I think that February is one of the most difficult months of the year. The month is at the tail end of winter, and it can feel like the weather is thrashing us from one place to another. We walk out of church and experience a beautiful day with temperatures in the 50’s only to receive snowfall and extremely low temperatures a few days later. Influenza is moving through the schools and communities even as we hear stories of Covet19 and worry about what new viruses might mean to us and those we love. The gloom of overcast days over the past three months have had a cumulative effect, and many of us struggle to stay positive. Sometimes we grow short with a colleague or a loved one. Our patience can be thin, and our sleep can be disturbed. In the tail end of winter where our health and emotions and relationships seem frayed, where is God in the midst of this moment?

At the end of a very long day as I was finishing up one more meeting, I looked down at my calendar and remembered I had a dinner on my schedule. I was not done yet. I put on a smile and headed to the restaurant. As I walked into the room, someone invited me to sit at their table, so I took off my coat and had a seat. I think there were four tables of people that night, maybe about thirty people. We were there for a surprise birthday celebration. After a moment or two of getting situated, I began to engage in the conversations around the table. We told stories, we laughed, we sang happy birthday, and we enjoyed each other’s company. At the end of the night, I was glad that I came. I left a bit more happy, a bit more relaxed, and ready to rest and begin a new day.

Among those nearly thirty people in the restaurant that night, I have to think many of them were feeling a bit frayed like me in the end of February. But for a few hours, we came together, and it was because we were with one another, we were celebrating life together, that then life came into each of us as well. God’s grace was present at those tables as we shared our laughter and sang our song and shared life.

God’s grace carried us home and gave us hope for the spring that is just around the corner.

The Rev. Dr. Daren Hofmann
An Altar in the World

Lenten Study

During the season of Lent, the adult Sunday school class will be studying the book An Altar in the World by Barbara Brown Taylor.

The study will be led by Pastor Hofmann, and it will begin on Sunday, March 1, and continue for six weeks. We will meet from 8:45 - 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall before worship.

Each Sunday, we will examine two chapters of the book and share in open conversation around the Spiritual Practices that the author discusses within those chapters.

Lenten Vespers

The season of Lent calls Christians to journey together with Jesus as he turns toward Jerusalem and ultimately to his betrayal, to the cross, and to the tomb. This year, our journey includes new opportunities to gather and worship on Wednesday nights for Lenten Vespers.

The six vespers services will be held at 6 p.m. in Fellowship Hall beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 26, and continuing through April 1. We pray that you will make time to be a part of this important season in the life of the church.

We Need Liturgists

If you would like to serve as a Scripture reader for a Sunday service, at 10:00 a.m. please sign up on the bulletin board, call 765-289-4431, or email office@firstpresmuncie.org

Readings for the week will be emailed to you by Friday prior to the scheduled Sunday, or a copy will be available to be picked up at the office.
Images from the Installation Ceremony of the Rev. Dr. Daren Hofmann on February 16, 2020.
The Generosity Committee wishes to say **Thank You** to everyone who made commitments to First Presbyterian Church for 2020. We are pleased to announce that of those making a commitment, forty either made a first time commitment or increased their commitment this year. These commitments represent thirty-eight percent of the names listed below. We are truly a congregation of joyful and generous givers!

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**March 2020**

**THE COLUMNS**

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**Third Thursday Luncheon**
March 19, 2019

**Topic: Muncie’s Non-profit Service Providers**
by James J. Connolly and Warren Vander Hill

To RSVP, please call or email the church office by Monday, March 16, 2020 at 765-289-4431 or office@firstpresmuncie.org

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**HELP NEEDED!**

In fact, a lot of assistance will be required!

The Spring Grounds Cleanup event at the Church will be held on Saturday, March 28, starting at 9:00 a.m.

To complete the work that needs to be done on that day, many workers will be needed. There will be tasks that require young bodies to accomplish. However, there are also many tasks that are quite appropriate for retirees.

If you have a wheelbarrow, shovel, rake or broom at home, please bring them with you. See you on the 28th of March.

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**Kent State Chorale**

**Performing at First Pres on March 20**
7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

The Kent State University Chorale, the Ohio university’s flagship choral ensemble, will give a free concert in our sanctuary on the evening of March 20 as part of their annual tour, which takes them to Chicago this year. Any church members willing and able to host two or more students overnight and provide breakfast for them in the morning please sign up on the list available on the information table or contact Kerry Glann.

Kerry taught at Kent State prior to moving to Muncie, and he is excited to bring this excellent choir and its conductor, his former colleague Dr. Scott MacPherson, to sing at our church.

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**Giving Up Bach for Lent**

A Concert of Contemporary Organ Music
27 March 2020 @ 7PM | Graeme Shields, Organ

At First Presbyterian Church - 1400 W Riverside Ave. Muncie

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**Dee Dah Day**

Dee Dah Day continues to study **The Gift of Years- Growing Older Gracefully** by Joan Chittister *

On Friday, March 13, and Friday, March 20, in the Church Lounge at 9:00 a.m.

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

**“This is the period of spiritual reflection, of spiritual renewal in life. Now is the time to ask ourselves what kind of person we have been becoming all these years. And do we like that person? Did we become more honest, more decent, more caring, more merciful as we went along because of all these things? And if not, what must we be doing about it now?**
COMMUNITY MINISTRY GRANT AT WORK

Hospitality Team Rocks! The hospitality provided by the First Pres team co-ordinated by Debbie Foster and Karen Hayden is a large component of our South View ministry. They provided a “to go” cart on Valentine’s Day which featured Panera bagels with cream cheese, coffee, hot chocolate and tea. Shown are Mary Kult and Shawn White enjoying a quick break. The Hospitality Team also provided drinks and snacks for staff who participated in our February Stress Buster, Zumba. Sherri Reichert of Studio Evolution on Wheeling Avenue led the after school session on Feb. 25. She’s a great teacher and made it fun for all.

Indy Air Bears Coaching: On February 18, 3 members of the Indy Air Bears who are also BSU students, coached the students from Kyanne Trissel’s PE classes in jump rope skills. They stayed from 9 – 2 to work with various grade levels and will come again on March 13 to work with another set of students. The photos are from Autumn White’s fourth grade class whose students were so proud when they could do “double dutch”. Our grant funds paid for an Air Bears presentation, the coaching, and a jump rope storage rack stocked with a variety of jump rope lengths.

Feedback from Volunteers: During our February 3 “Souper Bowl” luncheon, volunteers reflected on their efforts at South View.

Some of their comments about the best part of volunteering:
- “Interacting with parents, guardians, and families;”
- “Lightening the burden;”
- “Feeling of having made a difference;”
- “Understanding the cultures.”

What have you learned about SV? “Parents have more interest in their kids’ education than I assumed.” “Teachers are doing a fantastic job and are way over-worked.” “There are too many beginning teachers.” “There is something for everyone….all hands are needed.”

What are the school’s greatest strengths? “Camaraderie of staff; like a family;” “Students are resilient.” “Principal and asst. principal are positive in their discipline.” “Dedicated teachers and staff;” Social services available (food pantry, dental clinic, Open Door, etc.)

Continue to remember South View teachers, parents, and students in your prayers, Jan McCune and CMG team of Cathy Alexander, Marty Kendrick and Myron Earhart

News from First Pres Pre-K!

The Pre-K registration is under way and doing great! The three-year olds are over half way full already! The four-year olds are half full as well! This seems pretty good for only having registration open for 3 weeks! We still have a lot of room for two-year olds.

The month of March will begin to get busy here at school. We start Farm units and fieldtrips to visit farm animals. Silly Safari will be here to visit, and we have Spring Break March 23-27.

Trivia Night for the Pre-K was a great success! We had 85 participants and made $1,790.00! Thank you everyone who participated or helped us in any way! We had a lot of fun for a great cause!
Thank you, one and all, for your donations to the Dorcas baskets! In case you are asking, “What is a Dorcas basket, here is a reminder…

Our church, and Whitewater Valley Presbytery, partners with the Iglesía Evangélica Church in the Dominican Republic (DR). Our regional focus is the south region, six hours from the capital of Santo Domingo and very close to the Haitian border. According to our good friend, PCUSA mission co-worker, Jo Ella Holman, this area of the DR is the poorest part of the country and the least served by outside groups.

During a visioning trip in 2014, 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, Pastor Alfreda (who is very dear to me!) told us how the women of the church help each other with “Dorcas baskets”. The name is taken 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 name is drawn and that woman receives the Dorcas basket. Why does the Jacquimeyes 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 about difficulty in providing 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.

In 2015, our goal was to make 11 VBS craft Dorcas Baskets (supplies for 50 children) that First Pres Muncie would take with them on their March 2015 trip to the Dominican Republic. Thanks to a number of churches from WWP, we met our goal and the churches in the DR were thrilled!

We have repeated this project every year since then, adding one more church (to bring the number to 12) and increasing the supplies to serve 120 children. So, here’s a look at the numbers.

**2020 SUMMARY OF DORCAS BASKETS PROJECT:**

Number of baskets in 6 years = 71 (at 50 lbs per bag = 3,550 lbs of supplies!)

The first year we provided supplies for 50 children (50 x 11 =550). After that, we provided supplies for 120 children at 12 different churches (120 x 12 x 5 years = 7,200 children). Total children served =7,750!

Your donations and support make this ministry possible. Our friends in the DR are so grateful…it is an absolute joy to deliver them!

With joy, Cathy Alexander

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**Flower Dedication Calendar**

If you wish to dedicate flowers to a loved one, or for a special occasion on a Sunday worship service, please sign up on the Flower Calendar posted behind the information desk.

You will be contacted by the church office in advance of the date you requested, to gather information for the Sunday bulletin.

Please help offset First Pres’ Per Capita expense to Presbytery for 2020 by reimbursing the church for the per capita ($41.39) of each FPC member in your family. Checks should be made payable to First Presbyterian, memo: “Per Capita”. Thank you!
Lent Sermon Series:
“Rock of Ages”

Mar 1  Genesis 28:10-22  Bethel
Mar 8  Exodus 17:1-7  Massah & Meribah
Mar 15 Psalm 62  My Rock & My Salvation
Mar 22 John 8:2-11  Cast the First Stone
Mar 29 Matthew 16:13-23  Rock or Stumbling Block

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