

Restricted Donations

In addition to the support of our Operating Fund, additional donations have been made in June to funds restricted to specific purposes as follows:

Pentecost Offering	\$2,460
General Memorial	\$1,035
DREAM	\$275
Covid 19	\$700
Other Funds	\$550



What are you most grateful for at First Pres?

Here are some of the responses...

Programs/Youth

- Strong family values - solid relationships, excellent programs for all ages
- The chance all 4 of our children had through youth club and Confirmation – still means so much to them as adults. Our oldest son recently returned from D.C. for the Youth Club Reunion
- Secondly, I am grateful for the Sunday School
- Adult Sunday School – discussion with our friends at FPCC
- Food. The Good Food that touches my taste buds
- I need to learn English because it's very important to know how to read and write this language – speak also very well.
- I like to be here because discovering another country
- Projects and opportunities to share with these Christian friends
- So many different opportunities to serve
- Provided a place (Cherub choir) for my children to gain confidence
- Wednesday and Sunday Night Youth Clubs for our children
- Variety of activities, programs (i.e. small groups), and service change-ups
- And all the programs offered – opportunities to grow my faith, etc
- The ESL Program
- Programs
- Sunday school and ESL classes
- For learning English, it's important
- Gifts our children enjoyed: Mothers Morning Out, Youth Club, Choir, Go & Serve



We can be most thankful for the Scriptures. In God's Word, we not only discover His will for our lives, we find words of genuine comfort for those times when life becomes unglued. Our knowledge of God's Word is not useful unless it strengthens our faith and leads us to do good.

Luke 24:27: And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

2 Timothy 3:16,17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Jays & Concerns

Session Motions Passed At June Meetings

- Approved actions recommended by the Covid-19 Response Team
- Approved the baptism of Custodian **Freddie Arnett Foster** and his daughter **Jalisa Denae Foster** on July 1, 2020 by the **Rev. Matt Matthews**.

Congratulations to...

- **DREAAAM**...Changing lives for the past 5 years!
- **Robert Ferrer and Patricia Nashpitz** who were married July 5, 2020. Robert is our audio visual tech.

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family of **Bev Kelton**, whose daughter Cheryl Bourguignon died July 1, 2020;
- the family and friends of **Jerry Phillips** who died June 15, 2020.
- the family and friends of **Mary Wood** who died Monday, July 6 in Wala, Wala WA where she had been living to be closer to her daughter the last few years. There will be a service and burial here in Champaign at a later date.

Join us on Wednesday, July 15 for worship.

We will be led by Gary and Linda Peterson's daughter, Janna, and her husband through music and prayer.

We will gather on Zoom, chat and then worship with music.

Hope you can join us.

Mission Updates

Raindrop Project

BY RACHEL MATTHEWS,
TEMPORARY MISSION COORDINATOR
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World Mission's 2020 Raindrop Project

It is raindrop time again. Some of you may ask: Raindrop? What does that have to do with us? Symbolically, one raindrop may make an insignificant impact in our daily lives, but enough of them added together provides us with all of the water we drink and foods we eat. On alternate years our local and world mission groups collect raindrops from you all so that we can provide extra help to one of our many agencies we support. Think of the many drops ranging from a dollar or so up to many dollars. For example, a dollar may provide a drink for someone, while other raindrops provide for a piece of clothing, a place to stay, or something to eat. All drops come together in a large pool which can make a significant impact in the needs of one agency. During the month of July, we will be collecting funds from each of you represented by each rain drop, your gift.

This year, World Mission agreed to select a mission that is suffering from the Corona virus epidemic such as we are facing in this country. We did not have to look far. **Mark Adams** and **Miriam Escobar**, married coworkers (one of four PC(USA) mission co-worker couples we support) who were with us a few years ago, explained the ministry at Frontera de Cristo, our neighbor.

Frontera de Cristo is a Presbyterian border ministry located in the sister cities of Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico and Douglas, Arizona. They have their hands full. The Mexican/US border is now closed,



they are ministering and providing for Mexican citizens that have escaped from life threatening communities in the south, the border conflict to the north, and now, most recently, the COVID-19 virus which has hit their town with casualties and job layoffs such as we are experiencing.

As one of five binational ministry sites of Presbyterian Border Region Outreach (presbyterianborder.org), Frontera de Cristo works with churches, presbyteries, and secular organizations on both sides of the border to do justice, love, mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Their different ministries include the New Hope Community Center, Mission Education, Migrant Resource Center, Family Ministry, Church Development, CAME

(Migrant Exodus Ministry), and a Health Ministry. (<http://fronteradecristo.org/>)

The cost of living at the border is about the same as it is in the United States. The difference is that people working in Mexico do not get government subsidies when they lose their job. Covid-19 has increased the loss of jobs and the border conflict has restricted commerce for our neighbors on the border.

How to Give in 2020

Each raindrop may not be much. All the raindrops together can make a big difference. Each dollar may not be much. All our money together can make a big difference.

The Heart of Missions Newsletter has been revived during this COVID-19 crisis. Our local and global mission agencies are having to make rapid changes due to shelter in place orders, as well as food and medical supply shortages. The newsletter helps summarize some of what has been in the mission news for our mission workers and agencies during the past week in case you missed it.

You can access The Heart of Missions on the church website under the SERVE tab at firstpres.church/heartofmissions

Choose an amount to give. Together our giving will help reduce the impact of COVID-19 and the increased financial need at Frontera de Cristo because of it.

You can give either through check or online giving at <http://firstpres.church/raindropoffering/>

Please write the check to First Presbyterian Church, indicate "Raindrop" on your check or online giving information line.

First Presbyterian Church will be sending one check to Frontera de Cristo at the end of our collection. The Raindrop Offering will be collected in the month of July.

During the month of July

This month you will be hearing bits and pieces from our World Mission Committee about the **Douglas/Agua Prieta** story which led to Frontera de Cristo. You will see a short video that shows many of the issues facing Frontera de Cristo as they provide for all of the needs of these displaced families. On July 8, Rachel interviewed **Claudia Kirby** about what she and her husband, Bob, witnessed several years ago when they spent three weeks at Frontera de Cristo and the surrounding area. We have also set up a fun webpage explaining the Raindrop project and allowing you to give online...

<http://firstpres.church/raindropoffering/>

Some things have changed since Claudia and Bob's visit. The United States/Mexico immigration policies have complicated border relationships. Now the pandemic has exacerbated practically all of the difficulties that the border ministry already experiences. Our goal is for the Raindrop Offering to help reduce the impact of this virus. Of course, we are hopeful that each of you will give an amount that you can afford. If you have any desire to go deeper in learning about our ministry on the border, Frontera de Cristo has lots of information on their webpage, Facebook page, and various webinars. (<http://fronteradecristo.org/>)

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of "CAME"

English Translation of CAME: "Exodus Migrant Shelter"

A Historical review of the Life of CAME
BY STEVE GRITTEN
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One of several ministries supported by Frontera de Cristo, recipient of our 2020 Raindrop Offering is Frontera de Cristo's Migrant Exodus Ministry of CAME in Agua Prieta. It just happens to be its 20th anniversary this year. Agua Prieta is a city across the border from Douglas Arizona. Mark Adams and Miriam serve there as one of our Congregation's four Missionary couples. The citizens there are in great need of food, clothing shelter and now support from the Covid-19 virus. Seventy percent of the migrants that are served are from Southern Mexico. The larger Mexican border cities serve migrants from countries south of Mexico. Their ministries are supported by many external social organizations; whereas Agua Prieta must concentrate more from within and congregations such as ours to meet the needs of their people. Presbyterian congregations from both Mexico and the US have banded together to form a mission team "Frontera de Cristo". That team overseas the work in Agua Prieta.

In addition to the work of Frontera de Cristo mentioned above, in 2000, they formed a very important new program called "CAME" to assist migrant workers traveling to and from the United States. The initial purpose of CAME was to provide a safe place for Mexican males returning from US to sleep and eat before deciding what was next best for them. Mexico is a challenge for poor people due to insufficient law enforcement. Later, CAME became a safe place for women with children to eat and sleep.

In 2014 unaccompanied minors from Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) began arriving at the

border. This was part of the discussion of the changing context of migration.

In 2018 CAME began to stress support for families reflecting another change where families were arriving fleeing extreme violence and poverty seeking asylum at US Ports of Entry. To date CAME has served 23,500 individuals since their opening in 2000.

Since 2000, CAME has evolved with the addition of programs for education and projects aimed to assist families to find a way to exist.

Another challenge has been the border closure by the United States. This lengthens the time asylum seekers must wait for their turn to petition for asylum through the legal process at US ports of Entry.

Recently, with the aid of a Catholic priest, a program developed to provide a common area to establish vegetable gardens to provide food for their current use plus training for migrant families to learn how to care for themselves.

In 2020, the Board of Directors of Frontera de Cristo agreed to establish a fund of \$465,000 to construct additional space for a more secure living environment for families complete with rooms for them to work, play and learn. They hope to complete this work by the end of August.

CAME responds each year to additional challenges with programs and activities to meet the needs of its people. The current 2020 challenge has been the Covid-19 virus. In addition with the city-wide epidemic and the care for victims of this disease, many restrictions have been placed upon CAME.

CAME's clients must be protected with social distancing, masks, and limited programs and safety where they work together. In addition they have lost some of their volunteers especially their senior citizens.

On the other hand many migrants seeking to travel north to Agua Prieta have been stopped en route due to the virus.

They look to the community for medical support such as an existing local clinic plus the Red Cross and “Doctors without Borders”. Spiritual and financial support from US congregations as well as other parts of Mexico are always needed and welcomed. The building construction requires additional funding as well as the need for food, clothing, and supplies for their many outreach ministries.

**From Daniel Izquierdo
pastor of our sister church in
Cuba, Iglesia
Presbiteriana-Reformada Luyanó**

Hold on to hope. June 26th.
Cuban Presbyterianism Day

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace that believe in him, that you may be filled with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)

Remembering the beginnings of our Presbyterian church in Cuba, 130 years ago, the theme of hope highlights since its founding. Evaristo Collazo, the initiator of the work, begins it justly imbued with a hope, and so writes in letter addressed to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Southern United States Presbyterian Church in March 1890: “I feel inspired by the hope that this seed that the Lord, by his Spirit, has driven me to plant, will never disappear.”

We live difficult times, it is a tangible and evident reality worldwide and in our own homeland. To our poor and inexperienced economies add damage caused by climate phenomena, plus the havoc of epidemics, especially that of Covid-19, and the possibilities for international cooperation are reduced due to the greatest economic crisis experiencing the planet, for its multiple



dimensions in the social, financial, energy and ecological. Harsh realities we face and with unforgettable forecasts! It seems like we have no visible short-term solutions and hopes often fade.

The history of the beginnings of the Presbyterian work in Cuba shows us Evaristo Collazo starting work without resources or proper preparation, only trusting by faith and hope. By faith he seeks help and asks for it, by faith he trusts to become a pastor, by faith he launches himself into distant missionary camps, amidst strong opposition then by the Catholic Church. By faith he leaves his home in Havana when he is ordered to move to Santa Clara to settle there and continue his evangelizing effort. We certainly can't help but exclaim what a man of faith!, what a man of God!, What a vigorous hope!

The Cuban Presbyterian church lived moments of hopelessness in the 1980 s, due to the state of its facilities, the low membership, the exhaustion of its reduced pastoral body and the lay leadership, due to the external pressures of a society declared atheist ..When his forces were over, when he did not glimpse much light on the horizon, the God of history created crisis situations that caused many to look back at Him, and came the growth

experienced in the 90 s, which is maintained still. And it's valid to wonder: what did the believers then keep their choice for a decadent church before human eyes, and persevere in their attempt?, can hope and a certainty of faith even if they lack the necessary answers?

If we don't see the way out to problems and obstacles that seem unbeatable to us, we usually surrender, we are prey to discouragement, pessimism and inaction. But the Church of the Lord, when horizons seem to collapse, must continue to seek guidance in the Word, a handle.

God calls us to live a life of faith and hope, in love and service. It's time to cry out to God, and humbly wait for the Lord to make us come out strengthened, it's time to sow hope for those who have totally lost it, it's time to be salt and light for this Cuban land. The always present God has called us to follow and serve Him, and hopes of our faithfulness, of a testimony that responds to our convictions, to continue celebrating many years of the presence of our Presbyterian church in our homeland. In these times, clinging to hope is vital. May God continue to bless us. Amen.



Presbyterian Intercultural Network

The Presbyterian Intercultural Network works to achieve the “Imperative for the Reformation of the Presbyterian Church in being a transformative church in this intercultural era”. This commitment was adopted by the 223rd General Assembly in 2018. Our congregation has been a member of the network since 2019.

Compassion, Peace and Justice

Our Compassion Peace and Justice Ministry Team is a Christ Care small group focused on dismantling structural racism and on comprehensive immigration reform. We pray together, learn together and we act. We connect with our PC-USA Mission Agency ministry of Compassion Peace and Justice and our General Assembly Office of Immigration Issues. Our mission focus is DREAAM House. Join us Thursdays on Zoom from 11:00am-noon.

Prison Ministry

Prison ministry at First Pres includes letter writing and visitation of prisoners as well as support of Jesus Is The Way Prison Ministry a community reentry program of our Community Mission Deacons. We also support DREAAM House a goal of which is to interrupt the school to prison pipeline. Prison ministry is a part of our congregational commitment to Matthew 25:39. “And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?”

Are You Up to the Challenge

BY GARY PETERSON, NURTURE COMMITTEE
amer_swede@yahoo.com

A NEW photo challenge has begun!! Send a picture of your younger days to photos@firstpres.church. Younger days could be grade school, high school, etc. Candid shots are welcome. Pastor Eric will be the only one who knows who you are and he will post a new picture in Pastor Matt's daily message on Friday. Pictures will also be posted on the First Pres Facebook page. Some are already having fun guessing. Join the fun!!!! Make a guess about whose picture is presented each week. Visit <http://fb.com/groups/firstpreschampaign> to make your guesses, or email them to photos@firstpres.church.

Nurture is trying to make sure our flock is being connected in some way. We have a telephone tree. Others are making connections by letter. Birthday cards are being sent to children and people 80 and over.

Membership will contact first time visitors to our online worship service on Sunday.

Please be sure to fill out the online Connection Card each Sunday. It is a great opportunity to let known your praises, concerns, prayer requests and to communicate with our Pastors.

Nurture is also exploring ways we can further connect through Zoom that isn't already happening. We would much rather be having Taste of First Pres, Sholem Fest and other meet and greet opportunities in person, but until that can actually happen, we will do our best to keep all of us connected in other ways.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN**

302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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E: info@firstpres.church

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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 Mission Coordinator, Ext. 219
- Blaise Pascal CYF Connections Assistant, Ext. 216
- Ann Petry Accounting, Ext. 224
- Jeanette Pyne..... ESL Coordinator, Ext. 235
- 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.