

December 2016



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN

Pastor's Pen

BY CHUCK CARLSON, INTERIM HEAD PASTOR
(chuck.carlson@firstchurchchampaign.org)

We begin Advent in a posture of watchful waiting and hope.

FPC sits firmly in the midst of a time of advent. After months of waiting our PNC is preparing to actively begin its search for a permanent Head of Staff, a pastor and leader who will lead this congregation into the next phase of our future. This is a great congregation with wonderfully gifted and competent staff.

The ministries we support are exceptional and at the same time challenging, requiring us all to work together prayerfully and cooperatively. We seek to educate and inform through our Children-Youth and Family ministry (CYF), English as a Second Language (ESL) Program and an emerging adult spiritual formation ministry supporting great classes and events. Courageous Conversations engage significant social issues drawing community wide interest and support. Local mission through Community Mission Deacons (CMD) supports key agencies. Environmental Stewardship, Amateur Preachers, Mission Possible and others build up the Body of Christ locally as well. We offer different styles of worship supported by a fine music ministry, both contemporary and traditional.

We oversee an active world mission outreach embracing our Mission Co-workers in the Caribbean, Congo, Pakistan, Indonesia, the US Mexican border as well as an active partnership with Luyano Presbyterian Church in Havana, Cuba. These efforts enlist a deep commitment from all of us, personally and financially. I haven't even mentioned our active role with the immigrant community and our continuing efforts to build relationships and embrace our African brothers and sisters into the life of our congregation.

Margaret Wheatley offers an important observation; "Once individuals link together they become something different" (Healthy Congregations, p.12). We call it becoming the Body of Christ. Paul notes that God unleashes a variety of gifts and abilities among us, as well as a rich variety of ministries and services, challenging us all to use our God given gifts for the common good of the community (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

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Celebrate the holidays!

*Music Sunday
Lessons & Carols*

December 11 8 and 9 AM

Christmas Eve

10 AM Worship/Chapel
4 PM Family Service/Sanctuary
6 PM French Service/Chapel
7 PM Candlelight Service/Sanctuary
9 PM Candlelight Service/Sanctuary

Christmas Day

10 AM Worship/Sanctuary

New Year's Day

10 AM Worship/Sanctuary

**NO Sunday School or childcare
Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or
New Year's Day.**

**Be prepared to worship
with your children.**



Pastor's Pen continued

Later Paul reminds us; "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it"(1 Cor. 12:26-27). No matter the challenge of the moment, God calls us to stand together. We are called to be supportive of our web of relationships in order to maintain the momentum of our ongoing relational and ministry life.

To maintain community and relational health it is important that we keep cool and steady in our ministry work together. We make an effort to appropriately stay emotionally and relationally connected. What I do, how I am and how I act affects the whole community. This Advent is a time for us to come together in the hope and promise of the gospel. And so I challenge us to stay involved in our worship participation, and active in our giving and volunteering. God directs us to keep sowing the seeds of love, trust, and faith. Obedience to the things God calls to do will deepen our love and faith, please God, bear fruit and multiply blessings to us and others.

Our PNC is moving forward, our staff is engaged and our ministries are flourishing. There is a bright future because the God we serve holds the future. So we hope and stay watchful.

I leave you with Paul's admonition for the Romans and one God extends to us through the Spirit; "Let love be genuine, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers" (Romans 12:9-13).

Christ's Peace, Chuck

Staff Update

Dear Friends,

I recently made the very difficult decision to step down from my role as Coordinator of ESL Programs at the end of December (although I certainly plan to stay involved as a volunteer tutor!) Recent changes in family responsibilities and my demanding grad school schedule have simply made it impossible for me to continue to devote the necessary time to this incredible ministry.

My time as ESL Coordinator has truly been one of the most joy-filled experiences of my life. I have been proud to put my heart and soul into developing this program, and I have gained more than I can express – enduring friendships with wonderful people from all around the world, the opportunity to work with the incredible, supportive staff at FPCC and the many amazing ESL volunteers (both members and non-members of FPCC), knowledge of languages and cultures that has enriched my understanding of the world (and offered many opportunities to tell great stories at dinnertime!), and, most importantly, a first-hand glimpse of God's love in action.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the church in this most meaningful way. ESL at FPCC has forever changed my life – and I know it will continue to change the lives of many others.

Linda Sims
ESL Coordinator

Dear Friends,

I am so grateful for my two years as a part of the staff at First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. I have grown personally and professionally in the time I spent here and will always value this experience.

It is with a heavy heart that I tender my resignation as the Associate Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministry effective January 1, 2017 following the conclusion of my maternity leave.

I have accepted a part-time position as Youth Director at Copper Creek Church, which will begin in mid-January. This opportunity will allow me to work remotely and care for my new baby from home.

I will truly miss all the families and children I have worked with over the last two years. You all have made my time at FPCC so special.

Sincerely,
Kristen Plemons
Associate Director
Children, Youth and Family Ministry

Traditions

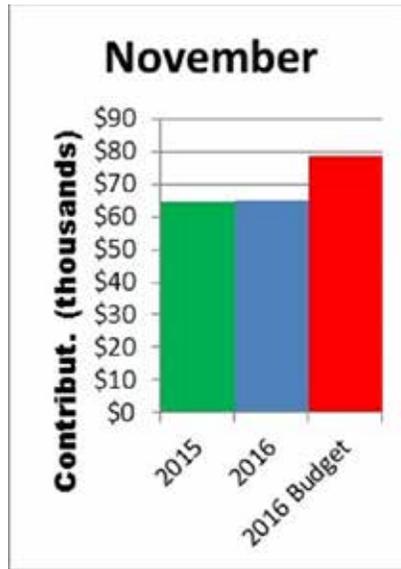
BY BYRON KEMPER, FINANCE CHAIR
(byronkem@life.illinois.edu)

This is my last newsletter article as Finance Chair and Session member. I will be coming off Session at the end of the year and will stay on the Finance Committee, but the chair must be a member of Session. It has been a pleasure to serve in this capacity for 3+ years, both interesting and challenging.

When I started, we were transitioning from a 2-campus church to a single downtown church coincident with the formation of Copper Creek. As we have settled in from that change, we are now in transition again searching for a new senior pastor. Persistent transition can be difficult, sowing doubt and uncertainty and sapping morale. This probably, at least partly, underlies some of our present financial and membership challenges, including pledges for 2017 that are below our goal, which will require budget adjustments.

Transitions can, however, present an opportunity for renewal and for adaptation to change if the will is there. As finance chair, one thing you fairly quickly learn is that this is a church of many passions. There are incredibly dedicated and creative members who are strongly committed to ensuring the future of this church and its mission, worship and education programs. With such dedication, if we work together with faith in the future, I am confident we can emerge from this transitional period stronger than ever.

Monthly Contributions: November contributions were about the same as in Nov. 2015. YTD contributions trail 2015 by \$37K and are \$91K behind our budgeted amount for 2016. For the first time in several years, pledged contributions received in 2016 are likely to be less than the original pledged amount.



Your Church

What's Warmer Than the Caribbean Sun? A Cuban smile.

We plan a congregational visit to our sister church in Cuba April 17-24, 2017. We will go on a religious license which requires travelers to be members or staff of our congregation. You also must have completed our Cuba Study sometime in the past.

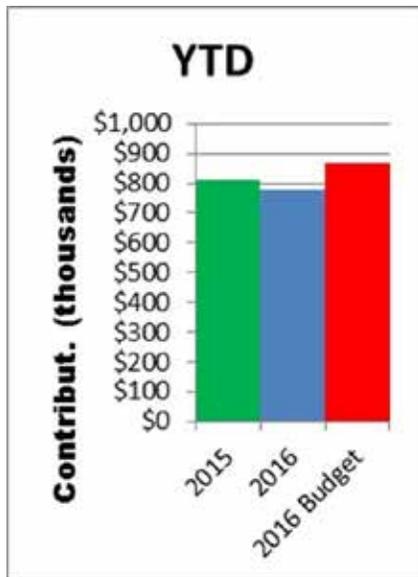
Deadline is December 31. Contact the church office if interested.

Relocation Ministry

Our Relocation Ministry provides survival household items to immigrant-refugee families moving to their first American home. We try to provide a place to sit, sleep, and the basic utensils to prepare and eat a meal. We accept donations, pick them up and deliver them to families. Please stop by the Angel Tree in Westminster Hall (see article on page 4) to see how you can help.

Tech Team Needs

We are still in need of volunteers for the Tech Team. Some of the positions are as easy as clicking a button or two at appropriate times during the service, and training is given to all. No matter your level of technical expertise, you can do this! You can also specify how often you are willing to serve -- even once a month is a tremendous help. Please contact **Pastor Eric** if you are willing to serve in this important ministry during our worship services.



It's Cookie Time!

It's Christmas cookie time!

The youth group will be baking cookies on December 10 to sell to the congregation on December 11 after the special music Sunday worship. Stock up on a nice selection for your Christmas gatherings without all of the work! They freeze well to keep fresh. All proceeds will go towards the summer mission experience.

Prayer Corner



What a Gift!

Christmas is a time for giving and receiving gifts. This Christmas let us focus on the greatest Christmas gift: the one mentioned in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God gave us his Son as a baby who grew and lived on earth until he died on a cross to pay for our sins giving us the joys of life eternal in heaven.

This Christmas may our prayer be the words of the apostle Paul found in II Corinthians 9:15. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift,"

Angel Tree

BY SANDY CARR, MODERATOR COMMUNITY MISSION DEACONS
(scar60@msn.com)

Christmas is quickly approaching, and FPCC will continue the annual tradition of having an Angel Tree in Westminster Hall. The Angel Tree this year is focusing intensively on items from the wish lists of the local agencies that Community Mission Deacons supports.

As a result of the recent state budget cuts many of the agencies are facing, the fulfillment of these wishes will offer much needed relief. Most of these agencies offer support to children and families, and in this way the original spirit of the Angel Tree to serve the youngest in our community remains alive.

Also on the tree are items for the Relocation Ministry. The Relocation Ministry of our church helps some of our church's immigrant families move into homes. Children in those families will benefit daily from your donations of needed household items such as rice cookers or pots and pans.

Each ornament on the tree represents an item on the wish list of a local agency. You may take as many ornaments as you wish!

After you have purchased the item, please bring it to the church. Please leave it unwrapped and with the ornament taped to it to serve as a label, place it under the Angel Tree. Because each ornament provides the approximate price of the item named on it, cash or check donations are also a great choice. Cash donations can be placed in the box provided on the table next to the tree.

Please note that there are some duplicated items on the Tree, as some agencies have asked for multiples of the same thing.

Jays & Concerns

Congratulations to...

- **Mark Hancock and Laetia Mamuene** on the birth of their son, Luke, on November 13, 2016.

We extend our sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Rick Sandquist** who died November 18, 2016.

Church Wide Survey

The Membership Team appreciates your participation in the recent Church Wide Survey. We will be tabulating results and reporting findings to Session in January. If you have not had a chance to take the anonymous survey, you may find it at <https://goo.gl/forms/UJ1NWk-flP0q7dv573>

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

Sunday School Highlights

Our elementary students completed a study of How the Bible Came to Be November 6. This is what the children shared about what they learned.

- People went to jail for making the English Bible.
- What I learned about the Bible is that people wanted to learn about the Bible so much they risked their life to learn about God.
- I learned that people who wanted to read the Bible had perseverance to have it.
- The Bible is made in 51 billion different languages. [actually 2,000]
- We respond to God. We give.
- It [the Bible] is full of love.
- I learned that not everyone can use a Bible. [some countries ban it]
- I learned that the Bible was one of the best-selling books because it sold over 5 million [actually 5 billion] books and it was all in 25,000 languages. [actually over 2,000]

We moved on to study the prophet Jeremiah. Emphasis was on his call as a youth to serve God, his message of God's warnings but also the hope of God restoring his people, and the obstacles he had to overcome to continue to deliver God's word to the people. We learned about being shaped by God as a potter shapes clay, and of God's promise to bring a time in which the law of God would be written in the hearts of people. The following is what the children shared about what they learned.

- Prophet sounds like profit, which makes me think of money, but prophets are messengers of God.
- I learned that Jeremiah was 14 years old when he became a prophet.
- You are never too young for God.

- Jeremiah loved God. He was sent by God.
- Jeremiah trusted God to go with him.
- I learned that God spoke to Jeremiah and Jeremiah listened.
- Jeremiah talked to people about God, but people didn't listen to him.
- God can help you feel better.
- God is calling in the song, also he is in my heart.

Our focus in December will be on the Christmas story and how God's word became flesh and lived among us. We had a special Christmas craft Sunday on December 4. The Sunday School classes will be attending the special music Sunday December 11 in the traditional worship service as the children's choir joins its praise with the adult choir for a song. Children will be dismissed when finished to return to the education building for an activity or are welcome to stay and worship with their family.

The high school class will be studying the topic "Who is Jesus?" in December. **Sabrina Hwu** and **Elizabeth Pippin** are leading this group of young people, and welcome others to come and join them at 10:30 AM Sundays.

Children's Choir To Sing

BY ALLEGRA MARTIN, CHILDREN'S CHOIR DIRECTOR

On December 11, the Children's Choir will sing with the adult choir during the Special Music Sunday anthem. We will have a rehearsal on Saturday, December 10 at 10 AM with the adults, and will make sure the van is accessible to those who need it.

On December 24, the children's choir will sing during the 4 PM Christmas Eve service, as well as participate in the pageant we have planned. We will have rehearsals on Saturday, December 17 at 10 AM and

Friday, December 23 from 2-4 PM. We will make sure the van is accessible to those who need it.

Just a reminder that if your child would like to be in the children's choir, then they need to attend all rehearsals, which are on Sundays from 10-10:30 AM, right after Sunday School. Missing one Sunday every 4-6 weeks or so is not a problem, but we don't want anybody to feel left behind. Kids learn really fast! They are all delightful.

Also, please feel free to introduce yourself whenever you stop by the Education building; I'm fairly new so I would love the chance to meet people and learn names.

What's Coming Up

Christmas Eve Family service December 24 at 4 PM. We will be presenting the theme of *Christmas Around the World*. The Children's Choir will be featured throughout in several songs.

We also need actors and actresses! Memorization is not required, you may read your part. If you and your family will be present on Christmas Eve, please encourage your child to participate as a reader, usher, or an acolyte to light the Christ candle. We need lots of readers for our program! You must be available for the rehearsals if you plan to be a reader or singer.

See Ms. Allegra's notes for the schedule. Contact **Mindy Watts-Ellis** at mindy.wattsellis@firstchurchchampaign.org to add your child to the list of those interested in participating.



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Change Service Requested



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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
- Chris Penny.....Facilities Manager
- Ann Petry Accounting
- Kristen PlemonsAssistant Children, Youth & Family
- Andrea Pope..... Contemporary Worship Director
- Richard Rossi..... Church Musician
- Linda SimsESL Coordinator
- 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@firstchurchchampaign.org.