

# 2017 Annual Report

## First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights



At First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, we are seeking to live the kind of life Jesus wants us to live. That means we strive to be a Matthew 25 church. Our goal is to be the hands and heart of Jesus in the world: choosing to love God and all people, shining the light of Jesus by serving others, and changing the world by caring for all.

### Growing in Faith: Through Our Ministries

Growth and the discovery of faith can happen at any age, and our Children's and Youth Ministries is a prime example of that. Children's Ministries continued to thrive during 2017 under the leadership of Katy Allen, Director of Children's Ministries, and with the support of our many dedicated volunteers. Children gathered for Sunday School each week to explore God's word and to learn about how to live out the teachings of Jesus in their lives. Preschool teachers used the Bible, games, activities, videos, and songs to introduce Bible stories including: Adam and Eve, Baby Moses, and the parables. Units for Kindergartners through fifth graders included: "Loaves and Fishes" (with a focus on sharing); "Water for Life" (exploring physical and spiritual water); and "Make a Joyful Noise" (learning about the Psalms through music). In the fall, students and teachers began a year-long study of what it means to "Choose Love, Be the Light, and Change the World," focusing on the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 25. "I was Hungry," "I was a Stranger," and "Choose Love" explored different aspects of mission and reaching out to help others in our community. Each unit concluded with a special event to bring the children together for a common experience, purpose, and celebration. Favorite activities included the Water for Life Market to develop awareness of global water issues and to raise money for clean water programs, a field trip to Jewel to shop for the hungry, and a breakfast to welcome friends outside our church community to First Pres.

The arrival of summer brought Summer Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. During Summer Sunday School, children and youth worked together to plant, tend, and harvest the Loaves and Fishes Garden. Vacation Bible School (VBS) continued to expand and provide an exciting and engaging week for 150 First Pres and community children. Children entering preschool through fourth grade explored their faith during Maker Fun Factory and learned that we are all made by God and built for a purpose. Children entering fifth and sixth grade joined MissionFactory and spent the week participating in mission activities both on and off-site. New this year, children from Faith Community Homes participated in VBS on a scholarship basis and enjoyed an extended day program to support their working parents' schedules. 80 teen and adult volunteers gave their time to make this program a success, and we greatly appreciate the congregation's support of this meaningful program each year!

To provide additional fellowship opportunities for children and families, Children's Ministries planned and hosted special events throughout the year, including a movie and craft event, an Easter Brunch and Egg Hunt, family Christmas caroling, and an Alternative Gift Market to provide ideas for donation gifts. Kids Connect also met each week during Family Night giving children from First Pres and Faith Community Homes the opportunity to enjoy fun and fellowship together.

Youth Ministries serves our middle school, high school, and college age youth. We continue to hold onto some long standing traditions such as serving Thanksgiving dinner to the wise and sage of our congregation, providing a soup and sandwich supper on Ash Wednesday, and offering summer trips for our middle school and high school youth. There were 16 middle schoolers on the mission trip to Niagara Falls and 20 high schoolers on the mission trip to Tennessee. This year we also offered a canoe trip to the Boundary Waters for the college age youth! These trips gave our youth the opportunity to grow in their faith, serve others, and build relationships. We also provided

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opportunities closer to home for our youth to serve, and be served, including high school trips to the Moorings once a month during youth group, Jan's Jam, cooking for PADS, packing trail mix for the Night Ministry, and much more. Youth of all ages were encouraged to help at VBS, participate in Feed My Starving Children, and engage in fellowship activities both on and off-site.

Sunday mornings continue with education being offered to middle school, Confirmation, and high school students. On Sunday mornings, Y-Search is going through a curriculum that will teach the youth stories from the entire Bible in two years. High School Sunday School has done curriculums such as God and the Internet, God on Broadway, and Big Questions where they discuss big life questions like "why are we here" and "do we truly have free will." These programs are led by 20 volunteers. There are over 70 youth who regularly participate on Sunday mornings.

In June of 2017, we put on our fourth rummage sale. We are grateful to all who came together to help the youth families raise \$10,600 to support our mission. This was in addition to our annual stock sale and cookie walk, which also helps offset the cost of our program.

Adult Education was also busy providing opportunities for adults to grow in faith. Highlights from 2017 include the Annual Fall Speaker (which was FBI agent Phil Andrew), classes on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, and three God's Honest Truth programs. During this program, members of First Pres share personal stories that revolve around a theme. God's Honest Truth has been met with wonderful success and feedback!

Those working behind the scenes to coordinate elements of worship at First Pres are the Worship, Music, and Sacraments Committee (WMS). In 2017, the committee recommended the following to Session and for Session approval: a Maundy Thursday service with St. John's, the continuance of the Easter Sunrise Service, summer service times, service times for December 24 and 31, and communion dates for 2018. Additionally, WMS reviewed and updated the WMS Committee responsibilities included in the Officer Orientation notebook, created a calendar of responsibilities of the committee, met with the Head Usher and discussed the role of the ushers (information on this will be updated), reviewed the funeral and wedding policies, and reviewed the 2018 music and committee budget.

### Building of Community: Welcoming All Who Come

One thing that makes First Pres so special is our shared sense of community and fellowship. Whether it is Family Night, Coffee Hour after Sunday worship, or a special event, First Pres welcomes all. Congregational and Community Life Committee (CCL) embraced a year full of exciting events, including the planning of Coffee Hour every Sunday in the Parlor.

Early in the year, CCL held a Community Group Fair in the Narthex and Parlor to inform members of the variety of groups they could participate in. The groups who participated included Meditation Group, Walking Group, Cycling Group, Make It Take It (a craft making group), Fantasy Football, Breaking Bread, Holy Yoga, and Fitness Boot Camp Group. This fair acted as an opportunity to explore and join the different groups at First Pres.

CCL participated in several events both inside and outside of First Pres to encourage people to come and get involved at First Pres. Tables were set up at the church during the Memorial Day Parade and the 4th of July Parade (which was open to the public for restroom use and refreshment purchasing), and CCL hosted a table at the Mane Event. There CCL gave away small gifts and trinkets that promoted our church and got our name out into the community. For a few months, CCL hosted a table in the Narthex encouraging church members to update their contact information and have new photos taken to update the online directory. In the fall, our first intergenerational event called "Harvest Bingo Bash" was held. It was a great time with snacks, games, prizes, and fellowship. CCL also aided in the updating of the membership list. They generated a letter that was sent to members asking if they plan to stay a member; phone calls were made and letters sent to reach out to those we have not seen in a long while.

Meanwhile, Deacon Ministries focused on serving the needs of the congregation in 2017. In April, the annual tradition of the church-wide birthday party for members who turned 90 years old in 2017 was held. There were 12 members who reached this milestone, and four of them were able to come to celebrate. Participating alongside with them were five current members over 90. The Kingdom served cake and punch as everyone joined in to sing Happy Birthday to all the honorees. Also in April, a new Deacon Ministries logo and tagline ("Caring for All") was introduced. Ministry Teams were hard at work in 2017 preparing the elements, setting up and cleaning, and recruiting servers for 11 Communion Sundays. The Christmas Eve Communion was also set up and prepared by the Deacons, but served by our church's youth. The greeters and ushers worked diligently to make sure we had people welcoming members and assisting those who needed it on Sunday mornings.

Deacon's Cards Team sent out 204 cards to church members in 2017. Deacons also provided six meals to members experiencing a major life event, and the very hard-working Receptions Team hosted 14 funeral receptions. Deacons continued to collect food in the barrels for Faith Community Homes and PADS, and the year ended with contributing all the food for PADS in early December.

## **Our Mission: Changing Our World Together**

The Mission Committee continued to build upon the work that begun in 2016 developing a local mission around our Family Night and Vision program. The Mission Committee continued to sponsor three families for the full year, adding one new family while one of our other families "graduated" from the program. The Vision program added an ESL class which works with immigrant families with children attending Arlington Heights' schools. Mission funds were reorganized to allow us to fund Family Night with \$9,000 to augment the remaining ECO capital.

To ensure funding was made to appropriate organizations throughout the year, new funding categories were created. These categories are PCUSA Mission and local "core" activities, work outside our local area, and discretionary support. A new request for funds form was developed, which when completed, offers deeper insight into the organizations that are requesting funding. The Mission Committee continued their support of our South Dakota and Dominican Republic missions, along with other local organizations, including WINGS and Habitat for Humanity. Additionally, new organizations to support were added, such as UIC Campus Ministry and the Ranchito Los Esperanzas mission. For these missions, we worked with our youth to match their collections.

This year, our Service Day partnership with Southminster Presbyterian Church continued with more than 125 volunteers. Participants of all ages from both churches worked together to deliver meaningful help to an appreciative community, and in the process built new relationships with each other.

A new giving opportunity began by partnering with Military Outreach USA to collect desperately needed household items for Veterans exiting homelessness. The location of the church to both the Memorial Day and July 4<sup>th</sup> parades made First Pres an ideal setting as a collection point for this worthy cause.

Continued support to help the homeless population in our area was done through funding for Journeys and financial support for our PADS program. This support also helped purchase a new warming oven to be used on Tuesday evenings during PADS. New leaders were recruited to take over Barb Psimoulis' leadership position in PADS as she will be transitioning out of this role in 2018. We thank Barb for the amazing job she has done over the years for the PADS program!

The highlight of the year for the Mission Committee was the unbelievable response from the congregation to our request for funds for hurricane relief that affected Houston, Florida, and Puerto Rico. The Mission Committee matched the first \$2,000 from our special collections. Our congregation stepped up and donated over \$10,000. Along with the Mission Committee's contributions, we provided over \$14,000 directly to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Hurricane Relief Fund!

## **Equipping the Church: For Today and Our Tomorrow**

To continue serving and moving First Pres into the future, it is crucial to have strong leaders and visionaries on our committees and in our office staff. The Nominating Committee was able to recruit new, strong leadership from our congregation for a variety of open positions on the church's leadership teams in 2017. This year the Nominating Committee filled the positions for seven Elders, five Trustees, and eight Deacons. Under the leadership of Reverend Alex Lang, the Personnel Committee worked to meet the staffing needs of our church and support our staff. We welcomed Maria Wojtas as our new Director of Communication. Her impact in revising our publications and establishing a refreshed digital presence was immediately felt. This year, the Personnel Committee also updated our staff's professional expense guidelines, accommodated newly revised pension and insurance figures from the Board of Pensions, instituted an improved staff evaluation and documentation process, and approved some title changes among existing positions to better represent new duties. We are grateful for having the opportunity to work with such outstanding staff who, on a daily basis, exemplify a dedication and commitment to our congregation.

At the start 2017, the Stewardship Committee focused on two new items: emphasizing how the money of the church is being spent and starting a budgeting class for "emerging adults" in the congregation and families of Faith Community Homes. Videos were created to showcase how stewardship money was being used and shown during services on Sunday. Video topics ranged from highlighting Family Night, to music, to our VBS program. A budgeting class was held on Wednesday nights in fall titled, "Freed Up Financial Living." Here participants learned new ways to think about their finances and the biblical impact it has on their relationships.

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# Choose love. Be the light. Change the world.

Continuing from 2016, the offering card program successfully raised enough money to purchase more Chromebooks for our Faith Community Homes families, redo the Children's Room at WINGS, and support a mobile food bank in December. Work continued with the Alternative Revenue Team to explore opportunities to generate revenue from non-traditional sources. Lastly, the Stewardship campaign, "The Power of One," was incredibly successful. We would like to thank the congregation for their continued support of the mission and ministry of First Pres.

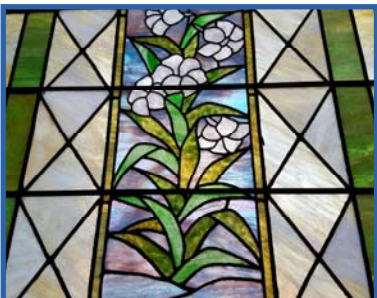
2017 proved to be a positive and productive year for the Administration and Finance Committee. At the beginning of 2017, the Administration and Finance Committee identified several priorities and are pleased to report that significant progress was made on these fronts. These areas included educating Session on the financial health of our church, assisting with the development of a multi-year building maintenance plan, seeking opportunities to increase the money we earn on the church's cash, and simplifying and streamlining our financial reporting. The Administration and Finance Committee is very pleased to report that in 2017 giving was higher than both 2016 and our 2017 budget, and spending was lower than 2016 and our 2017 budget. This is a wonderful combination and allows us to set money aside for much-needed building maintenance projects.

The Board of Trustees had a busy 2017. Major projects of the year included painting a portion of the Sanctuary ceiling, sealing and painting the Sanctuary windows, repairing the lighting in the West Parking Lot, and mapping the sewer system, which will be used to correct flooding issues experienced in the past. A multi-year project to retrofit electrical fixtures throughout the church was nearly completed and has an expected completion date of 2018. Additionally, the emergency lighting in the church was checked and batteries replaced.

The Trustees addressed several major contract issues in 2017. These included a change in the company used for custodial duties and the signing of a security company to help secure the church facility in the evening. Several preventative maintenance agreements were entered into to assist in the upkeep of the kitchen equipment, fire suppression systems, and landscaping. Additionally, a fee structure was developed for entities wanting to use the rooms and facilities of the church.

Throughout any year, there are always some issues that spring up unexpectedly. Surprise issues that needed to be addressed included the repair of a large sewer break outside the church, the replacement of an old fire system panel, an emergency repair on the elevator, several roof leaks, and a plumbing repair that was needed in the Christian Education wing (concerning clogged supply pipes). Trustees would like to thank the outgoing Vice President, Tom Stautzenbach, the Director of Operations and Technology, Brian Larson, and the Connections crew.

While Trustees were busy working on the physical aspects of our church, the Communication Committee was working on updating our church's digital space. In August, the Communications Committee finalized and launched our new church website, [www.firstpresah.org](http://www.firstpresah.org). The new site features an updated look and a refreshed logo. The site works across mobile devices, allows for easy access to sermons, and continues to connect users to important church events and information. The site also features a blog section that is very helpful to keep up-to-date on the sermons and church news. The media section contains a variety of content including past concerts and recitals, videos of our sermons (both current and past), and videos of our weekly worship announcements. Initial feedback has been very positive and we are thankful for all of the input. We have altered several user features since the website's launch based on our congregation's suggestions and feedback. The Communication Committee hopes you are enjoying our new home on the web, and if you are interested in becoming involved with the committee in the future, reach out to Maria Wojtas, Director of Communications, at [mariawojtas@firstpresah.org](mailto:mariawojtas@firstpresah.org) or 847-255-5900.



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