It has been six months since I arrived to be your interim pastor for the next three years or so. The goal, of course, is to invest deeply during these years in everything that positions First Pres in just the right ways so your new pastor will gladly join in on the dynamic journey already begun. Every day, every person and every moment makes up part of this adventure. I thank God for each of you as we travel forward.

With six months behind us, perhaps a check-up is warranted. I'm aware of some aspects of our congregational life, not all. (No, pastors don't know everything!) Here are some of the highlights I see from my seat (I hope you think of many more!):

- A great staff doing wonderful ministry to support, serve and lead in many points of our ministry. I simply could not be more enriched by serving with these folks.
- A fabulously gifted and deep-hearted congregation - this means you - who gladly serve Christ, this church and ministries within our walls and beyond, in our communities and around the world.
- Officers who give of themselves from strategic thinking to the smallest of tasks to enhance what currently happens as part of our church life and build toward the future.
- People of all opinions about the challenges we faced in 2016 who are committed to this church and who are attentive to what God wants to show us so healing can be real for everyone.
- Key values that have been in place that makes us First Pres are being tended well, things like worship in all its facets, ministry events, mission outreach, Preschool, financial generosity and stewardship, children's ministry, property upkeep and so many more aspects of our life, far too many to list here.
- Conversations that show both what we will always value and how those values can be lived out in fresh and dynamic and deeply-rooted ways.
- Hearts that are stirred to, in the words of a pastor I know, "walk on the way of Jesus increasingly in the ways of Jesus."

You'll see plenty of evidence of all these observations and more in the pages of this newsletter. You'll hear and see and experience these things for yourselves each time you engage in our ministry and mission. Thank you for all you do for Christ and First Pres!

What you haven't seen yet, but soon will, includes:

- results of the Dominican Republic trip in partnership with Presbyterian Churches;
- time to hear from Executive Presbyter Alan Thames and members of presbytery's Committee on Ministry as they share information about our last several years;
- deep conversations about who we are as First Pres and what God has in store for us; one step in this process may be a weekend-long church-wide leadership retreat by the end of June;
- the celebration of former pastor Ron Naylor's designation as Pastor Emeritus on April 30th;
- steps to maximize our current staff to help ministry thrive at even higher levels;
- partnership with an existing Ball State University ministry while also engaging in new ways with students who currently see First Pres as their home church;
- a five-week Lenten class on Sundays taught by Professor Jason Knapp (who happens to be my wife Laura's older brother), under whose teaching and insights I've long wished to sit;
- a unique post-Easter five week confirmation class experience that will be for youth and all adults as an intergenerational adventure in learning about God, God's works through history and personal faith.

God has been and is up to special things for our congregation. I'm so glad to be part of it all as we travel alongside one another with our eyes fixed on Jesus. Whether you've been part of this ministry for decades for weeks, I hope you experience this gladness as well.

The Rev. Dr. Pat Smith
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TRIP NEWS

Our fifth “family reunion” trip to the Dominican Republic is fast approaching!

Our team will fly out on Sunday, March 5, and return on March 11. Our first goal of the trip, as always, is to build relationships! How will we do that?? We will spend lots of time with the children of Mella, teaching and learning from them! For the second time, we will branch out into the community by spending time in the Mella preschool which is directed by a pastor from another Mella church. We hope to spend some time in conversation with high school students who are learning English.

If you would be willing to pray for a team member (Cassie Alexander, Dan Alexander, Jessica Bryzek, Lucas Clay, Tracy Clinger, Michelle Kaitchuck, Sunwoo Lee, Carrie Jo Miller, or Allison Simmons) or the whole team while we are gone, please see the prayer plan below.

FPC Muncie to Mella Family Reunion, March 5-11, 2017
Prayer Guide

Saturday, March 4
Pray that God would put a hedge of protection about the entire trip.

Sunday, March 5
Pray for safe travels; pray for our friends who will meet us at the airport.
Pray that God will be glorified by every aspect of our trip.

Monday, March 6
Pray that we will hear the voice of God in Mella and Duverge; that all of us will be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Tuesday, March 7
Pray that God’s love would be shared and strong bonds of Christian love will be renewed with our new DR friends.

Wednesday, March 8
Pray that God would provide strength and good health throughout the trip.

Thursday, March 9
Pray that God would protect and provide for our families and church back home.

Friday, March 10
Pray that the unconditional love of God would radiate in and through each of our lives.

Saturday, March 11
Pray that each of us, as well as our old and new DR friends, would have a personal and powerful encounter with God. Pray for safe travels; pray for our reunion with our families.

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10
Trivia Night was a SUCCESS!  
...And lots of FUN!

Heather and Bill Roger's table were the winners!

We are fortunate to provide scholarships for families in need each year.

A big thank you to John Foster, who emceed for the evening and Fellowship and Church Growth Committee for supplying popcorn and drinks!

It was a wonderful evening of fun and fellowship!
HELP FPC GO GREEN!

The improved recycling program at church helps us reduce our landfill waste, but it is only the beginning to being sustainable. Here are some things you can do to help:

1. Bring your own travel mug or coffee cup on Sundays to reduce Styrofoam waste. (it can’t be recycled in normal operations)
2. Follow the signs on the bins to make sure the waste is put in the correct bin.
3. Think REDUCE before RECYCLE. It’s best to reduce or eliminate the usage of things that have to be throw away.
4. Bring your small batteries and ink cartridges to the church to be recycled. (bins are in the coat racks before Fellowship Hall)
5. Recycle at home. (There is a SUSTAINABILITY FACT SHEET by the battery recycling bin!)

Feel free to contact me if you have questions about how to be better stewards of our Earth!

-Lucas Clay, Building Superintendent

Children and Youth Sunday School Classes  Mission Project: The Muncie Animal Shelter!

Cats Have 9 lives... but you don’t!

It’s a doggone good Make it count by donating pet supplies to animals in need! (Tote in North Lobby)

The First Presbyterian Church Children and Youth Sunday school groups came together for an exciting semester.

Individual and group goals for our church have been set in all areas, including:

Education  Mission  Fellowship  Stewardship  History  Worship

This semester we will be collecting supplies and we encourage you to help!

Special thanks to Minkyu Lee (4th grade) for the design of our mission project notification. There will be more news coming soon about this exciting project in the weeks to come! Thank you for your encouragement and support!

Dee Dah Day

Women’s Book Study & Prayer Group

Join us for the Dee Dah Day women’s fellowship. All are welcome!

February 24 at 9 a.m. in the lounge

If you have any questions, please contact Barb Ottinger(lkbaott59@comcast.net

2017 Per Capita

Please help offset First Pres’ $14,533.35 Per Capita expense to Presbytery for 2016 by reimbursing the church for the per capita ($38.55) of each FPC member in your family. Checks should be made payable to First Presbyterian, memo: “Per Capita”. Thank you!
SAFARI TO POVERTY:
Conversations and Meditations During Lent
Jason Knapp

Season of Lent, March 5 - April 2

Years ago my daughter Lorien and I were walking downtown one day in the city of Mwanza, Tanzania, when a man filled with anger came shouting at us out of the shadows of a warehouse. "Mzungu, you make us POOR!" His English was halting, but not his message. It was an alarming moment in a country I was just getting to know, a country where over 120 languages are spoken. Although he used a rude and threatening form of address, I never wished more that I had adequate Kiswahili – the most common language in Tanzania – to attempt a conversation with the man concerning his outrage about poverty. It might have been a life-changing conversation.

We are all concerned in America – some of us obsessed – with wealth and poverty. Many think of poverty as the black hole in the galaxy of wealth, an ever-threatening magnetic force drawing us toward oblivion. Reason (and the wisdom of our financial planners) says we must be ever-vigilant guardians of our wealth. But then we bump into Jesus who has things to say about the rich and the poor that we aren’t sure we understand and that make us quite uncomfortable. The Gospels in the New Testament, and the protracted conversation about wealth and poverty throughout the remainder of scripture give us no ease. The long historical testimony of the Christian Church is a testimony of conflict and struggle over this issue. No wonder it is an inheritance Christian faith communities in our culture would often rather not talk about or engage with seriously.

Nevertheless, I invite you to join me in this season of lent to take a safari, a journey, toward Jesus and his teaching concerning poverty. People of the Jesus Way, both poor and rich, have this valuable inheritance to reclaim for their witness in the world. And it needn’t be a frightening adventure if we travel together in community. Join me for five weeks this spring, not as tourists, but pilgrims. It is a journey that ends at the cross and begins with the resurrection.

Jason Knapp is a studio artist, scholar, and retired university professor; a Christian layman whose safaris with Jesus have taken him around the world. A Nebraska native, he took some of his most important education at the University of Kansas and UC Berkeley, on a farm in Southern Illinois, in the cross-cultural communities of New Mexico, in the alto selva of Peru, in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, and in the streets of Mwanza, Tanzania. Jason’s family is large, exciting, and a source of immense joy to him. He is currently a partner in Knapp Centennial Farms, LLC., serving The White Water Presbytery as a ruling elder, and the American Board Chair of Kwetu Faraja, a Tanzanian NGO and American 501(c)3 organization, dedicated to caring for vulnerable children. He is also a FaceBook writer and spoon carver.
Lenten Sermon Series: Jesus' Last Week
March 5-April 16

Lent is a time for introspection, self-examination and repentance leading up to our remembrance of the events of Holy Week. That last week of Jesus' ministry before his death and resurrection contains a vital combination of events and conversations that often are overlooked because our focus is on the beginning of the week, Palm Sunday, and the end of the week, Resurrection Sunday.

This Lenten season, we'll take a slow walk through that week from the joyously shouting crowds who greet Jesus to the profound silence of grieving women in the pre-dawn graveyard where Jesus' body had been placed. As we travel from one Sunday to the next following in the footsteps of Jesus, we'll discover pertinent moments that can inform our approach to the wonder of the Resurrection.

March 12
Fixing What is Broken
Mark 12:1-12
OT: Ezekiel 6:1-8
Theme: Jesus indicts the corrupt

March 19
Rule Number One
Mark 12:28-34
OT: Deuteronomy 6:1-9
Theme: Love God, love others

March 26
Sincerity Affirmed
Mark 14:3-11
OT: Psalm 69:29-36
Theme: True devotion is costly

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 (765) 289-4431

2017 Flower Calendar
If you would like to provide flowers for a Sunday worship service during 2017, please sign up on the Flower Calendar posted behind the information desk. You will be contacted in advance of the date you request.

Next available dates: March 26th, April 2, 9 and 16

American Red Cross BLOOD DRIVE
First Presbyterian Church
1400 W Riverside Ave
Muncie IN
Blood Drive
April 13, 2017
1:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Fellowship Hall
To schedule your blood donation appointment, call 1800-REDCROSS or go to redcrossblood.org
sponsor code “Firstpres”
Support Our South View

Because 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. Below are the upcoming dates:

- March 9, 2017
- April 27, 2017
- May 25, 2017
- June 22, 2017
- July 27, 2017

To volunteer, please email Cathy Alexander: cathy@firstpresmuncie.org

Volunteer duties may include:

- Help distribute food at the school site on a monthly basis and potentially bi-weekly or weekly basis (approximately 2 hours per distribution)
- Check-in families prior
- Help individuals take food to their cars if needed
- 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 be broken up to accommodate an individual’s capabilities.

Third Thursday

Everyone is welcome for lunch and fellowship in Fellowship Hall at 12:00 noon. The cost is $3.00.

March 16

Discussion on Protecting God’s Creation

Speaker: Lucas Clay

Call the church office (765-289-4431) or email office@firstpresmuncie.org to register by Monday March 13th

Salvation Army Pantry Item For March:
Canned Fruits and Vegetables

Please place your donation(s) in the cart in Fellowship Hall.
First Presbyterian Church
1400 W Riverside Ave., Muncie IN 47303

... Lifting Up Christ
Building Up People

www.firstpresmuncie.org
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Presbyterian Church
1400 W Riverside Ave., Muncie IN 47303

Palm Sunday
Sunday April 9th, 2017
Brunch between services

Maundy Thursday
Thursday April 13th
Service at 7:00 pm

Good Friday Service
Christian Ministries 7:00 pm
First Baptist Church
309 E Adams St,
Muncie, IN 47305

Easter Sunday
Sunrise Service at 7:00 am
One combined service 11:00 am