There's a possibility you were of the same mind I was several weeks ago when I suddenly realized, "It's almost the holiday season! How can that be?" As you read this edition of the Columns, we are past Thanksgiving and speeding on toward Christmas and New Year's Day. Whew. Where does the time go?

This particular question about time is, in a way, unanswerable. Where does time go? How can one say? Time passes. Time is filled, wasted and reckoned. Time heals. Time grows short. People race against time, try to seize it and turn it back. Yet time is not even tangible. It just is. What we do with time is the critical factor.

There's a powerful little conversation about time in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel The Fellowship of the Ring. This dialogue takes place between the stalwart wizard, Gandalf, and the diminutive hobbit, Frodo. They are witnesses to the profound unleashing of evil in their world, an evil that seems to be unstoppable. Frodo speaks wistfully, “I wish it need not have happened in my time.” Gandalf replies, “So do I, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

These holiday weeks have been given to us. What will we do with them? I'm quite aware this is a particularly personal question. No one person, and certainly not your pastor, can pretend to know what any one of us will do as we move through these December days. After all, we are all different. For all we hold in common, each of us is our own person following a path that is ours alone with its challenges and joys, its obstacles and its opportunities. Even when we travel the exact same path, we do it differently.

Yet this is a common journey. We are invited to begin the holiday journey with thanksgiving. This usually means giving thanks when there is yet much that is unknown. When the way is tough, God has promised to be right with us through that which is largely shadow. When the way is easy, the same promise is ours. God's presence is reason enough to be thankful "through the highs and through the lows."

Whatever may come in the details of your life, these weeks lead toward something, to Christmas and the New Year. Christmas is most often associated with joy and gifting. New Years always carries with it both closure and openness, an opportunity to reflect on what has been in the year past and is yet to be in the year ahead.

May we all take time in these weeks to remember and to anticipate, to consider what was and is and is to come, all under God's unfolding goodness and love. I wonder what God has in store for us next. I can't wait to find out.
Thank you, Don!

Celebration of Don Ester’s Music Ministry
First Pres Proving Its Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:7

*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

The initial response to this year’s Stewardship focus on generosity is breathtaking. Seventy five percent of the pledges received so far are greater than last year, reflecting a total increase of over $40,000. Thanks to everyone who has responded so generously thus far!

Unfortunately we have not heard from about forty percent of those that pledged last year. If you have not yet responded generously to our annual Stewardship request, please take a moment and do so now. Please complete your pledge card and mail it to the church office or bring it to this Sunday’s worship. If you have misplaced your card, don’t worry, just call Lisa (289-4431) in the church office and she will send you a new one.

As First Presbyterian Church steps forward in our God-given life and ministry, our financial needs are quite real. Your gift to God will enable our church to support our mission to our community, our country and our world.

To facilitate your commitment there are several ways to give:

1. Good old-fashioned check - pay at one time, quarterly, monthly or weekly - we can even provide envelopes!
2. Online via ACH - simply go to the church website, [www.firstpresp scrimmage.org](http://www.firstpresp scrimmage.org) and click on “Stewardship” and then “Online Gift/Payment.”
3. Online via credit or debit card - simply go to the church website, [www.firstpresp scrimmage.org](http://www.firstpresp scrimmage.org) and click on “Stewardship” and then “Online Gift/Payment.”
4. Qualified Distribution from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). If you are at least 70 ½ years old you can distribute up to $100,000 from your IRA directly to nonprofits of your choice. See your tax professional for guidance.
5. Appreciated Securities - have a stock or mutual fund that’s doubled or tripled? It could be a candidate for a direct transfer to the church and potentially save you any capital gains tax. Please contact Lisa Ulrich, Business Administrator, to coordinate this type of gift.

Faithfully Yours,

Claudia and Charlie Sursa
Kelly and Joel Shrock
The Rev. Dr. Pat Smith
The Giving Tree will be up in the Lounge hallway on Sunday, November 27, and you can help decorate it with ornaments which are displayed on the table beside the tree. Please select an ornament or several, remove the tag from the ornament and place the ornament on the tree. Then purchase the gift, wrap it, PUT YOUR TAG ON THE GIFT IDENTIFYING THE RECIPIENT, MAKING SURE THE FAMILY NUMBER IS ON IT. And put it under the tree.

Many ornaments represent a very special need of a family of children or of persons identified by the Salvation Army, A Better Way or the YWCA. Other ornaments represent gifts for agencies with whom we partner - some specific gifts and some monetary gifts.

It’s such a joy to buy for a child knowing how excited he or she will be. Each child will have two ornaments: one with toy or game suggestions and one with clothing suggestions and sizes. We ask that you choose only one of the suggestions per ornament because all the families have more than one child represented by ornaments. It wouldn't be fair for one child in the family to receive 12 gifts while the others each receive two. If you want to buy many gifts, you could take ornaments for all the children in the family.

Agencies represented by some of the ornaments include Christian Ministries, Muncie Habitat for Humanity, Second Harvest Food Bank, Motivate Our Minds (MOMS), and Muncie Mission.

Place your gift(s) under our Giving Tree by Friday, December 16, for delivery on December 18.
**Be a Bell Ringer for Salvation Army**

at the Muncie Mall (just inside the entrance by MCL Cafeteria).

First Pres members will be ringing the bells on December 13 from 2:00-7:00 pm, December 14-15 from 2:00-4:00 pm and December 16 from 2:00-7:00 pm.

Choose a one-hour time slot and sign up in the Lounge Hallway.

This is a great holiday activity for the whole family!

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**Oh, Come All Ye Faithful…and Sing!**

Time for the all-church caroling party, Sunday, December 11, from 5:00 to 7:00! Bring the whole family! We will caravan to church members’ homes to spread holiday cheer (which means we need some good singers!) and return to the church for refreshments. Cider and hot chocolate provided… bring a plate of goodies to share.

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**All-Church Carry-In Advent Brunch!**

**Sunday, December 18th**

9:30 am

in Fellowship Hall

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**You won’t want to miss the Advent Brunch performance!**

We hope you’ll join us for this special event!

**Bring a brunch dish to serve 10 - 12!**

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**Breakfast with Santa**

Saturday, December 10

Fellowship Hall

8:30-11:00 a.m.

On behalf of the church, Pre-K staff, and the Pre-K Board, we are excited to host the second Breakfast with Santa. Church and Pre-K families will enjoy breakfast at 8:30 a.m. followed by visits with Santa & Mrs. Claus, as well as the opportunity for children to make a craft! Reservations are required and must be received by December 4th as we plan for the breakfast. To make reservations please contact Tracy Clinger: 751-7960, tracy@firstpresmuncie.org or the church office: 289-4431; office@firstpresmuncie.org

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Cost: A children’s book(s) in Spanish and/or 24 count Crayola crayons
**Third Thursday**

**Day Trip to Indy: A Bicentennial Celebration—December 15th**

Depart the church at 9:00 am for the Indiana State Museum. We will see two special exhibits: *Indiana in 200 Objects: A Bicentennial Celebration* and *Lincoln’s Mallet*. We will enjoy lunch* at Ayres Tea Room, which will include many of the luncheon specials we remember from our childhood...Ayres famous Chicken Velvet Soup. View an original mechanical Christmas window from Ayres downtown Indianapolis store. Check out the State Christmas Tree and try to find Delaware County’s ornament. Explore the gift shop.

Cost: $11 Lunch at your own expense

Deadline for reservations: December 5th

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**Dee Dah Day**

Women’s Book Study & Prayer Group

**December 2nd** 9 am-11 am in the lounge.

Contact Barb Ottinger (lkbaott59@comcast.net) if you have questions. **December 16th** at 11:30 at MCL. Contact Carol Watkins (765) 759-8009 if you have any questions.

*All are welcome!*

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**Fellowship Sunday & Adult Sunday School:**

- **December 4**—Fellowship Sunday
- **December 11**—Nooma (Bill Rogers)
- **December 18**—Advent Brunch
- **December 25**—Christmas
- **January 1**—New Years

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**Walk A Mile In My Shoes**

is quickly approaching!

The walk is on February 11, 2017 and First Pres will be forming a team!

Be on the lookout for more information coming soon!

Just a friendly reminder that the church will be closed on December 23rd, 26th and 30th, and January 2nd.

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**First Presbyterian Church**

1400 W. Riverside Ave.
Muncie IN 47303
Phone: 765-289-4431
Fax: 765-289-4486
www.firstpresmuncie.org
office@firstpresmuncie.org

**SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES:**

- 8:30 a.m.—Contemporary Service (Sanctuary)
- 11:00 a.m.—International Service (Chapel)
- 11:00 a.m.—Traditional Service (Sanctuary)

**The Rev. Dr. Pat Smith, Interim Pastor**
rpatsmith@firstpresmuncie.org

**The Rev. Dr. Myungku Lee, Associate Pastor**
9brights@firstpresmuncie.org

**Cathy Alexander, Director of Mission & Circle Ministry**
cathy@firstpresmuncie.org

**Tracy Clinger, Director of Pre-Kindergarten**
tracy@firstpresmuncie.org

**Lisa Ulrich, Business Administrator**
lisa@firstpresmuncie.org
Upcoming Sermons

December 4       Our Hope Arrives: In Surprising Ways       Mt. 3:1-12
December 11      Our Hope Arrives: In Our Uncertainties       Mt. 11:2-11
December 18      Our Hope Arrives: In God’s Way       Mt. 1:18-25
December 24      Our Hope Arrives: In the Right Place       Lk. 2:1-7
December 25      Our Hope Arrives: In Our Hearts       Lk. 2:8-20
January 1        A Faithful Promise: God is With Us       Isaiah 41:10
                           Mt. 28:20b

Liturgists

Liturgists for 8:30 am & 11:00 am services are needed. If you are willing to serve as a Scripture reader for a Sunday service, please sign up on the bulletin board behind the information desk or contact the church office (office@firstpresmuncie.org: 289-4431).

SOS
Support Our South View

The December pantry will run from 4 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. (4-5 p set up, 5-7 p distribution, 7-7:30 p clean-up) on December 8th. Volunteers can work the full shift or a portion of time. If you would like to be a part of this brand new program at South View, please contact Cathy Alexander (cathy@firstpresmuncie.org).

Since First Pres is already a presence at South View through Kids Hope mentoring, Second Harvest is asking our church to provide volunteers for the monthly South View Food Pantry.

Volunteer duties may include:

- Help set up tables and food for food distribution (approximately 1-1.5 hours)
- Help take down tables after food distribution (approximately 30 minutes)
- Must be able to pass a background check

Note: Tasks can accommodate to an individual’s capabilities

We Welcome Helen’s House!

Helen’s House is a new supervised visitation and case management agency serving in the Department of Child Services Region 7 which covers the following counties: Grant, Blackford, Jay, Delaware, and Randolph. We are committed to challenging the current status quo in service delivery in order to better serve families and get children to permanent homes quickly. Kindness is at the heart of our approach and families will be cared for and encouraged regardless of what happened to land them in this situation.

Staff will provide services in safe, home-like or home-based environments. The main agency (in Marion) and satellite locations of Helen’s House will be well stocked with toys, games, and activities for multiple age groups to help families learn how to play together. Families will work towards appropriate communication skills and enhance their protective behaviors towards their children while receiving much needed encouragement and support. At Helen’s House, we are intentional about helping families create better relationships. Our staff will teach life skills in very practical ways, through hands-on learning and activities.

We are incredibly grateful for the First Presbyterian Church Session’s approval to partner with Helen’s House for space for our services. If you have any questions about Helen’s House, feel free to contact Casey Getzin at casey.g@helenshouseinc.org.
As in previous years, you have the opportunity to order poinsettias to decorate the church in honor or in memory of someone dear to you. The flowers may be taken home with you after the 7:30 pm Christmas Eve service.

Cost is $15 each.

Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church;
memorandum: Poinsettias

Orders must be received by the church office on or before Sunday, December 11, 2016!

To order, please place a completed form and payment in the offering plate or send it to the church office at 1400 West Riverside Avenue, Muncie, IN 47303.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Quantity ordered: _____ X $15 each = Total due $_______
Date paid: _________ Amt paid: _________ Check #__________
In loving memory of: __________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
In honor or celebration of: _________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Given by: _________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________