Our worship on the last Sunday of 2017 was a different kind of worship experience. Since it was the first Sunday after Christmas, we began with some carols that helped us give full voice to the wonder of Jesus’ birth. The service was organized to allow each of us to remember moments from the past year. We also looked ahead to what we anticipate in this new year.

Our text for the morning was in chapter two of Luke’s selective biography of Jesus. We focused on the day Jesus’ mom and her husband brought eight-day-old Jesus to dedicate him at the Temple as was usual. One of the people who saw them was a godly man named Simeon. This unusual man rejoiced to see the infant Jesus. He said, “This child is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of God’s people Israel!” Light and glory are vital themes for the people of God today and First Pres for 2018.

We also gave every person an opportunity to pick up a slightly bigger-than-business-sized card from a basket filled with them. Each card had a different verse from the Bible. We were encouraged to consider that each person’s randomly selected verse could be considered as a verse for the year, something to read and consider regularly. We did the same thing last year. My verse last year is, “Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you” (1 Samuel 12:24).

As we move into January of 2018, I look forward to how we might all serve God faithfully with all our hearts and stay attentive to all the great things God has done and will do in us and through us.

There are some key moments for us this month as the year gets underway. They include:

1. The beginning of a new sermon series called, "Life Clues"—This series (details are found elsewhere in this newsletter) allows us to examine the purpose of Jesus’ life and ministry and how it informs us in daily life. We’ll look at some long conversations Jesus has with some fascinating people. We’ll also examine the miracles that Jesus does. Each of these moments reveals a lot about God and faith and will help us be open to all God wants us to be and do individually and as a congregation in 2018.

2. Our Annual Congregational Meeting on January 21st—This meeting will be held between services at 9:45. Gathering at this time will provide the opportunity for us to come together as a whole congregation to fellowship together over doughnuts and coffee. We’ll do some required yearly business (like information on the 2018 budget and the election of new officers), give input into some new areas of our ministry and get an update on what to expect in this interim period as First Church. It’ll be a great morning, a key time to listen, make decisions and ask questions.

3. The officer orientation on the morning of Saturday, January 27th—This time will provide all current and in-coming officers an opportunity to engage in some important learning opportunities and strategic conversations about how our whole ministry can be built so that we bear a lot of great fruit in 2018. Please be praying as your officers prepare for this wonderful opportunity to spend extended time together.

4. New officers’ ordination and installation during worship on Sunday, January 28th—Our new class of officers will be ordained and/or installed during both services. We can all look forward to affirming that God has provided these brothers and sisters who will with wisdom, joy, hope and love as we move forward together.

5. Classes will get underway on Sunday mornings starting January 7th. Adults will engage in strategic conversations for us as a congregation.

6. On Wednesday evenings starting January 10th (6:00-7:00 PM), I’ll facilitate a discussion based on the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday. In this way, we’ll have a chance to consider together what Jesus was up to in the 1st Century and is up to in our lives today.

January starts a new year. This January also is a time that gets things started in special ways as First Pres. Thanks for being a part of it all!

Rev. Dr. Pat Smith
SPECIAL THANKS FOR OUR OUTGOING OFFICERS

Being Presbyterian is more than attaching ourselves to a vital historical movement or a word that most people can’t spell. The Presbyterian way of life is, in its purist sense of the word, about how life and faith is organized. That doesn’t sound very dynamic, but it really is. Scripture talks about those who are qualified to lead as overseers/elders and deacons and tell us that these people, moved and filled by the Spirit, are critical to the life of God’s people.

Our denomination’s Book of Order declares that these leaders “are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish.” This last word is compelling. With this goal in mind, we also read that “those who undertake [these roles] should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.”

The congregation will soon learn who our new elders and deacons will be for the coming year(s). On the way to that announcement (and their election at the Annual Meeting on Sunday morning, January 21st), we should pause to give thanks to those men and women whose term of office on one of our boards comes to a close at this time. They have served us all with faith and diligence. They will each be missed in their roles as Session and Board of Deacon members. We look forward to the ways God will continue to use them to help our ministry flourish along with the rest of us.

We thank God for these brothers and sisters in Christ:

**Session:**
- Jason Arnold
- Aileen Howard
- Ron Kaitchuck
- John Linder
- Charlie Sursa

**Deacons:**
- Cathy Bretz
- Susie Goddard
- Pam Riegle
- Paul Stewart

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, January 21, between services in the sanctuary.
All members are encouraged to attend!

Church Officers Orientation Meeting
Saturday, January 27, at 9 a.m.
In December, 2014, Carrie Jo Miller, Barry Sumner (Zionsville PC), and I had the privilege to travel to the Dominican Republic to visit Iglesia Evangélica Church leaders in the southwest corner of the country. This part of the Dominican Republic (DR) is six hours from the capital of Santo Domingo and very close to the Haitian border. According to PCUSA missionary, Jo Ella Holman, this area of the DR is the poorest part of the country and the least served by outside groups.

During our visit, we met with several pastors, their families and church leaders. It was a wonderful experience and we got to know fellow believers who have an incredible faith and spirit. We were uplifted by their love of God, their worship and focus on sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in their communities.

At the church in Jaquimeyes, Pastora Alfreda told us how the women of the church help each other with “Dorcas baskets”. Many of you will recognize Dorcas from Acts 9:36. “Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity.” For a Dorcas basket, each woman donates a food item (valued at 50 pesos or less) for the basket. Then, a woman is chosen to receive the Dorcas basket. Why does the Jaquimeyes church do this? A Dorcas basket helps supplement what the family is able to buy and eases the burden of feeding a family.

We also heard from the women of Pastora Alfreda’s church about how difficult it is to acquire basic craft items (crayons, glue sticks, etc) for children’s activities, such as vacation Bible school. As we were brainstorming with the church leaders, we came up with the idea to provide a Dorcas basket of craft items for each of the churches we visited.

This is where we need your help! Our Presbytery goal is to make 11 VBS Craft Dorcas Baskets. Please donate items from the list below. Various teams from our Presbytery will take the baskets to the DR. The deadline for donations is February 4.

Thank you in advance for your donations! Cathy Alexander

**Needed supplies:**

- Washable markers
- Crayons
- Staplers and staples
- Bottles of Elmer’s glue
- Single hole punches
- Rolls of scotch tape
- Packages of 11 x 17 brown construction paper
- Stickers
- Skeins of yarn (any color)
- Sandwich size Ziploc bags
- Brown paper lunch sacks (120)
- Packages of white card stock
- Self-stick heart shaped stickers (need 1000s!)
- 6 X 9 manila mailing envelopes (need 120)
The Rev. Dr. Rob Weingartner was our guest preacher on November 19, 2017. As executive director of the Outreach Foundation, Rob shared the following points for how to move from “maintenance” into “mission.” These six points fit nicely into our conversation about “shifting” and “bearing fruit.”

♦ **REDRAW the mission field**

Mission is no longer from the West to the rest. Really, it never truly was. We who are Christians in the United States now find ourselves living on a mission field. The fastest growing religious group in the U.S. is “none,” and some expect that group to be larger than “Protestant” by 2035. The person in need, the one who does not know Jesus, may be someone close by. We are called to live as ambassadors for Christ in the places where we live and work, study and play, in our Jerusalem and Judea. And we are called to care about Samaria and the ends of the earth because Jesus does! New opportunities and challenges come with migration patterns that are bringing the peoples of the world to our neighborhoods.

*How are we celebrating and advocating for both local and global mission?*

♦ **RECLAIM the wholeness of the Gospel**

It is time to end the distracting arguments about whether mission is about evangelism or social action. Our proclamation of the Gospel must be in word and deed. As missionary professor Sam Moffett affirmed, “The way we serve others must reflect the love we proclaim, and our service must not go unexplained.” Our witness to the good news is through evangelism, deeds of compassion, and action for justice.

*A compelling case about the wholeness of the Gospel and God’s mission can be made by pointing to Jesus’ own life and teaching. Do we see this fullness represented in the life and commitments of First Presbyterian Church?*

♦ **REDEFINE the purpose of the church**

The late South African church leader David Bosch writes in *Transforming Mission*, “There is mission because God loves people.” Mission is not a program of the church; it is the purpose of the church. It is not the church’s mission; it is God’s mission into which we are invited. The God who is in mission to
the world has constituted the church to participate in God’s “plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1) We are called to be “communities of God’s people who define themselves and organize their lives around their real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission in the world.” (Alan Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways)

How do we make clear the truth that the church (our congregation) does not exist primarily for the sake of itself?

♦ REFRAME mission participation

Mission is not just the responsibility of those called to long-term mission service, of the session, the staff or the mission committee. It is not the purview only of those who lots of money to give or who have time and money to travel. While there is a continuing role for long-term missionaries, Jesus establishes an essential link between discipleship (following him) and mission (proclaiming and demonstrating his kingdom). Each follower of Jesus is baptized into a mission society with the privilege and responsibility to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

If the role of leaders is equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12), how can our church help each person discover and embrace his/her calling? How can we help our members make a more intentional connection between their faith and ways that they may be serving as a volunteer through community agencies and organizations?

♦ REFOCUS your attention as leaders

Mission leadership is not about telling other people what they should be doing. It is about a commitment to discerning prayer, openness to the Spirit, holy imagination, permission-giving, risk-taking and being an example. The best way to cultivate an atmosphere of mission discovery and commitment at First Presbyterian Church is for you – pastors, elders and other leaders – to make giving and service to others in Christ’s name a visible priority in your own lives.

How does our building, our worship bulletin, our budget, the work of the committees direct the congregation’s attention to the world outside the walls of the church in ways that reflect the essential “sentness” of the church?

♦ RENEW your relationships with the global church

The demographic center of the church and the locus of the church’s mission initiative have shifted away from the West. In 1837 80% of the world’s Christians lived in Europe and North America; today; it is 30%. God is using the global church to renew the church in the West, not because we are so important but because we are a part of the body that is hurting. We cannot be whole in our faith and discipleship apart from the gifts of the global body of Christ. The new global church realities invite us into a deep humility in which we listen and learn from the faith and the faithfulness of the majority church.

Are there ways that we can awaken folks at First to the gifts of our friends and partners in the Dominican Republic? Are there other partners who have gifts to share with us? Are there believers from other cultures whom God has brought to our community to whom we can reach out?
**The Journey for Spiritual Enrichment**

Wherever we are in our life with God, there is always room for expansion, enrichment and a deepening that God desires to stir in us. There are so many ways that God can do this stirring to something more. It can come through service to others, in worship, ministry investment in First Pres and out in the community. It can also come through seasons of extended, personal reflection on our lives, Scripture and our lives in the company of others.

“The Journey” is a nine-month investment in the opportunity to reflect on who God is, who we are as apprentices of Jesus and what God wants to do through us. Pat and Laura Smith will each lead one of two groups that will form a committed community that invests in personal preparation and then conversation each week. One group will meet on **Tuesday mornings from 9:00-11:00 starting January 9th**. Laura will facilitate sharing for this group. Pat will do the same for the other group that will meet on **Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:30 starting January 11th**.

In publicity to this point, it has been noted that the cost of the materials is $295 per person. Because of the nature of this opportunity, funding has been made available through a generous gift that will provide partial scholarships, taking the cost down to $50 per person as needed.

Please contact Pat (rpatsmith@firstpresmuncie.org) or Laura (knappkin76@gmail.com) for more information. We’d like to have commitments by December 18th. The plan is to cap both groups at ten participants, so don’t wait too long to let Pat or Laura know your interest.

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**The Salvation Army Benefit Dinner on Dec. 13 Was a Definite Success!**

We raised **$2,353.45** and had wonderful participation from within and without the First Pres family.

So many people helped make this effort work, but we would especially like to thank Deb Foster, Janie Miller, Sharon Stephen, PJ and Dave Froenicke, Joy and Warren Vanderhill, Barb and Larry Ottinger... and everyone who volunteered.

**We hope to do this again next year!**

Volunteers always welcome!

Kitchen volunteers at **12:30 to 3:00 pm** and Delivery drivers at **2:30 pm**

A sign up sheet is located on the bulletin board, behind the information desk.
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.

Flower Calendar 2018

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

Support our South View Food Pantry

Volunteers are welcome to distribute food at South View from 4:45 to 7:00 on the following dates:

January 25  February 22  March 22
April 26  May 24

Email Cathy Alexander if you would like to be part of this wonderful ministry!

cathy@firstpresmuncie.org

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!

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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
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Lisa Ulrich, Business Administrator
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Gabriela Burciaga, Administrative Assistant
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Lucas Clay, Building Superintendent
lhclay96@gmail.com
During Advent and Christmas we enjoyed a full celebration of the birth of Jesus. As we step into a new year it's a good time to pick up the rest of the story in order to discover who he was and what he sought to accomplish. Our sources are the mini-biographies of Jesus called the Gospels, the “Good News.” This winter, we will walk through one of these documents called, The Gospel According to John.

If we take a face value what the Bible says, this man John knew Jesus well. He was among the first to become a disciple of Jesus. His declared reason for writing his treatment of Jesus and his ministry is “that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

John’s gospel includes moments in Jesus’ ministry that provide compelling clues about himself, about faith and about big picture realities related to God and all creation. These startling clues are given in a series of conversations and miracles. With each of these events, Jesus points out something deeply important for those who were with him then and for us today.

Come join us as we examine these “life clues” in the months ahead. Each of these clues might lead to vital discoveries for us all.

| January 14 | For the Seekers | 1:29-34 |
| January 21 | Things Can Be Different | 2:1-11 |
| January 28 | For the Respected | 3:1-15 |