Stepping Forward

I haven’t been around a child who takes its first step lately, but I remember the wonder of that moment when I’ve been there to see it myself. When I am with someone who describes their own experience of this as parent or family member or friend, their eyes light up and their voice takes on a quality that percolates with joy.

That’s the kind of thing that fills me with a sense of genuine wonder for what we are moving through at this time. Like the parent of a child on the brink of something that, however tentative, will open up a whole new stage of life like that transition from crawler to toddler, I see how we have come along with one another with so much good in place as part of our current life. These good things are attached to all that First Pres has been for many, many years. We are where we are because of where we have been.

After a year of getting our footing together, a year that has brought new staff, new participants in ministry, a new year of university student involvement, fresh looks at ways to be First Pres in our ministry life and missional way of living, there are signs that what is stirring may give us a way of walking that is a new, joyful chapter that opens up new horizons.

All of us get to be a part of this. This doesn’t mean we all share the same perspective in these first steps nor are we in the same position. Take for instance the reality that not all of us were part of the “Bearing Fruit Weekend” in June with Rev. Dr. Ray Jones. Not all of us have yet read the book *Shift* that he recommended. Not all who have read this book have yet entered into some of the conversations about its themes. Not all have yet engaged in walking the neighborhood in which our ministry is rooted at 1400 W. Riverside. Anyone who has invested in any of these elements may have a different view of them from others. All of us are aware that things are stirring. I trust we are all opening ourselves to be in prayer for all that God wants to show us.

I hope you are aware of the offer Ball State has made to buy the almost three acres to the north of our campus. A letter should have come to you the week of September 18th. I hope you have or will attend one of the information meetings or have reached out to Session members with your questions. The decision as to whether to accept their offer or not is still before us. We’ll meet on Sunday morning the 15th of this month for worship, a congregational meeting and a fellowship lunch on the grounds. The congregational meeting is for the purpose of deciding by vote the disposition of this offer.

No matter how we currently view this offer or anything leading up to it, this decision is part of our life as we step forward. I can think of reasons we might be hesitant to sell. I can think of reasons we might think it is a good thing. As we pray and listen and do our best to be attuned to what the Spirit of God might prompt in us on this matter, we also do this knowing this is only one moment, one step. There is so much that is going on around us in our world and in our congregational life that also invites our attention in order to live more and more fully as God’s people.

A just-learning-to-walk toddler lives in a position of uncertainty. In all that this child knows is rock solid like love of parents, security and provision, there is this tentative thing called taking a step. Standing upright is tentative. Moving that first foot forward is tentative. Soon, a second step is taken, and before we know it, the walking is much more assured. All this, of course, leads to confidently striding out and, in time, even running. It’s all pretty amazing.

May God keep showing us all we need to see and do in order to run with confidence in all that is set before us.

The Rev. Dr. Pat Smith
**Ball State Property Offer**

During the week of September 18th, a letter was sent to the members and friends of First Presbyterian. In it we learned about the interest Ball State University has expressed in seeing if we would be willing to sell an almost three acre parcel of land that stretches across the northern edge of our property. They have approached us because that plot of land is the best option from their perspective for where they can build a three story, four-level parking garage to replace the Emmons garage that will be taken down as part of the Campus Master Plan.

With the first interest expressed to Pastor Pat and subsequent conversations in our Building Committee and Session, a process began to unfold to clarify all information regarding this interest. We’ve clarified where the building site would be, it’s general appearance, how it would likely impact the woods and water issues of that part of our property, and what the purchase price would be among many other matters. The sale price would be $433,750. (Any sale would need to be approved by our presbytery. All proceeds will be available for our congregation’s life and ministry as discerned by Session.)

Once Session felt it had all the information in hand, the decision was made to share it with the congregation. A series of four information meetings began on Sunday, September 24 and Monday, September 25 with the last meetings yet to be held on Tuesday, October 3rd at 5:00 PM and Saturday, October 7th at 10:00 AM, all in Fellowship Hall. At each of these meetings, Mr. Chris Paladino or his representative will explain the background and details of their offer and intent. All questions are welcome related to the university’s proposal and the process followed by Session. Time will be given to share perspectives on this possibility at each meeting.

**A congregational meeting is called for Sunday, October 15th at 11:00 AM following a single worship service at 10:00 AM.**

The purpose of that meeting is to vote on whether we will sell the agreed upon acreage to Ball State University for $433,750. Voting will be done by written ballot. The motion will be affirmed if it receives a two-thirds majority vote of official members present that morning.

Pat Smith and the Session have encouraged us to consider our own individual perspective from the standpoint of what will provide the best results for bearing wonderful spiritual fruit in the coming years.

**The schedule for Sunday, October 15th will be:**

- 10:00 AM—Combined Worship
- 11:00 AM—Congregational Meeting
- 12:00 PM—Congregational Lunch on the front lawn
Graduate students from the Ball State Opera Theater, including Alexandra Billhartz, Anna Buck, Maegan Pollonais, and Rory Wallace, will be performing selections from both operatic and contemporary repertoire in a benefit concert to raise money for the victims of Hurricane Maria.

All proceeds will go directly to Living Water Community, a Catholic mission organization that seeks to help the poor and homeless in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the Caribbean.

Location: The sanctuary at First Presbyterian Church of Muncie.

Admission is free, but donations are requested.
Financial Update

As of August 31, 2/3, of the way through the year, we have good news and the possibility of bad news.

The good news is, expenses are 6.1% under budget, and we expect to be under budget for the year, though probably less than 6.1%.

The bad news is that income is running 1.6% under budget, and our fear is that, if nothing changes, income for the year will come in even further under budget than 1.6%.

Here’s what we’re looking at. Out of $650,000 budgeted for regular contributions, $426,471 has been collected to date, leaving $223,529 uncollected. $144,903 of this uncollected amount represents pledged amounts that we expect and hope to receive between now and year-end. We have received $69,130 from non-pledgers who either pledged or gave $111,671 last year. We hope that we will receive at least the difference, $42,541, over the remainder of the year. If both of these occur as hoped, we will still be $36,085 short.

We also have some folks who gave last year, did not pledge this year, and so far, have not given anything this year. Some of these people have apparently left, although they remain on our membership rolls. Those remaining, if they give what they gave last year, would reduce the shortfall to $11,034. If this became our final result, our predicted expense savings and our small general fund balance from last year of $11,364 would cover the shortfall, provided our other small sources of revenue don’t fall short as well.

Notice there are a lot of ifs that have to happen.

On the bright side, eleven pledgers have to date given a total of $9,239 more than they pledged for the full year. Twelve non-pledgers have already exceeded their last full year giving by a total of $4,755. Finally, we have twenty-nine first-time givers (non-pledged) who have given a total of $5,789.

So, here’s our hope: if we can give a little extra between now and the end of the year, we might end the year with at least a small surplus to carry us into 2018, which we know will be a year of new opportunities and challenges.

The year 2018 is a year we hope will result in our church bearing much fruit.

Generosity has a great deal to do with “Bearing Fruit.”

Coats Against the Cold

New and gently used coats are needed for the 10th annual Coats Against the Cold, sponsored by Hearts and Hands United of Delaware County, Inc. Hats, gloves, scarves and mittens are also needed.

Donations will be accepted through October 8 and can be brought to the church, or can also be dropped off at Christian Ministries of Delaware County, 401 E. Main St., Center Township Trustees Office, 1200 E. Main St., or Bailey Cleaners, 3005 W. Jackson St.

The giveaway will be 10 a.m.-2 p.m. October 14 at the Delaware County Fairgrounds.

Information: 765-730-0787 - heartsandhandsunitedofdelawarecounty.org
So, you have read SHIFT and participated in discussions, but you still have questions about how we “grow” disciples and join God on his mission in the world? Here’s some recommended reading from Pat Smith and Ray Jones:

**Bearing Fruit-Recommended Reading**

By James Bryan Smith:  
The Good and Beautiful God  
The Good and Beautiful Life  
The Good and Beautiful Community

By Alan J. Roxburgh:  
Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World  
Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood

By Craig Van Gelder:  
The Missional Church in Perspective  
The Ministry of the Missional Church  
The Essence of the Church

**Excerpt from the introduction of The Good and Beautiful God:**

This is the first book in The Apprentice Series, which along with the other two books forms a “curriculum for Christlikeness.” The aim of this first book is to help people discover the God Jesus revealed….The focus of this book is on the character of God. The second book introduces the reader to the kingdom of God and focuses on our inward characters. The focus of the third book is to help us learn how to live as apprentices of Jesus in our ordinary, everyday lives.

**From the back cover of Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World:**

Exhausted with trying to “fix” the church? It’s time to embrace a different path: getting in sync with what God is doing in the neighborhood around us. In Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World, internationally renowned leader and scholar Alan Roxburgh contends the breakdown of the church’s dominance in North American life is actually a blessing. Today faith communities of all kinds—suburban and urban, large and small, denominational level and parish—can re-engage with the mission of God and reimagine church from the ground up.

From some online reading, check out Alan Roxburgh’s online newsletter, The Missional Network  [http://themissionalnetwork.com/](http://themissionalnetwork.com/)

You can also read about the neighborhood engagement efforts of the Presbytery of Cincinnati [http://www.presbyteryofcincinnati.org/transformation-docs.html](http://www.presbyteryofcincinnati.org/transformation-docs.html)

Happy Reading!
We don’t need carefully crafted 3-point sermons to point us in the direction of right living. If as the adage suggests, brevity is the soul of wisdom, a couple of words can be sufficient to instruct us in the way we should go. So choose which of the following word pairs you’ll pursue this day. Tomorrow, choose another. The day after that . . . You get the idea.

**Act justly**

**Trust God**

**Be kind**

**Love mercy**

**Walk humbly**

**Love extravagantly**

**Serve joyfully**

**Do good**

**Pray fervently**

**Give generously**

The list above is merely a starting point, ready and waiting for additions — yours and mine. And should we run out of ideas, we can turn to the ultimate resource for inspiration and instruction (two more good words).

As Christ-followers, we have access to the best words, God’s words as conveyed in the Holy Scriptures. Even better, the God who spoke us into being welcomes us into relationship with THE WORD that was in the beginning with God and was God.

All the words we need for right living already have been said.

**Praise God.**

These word pairings are brought to you by the Generosity Committee in hopes that you, too, will be inspired by this simple message. We can and should be motivated down the path of right living with just a couple of words. We hope you will begin pondering each pair throughout the next few weeks. In addition, may we also add this question for your consideration, “What does generosity mean to you?” We look forward to learning your response.

Generosity Committee: Patrick Burkey, John Foster, Bill McCune, Jon Moll, Kelly Shrock, Pat Smith and Charlie Sursa.

**Fellowship Sunday and Adult Sunday School**

**What is Fellowship Sunday?**

Our regular “coffee / fellowship” time between services will take place in Fellowship Hall (refreshments will be served in Fellowship Hall). From 9:45 to 10:30 am there will be an activity which fosters relationship building.

**Fellowship Sunday is a great time to invite people to visit our church.**

**October 1**

**Fellowship Sunday - Bible Trivia**

Choose your own teams and brush up on your knowledge of the Bible...who said this, who did that, where did that occur? We get started around 9:50. Prizes will be your own satisfaction that you and your teammates know the Bible!

**October 8 - 29**

**Teachings on The Reformation - Joel Shrock**
"Share the gospel at all times, and, if necessary, use words."

These words (attributed to St. Francis of Assisi) give me a chill. I mostly run around with Presbyterians, who mostly run around avoiding the use of words to share the gospel. Presbyterians are great with random acts of kindness. Presbyterians are great at advocating for a society which more closely reflects God’s desires for the world. Presbyterians are great at tutoring low-income students and going on mission trips and living lives which share the gospel quite regularly. Just don’t ask us to use words.

That’s why St. Francis’ advice is so bad. The last thing we need is permission from a thirteenth century saint to keep us from worrying about articulating our faith in Christ.

Most Presbyterians have a hard time actually opening our mouths and saying something about Jesus. This was confirmed last week when I spoke with a group of church leaders from a congregation in Savannah presbytery. I had the chance to talk to them about some of the marks of faithfulness in congregational life.

The office of congregational vitality here at the Presbyterian Mission Agency is refining a list of marks, such as Lifelong Christian Formation, Healthy Systems, Intentional Evangelism, Outward Incarnational Focus, Empowering Servant Leadership, Inspiring Worship, and Caring Relationships.

After talking about which of these marks are strengths for the congregation, we moved to the marks that might be more challenging. Everyone there seemed in agreement: Intentional Evangelism is the one where they need the most work. Someone commented, “it’s just the way we are.” It seems to be a congregation where everyone is devoted to sharing the gospel at all times, but are right with St. Francis to only use words when absolutely necessary.

The saints of this church aren’t the only ones who struggle with this. I do too! I love to preach and speak about Jesus, and like to think I use my words to preach the gospel very regularly…but almost always with and to other Christians.

I have a hard time with people not from the church.

Just the day before I was talking with these church leaders, I struggled to use words to talk about Jesus. I was in another city with “Jason,” one of my fraternity brothers from college. We were talking about issues of privilege. Now, I base my understanding of what people with privilege should do to respond to the culture on Philippians 2:1-11, the Christ hymn, which says that Jesus gave up all of his privilege to come and die on the cross.

When the conversation turned to privilege, this passage popped into my mind. An internal dialogue started. “Am I going to tell Jason about this passage?” “Will he think I’m preaching if I do?” “Can’t I just explain it another way without bringing up my faith?”

In retrospect, the inner dialogue was a little unnecessary. Jason knew I was a Christian back in college. He knows I’ve gone to seminary. He knows I am a minister working for the national church. Odds are that he would find it odd if I didn’t bring up my faith from time to time.

But the inner dialogue of doubts made me wish I could just share the gospel through my kindness to him, rather than by using words.

This time, though, I took the plunge. I told him about the passage briefly and how I try to follow Jesus in using my privilege to serve others. The whole comment took about 45 seconds maybe. Maybe less. And it was…fine. There was no lightning bolt of recognition on his part. There was no rejection. The conversation just went on. I’m not sure what the Holy Spirit might do in Jason after I took this baby step.

I’m a lot more concerned, actually, with what the Holy Spirit will do in me, now that I’ve taken it. I hope the Spirit will keep calling me to share the Gospel at all times, and to use words whenever possible. I pray that in challenging situations, I can hear God’s still small voice reminding me “do not worry about…what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12).

And I pray that I’m part of a church that will spur me on, again and again, to increasing acts of intentional evangelism.
International Congregation
Welcome Party
on September 16, 2017.

Indiana’s First Lady
Janet Holcomb
at First Presbyterian Church
Dear First Pres family,

Words cannot describe the incredible amount of generosity, care, love, and support you gave me on my last Sunday. It was a joy to see each of you at the reception. Hearing the warm wishes and heartfelt notes of thanks was an emotional moment for me, and as Pat led a circle of prayer, I could feel the strong bond each of us shared through Christ. It was a demonstration of God's love, which is a clear foundation of First Pres and is one of the many reasons I proudly call the church my home.

I've opened and read each card I received from the basket. Your generosity was overwhelming! I appreciated the personal and unique creativity, style, humor, color, and message. I will keep and cherish them with me throughout my years of medical study as a reminder of the loving family I have here in First Pres.

I will continue to pray for the church, for its ministry, mission, and members. I have no doubt in God's plans for much exciting endeavors in the near future.

Instead of saying "farewell", I would rather say "see you again", as I am sure our paths will cross again. Thank you so much for a wonderful experience and opportunity of service. God Bless.

Sunwoo Lee

Disclosure:
Sunwoo’s letter didn't get published in the September newsletter, as it should have. Apologies to him, his family and the rest of the congregation of First Presbyterian Church.

Dee Dah Day
Women’s Book Study & Prayer Group

We continue studying the book, Learning from the Giants by John C. Maxwell.
Please come and join us!

For further information, contact Barb Ottinger (765-289-4080 or lkbaott59@comcast.net).

School is back in session and we need cooks and drivers on Tuesdays
Kitchen volunteers at 12:30 to 3:00 pm
Delivery drivers at 2:30 pm
A sign up sheet is located on the bulletin board, behind the information desk.

September Donation Item
Canned Meats and Hearty Stews
As always, please place your donation(s) in the cart in Fellowship Hall.

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

SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES:
8:30 a.m.—Contemporary Services
11:00 a.m.—International Service (Chapel)
11:00 a.m.—Traditional Service

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

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

Carrie Jo Miller, Commissioned Ruling Elder
cjmiller3501@comcast.net

Cathy Alexander, Coordinator of Ministry and Mission - cathy@firstpresmuncie.org

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

Lisa Ulrich, Business Administrator
lisa@firstpresmuncie.org

Gabriela Burciaga, Administrative Assistant
office@firstpresmuncie.org

Lucas Clay, Building Superintendent
lhclay96@gmail.com
Liturgists for the 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 Gabby at office@firstpresmuncie.org or call 765-289-4431.

Readings for the week will be emailed to you or a copy can be picked up in the office.

Thank you!

October 26

November 30

December 14

January 25

February 22

March 22

April 26

May 24

WE NEED LITURGISTS

Liturgists for the 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 Gabby at office@firstpresmuncie.org or call 765-289-4431.

Readings for the week will be emailed to you or a copy can be picked up in the office.

Thank you!

FALL SERIES: “LONGING FOR THE BEST”

No matter how things are going at the moment, there is always something that could be better. Whether our current circumstances are bleak, or great, or somewhere in between, we can all find ourselves in a position where we hope that tomorrow will in some way be better than today.

The Hebrew people once found themselves in about as bleak an existence as can be imagined. Once a favored family in a land of plenty, they found themselves on the short end of the stick generations later. Life that was once good went bad, very, very bad. They languished between the memory of what once was and that for which they hardly dare long. They longed for the best while barely able to imagine anything could ever really change for the better.

Our “Longing for Best” series will allow us to examine the history of the Jews in the period known as the Exodus. God takes them from slavery in Egypt to freedom and to a land God had in mind for them all along. The process God uses to accomplish this shift from hardship to rest will inform and encourage us as we face the realities of our present life that lead us to long for something more.

October 1

9:45—Sunday School - Youth Hall

October 8

9:45—Sunday School—Youth Hall

1:00—LASER TAG

October 22

9:45—Sunday School—Youth Hall

October 29

9:45—Sunday School—Youth Hall

5:00—7:00—PUMPKIN CARVING—Youth Hall

November 5

9:45—Sunday School—Youth Hall

November 11

5:00 pm—LOCK IN

November 12

9:45—Sunday School—Youth Hall

11:00—PRE-K Sunday Program

Questions? Contact Aaron and Jacqueline Burton

October 1

“Moving Day”

Exodus 12:31-42

October 8

“Overcoming Obstacles”

Exodus 14:1-14

October 15

“Rotten Attitudes”

Exodus 15:22-16:3

October 22

“Getting Better Organized” 1st Connection to Generosity

Exodus 18:13-23

October 29

“Values That Last” [Reformation Sunday 500th Anniversary]

2nd Connection to Generosity

Exodus 24:1-7

November 5

“God First in Everything”

Commitment Sunday and Communion

Exodus 25:1-19

November 12

“At Rest”

Pre-School Sunday

Exodus 21:12-17

November 19

“Grateful Hearts”

Rev. Dr. Rob Weingartner, Executive Director of the Outreach Foundation

Guest Preacher

Questions? Contact Aaron and Jacqueline Burton
How can followers of Christ be advocates for the environment and human rights?

Come join us as we explore our individual responsibilities in advocacy and awareness in current events as followers of Christ.

Aside our Sunday services, our regular activities include:

Every third Tuesday of the month: Documentary and Discussion.

Contact Lucas Clay: lhclay@bsu.edu

Attendees will get to sample and enjoy the delicious wine at Tonne while they are treated to light snacks and invited to participate in our "bad art" competition. Those in attendance will draw random names of objects/animals from a hat and they will then be challenged with the task of creating sculptures of them with Model Magic or Play Doh. Two sculptures will be awarded the titles of "best bad art" or "worst bad art".

Come join a good time for a good cause.

Tickets will be $20 in advance or $25 at the door.

Join our team of Volunteer Bus Drivers

Here’s an easy volunteer opportunity…providing Sunday morning transportation for our Westminster Village members. The church bus is very easy to drive and doesn’t require a special license. The bus leaves the parking lot at 10:20 to arrive at Westminster around 10:30 am.

The group is in the main lobby waiting for the bus (pull under the overhang).

After the service, you bring the van to the circle to pick up the group.

If you have any questions, ask one of our current drivers: Cathy Alexander, Jeff Clinger, Tim Koontz, Jonathan Schmidt, Claudia Sursa and Bob Wadsworth.

If you would be willing to drive, please contact the church office 765-289-4431.

A reminder email with the schedule will be sent out weekly.
Session has called a congregational meeting for October 15th at 11:00 am for the purpose of deciding the question, "Will First Presbyterian Church agree to sell a portion of our property, as stipulated, to Ball State University?"

Information Meetings in the Fellowship Hall have been scheduled as follow:

- Tuesday, October 3, at 5:00 pm
- Saturday, October 7, at 10:00 am
- Sunday, October 8, at 12:05 pm -- Sharing Perspectives and Prayer

Schedule for Sunday, October 15:

- 10:00 am Single worship service - 11:00 am Congregation Meeting
- 12:00 pm All church picnic

Pulled pork sandwiches and drinks will be provided, but bring your own side dishes and deserts. A large tent will be set up, weather should not be an issue. No need to make a reservation, just show up and bring a dish!