Glimpse of Grace

It is the New Year, a time where we reflect over the year that is ending and we plan for the year that is just beginning. This can be a time where we come to terms with the challenges that we have faced as well as the beauty we have witnessed in the past year. This can be a time where we resolve to do things differently and take the opportunity to make something new in our life and in the world.

I believe that the Kingdom of God is not just a promise for a heaven that is far from us, but it is anywhere in this world where the aspects of the kingdom are manifested before us. When we experience true kindness, acts of charity and generosity, relationships that break down barriers and invite strangers to become family, genuine love and redemptive forgiveness, what we are experiencing is the Kingdom of God breaking into our world. We are catching a glimpse of God’s grace.

As I reflect over 2019, I think about the faithful leaders who I have had the privilege to work with - volunteers and paid staff who have a strong faith, a heart for Christ and the church, and who care about people deeply. I think about the times where they have helped my faith and my leadership, where they have inspired me with their own ministry, and where they have lifted up someone in need. And what is their motivation? I believe, at the heart of each of these individuals is a faith that Christ has called them into leadership and service. These people have been a glimpse of grace for me this past year, a vision of God’s love breaking into this world, even if for just a moment.

As we walk into 2020, I wonder how our world might change if we all became a bit more aware of these glimpses that are all around us? How might we grow in our own faith, hope, and love? How might we become glimpses of God’s grace in our own lives? With all the potential that this new year has, my prayer for us all is that we might notice the Kingdom of God a little more regularly in our everyday lives. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The Rev. Dr. Daren Hofmann
ADULT/YOUTH SPIRITUAL GROWTH CLASS IN FELLOWSHIP HALL
8:45 a.m.– refreshments
starting promptly at 9:00 a.m. Class wraps up at 9:45 am
Coffee and donuts served!
We hope to see you in Fellowship Hall at 9:00!

Adult Sunday Class will be led by the Rev. Dr. Chuck Horvath

Sunday, Jan 5:
Our Adult Sunday school class will explore the subject of Sunday school. Is Christian Ed just for Sundays? Should we be a school or a college? Should we have classes or courses?
If you’d like to share your thoughts, come join us in Fellowship Hall at 8:45 a.m. Oh—you get first crack at the coffee and donut holes. (Not that we’d bribe you or anything.)

Sunday, Jan 12.
The 4 Roles of the Christian. What are the roles of a Christian? Most Christians think of themselves as believers, but what about as evangelists too? What would it mean to live into the role of disciple or ambassador? What about pilgrim and steward? Come and learn more about these roles and how they might change your views of yourself and your church.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL REPORT
If you are a leader for one of our committees or groups, please remember that annual reports for your committee or group need to be submitted to the office by January 12th to be included in the Annual Congregational Report. Thank you for your help in this matter.

FIRST PRES LEADERSHIP OFFICERS TRAINING RETREAT
We will have a Saturday morning retreat for all active and newly elected Elders and Deacons on January 25th from 9-Noon. This will be an important leadership training as we prepare for the new year ahead of us and work together to vision and equip ourselves for the mission and ministry of Christ through First Presbyterian Church. Please let the office know if you will be attending or unable to be a part of this important training.
Are you passionate about your generosity to First Presbyterian Church? Does our congregation’s outreach in the community inspire you? If you are age 70 ½ or older, there is an easy way to share your passion and treasure through the required minimum distribution from your IRA.

The Requirements:
- You must be 70 ½ or older at the time of the distribution
- The distribution must be an otherwise taxable distribution from an IRA (excludes ongoing SEP or SIMPLE IRA’s)
- Distributions must be made directly to First Presbyterian Church
- Annual distribution limit of $100,000

The Benefits:
- Can satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year
- Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA are not included in taxable income
- Take advantage of the new, higher standard deduction and the benefit of a charitable gift

**Please consult your tax professional before taking any action.**
Women’s Book Study & Prayer Group

Happy New Year—2020!!

DEE DAH DAY will be meeting on Friday, January 10 and Friday, January 24 in the Church Lounge at 9:00. Please come and join in our discussion (after our healthy snack) as we study The Gift of Years—Growing Older Gracefully* by Joan Chittister.

For more information, please contact Barb Ottinger at 289-4080 or lkbaott59@comcast.net.

* “The blessing of nostalgia is that it can serve to remind us that just as we survived all of life before this, grew from it, laughed through it, learned from it as well, we can also live through this age with the same grace, the same insights—and this time, share that audacious spirit with others.”

Young Learners at First Pres

Our youngest children have had a great start to their faith formation at First Presbyterian over the last weeks. We’ve had 5-6 learners every week with a total of 8 different kids between the ages of 2-6 years old taking part at one time or another. We’ve had several different teachers involved to give our kids different perspectives and voices as we’ve been learning about Advent and the Christmas Story. The teachers and kids will take a break from class on December 29th and January 5th while everyone celebrates Christmas and we’ll start back on January 12th. Our next few lessons will be on Baptism, Jesus Calling the Disciples, and Jesus Blessing the Children. Make sure to ask our youngest friends what they’re learning about.

As we move into the new year, we’re hoping to finish their own room so we have a space that feels like ‘home’ for them here at the church. We’ll make sure to keep their artwork and information about their lessons in the classroom so that we can continue in our learning from week to week. We’ll let you know when it is done, so you can come take a look and offer a prayer for our kids as they learn.

If you’d like to join in on the fun and learning in some way, just let Kate Johnston (katieb.ester@gmail.com) know. We’re making sure to have two background checked adults with our kids at all times to keep our youngest learners safe. So even if you’re just willing to be an extra pair of loving hands for a week, we can use you.

National College Students Retreat

“DOING”
Matthew 7:24-27

Led by:
Rev. Dr. Myungku Lee

Attended by
120 students

Held in Chicago, IL during Thanksgiving Break for 3 days and 2 nights.

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COMMUNITY MINISTRY GRANT AT WORK

VOLUNTEER NEWS:

- Joyce Beck has taken on many of the functions of Volunteer Co-Ordinator since Laura Smith resigned. (However, both Pat and Laura continue to volunteer at South View.) Joyce maintains the volunteer list, contacts volunteers with opportunities to serve, and records volunteer hours.

- Currently 65 people are on the volunteer list, including 4 who do not attend our church. Of those, 47 have recorded hours for the South View ministry totaling 1,054.25 hours since July 1. Service hours are one of the evaluation measures the CMG team is using to assess our project’s effectiveness. So, if you have served and not yet sent Joyce your hours, please do so.

GIVING TREE/CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS: According to school counselor, Susan Clock, our Giving Tree provided Christmas gifts to 41 individuals in 2019, 30 more than the previous year. We are also delivering Christmas food baskets to 24 different families. Thank you to all involved in spreading Christ’s love to the SV community this Christmas.

THE MIRACLE ON FRANKLIN STREET:

ACT 1: Late September, Myron Earhart and a crew of volunteers assemble the Gaga Ball pit for the 4th/5th playground. During every outdoors recess, a large group of students spend the time playing Gaga dodgeball in it. It is a big hit with both the students and the teachers!

ACT 2: Sarah DeRolf, 4th grade teacher, discovers that the Ball Pit was vandalized sometime over a recent weekend. Mr. Williams informs the teachers of the situation and they rally. Brittany Dozier posts on her Facebook account, “Shame on whoever destroyed the brand new piece of playground equipment at South View. Our children deserve better than that.”

ACT 3: Within hours, the Facebook post has over 400 responses and 100 shares. Two men who do not know one another, Josh Miller (pictured) and Mike Lowrey show up at the school and put the Gaga pit back together. Someone sets up a Go Fund Me account which raises over $60 by the next day. The students sign giant thank you cards to the “Good Samaritans.”

THE FINAL WORD: Principal Anthony Williams wrote to his staff, “Thanks to a random stranger (or someone you may know) who came to South View and fixed the ball pit! There is more GOOD in this world that we give it credit for!!! We always hope for the best but prepare for the worst. There may be more vandalism in the future. There may be more negative comments about students on the South Side. It’s not about these incidents or comments BUT the responses to these incidents that will define our school culture! Just as easy as it was to spread the fact that our playground had been vandalized; we should also be sure to spread the word that it has been fixed!!”

As we enter the new year, let us renew our commitment to be bearers of light, Jan McCune for the CMG team of Cathy Alexander, Myron Earhart and Marty Kendrick.
News from our favorite island...

Our friends in the Dominican Republic send Christmas/New Year’s greetings to all of us! As I write this, with snow outside my window, it is a balmy 81 degrees in Santo Domingo...so it is even warmer in Mella!

New from Presbyterian World Mission

For several years now, our church has supported the efforts of Jo Ella Holman, Presbyterian mission co-worker, serving in the Caribbean. And for several years now, Jo Ella has been an integral part of our efforts in the Dominican Republic! The following is information taken from Jo Ella’s November 2019 newsletter and highlights some upcoming changes in the missionary field:

David Cortes-Fuentes and Josey Saez Acevedo are now in transition to new assignments in the Dominican Republic in January. Josey will join the Christian Education team of the Iglesia Evangelica Dominicana (IED) in developing curricula and training Sunday school teachers. David will begin a new regional position in the Caribbean as a theological educator and curriculum consultant.

Mark Hare and Jenny Bent are in transition as they move from the Dominican Republic to Costa Rica.

I (Jo Ella) am in my final year serving as a mission co-worker and look forward to retiring at the end of 2020. I shall appreciate your prayers for this upcoming year of transitions. I am immensely grateful for your support this year and humbly request that you continue that support next year. I thank you in advance for your faithfulness.

News from Whitewater Valley Presbytery’s Hispanic Ministries Leadership Team (HMLT)

HMLT meets on a monthly basis and directs our Presbytery’s efforts in the Dominican Republic and Mexico. HMLT is planning two trips to the DR next year with the second trip open to anyone in our Presbytery.

The purpose for the first trip in February is to lead/participate in a workshop for pastors in the south region and to deliver twelve Dorcas baskets to the region. Dan and I will be a part of this trip. We will also have planning meetings about Dorcas baskets and the Solar Oven Trip (below).

The second trip, tentative dates of October 12-18, is a Solar Oven Trip and is open to anyone in our Presbytery. We will travel to the south region, along the Haitian border, to build and distribute solar ovens. This is a very active trip...we will build the ovens, buy the food for demonstrations, share a meal, and distribute the ovens. If you might be interested in participating, please contact me (calexander85@aol.com) for more details.

In addition to these two trips, Dan and I, with our hearts for youth and youth work, hope to travel back to the DR in June to work as camp staff (washing dishes, etc.) for a youth anti-violence camp. This camp was held last year in Bani, but no youth from “our region” were able to attend because of distance and cost. By bringing the camp to “our region,” we hope this camp will be the first, but not the last, offering for youth in the south.

How can you be a part of this ministry? First and foremost, please pray for our friends in the DR and for our partnership. Consider joining us on the Solar Oven Trip! If you can’t be a part of the trip, shop for Dorcas basket supplies! Here’s a list of items that we need by January 19:

Dorcas Basket Supplies:

- Colored pencils
- Manual pencil sharpeners
- 240 band-aids
- 120 alcohol wipes, individually packaged
- 120 antiseptic ointment, individually packaged
- 120 heart stickers
- Stickers (variety)
- 120 10 oz. plain white paper cup (plastic or foam will not work)
- 120 tongue depressors or Popsicle sticks

Our main goal in our mission work is building relationships. We have built relationships with our Presbyterian co-workers in the DR...with the leaders of the IED church...with pastors and people in the south, especially Mella. The relationships with our DR partners make the work very rewarding.

Thank you for your continued prayers for this ministry.

Cathy Alexander
Ministry Guild continues collecting crafting items for Beyond I CAN:

Bring anything that can be used or repurposed: Magazines, newspapers, crafting materials, jewelry, paint, glue, yarn, old and new greeting cards, stickers, paint brushes, terracotta flower pots, cardstock paper, scotch tape, etc.

Beyond I CAN creates jobs and experiences that allow individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to operate a business with assistance from volunteers. Please put your donations in the tub basket located in the North Lobby.

Join our team of Volunteer Bus Drivers

We have a volunteer opportunity providing Sunday morning transportation for our Westminster Village members.

The church bus doesn’t require a special license and is easy to drive.

The bus leaves the parking lot at 9:15 a.m. to arrive at Westminster around 9:30 a.m.

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, Tim Koontz, Jonathan Schmidt, and Bob Wadsworth.

If you would be willing to drive, please contact the church office. A reminder email with the schedule will be sent out weekly.

THE COLUMNS

January 2020

THE SALVATION ARMY PANTRY:
Canned Soups and crackers

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

TAKE HOME A HYMNAL

We are now using our new hymnals in our Sunday worship services and we need to dispose of the 1990 hymnals we were using.

If you would like to have any of our 1990 hymnals, please feel free to take them from the tables in the hallway outside the Lounge where they are stacked until further notice.

The 2020 Calendar for the Communion Table Flowers is up on the Information Board, ready for you to choose your preferred dates for communion table flowers offering.

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SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES:
10:00 am Worship Service
11:30 am International Congregation Service
4:00 pm Grace Village Worship

The Rev. Dr. Daren Hofmann
daren@firstpresmuncie.org

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

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

Sharon Rogers, Director of Pre-Kindergarten
sharon@firstpresmuncie.org

Lisa Ulrich, Business Administrator
lisa@firstpresmuncie.org

Gabriela Burciaga, Administrative Assistant
office@firstpresmuncie.org

Asher John, Building Superintendent
ashersw@yahoo.com
The annual congregational meeting of First Presbyterian Church will be held after worship on Sunday, January 19th.

The purpose of the annual meeting includes the receiving of the annual report including the 2020 budget, electing new officers, voting on the senior and associate pastors terms of call.

All members are encouraged to attend!