

March 2017



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Pastor's Pen

BY CHUCK CARLSON, INTERIM HEAD OF STAFF
(chuck@firstpres.church)

As we begin Lent I am ever more conscious of Christ's call and the implications of that call upon my life. Life has a way of sorting out those things that are truly important as we seek to pay attention and listen to God's Word and Spirit. I see more clearly past compromises, failings, and sins. I also am becoming more deeply aware of God's unfailing love and grace. God knows "how we were made; he remembers that we are dust" (*Psalms 103:14*).

To a generation of God's people whose hearts had turned and were not steadfast or true to God's covenant, a people who had forgotten, the Psalmist directs us to the nature of God's character. Listen to the profound compassion of God's heart for us; "Yet he, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; often he restrained his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not come again" (*Psalms 78:38-9*). C.S. Lewis observes that we may ignore the presence of God, but nowhere can we evade that presence. God is everywhere, walking around incognito, though not inaccessible. The real work for us is to remember, to attend, to come awake and then remain awake to that presence. Lewis goes on to say, and I will allow him to do so in his own words; "Oddly enough, what corroborates me in this faith is the fact, otherwise so infinitely deplorable, that the awareness of this presence has so often been unwelcome" ('Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer').

Lent is a time for us to remember and welcome God's presence into our lives. We are called to come awake, to remember who we are and who God is. God's invitation through Joel is relevant for us; "Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing" (*Joel 2:12*).

Our Lenten theme is, "Listen Up! Jesus Speaking". To assist us in our Lenten journey take a look at the spiritual practices that are included in the bulletin each week. During our worship we will incorporate times for silence and quiet reflection.

I especially encourage you to spend some time in the Lenten Spirituality Center in the Narthex of the church. As I stopped and allowed myself to experience each



Salsa Lessons With Yuri Sohn and Cuban Hospitality

Come to watch or come to dance. This Cuba style gathering is for everyone.

Please invite family and friends to join us on Sunday, March 12, at 2:00 PM for a Salsa Dance Lesson given by tennis professional and dance instructor **Yuri Sohn**. Tickets of \$20.00 each are available at the church office, from any Cuba Partner and in Westminster Hall each Sunday and at the door.

Can't give \$20.00 then give what you can. Your presence is golden. Proceeds will help our sister church in Cuba complete a guest house which will in turn help to fund the neighborhood outreach of our church there.

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Pastor's Pen Continued

station last Ash Wednesday, I was moved to reflect more deeply upon the meaning of Lent.

Another opportunity is to join **Judi Geistlinger** and me in an adult class study, "God's Abundant Table". We will meet at 10:30 AM each Sunday during Lent in Centennial Hall. We would love to have you join us in this conversation. Books are available in Westminster or simply come to class and enjoy. If you desire a book we will have them available.

I am happy to let you know that our PNC is again receiving Personal Information Forms from pastors seeking a call. Be in prayer for them. Also be in prayer for the search committees looking for a part time technology person to support our multiplying needs in this area. The search is also underway for a part time CYF person to join our staff and work with Mindy in that ministry.

Pray for your Session as they continue to give leadership to this congregation. We continue to respond to the changing dynamics God is bringing our way during this time of transition. How is God calling us to respond at this time and place in our history? We are called to live within a healthy tension as we move from what is to what God's future vision for us will be. The temptation is to give power to the familiarity of the past and settle with the comfort of today's reality. The challenge we must embrace is to transcend the reality at hand and be listening for and discerning what God's vision for us might be. We want to be God's instruments to bring a new future into existence.

Enjoy your journey through Lent. I consider it a privilege to be on that journey with you.

Chuck

Memorial Fund

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, FINANCE CHAIR
(mschoeffmann@mchsi.com)

What happens to donations made to the church in a deceased members honor? One of the many funds managed by the Finance Committee is the Memorial Fund.

This Fund is comprised of donations made in memory of a deceased member of our church. Some of the donations are designated for a specific purpose but most are not. This leaves the decision of how to use these General Memorial Funds up to the Finance Committee and Session.

However, when the amount of memorial donations is large, the pastors, with the advice of the Finance Committee, will consult with the family on how to utilize the funds.

The balance in the General Memorial Fund at the end of 2016 was \$41,379 and is the result of donations made in the honor of 44 members.

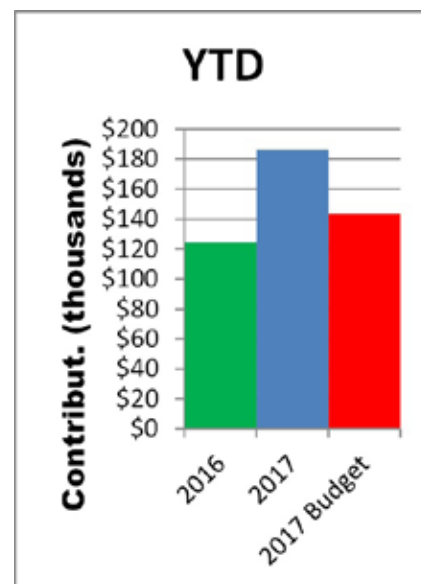
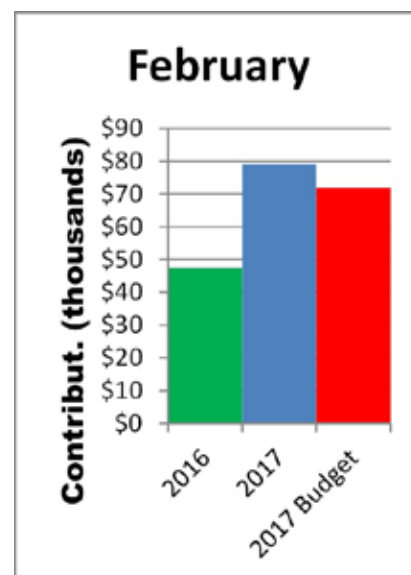
In the development of the 2017 Budget the Finance Committee recommended and the Session approved the expenditure of \$13,700 from the General Memorial Fund as follows:

- \$5,000 for Community Missions
- \$6,000 for World Missions
- \$2,700 for Staff Training

These funds allow the church to continue to support our mission activities and staff beyond what will be available from our limited income in 2017.

A donation given in the memory of a member of our congregation is a wonderful way to honor the member's life. This is especially valuable to our church in supporting existing programs in times of financial stress and in providing initial funding for new initiatives by the church.

Monthly Contributions: Contributions in February continued a strong start to 2017, exceeding February 2016 by \$32K and the budgeted amount by \$7K. The year to date (YTD) exceeds last year by \$61K and the budgeted amount by \$42K. This strong start contrasts with a decrease of \$47K in prepaid pledges (i.e. paid in the year before the pledge year) for 2017 compared to 2016. Note that prepaid contributions are prorated with 1/12ths added to each month's contributions.



Prayer Corner



Constant in Prayer

How is it possible to "pray continually" as God says in I Thessalonians 5:17? How can I make prayer as consistent as breathing? To find the answer we look at verses 16 and 18. First we are told to "be joyful always." We can be joyful because taking our sorrows to God in prayer is healing. This gives a desire to "pray continually."

Finally we "give thanks in all circumstances" because God has helped us in the past and will help us in the future.

Today let us remember to be joyful, pray continually and thank God.

Throughout Lent

In this season of Lent, we invite you to visit the **Spirituality Center** located in the State Street entryway to the sanctuary. The center consists of five self-guided stations for contemplation, reflection, and prayer. You will find a prayer wall, a fountain, a crown of thorns, artwork, and a cross. Each station invites you to interact in a tangible way. For example, you may tie a fabric strip to the prayer wall to represent your prayer. Visit as often as you like.

We extend an invitation to you to join one of our **adult education classes** during Lent as we learn and grow in Christ together.

Lenten Study: God's Abundant Table by Cynthia Campbell 10:30 AM
Centennial Hall Sundays March 5- April 9 led by **Pastor Chuck Carlson** and **Judi Geistlinger**.

Fear of the Other by William H. Willimon 5:30 PM Parlor Tuesdays March 7-28 led by **Judi Geistlinger**.

We would like to **serve coffee at Easter** services this year but need two people for making coffee and two for clean-up. Please let the Spirit move you and contact **Nancy Brombaugh** (356-2817) or **Leland Andrews** (352-1023) soon! This year Easter services will be held at 8 and 9:30 AM.

Jays & Concerns

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family and friends of former member, **Adlon Dohme Jorgensen Rector**, who died February 8, 2017. A Memorial Service will be held Saturday, April 8, at 1:30 PM in our Sanctuary.
- the family of our Accountant, **Ann Petry**, whose brother died recently in Farmer City.

Easter lilies and flowers will adorn our Sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 16. Plants, \$13 each, may be given in memory or honor of someone. Either mail your check to the church office or drop in the offering plate on Sunday mornings. Be sure to include a note for who the plant is in memory or honor of.

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

Pancake Breakfast

A huge thank you to the many volunteers who made the pancake breakfast a success! The crew for the breakfast made a great team; **Sabrina Hwu, Rick Loma, Dann Musasa, Jonathan Mnyampara, Carissa Hwu, Laura Walston, Lizz Pippin, Grace Rispoli, Pam Hadley, Matt Rispoli, Betty Hollister, Naomi Rempe, Ann Webbink, Jean Brunson, Ginny and Jack Waaler, Jim and Laurie Dey, and Joyce Wittler.**

What a wonderful chance for fellowship while supporting the youth mission trip to help flood victims in Hammond, LA. The youth thank you for your generosity. We raised over \$700!

We are in need of a male adult chaperone for this trip. The dates are May 29-June 3, 2017. Contact **Mindy, Sabrina, or Lizz** if you are interested in being considered.

Youth Retreat

Our high school youth had a winter retreat at **Sabrina Hwu's** house March 3-4.

The retreat began at 5 PM with dinner and lasted through March 4 until 5 PM. Food, fun fellowship, Bible study, prayer, and time for serving in our community at Salt & Light were part of the experience.

Sunday School Mission Work

The blessing blanket is finished! **Charlene Bremer** sewed the panels together, and the result is stunning! We are so thankful for her time and talent to make this project a success. The children drew the images on the white panels and helped to finish tacking the front to the back to complete the blanket. Here is an image of the finished project. The blanket has been delivered to the Canteen Run.



The children are now creating bean bags to donate to the DREAAM House for tossing games. Our next project will be collecting school supplies for our Cuban church partners and creating a special Lord's Supper cloth for their worship space.

Children will be given fish banks to start collecting coins for the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. Fish banks will be collected on Easter Sunday. The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering supports Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Self Development of People, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program of the PCUSA.

Sunday School News

We are continuing the theme of God's word to build upon what the children learned last semester. The word has become flesh and is dwelling among us now in our story line. We will be listening closely to the words Jesus had to share with us. We will especially be spending time with the words of Christ that we hear repeated in worship, *The Lord's Prayer* and the Lord's Supper.

In February we have been studying *The Lord's Prayer*. The children each received a prayer journal and have been practicing different types of prayer. Our focus will shift toward Lent as we learn about the Beatitudes and the Lord's Supper.

The high school class concluded their study of the book of Proverbs and will be continuing their study of the many facets of Jesus as teacher, healer, shepherd, servant, miracle worker, and savior.

We have a healthy population of children eager to hear the word of God. We need loving, caring adults to share their love of God with them. If you would like to get involved in this ministry, please

contact **Mindy** or a member of the CYF team; **Kristi Carlson, Lizz Pippin, Patty Farthing, Mel Leichter, Sabrina Hwu, Simao Nhoca, or Joyce Wittler.**

Perhaps you would like to help one of our current teachers in the classroom; **Claudia Kirby, Marjorie Wixson, Judy Hendrickson, Beryl Forewah, Mel Leichter, Joyce Wittler, Lizz Pippin, and Sabrina Hwu.**

If classroom teaching is not for you, you could help in other ways. Be a door greeter, help prepare snack, be an adult helper for the choir rehearsal, be an adult presence at the church van loading after Sunday school, or help drive some kids to and from church.

Your time commitment can be tailored to your needs. Can only do it once or twice a month? We can still find a role for you in the ministry!

The Lithuanian Boys' Choir, Dagilelis, will perform at Faith UMC on Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 7 PM in the North Sanctuary.

The Chamber Choir of Central Illinois Children's Chorus will sing one piece with them as well.

This concert is free and open to the public.

SAVE the DATE!
Saturday, April 15, 2017
East Central Illinois Refugee
Mutual Assistance Center
(ECIRMAC) fundraiser...

Round Barn Center kicking off at 6 PM with a silent auction and entertainment followed by a dinner at 7 PM.

Tickets are \$75 each or a table of 8 for \$550.

Contact ECIRMAC for more information.
(<http://ecirmac.weebly.com>)

Session Notes

At the February Session meeting, the Session approved...

- ♦ Including Communion served at the Saturday Praise and Prayer Service as part of the Clerk's Report;
- ♦ The updated Benevolence Policy;
- ♦ The resolution drawn up by Marc Miller on who is approved to sign checks and conduct business, such as transfers on behalf of the church;
- ♦ Membership Team's request to be rolled into a larger committee entitled Membership, Hospitality, Fellowship & Outreach.

Your Church at Work

Talk the Talk

BY KRISTI CORBIN, MISSION COORDINATOR
(kristi@firstpres.church)

What a blessing it is to serve in Missions! The work we do through our church is measurable and powerful. Whether it is the tens of thousands of dollars this church gives to mission work locally and around the world, the committed volunteer work of church members that goes on without others even knowing, the work done through our ESL program or the day-to-day volunteer work/ministries of all of the Mission Ministry Teams, our church tries to not only "talk the talk" but to "walk the walk."

In fact, a recent unsolicited email received at the generic email address for the office stated:

I just wanted to drop you a note to say thank you. You don't know me personally, but I wanted to thank you and your staff for your service, commitment and love for this community. It is making an impact. Your work is bearing fruit. So thank you! Be encouraged! You are making a difference. Keep it up!

*With Gratitude,
Erika*

The Holy Spirit is moving and this community is once again seeing the commitment our church has to helping others. Praise be to God!

However, in the midst of serving, caring and reaching out, there are challenges. One such recent challenge has been a man using a fake story to attempt to solicit funds from multiple church members, staff and community members. We wanted to let you know that he asks people for money (around 20 dollars) to

take a cab to go home and get his second set of keys so he can get his keys out of his locked car. He has been soliciting not only on church property, but also in the neighboring community using the same story. If you get approached by someone who is a nicely dressed man of mid-sized build who has this story, you should be aware that it is probably this same person.

There is so much going on in Missions to impact the world and to give individuals a hand-up out of poverty! Please check this month's *Heart of Missions* to learn more about this work of the church, learn more about upcoming fundraisers, volunteer opportunities, opportunities to travel and about the temporary Men's Homeless Shelter.



Luyanó pastor, **Daniel Izquierdo** in finished part of the guest house next to the church that he hopes will generate revenue to support the work of the church in a changing Cuban economy. Revenue and donations from the March 12 Cuba Café Salsa and Dessert will help fund their efforts.

empty tomb

Last month PW reported that 24 patchwork quilts were donated to *empty tomb* from **Carol Penka's sister-in-law**. The quilts will be given away as needed.

At the May Tea, PW will collect additional layette items for donation to *empty tomb*.

School Supplies to Cuba

At The Gathering, we will be collecting school supplies during Lent for our sister Cuban church. Suggested donations are: crayons, pencils, erasers, glue, scotch and masking tapes, colored papers, scissors, and stickers. Here is what is on the CWS school kit list to give you an idea.

- One pair of blunt scissors removed from the package (rounded tip, only)
- Three 70-count bound notebooks or notebooks totaling 200-210 pages (no loose-leaf or filler paper)
- One 30-centimeter / 12" ruler
- One hand-held pencil sharpener removed from the package
- One large eraser (no pencil cap erasers)
- Six new, unsharpened pencils with erasers removed from the package
- One box of 24 crayons (only 24)

International Women's Day March 8

We will celebrate women the entire month of March as the Saturday Praise and Prayer Gathering hosts women whose lives are models of inclusion and gender equity.

Here is a preview of speakers.

March 4

Shandra Summerville is from Canaan Baptist Church. She is a Cultural and Linguistic Competence Specialist who leads workshops and consults to groups looking to implement the principles of cultural competence. Ms. Summerville is a minister and is active in many community organizations.

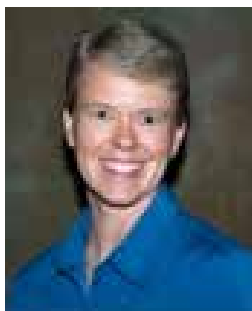


March 11

Karen C. Flynn, PhD is Associate Professor in the University of Illinois Department of Gender and Women's Studies and African American Studies. Her research interests include migration and travel, popular culture and feminism. Her recent book, *Moving Beyond Borders: Black Canada and Caribbean Women in the African Diaspora* has been widely acclaimed.



Melany Jackson, M Div is Executive Director of CU at Home which works



to provide shelter for the homeless in Champaign-Urbana. She received her Master of Divinity in 2008 after which she led Midwestern Evangelism Teams.

March 18

Valena Claiborne is from Windsor Road Christian Church where she serves as Outreach Minister. Her passion is "to empower and encourage women through service and teaching that through His word it will be revealed that we are His treasured possession."



The **Rev. Dr. Evelyn Underwood** is associate minister at New Free Will Baptist Church in Champaign. She has served the City of Urbana most of her life including twelve years on the Urbana Unit 116 School Board. Evelyn has served many organizations that work for the advancement of people including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League and C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice. She has received five academic degrees and is the mother of ten children.



March 25

Evangelist **Lynnea Redmon-Williams**, Indianapolis, has "a mission to empower women, to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and to see women delivered and set free. She stands on the notion that the Word should be shared in a real and practical way that applies to people's everyday lives."



Representative **Carol Ammons** represents the 193rd District in the Illinois General Assembly. She previously served on the Urbana City Council and the County Board. Her work has taken her to Courage Connection, The Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army and University YMCA. Carol is a full time legislator, wife and mother of three.





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302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Change Service Requested



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302 West Church Street
Champaign, IL 61820

P: 217.356.7238

F: 217.356.7242

E: info@firstpres.church

www.firstpres.church

Sunday:

- 8 and 9 AM Traditional Worship
- 9 AM Children and Youth Education
- 9 AM The Gathering (Contemporary Worship)
- 10:30 AM High School Youth Education

Saturday:

- 6 PM Praise & Prayer Gathering
(French-English Service) Centennial Hall

Pastors:

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

Staff:

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

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