

October 2020



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Snippets From Your Pastor/ News from the Covid-19 Response Team

BY MATT MATTHEWS

MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The single goal of the Covid-19 Response Team has remained the same: to keep our flock and our staff safe from a deadly disease for which we have no cure or vaccine. They met on Tuesday, October 6, and made these decisions:

1.) Worship remains essential. To that end, the Worship Team will propose an alternate face-to-face service that will begin in late October/early November. The service will be limited to fifty-people and will be offered at a time other than 9:00 a.m. on Sundays. The time of this service and other details will be announced, but will include preregistration, check-in, sign-in with temperature check, physical distancing, the wearing of masks, no spoken liturgy, no congregational singing, etc. This face-to-face service will last no more than 40-minutes. There will be no indoor fellowship, and no coffee or food service.

2.) Worship remains essential. To that end, our flagship worship service will remain as is. We will record our full service and have it available for viewing at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings on YouTube, Facebook, and our church website. The recorded service will be placed on our website for future views. Go to FirstPres.Live

3.) We will not be having indoor, in-person Christmas Eve Services. We believe the higher incidence of traveling will exacerbate the possible spread of Covid, as the likelihood of non-symptomatic carriers (and possibly out-of-towners) will be high. The Worship Team is working on virtual options and outdoor options. (The CYF Team is already working on their virtual Nativity that will be shared online.)

The Session of our church will discuss and vote on these three motions on October 15.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas with me about how we should best move forward. What I've learned is that everyone is making their way through this pandemic in individual ways, family by family making different decisions that seem best for them. It's trickier doing moving forward as a congregation when different ones of us are in different places. Individually and congregationally, however, I know



Sunday in the Park

The Nurture Committee invites you to

Hessel Park

11 AM October 11

Bring your lawn chairs and

let's gather for an hour

near the Pavilion

at the north end of the park.

The committee will be available to guide you to our spot and provide a safe location following social distancing, sanitation and guidelines such as wearing masks.

we'll arrive on the other side—relieved and whole. Why do I know this? Because God has led people through tricky passages before. God is most assuredly with us now. And God is worthy of our glad trust.

As your pastor, you can imagine how I want to serve well every soul who calls this congregation home. I want to strengthen this flock by God's grace any way I can. Please remember the herculean efforts being made to gather the flock for service, worship, and spiritual growth by way of Zoom and a few in person events. Some of those opportunities include:

- Sunday in the Park (11:00 every other Sunday in Hessel Park, weather permitting),
- The Wednesday Night Gathering (every Wednesday at 7:00)
- PW circles (contact Brandi Lowe for details),
- The Pickleball Team (Wednesdays at 1:00 at Hessel Park),
- Myriad church committees and study groups,
- Saturday Francophone prayer online,
- Sunday School programs for children, youth, and Easy English, etc.
- Private prayer in the sanctuary.

Please, also, remember how your dollars are trickling through our church out into our community and world bringing all manner of healing, groceries, and hope.

God is faithful even in pandemic.

God is good. All the time.

PEACE,
Matt Matthews
864.386.9138

Worship Team Assistance Needed

BY JUDI GEISTLINGER, CHAIR
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We need you! Our Worship team has been busy this year producing high quality worship for online delivery. We have been relying heavily on a small list of faithful volunteers, but they cannot do it alone. If you are willing, you can be trained to be a camera or sound operator. We meet at 10:30 on Wednesday mornings. Recording sessions end by noon.

We could use help at other times from other recording sessions. (Did you know that music is recorded independently of our Wednesday morning sessions?)

Are you able to make some banners to hang at the front of the sanctuary? Fall could offer some rich opportunities for adding beauty on our "ordinary time" green banners.

Advent is coming up and we will need purple banners, perhaps with candles to remind us of the time of preparation.

The Worship Team that plans worship and looks at the "Big Picture" meets online on the second Tuesday of the month via Zoom at 7 PM. Please contact **Pastor Eric** or Worship Chair **Judi Geistlinger** at judigeistlinger@outlook.com or 217-493-5462 to talk about how you can serve this vital ministry of our congregation.

An Observation

BY LINDA PETERSON
LINDAKPETE@GMAIL.COM

Oh, how I have missed the gentle squeeze of a hand, a soft hug or a gentle whisper of a kiss on the cheek. This happened every Sunday, then Covid19 appeared. But we can still connect.

I thank God that I still can worship with my family of Christ followers, just a little differently. The pastors, worship teams, musicians and technical wonders have brought the service into my home. Church and worship have not stopped! The work of our church and committees continue, albeit in a different format. ZOOM has become our best friend. Your volunteers and staff continue to meet, plan, take suggestions and guide us all. What a blessing is First Presbyterian Church and all her affiliates.

Not only are committees meeting but small groups continue as well as a Wednesday night service at 7 PM each week. There is a wealth of opportunities to stay connected. Take advantage and join a group.

We are so thankful that we can meet out of doors with masks on at reasonable distancing with relative safety. Oh, how much more fun to see you close up and not on a screen. Come join us at Hessel Park on Sundays October 11 and 25 at 11 AM.

How are you coping in this world of change? Autumn is slipping in with crisp air and soon to be falling leaves of a myriad of colors. Raise your spirits and enjoy a walk in the fresh air.

Nurture Committee

BY GARY PETERSON

AMER_SWEDE@YAHOO.COM

Thanks to those who attended "Sunday in the Park" during September. We averaged over 30 people each day. We would love to see more in October. The dates are October 11 and 25. Wear a jacket and come see others in person and not over Zoom!! We meet at the north end of Hessel Park.

We need more people to sign up for "Virtual Desserts"!! This is an opportunity to have fellowship with one another. They will be small gatherings in the evening similar to Dinners for 7, 8 or 9. A chance to converse about whatever you would like to talk about and be able to see each other via Zoom.

"Pickle Ball". We have had a couple of new attenders at our Wednesday afternoon gatherings at Hessel Park. Come learn this fun game. It's for all ages and talents. We have a few extra paddles to give you the chance to try it out. Come join us at 1 PM each Wednesday as weather permits. Park at the north end near the Pavilion and you will spot us on the court.

If you have questions or would like to sign up, please contact **Linda or Gary Peterson** at 217-398-8504.

Greg Cozad is now the chair of the Nurture Committee. Please welcome him as he takes over to lead us in the future. Let him or us know your thoughts and ideas about how we can Nurture our flock.

Your committee... **Greg Cozad**, chair, **Bob Kirby**, **Ginny Waaler**, **Tom Gilmore**, **Jane Tock**, **Linda and Gary Peterson** and **Eric Corbin**, pastor liaison.

A Sunday in the Park...



Children, Youth & Family

Children, Youth & Family Update

BY MINDY WATTS-ELLIS, DIRECTOR OF CYF
MINDY@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH



Carly meets JIP this summer.

We are offering a way to connect with your fellow Sunday School disciples in Christ online! The slot for Elementary students is from 10:15-11:15 AM on Sundays and for Middle School and High School students at 1-2 PM Sundays. The hyperlink for the Zoom Sunday school meetings is sent each Wednesday in the CYF Weekly Update e-newsletter and through email reminders directly to the age groups. The first Zoom time for the Children's Choir was October 4th with Mr. Connor from 10:15-11:15 AM.

Sadly, there will not be a Trunk or Treat event this year due to COVID-19 restrictions for everyone's safety, and no soup supper because our beautiful kitchen remodeling is not yet complete. However, to get into the spirit of the season and

provide fun for our community children, I encourage those of you enthusiastic about Halloween fun to consider volunteering for the Urbana Park District and Champaign Park District collaborated parade planned for October 28 at Market Place Mall Parking lot from 5:30-8 PM. Those interested in volunteering can contact **Mindy** at mindy@firstpres.church and I will connect our volunteers to the event organizers for time slots and volunteer assignments.



Emery Ludwinski makes a weaving during remote VBS.

DREAAM will soon be offering small in-person student groups of remote learners a safe place to meet while their parents are at work. We will be hosting three groups of 8 students on our church campus in the education building starting in October. We are doing our best to make the environment a safe one by following CDC recommendations for minimizing the risk of pathogens. Session has approved our partnership in this endeavor and **Mindy Watts-Ellis** will serve as

our liaison with DREAAM for this aspect of their programming. I am so pleased that the church is able to help make this much needed contribution to community families and student learning needs. If you would like to provide monetary support for student supplies, you may make a donation to the church and place DREAAM in the notes or memo line.

Eco Ambassadors

BY SAM LAUFENBERG

My experience with the Eco Ambassadors was like no other. Eco Ambassadors is run by a group called Faith In Place. They are helping to get laws passed to better the environment. They also lead multiple internships for teenagers that have a passion for the environment.

I learned about The Eco Ambassadors through my history teacher at Academy High. I thought it would be an interesting opportunity, so I applied. I was accepted, and I joined the Eco Ambassadors of central Illinois.

The Rev. Cindy Shepard is the leader of the group in central Illinois. We learned about sustainable farming, climate change, and ways we could make the environment better in our communities.

I learned so many things in the program and I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Eco Ambassadors.

Finance

Stewardship

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

MSCHOEFFMANN@MCHSI.COM

During the month of October we will be hearing from several of our church families about what stewardship means to them. We will read their notes or letters and view their videos during worship expressing their thoughts and experiences. This is a time during the year that we pause and consider our thoughts and experiences during our faith journey with First Presbyterian. As we contemplate the future during these very unusual times, it is important to consider how we can be a faithful part of our church's missions and programs next year. Our reflection on this past year and planning for next year will be assisted by the receipt of a Narrative Budget describing 2020 activities and the Draft 2021 Budget.

All of our church families and friends will receive mailings that include notes about stewardship and pledge cards that can be completed and mailed back to the church. Pledge commitments can also be made at our website at the following address: <https://www.firstpres.church/pledgecard/> We ask that you complete and mail the card or respond at our website before November 1st. That Sunday we will consecrate pledges during worship.

Thank you to everyone for your continuing support of First Presbyterian Church.

Financial Update

BY MARK SCHOEFFMANN, CHAIR FINANCE

MSCHOEFFMANN@MCHSI.COM

Contributions

Contributions in September to the Operating Fund were \$43.0K less than in 2019 and \$38.8K below the budget at \$38.7K. The Year to Date total is below last year by \$68.7K and below the budgeted amount by \$94.1K. These figures include

prepaid pledges (those paid in the year prior to the budget year) that are pro-rated over the year with 1/12 added to each month's contributions. Including all revenue sources, at 75% through the year, we have received 82.1% of the expected 2020 revenue.

Expenses

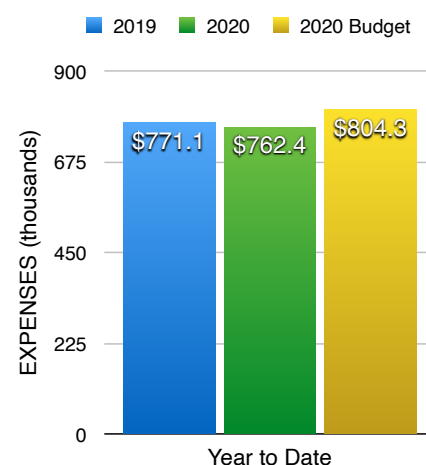
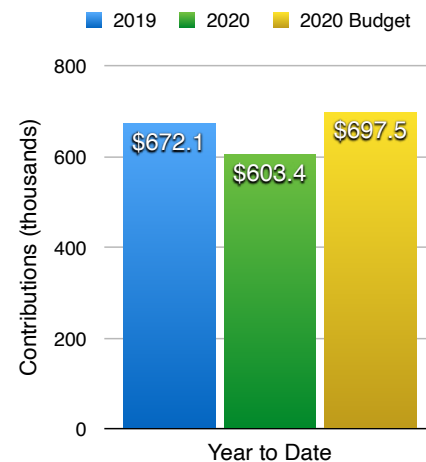
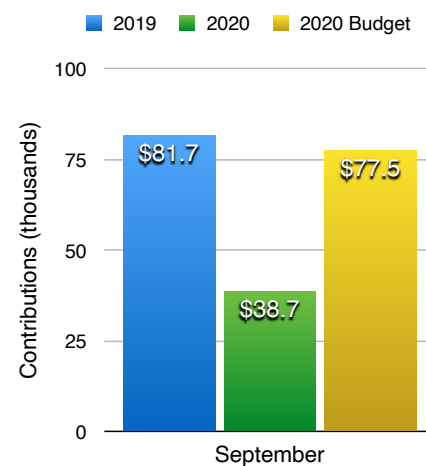
Year to Date expenses are \$41.9K below the budget at \$762.4K and less than in 2019 by \$8.7K. At 75% through the year we have experienced 71.1% of the expected 2020 expenses.

Balance

Considering all sources, revenue exceeds expenses by \$85.9K which is \$75.0K better than at the end of September 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 Funds

In addition to contributions to the operating fund there was \$1,000 donated in September to funds restricted to specific purposes such as missions supported by our church.



*God is faithful,
even in a pandemic.*



As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14

Suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

Session Motions Passed at September Meeting

- Moved First Presbyterian Church of Champaign agrees to host the DREAAM project remote learning pods (tribes) beginning in October of 2020 through December of 2020 with the possibility of extension through May of 2021. Three classrooms on the second floor of the education building will be utilized with all proper approved precautions to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 as agreed upon by the leadership team and the COVID response team of First Presbyterian Church. The gym will also be used occasionally by limited numbers of students with individual play equipment sanitized after each use. DREAAM will provide 4 staff members to supervise the learning pods. DREAAM will cover the costs of the program. Ordinarily, additional facility costs required of the church to maintain the program sanitation will be negotiated within the financial means of DREAAM.
- Moved the Report on the "Independent Accountants Report on Applying Agreed Upon Procedures" be accepted and the Finance Committee's Disposition of the Recommendations be accepted.

Join the Classic Book Study Tuesdays at noon via Zoom

The book group is beginning a new book titled *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman published first in 1947.

Howard Thurman is a well known black pastor who was a chaplain at Howard University and then at Boston University for many years.

If people would like to join, please contact **Jeannie Snoeyink** or **Ginny Waaler**.

Mission Updates

ESL News

BY JEANETTE PYNE, ESL COORDINATOR

JEANETTE@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Linda's ESL Class

We have been meeting virtually on Zoom for quite some time now, and one benefit is that a tutor can teach from anywhere! Below you will see a picture of **Linda Hemminger's** ESL class. These students are at the Green Class level, which is an intermediate English class. The units that we are currently going through are Community and Housing. So, they are learning about how to describe their dream house, prepositions and anything else related to these two topics. Linda is a great tutor and tries to also meet the students' English language learning needs as they arise. Soon we will transition to the Clothing, Autumn and Halloween Units.

Linda's class meets on Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10-11 AM. You may see a familiar face in the screenshot. **Harry Bremer**, a former member of First Pres, is observing from his new home in Texas. He is in training to become an ESL tutor

with us. He was tutoring ESL students in-person at a library in Texas, but they had to close this program due to the pandemic. By tutoring with us, he can stay connected with ESL students and with the CU community in general. Keeping in line with our mission, all of our students are living in the Champaign-Urbana area.

If you are interested in learning how to tutor from the comfort of your own home, whether that's in the Illinois, Texas, or anywhere else, feel free to contact the ESL Director, **Jeanette Pyne**, at jeanette@firstpres.church.

Cuba Partnership Update

BY NANCY PIPPIN, SECRETARY
CUBA PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE
NANCYPIPPIN@YAHOO.COM

The PCUSA Cuba Partner Network (PCUSA- CPN), of which our First Pres Cuba Partners is a member, held its annual meeting on September 25th and 26th this year. Due to the pandemic, rather than meeting in person in Cuba as originally scheduled, the group gathered online.

While all would have preferred to be together in person, gathering online permitted more people to participate than would have been able to manage the travel and time to go to Cuba.



All sessions were conducted via Zoom. However, the anniversary celebration was open to all and is available to view on the PCUSA Cuba Partners YouTube Channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpJYbFYICQd2U9ANYuiD5uw?view_as=subscriber.

Approximately 120 persons in Cuba and the USA participated online over the two days of meetings. We heard speakers, engaged in extensive Q & A sessions, caught up on current conditions in Cuba, worshipped together and celebrated both the 130th anniversary of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba (IPRC) and the 20th anniversary of the PCUSA- CPN.

It was a joy to see and hear from former First Pres member **Pat Metcalf** along with Cuban brothers and sisters, including **Rev. Dora Arce**, **Rev. Dr. Reinerio Arce**, and **Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham**.

Interested in learning more about the meeting, conditions and the Church in Cuba, or about the First Pres Cuba Partners? Contact **Rachel Matthews**, Mission Coordinator (rachel@firstpres.church) or members of the First Pres Cuba Partners Steering Committee: **Mary Lou Bauer**, **Tracy Dace**, **Bob Kirby**, **Carol Miles**, **Nancy Pippin**, **Peter Yau** or **Rittchell Yau**



From top left to bottom right: Linda (tutor), Harry (tutor), Roza (Kyrgyzstan), Qi Li (China), Lily (Korea), Youngeun (Korea), Jinseon (Korea)

As a Committee we again offer our thanks to you our congregation for your prayers and support of our sister church in Luyanó, Havana.

Green Team Styrofoam Recycling Event Saturday, October 31

BY CLEMMIE ACKERMANN
COLETTA.ACKERMANN@GMAIL.COM

What's scarier than ghosts or monsters?



Filling the planet with things
we could recycle!

Bring your Styrofoam to the recycling event and give the planet a treat!

While we've all been staying at home and supporting local restaurants and businesses, that has meant the increased use of Styrofoam and plastic from take-home containers. Hopefully, we've all worked at recycling the plastic and saving the Styrofoam. The Environmental Stewardship Committee has received permission to hold another recycling event with some COVID safety procedures included.

Saturday, October 31 9-11 AM Doxology Lane

enter the church alley from the west
and exit east to State

Masked and gloved Green Team members
will collect your Styrofoam
and deliver it to DART

Acceptable items...Styrofoam containers,
cups or block foam (no packing peanuts!)

- Must be clean (rinsed and wiped)

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

- Must have #6 chasing arrow imprinted on it



- Remove straws, lids, tape or any other non-foam material

Special COVID Rules...

- Styrofoam should be boxed or bagged and placed in vehicle's trunk
- Drop-off drivers should wear masks and stay in the car
- Volunteers wearing masks and gloves will collect Styrofoam from vehicle's trunks

When we use a styrofoam cup or use take home containers, we are using a product that will be with us for centuries – five centuries or more. Currently, 2.5 million cups are used per year in the US and most of these are thrown into the trash and then into our landfills.

If you can't make it on the 31st, you can take your Styrofoam over to the DART Recycling shed yourself and place it in one of the available bags. The facility/shed is at: 1505 East Main Street, Urbana.

Thank you!



Our Environmental Stewardship Committee won an award this past month at the Faith in Place Green Team Summit. We were surprised to learn that there was a beautiful trophy involved.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

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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
Brendan Barker..... Organist
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](mailto:info@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.