



OPEN DOOR

Volume XLIV, No. 12, December 6, 2017

From the Pastor



Letters from prison carry more meaning than most other correspondence, like a postcard from the beach. Captivity and suffering focus the mind, resulting in wisdom that can focus the minds of the readers. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail comes to mind. Or the prison letters of the Apostle Paul. That's why such letters are valued and kept, so that all of us might be inspired and re-centered.

While it might seem strange to begin the season of Advent with thoughts about prison letters, we do well to remember that Advent begins with scenes of tribulation and judgment. Isaiah 64 begins, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,..." Why? To make things right. To restore justice. That passage is followed by Mark 13, where we read, "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." It's a scene of judgment, and it is followed by the admonition, "Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come."

During his last Advent in 1944, Dietrich Bonhoeffer included a poem with a letter to Maria von Wedemeyer and Bonhoeffer's family. It was written from his prison cell in Berlin, where he was being held because of his connections with those who tried to assassinate Hitler. The second verse reads:



*The old year still would try our hearts to torment,
of evil times we still do bear the weight;
O Lord, do grant our souls, now terror-stricken,
salvation for which you did us create.*



At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, but let us remember what John's Gospel tells us. The coming of Jesus was a "light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." It was a dark time, with the Jews living under Roman occupation. It was violent and impoverished with precious little reason to hope. The hymn, "We Gather Together," which we sing at Thanksgiving, reminds us of this truth. "Let thy congregation escape tribulation... O Lord, make us free."

Continues on page 2

Inside this issue:

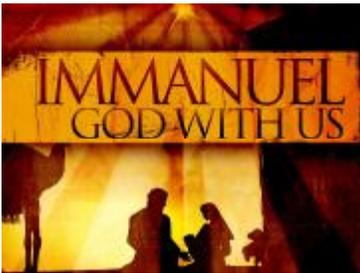
Special Features	2
Advent Events	3
Church Family	4
Church News	5
Malawi Update	6
Other Items of Interest	7
Church Volunteers	8
December Calendar	<i>insert</i>
Poinsettia Order Form	<i>insert</i>
Special points of interest:	
✓ Christmas Giving	2
✓ Caroling and Cookies	3
✓ Order Poinsettias	4 & <i>insert</i>
✓ Malawi: Trip, Students, Pre-school Supplies	6-7

From the Pastor *Continued from cover page*

Though hope be only like a candle in the wind, Bonhoeffer held to its promise:

*The candles you have brought into our darkness,
let them today be burning warm and bright,
and if it's possible, do reunite us!
We know your light is shining through the night.*

The Gospel was made for hard, uncertain, and dark times, just like a candle is made for the night. Even in the darkest night, we need never despair. Immanuel means “God With Us.” And God is with us always. This year, this season, may God impart to all your hearts “the blessings of his heaven.” Merry Christmas!



—Pastor David

Interfaith Alliance Crisis Nursery
C-U at Home MLK Scholarships Reading Group
Habitat for Humanity
CU Mens Winter Shelter
Empty Tomb
Mulanje Hospital
Champaign County Christian Health Center
Presbyterian World Mission
SAFE House Courage Connection Food Pantry
ECIRMAC Boy Scout Troop 6TIMES Center
Special Olympics A Woman's Fund

Christmas Offering 2017 Support Local Mission

We will be receiving our annual Christmas offering throughout the month of December. This very important offering supports local mission agencies and our Benevolence Fund. See the bulletin board by the coffee kitchen for lists of local partners supported by this offering. Please mark your gifts as “Christmas Offering” and place in the weekly offering, drop off during the week at the church office, or give on our church website. Thank you for your generosity in helping those in need.



Giving Tree 2018

Mission Committee is sponsoring gift tags for residents of Champaign County Nursing Home again this year. We have received tags for 12 residents, representing a few of our most vulnerable neighbors in the community. Each tag contains a short list of items that the resident would like to receive. This is a great opportunity to partner with a friend to fill a special someone's wish list.

Tags will be available at the Alternative Gift Table this Sunday and on the Mission bulletin board before and after Sunday. Please return your gifts wrapped with the tag attached to the church office by December 21, and we will deliver them to CCNH. Residents will open their gifts together at a holiday party. Thank you for your support and generosity.



Alternative Gifts Available!

The Mission Committee offers the Alternative Gift Sale on **December 10 and 17**. Give a gift in honor or in memory of a loved one, and purchase items to benefit our sister church in Domasi, Malawi. We have a focus on educational opportunities this year including tuition, school fees and preschool toys and supplies, as well as support for the Women's Guild Sewing Project and the shallow wells. You will receive a Malawi Partnership ornament card to acknowledge your gift. These are gifts that give twice! Please plan to drop by the Alternative Gifts table in the narthex. Personal sponsorships for individual students will also be available at our table from Lauren Smith. (See page six for details.)

Advent Events

Caroling and Cookie Party

Everyone is invited to go caroling on **Sunday, December 10 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.** Help bring Christmas joy to our homebound members and others in the congregation. We need lots of singers and you don't have to be a good singer—anyone willing to smile and hum along a little bit will be an excellent addition to the group! We will take a plate of cookies to each individual or couple we visit. After caroling, we will return to the church to warm up with hot chocolate and



If you can, please drop off about three dozen cookies in the church kitchen by noon that day (bring them with you to church in the morning) so that we have time to prepare the special plates for the individuals we visit. We will gather in the Fellowship Hall at 2:00 p.m. to get our songbooks and head out for caroling.

This event is always much enjoyed by both carolers and “carollees” – don't miss out! Contact Karen Mortensen (Karen.pinney.mortensen@gmail.com, 344-5257) if you have any questions. **Sign up on the sheet in the Friendship Pads or contact the church office if you plan to participate. RSVP is appreciated, but not essential. Please join us even if you don't sign up!!**



Christmas Eve Service

**Sunday, December 24
at 7:00 p.m.**

The morning service on December 24 is our Fourth Sunday of Advent service.



Christmas Luncheon

**Wednesday, December 13, 11:30 a.m.
in Fellowship Hall**



The luncheon will begin with entertainment provided by children from the Cooperative Nursery. Following lunch, Case Sprenkle will lead a carol sing-along from the piano. The Deacons will provide the meal. Everyone is welcome!

Please let us know if you are planning to come by notifying the office or by signing up on the sheet in the friendship pads.



Blues/Jazz Service



This season of the year, with short sunlight days, can be a time not of joy, but depression. Perhaps it is also the first time to celebrate without a loved one. Perhaps it is simply a time of loneliness. Maybe you just like jazz. **On Sunday, December 17 at 4:00 p.m.** the Wellness Committee will present our fourth annual “Blues” Jazz Worship service in the sanctuary. The 40 minute service will include live jazz music, scripture, anointing, candle lighting, prayer, and a time of sharing. There will be a reception with light refreshments following the service.

Poinsettias

It is time to order Poinsettias for the Christmas display in our sanctuary. This year we will have a mix Order forms are enclosed in this newsletter.

Please submit your form to the church office with your payment. If you have questions, contact the church office. The deadline for orders is December 17.



Welcome to our New Soprano Section Leader

The choir extends a hearty welcome to our new soprano section leader, Molly Abrams! Molly is originally from Cutler, Maine and is a current master's student in vocal performance at the University of Illinois. She would like to make a career out of singing and someday teach at the collegiate level. She recently played Gretel in Lyric Theatre at Illinois' production of *Hansel and Gretel* in November!



In the Church Family

Let us remember in our prayers:

- Wanda Giddings
- Jane Green (Presence Room 4434)
- Iris Marcum (broken hip, Room 217 Renewal Unit at Clark-Lindsey Village)

We share love and sympathy with Katrina Good and family following the death of Katrina's mother, Verda Hersherberger Good on November 30 in Eureka, Illinois. The memorial service will be Saturday, December 9 with visitation at East Bend Mennonite Church from 10:00-11:55 with service at noon.

Updates for the Directory

Berniece Adair's phone number is ... please ask church office.

Bill and Lucille Carlyle moved to Clark-Lindsey Village. Their address is . please ask church office. Urbana, IL 61802.

Kermit and Ann Harden will be moving to the Windsor of Savoy on December 15. Their address will be . please ask church office. avoy IL 61874.

Congrats to a Graduate



Mikayla Downey, granddaughter of Harold and Lois Guither, is graduating from Michigan State.

Church Office

The church will be closed Christmas Day, Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26. The church will also be closed on New Year's Day, Monday, January 1.



Highlights of the November 21, 2017 Meeting of the Session

- Donna Barkley has transferred her membership to St. Cloud Presbyterian Church, St. Cloud, Florida.
- The stewardship campaign is on target so far. Several pledges remain outstanding.
- The ReVision Committee submitted a preliminary report which will be circulated to the congregation for comment. A final report will be considered at the December Session meeting.
- A possible 2018 capital campaign will be considered at the December Session meeting.
- Fifteen people will be participating in the Malawi trip next summer (see page 6 for details).
- The Membership Committee will be reviewing the rolls.
- A new Fellowship Hall Use Policy was presented.



—Don Greeley, Clerk of the Session

Sunday Seminars

11:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

December 10: “Advent Special Music: Britten’s ‘A Ceremony of Carols’”

In anticipation of Special Music Sunday during worship on December 17, Director of Music Lindsey Bruner Woodcock will present a seminar about the music on December 10. Our special music for Advent will feature excerpts from Benjamin Britten’s beloved holiday work, “A Ceremony of Carols.” Composed during the Second World War, this work blends mystical medieval texts with Britten’s innovative musical language. Lindsey will be discussing this remarkable piece of music, its inception, noteworthy features, as well as the life the composer.



December 17: “Gospel of Matthew – Birth Narrative” by Warren Hapke

Advent Devotional

To help us prepare for the birth of Christ, the worship committee has provided “Songs of Advent II,” a second edition to our “Songs of Advent 2013” devotional. Almost all the meditations were composed by church members, with some new contributions this year. From the first edition, it includes some meditations written in 2013 and some meditations retrieved from past Advent meditations during the period of 1985 through 2002s.



Paper copies of “Songs of Advent II” are available in the Narthex and is accessible on our church website under the Member Access page (which is under the “About Us” tab). Contact the church office if you need the password. As we await the celebration of Christ’s birth, find time to reflect and make space in your hearts and minds for the “Songs of Advent II.”

Adult Bible Study



Sundays at **8:15 a.m.** in Meeting Room B which is next to the church office on the main floor. We are currently studying the book of Second Peter.

Upcoming PYC Events

Sunday, December 10: PYC collaboration event. We are planning to meet at the mall for mall tag.

Sunday, January 14: PYC collaboration event at our church. We are planning to do an overnight event then complete a service project the next day. Monday, January 15 is off of school for MLK Jr. Day.

—Robert Foelske, Youth Coordinator

Food Pantry Update

In November we served 55 households (with 200 people, including 100 children and 21 seniors)—a new record. Seven families shopped from the special diet table—also a record. We also added a special table this month with thanksgiving foods on it, such as sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes and applesauce. Thanks to all our shoppers and the many church members supporting this ministry we had food enough for all. Our nutrition class was also full this month and a number of people were added to the waiting list. Many thanks to our shoppers and the volunteers who helped with set up and food distribution: Abigail and Cornelius van der Velde, Candace McMaster, Beez Gordon, Susan Silver, Jacque Chase, Jon Todd, Ryan and Linda Larsen and their two sons and Cindy Burton.

Food & More Program Donation Request for December: dish soap



Malawi Update – December 2017

Update on the 2018 Malawi Mission Trip



Participant interviews for the June 2018 trip have been completed. Fifteen people have been selected to participate and after receiving support from the session, Rev. David Oliver-Holder has sent a formal request to the Shelbyville Church asking for partial funding for the trip. The following church members have committed to the trip:

- John Dimit
- David and Jean Oliver-Holder, Nathan Holder, Clara Holder
- Cindy Fraser
- Lauren Smith
- John Harden
- Don and Nancy Uchtmann

Each of the above will contribute \$500.00 towards the cost of the trip.

The following non-church members have committed to the trip and will contribute \$1,000 towards the trip.

- Dalitso, Sarah, Josiah and Nandi Sulamoyo (originally from Malawi, speak Chichewa)
- Kathleen Liffick (retired Head Start Director and early childhood specialist)

Final dates for the trip have not been set, but it is expected the departure date will be around June 18 or 19 with a return around July 2 or 3.

The purposes of the trip include the following:

1. Relationship building between our congregations and communities.
2. Witness the progress made in the construction of the preschool, and to work with the leadership of Jeanes Church to refine the preschool business plan.
3. Explore ways to revitalize the wells program.
4. Hear from the Church Women's Guild about the progress of their sewing program.
5. To meet and encourage high school students sponsored by our church members through the bursary of the Jeanes Church.
6. To celebrate our 20 year partnership



Malawi Bursary Student Update

Several of the high school students that individual Church members are sponsoring gathered for a group photo with some of their new supplies. Individual church members will continue to sponsor twenty two returning high school students. Fifteen new high school students are looking for sponsors. The cost to sponsor a student for the year is between \$30.00 - \$250.00. If you are interested in sponsoring a student, please stop by the Alternative Gift Table in the Narthex on Sunday, December 10 and 17. Your support is appreciated.

Preschool Supplies

After consulting with UPS (DHL), Fed Ex, and the United States Post Office, our box of preschool supplies was sent via US Post (with tracking) to Malawi on November 2, 2017. It arrived in Malawi on November 13 and we are awaiting word that it has arrived at its final destination in Zomba, where the pastor's wife, Vellie Chingota, will be watching for it. She will transport it back to Domasi. Although the US Postal Service cannot guarantee when our box will arrive at the final destination, it is by far the cheapest way to send items. Once we receive word that the church has received this box, the mission committee will determine whether to send the final preschool supplies with the team that travels to Malawi in June, or send them via the US postal service.

Generosity Rooted in the Heart



November 5 was our Commitment Sunday. Thank you to each of you who already turned in your Estimate of Giving for 2018!! So far we have received a total of 408,583 in estimates of giving for 2018. Our goal is \$449,692. If you haven't already submitted it, please **bring or mail** your Estimate of Giving card to church or submit

your Estimate of Giving via **phone:** 367-8357 **or email:** Rachel@firstpresurbana.org.

THE CHORALE's Music in the Air

Beginning its 36th season, The CHORALE presents its first concert this Saturday, **December 9, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at Faith United Methodist Church** (1719 South Prospect, Champaign, IL). *Music in the Air* will be full of joyful, uplifting music of the season with familiar choral repertoire. Special guests will be the Sycamore Brass, a quintet of brass instruments that will showcase their classic and toe-tapping selections to entertain the audience. The evening will end with a carol sing, accompanied by the brass and members of The CHORALE. Admission: \$15.00

Report on the Presbytery Meeting, November 17, 2017

Commissioners from the 84 churches in our Presbytery (Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois) met in Monticello. First Pres. Urbana's commissioners are Pastor David and Don Greeley (elder appointed by our Session). Significant items:

- Marion Medical Mission installed 2650 wells this year in Africa, providing good water to over 400,000 people.
- Checks for \$125 were distributed to each of the churches. This money, from the Synod, is to be used for "something that enhances the connection of our church with our community." An accounting of the use is required at the end of next year.
- The director position at Camp Carew, near Carbondale, is being reduced to half time to save money. A full summer camp schedule is planned, however, including 2 Confirmation camps, one there and one in Danville.
- Overtures for next Summer's General Assembly: There was approval of overtures to add flexibility in moderator roles for Session meetings; ask for implementation of the previous report on mental illness called "Comfort My People" and to allot \$250,000 for that effort; and ask the church councils to divest PCUSA stocks in fossil fuel companies.
- A meaningful, short video titled "Keeping the Faith" was played. It deals with Presbyterian church responses in the aftermath of Ferguson. See <https://vimeo.com/229005562>
- PSEI finances are improving with major cost-cutting. About \$50,000 has been cut from the annual budget with more to come.
- There was discussion of the role of Presbytery. "Connect, Equip, and Inspire" are the three pillars.
- Rev. Jan Edmiston, the co-moderator of the national PCUSA spoke. She recommended two books: Waking up White by Irving and Always with us, dealing with Jesus and the poor. She asked: "What breaks God's heart in our neighborhood?" "What do we love more than we love Jesus?" "Did Jesus die for this?", referring in part to committee meetings. She cautioned to not do Mission with the goal of bringing in new members. Her blog is called "A church for starving artists". Google it. An audio recording of her sermon can be found at: <https://www.dropbox.com/1/scl/AABgP4B4vazzZgxscNdIMiko4Dk35WSFCpk> (please ask the office to send you this link if you don't want to type it out).



Church Volunteers

Sunday Assisting Schedule

	December 10	December 17	December 24, 9:00 a.m. Fourth Sunday of Advent	December 24, 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve	December 31	January 7, 2018 Epiphany
Worship Leader	Jason Harris	TBD	Lauren Smith	Jean Oliver-Holder	TBD	TBD
Head Usher	Harold Guither	Don Wendel	John Dimit	TBD	Jason Harris	Jason Harris
Ushers	Dave Sherwood Julie Sherwood Ed Scharlau Carol Scharlau	Barb Schleicher Gary Jackson Dixie Jackson	TBD	TBD	Linda Brucker David Bullock	Barb Schleicher
Greeter	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Steward	TBD	Jason Harris	Karen Mortensen	TBD	TBD	TBD
Coffee Maker	Beth Chato	Jamie Ellis	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Cup Washer	Beth Chato	Jamie Ellis	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Flowers/ Communion	Flower dedication available	Crèche	Crèche	Crèche	Flower dedication available	Communion

Thrift Shop Sorting Days



Thanks to our volunteers Harold Guither, Camille Caldwell, Dixie Jackson and members of the UIUC Phi Delta Epsilon honorary fraternity for their help at the November 18 *Twice Is Nice* Sorting Day. Due to their hard work, the second floor donation shelves were nearly cleared off!

There are many ways you can participate in this mission to our community: shopping here for your holiday needs, advertising our merchandise or volunteering for our next sorting days on **Wednesday, December 6 from noon to 4:00 p.m., or Saturday, December 16 from 8:00 a.m. to noon.** Thank you.

Thanks to Courtyard Landscaping Volunteers



As this year's growing season comes to an end, several volunteers deserve our thanks for helping maintain the library's courtyard garden. John Dewey pruned the old crabapple tree and donated canna lilies for the west bed, Barbara Schleicher helped prune all the shrubs, Gary Jackson trimmed the ornamental grasses and dug the cannas for storage, Steve Johnson stored the lawn chairs, and Eva Steger faithfully battled weeds that sprouted throughout the long, hot summer. Please give these volunteers your thanks, and be in touch with Dixie Jackson if you can join them in maintaining the garden next season.

Church Staff

Pastor/Head of Staff – Rev. Dr. David Oliver-Holder
david@FirstPresUrbana.org

Financial Administrator – Rachel Gladden
rachel@FirstPresUrbana.org

Office Manager – Tracy Weddle
office@FirstPresUrbana.org

Sexton – Steve Johnson, sjohnson@FirstPresUrbana.org

Director of Music – Lindsey Bruner Woodcock
lindsey.bruner@gmail.com

Organist – Ted Turner, tat3@illinois.edu

Media Support Specialist – Nani Baker
nbaker@firstpresurbana.org

Youth Coordinator – Robert Foelske

Children's Choir & Junior Handbell Choir Director –
Jennifer Immke, jenykate14@hotmail.com

AV Technician Coordinator – Cedar King

Tenor Section Leader – Andrew Turner

Soprano Section Leader – Molly Abrams

Nursery Caregivers – Skylar Matteson, Autumn Ellis

OUR KEY MESSAGES

Welcome to our church family!

God is doing *exciting* things here!

Choose a path: **Have an impact & feed your soul!**

Thanks to Jim and Fran Welch for preparing this Open Door for mailing.

Open Door Deadline: For inclusion in the next Open Door, items should be submitted by **Thursday, January 4, 2018** to office@firstpresurbana.org. The Open Door will be mailed on **Wednesday, January 10, 2018**.

First Presbyterian Church of Urbana

602 W Green St, Urbana, IL 61801

(217) 367-8357

www.FirstPresUrbana.org

Find Us on Facebook

Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.