I’ve read more than some people and less than others. I’m pretty happy with that particular position. When I read, I have an affinity for how a column, an article or a book begins. Some teach that the beginning is everything. I’m not sure I can fully agree, since the middle and end are also important, but the beginning is certainly vital.

There are some stand-out opening lines of books that are on a number of lists as the best opening lines in all of literature. Among them is one from native Hoosier Curt Vonnegut who was born and raised in Indianapolis. Slaughterhouse-Five starts with, “All this happened, more or less.” The reader is struck immediately with the fascinating and compelling ambiguous certainty of this statement. Enough people keep reading to place this book in the top one hundred books of the last hundred years.

First Pres is at a beginning. Like all people, we are entering a new year, 2019. As a congregation, we are entering our 181st year. That’s a lot of new beginnings. We’ve experienced four new beginnings related to places we’ve worshiped, the last, of course, at 1400 West Riverside Avenue. Each of our pastoral changes has also brought us to a new start.

We are on the verge of a beginning of this magnitude once again. Since before my arrival as your interim pastor, you’ve looked forward to the time when the full search for your next installed pastor would begin. From my perspective, we’ve paced ourselves well, remaining sensitive and alert to the Spirit’s guidance. We are now poised for the start of the actual search.

Four weeks ago, Whitewater Valley Presbytery’s Commission on Ministry approved the Mission Study document to which two dozen people contributed that tells the story of First Pres. With this approval, our next step is to elect the Pastor Nominating Committee. This group, representative of our entire congregation, will draft a Ministry Information Form, and that step opens the door to our posting our position opening through the PCUSA and receiving inquiries from pastors. Eventually, one will be presented to the congregation as First Pres’ intended new pastoral leader.

In order to get us to the point in the next few months where resumes can begin to be received and assessed, there are some key steps we will want to keep in mind and be present for as the year begins:

- Sunday, January 6–9:00-9:45—our first TalkAbout of 2019 in which we will review all that has been done and is still to be done relating to the search for our new pastor
- Sunday, January 20—following worship—our Annual Congregational Meeting (a congregational carry-in for lunch!), where several vital, meaningful and timely ministry updates will be given and other matters attended to including the election of our new officers and the election of the Church Nominating Committee that will lead us through the process to elect the Pastor Nominating Committee (likely starting in February)
- Sunday, January 27—the ordination and installation of our new officers during worship

January 2019 is a new beginning, but it is also a profound continuation. We are simply at a new point in the timeline of all that God has been doing in and through First Pres all along.

Let’s all seize the opportunity to invest anew to the glory of God.

The Rev. Dr. Pat Smith
**First Presbyterian Church**

**Annual Congregational Meeting**

Sunday, January 20th, following worship in the sanctuary.

*All members are encouraged to attend!*

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**"He who is generous will be blessed."**

*Proverbs 22:9*

Please look for the First Pres Pledge Cards

**Generosity Campaign 2019**

on the church information desk,
or call the church office and they will send you one!

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**2015 Per Capita**

Please help offset First Pres’ Per Capita expense to Presbytery for 2019 by reimbursing the church for the per capita ($40.72) of each FPC member in your family.

Checks should be made payable to First Presbyterian, memo: “Per Capita”. Thank you!

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**Ministry Guild**

Our first meeting of the year is **Monday, January 14 at 5:00 p.m.**
in the church Lounge.

This is a very important meeting as we will be planning the activities for the year.

Mark your calendars to attend and invite others to join us too!
ADULT/YOUTH SPIRITUAL GROWTH CLASS IN FELLOWSHIP HALL

from 8:45 to 9:45 am every Sunday
8:45 a.m.—refreshments—starting promptly at 9:00 a.m.
Coffee and donuts served!

January 6 - TalkAbout: “Search Process for New Pastor” - by Pat Smith

Adult Sunday Classes in January 13, 20 and 27
“Walking with Nehemiah”
By Bill Rogers

Dee Dah Day
Women’s Book Study & Prayer Group

Come and join Dee Dah Day in 2019
We continue to study “The Gift of Years--Growing Older Gracefully” by Joan Chittister.

We will meet on Friday, January 11 and January 25 at 9:00 in the Church Lounge.

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Ottinger at 289-4080 or lkbaott59@comcast.net.

* "The truth of is that this new stage of life liberates in a way no other stage of growth can possibly do.”

THIRD THURSDAY

Everyone is welcome for lunch and fellowship at our Third Thursday Luncheon in Fellowship Hall.

January 17, 2019 at 12:00 (noon)
“A SOLDIER’S FOOTSTEPS” by Nancy Carlson

In September, 2018, Nancy Carlson and her four sisters re-traced their father’s footsteps through WWII, from Normandy to Occupied Germany. How did they know where he had been? Louis Briggs sent hundreds of letters from Europe in 1944 - 45, and when he returned to his Illinois farm, he made a comprehensive scrapbook of his experiences in the war. The sisters only found it after his death in 2001. Carlson is a retired associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State.

Cost is $5.00 Please RSVP by Monday, January 14, by calling the church office (765) 289-4431 or email office@firstpresmuncie.org

The 2019 Flower Calendar is up on the Information Board!

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.
“I am so proud of our First Pres. family. Brings tears to my eyes.” Jim Williams, MCS School Board President in response to a December email about our progress at South View.

“Thank you very much for all that you do at SV. I greatly appreciate all your support and kindness.” Kara Miller, Principal

Beginning in October, when FPC decided on South View Elementary as its focus, we’ve recruited volunteers to work in the school as determined by interviews with the personnel there and our own suggestions based on the talents of our church members. What started out as a trickle has turned into over 30 volunteers (with background checks), some of whom will start when school resumes in January.

**New volunteers:** Bev Wilson and Linda Gray will use their nursing expertise one morning a week assisting the school nurse, Cheryl Reynolds. Linda Greene will join the team this spring after she returns from Florida.

We now have a Hospitality/Teacher Appreciation Team headed by Ms. Hospitality herself, Debbie Foster. She, Karen Hayden, and Ed Humphrey provided snacks for the Dec.17 faculty meeting. Karen and Debbie, along with cooking recruits, made a “Take-it-with-You” brunch for the Jan.3 teacher work day. Besides food, they filled a shoe box with little encouragements to start the new year. We are trying to collaborate on hospitality/teacher appreciation with the churches who already have a relationship with South View: Heritage Apostolic Tabernacle and Destiny Church. Heritage will take February and Destiny has been asked to take March.

Our burgeoning number of volunteers has turned a 1-person job into one for 3 people. Lance Scholtes expedites the background check forms. As the Volunteer Coordinator, Laura Smith lets volunteers know they have passed the background check and helps find them a good fit based on time commitment, interests, talents and school needs. Joyce Beck records volunteer hours monthly. This information is useful when telling our story to others and applying for future grants.

At first, the school was friendly but had a “wait and see” attitude toward us. But as we’ve consistently put in our hours (matched our words with actions), Principal Kara Miller and her staff have enthusiastically embraced us. The volunteers are so impressed with Kara and her staff... with how they meet each day with a positive attitude and a smile in spite of the challenges inherent in a high poverty environment. They deserve all the kudos they can get!

In late December, Kara and a team from First Pres visited the Sensory Room at Burris. This is a separate room which is used by special education students, those needing an occupational or physical therapist, and students who need a place to decompress. It is filled with a variety of materials such as texture balls, balance boards, special swings, and manipulatives. South View plans to open their own room second semester with help from our church (Mission and Session) who provided $2,000 in funding for whatever the school needed as teacher support. Materials for a sensory room were a top priority.

**What is needed now:**

**Breakfast monitors** - 7:40-8:40, one morning a week; Greet students and help expedite breakfast for 500+ students; For more information, talk to Bill McCune or Pat Smith, our current monitors.

**Food Pantry volunteers** - 4th Thursday of the month; 4-5pm: set up (requires lifting) and/or 5-7pm: food distribution and talking to parents; So far, Norm Beck and Claudia and Charlie Sursa have volunteered.

**4th grade teachers request:** gently used games like Battleship, Connect 4, Yahtzee, Scrabble and 100-200+ piece puzzles preferably with social studies or science theme. They will be used during indoor recess.

**Continued prayers for this ministry and your part in it.**

Waiting to see what God does in the new year, The CMG team of Jan, Cathy, Marty and Myron
We are looking for a team of 5-10 people to volunteer once a month at South View Elementary to distribute food and/or set up. This is a perfect job for someone who is working but has some flexibility.

Dates: Fourth Thursday of the month: January 24; February 28; none in March; April 25; May 23; June 27 and July 25.

Time: 4-5 pm set up (requires lifting); 5-7 pm food distribution; YOU MAY DO ONE OR BOTH!

Interested? Call Jan McCune at 765-717-4291 or email at jbm2200@comcast.net. if you have not yet filled in the background check form, you may pick up one in the office.

**MAKING CONNECTIONS**

**and**

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS**

This school model allows for a customizable approach to connecting with students and their families. Second Harvest works with each school to understand their needs and capabilities to ensure that the program put into motion is sustainable and manageable for all involved.

A typical model that works well features a monthly distribution of food in a school gym or other large location within a school where Second Harvest delivers food a few hours before the distribution. This keeps administrators from having to worry about storing food over time.

School food distributions have proved to be an excellent way to bring parents and guardians into the school setting with their children to create stronger bonds with teachers and other school officials.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**4RD ANNUAL TRIVIA NIGHT FUNDRAISER**

February 23, 2019

Fun, Fellowship, Fundraiser - Join us for a night of trivia while we raise money for preschool scholarships. More details coming soon!

**PRE-K NEWS!**

Preschool registration will begin on February 1, 2019 for church members and current preschool families.

You may register at www.firstpresmuncie.org under Pre-K/PDO or call Tracy Clinger for more information (765-751-7960).
CHRISTMAS FUN AT FIRST PRESS...
The preschool and church families enjoyed Breakfast with Santa on December 8!

CHURCH ADVENT BRUNCH ON DECEMBER 16
THE BEARING FRUIT HARVESTERS GROUP
Is collecting donations of 4-pack toilet paper rolls for the Cardinal Kitchen.
Cardinal Kitchen is a year-round food pantry on Ball State campus that is
operated by students for student’s benefit.
Please place your donations in the plastic tote located in the North Lobby.
Thank you!

THE COLUMNS

Liturgists for the 10:00 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 in the office (office@firstpresmuncie.org; 765-289-4431).
Readings for the week will be emailed to you or a copy can be picked up in the office.
Thank you!

We Need Liturgists

SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES:
10:00 am One Unified Service
11:30 am International Congregation Service
4:00 pm University/Young Adult Worship

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

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Salvation Army Pantry
Needs for January:
Soup & Crackers

Please place your donation in the cart in the coat closet in Fellowship Hall.

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
cjmillerr3501@comcast.net

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

Lisa Ulrich, Business Administrator
lisa@firstpresmuncie.org

Gabriela Burciaga, Administrative Assistant
office@firstpresmuncie.org

Travis Graves, Building Superintendent
tog0311@gmail.com
It’s pretty obvious that Christmas is all about Jesus. That means that the weeks leading up to Christmas, a time called Advent (“coming”), would likely be a time to look forward to celebrating the arrival of Jesus. It might also make sense that Jesus’ birth as one of us humans at Christmas sets into motion a wide array of implications. With this in mind, Christmas is not a standalone event.

Christmas is the most important pivot point in all human history. The Bible makes clear that all of time, before Jesus’ birth, leads up to this most unique moment. Jesus is identified as Mary’s boy and by virtue of her marriage to whom she is engaged, Joseph’s son. These relationships are fully secondary to the critical reality that Jesus is the Son of God.

God comes to earth in uniqueness and fullness. This is no accident. It is no myth. It is not just some tradition of the Christian religion. This is part of a plan, a design, to honor God and provide life for the human race. What is anticipated, what happens as Jesus is born and what results makes up a story that just cannot be missed.

So, let’s not miss it! Let’s invest ourselves in the telling of this most remarkable of all stories. The Son of God arises! May we welcome his coming and all it means to us and to all people.

January 6 (Epiphany) Matthew 2:1-12 King of the Jews
January 13 (Baptism) Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 Dearly Loved
January 20 John 2:1-11 Shows His Glory
January 27 Luke 4:14-21 God’s Favor