Christianity in Crisis

There’s nothing new, of course, in the view that Christianity is in crisis these days. From journalists to scholars and theologians to laypeople in our churches, the world is becoming increasingly pluralistic, and many wonder what will become of the Church and what will become of Christianity in the future.

Issues like redefining marriage and sexual orientation have, in my 42 years in ministry, divided the Church. But so did civil rights in the ‘60’s and the role of women in church leadership.

Of course, even in our own local church, we all hold a diversity of views on controversial subjects; our personal lives and experiences form and shape us in unique and particular ways. Oftentimes, those controversial issues in themselves are layered and complex.

Some people, I’m sure, are tempted to say, “Forget the Church and follow Jesus.”

Certainly if we recall the prophets of the Old Testament, we would remember they spoke a Truth that no one wanted to hear. They were not welcomed at a time and in the space that they prophesied – no more than the Truth and teaching Jesus offered were welcomed by those who would have witnessed his ministry of radical love, which was an offense to the Jewish status quo.

Maybe we as individuals need to do better at following Jesus. Maybe as the Church universal we need to do better at following Jesus. Maybe we could be a little more like Jesus in how we treat one another and how we speak on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed, and how we tend to our relationships. Maybe we should not be so quick to turn away someone with a word that we might not agree with, for we might not know when we have a prophet in our midst.

Certainly in many aspects of the institutional Church things are a little messed up. Things are divisive, and for many churches things look bleak. But I’m not overly worried about the end of Christianity or about the death of the Church that has existed for some 2,000 years.

Christianity has seen crisis throughout its history. The Church universal has faced many storms, and even in our own Presbyterian roots we’ve lived through schisms, difficult transitions, and hard reconciliations. But somehow, something holds us together and continues to call us together – to live in this amazing age of the 21st century; to live in that tension of disagreement; to be siblings with those with whom we disagree; and to even love one another.

You know, and I know, this is not an easy task.

But I can imagine that it is possible by God’s grace. For it is the very love of Christ that challenges us to live our lives more like Him. It calls us to confess and repent the brokenness in our lives. It binds us together as community. As your pastor I have been so proud, over my years here, to point to the way that we model for other churches in our denomination that we can disagree on many theological issues but still respect and love one another in Christ. We don’t leave and join other denominations, all of which have their unique challenges and issues.

There will always be differences in how people read and interpret the Bible; therefore we will always have our differences. The one non-negotiable item in Scripture, it seems to me, is that we are called to love God and one another, and that will always trump whatever current crisis we face.

With great love as your pastor,

Ron Naylor
Your Green Living Team has a win-win proposal from our utility companies as they help us work toward reducing our carbon footprint. That is, here’s a way to make our homes more energy-efficient and to be good stewards of God’s good creation.

Energizing Indiana, on behalf of the utility companies, is working through non-profit organizations in order to reach the most households. Here’s how the program works: you sign up through First Presbyterian for a home energy assessment and once you’ve had the free assessment, First Pres is sent a check for $25 which will be added to the Window Replacement Fund. Together we’re caring for God’s good creation.

Home energy assessments are a smart approach to improve the comfort of your home by raising your home’s performance, lowering energy bills, improving in-home air quality and increasing your home’s value. Sign-up sheets are at the information desk. Energizing Indiana will call you to make an appointment for the energy assessment in your home. You will be given a print-out after the assessment showing in detail ways you could improve your energy usage and make your home more comfortable while lowering your utility bills. First Pres would receive $25. What a deal!

Eligibility requirements:
- Single-family owner-occupied homes OR non-owner homes where occupants have the electric services in their name.
- Duplexes, triplexes, and quads (condos up to 4 units), rented or owned.
- Homes ten (10) years or older.
- Homes that have not had a utility-sponsored assessment in the last 3 years.

Energy Advisors will guide you step by step through the process to produce long-term, cost-effective energy savings by analyzing your energy use, recommending appropriate efficiency measures, and installing several low-cost energy-saving measures. Advisors will also assess the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems in your home to determine if they are operating efficiently. They also may inspect your home’s air duct sealing, insulation levels and more to evaluate your home’s energy consumption and heating and cooling efficiency.

Questions? More info at the information desk or call Carrie Jo at 289-4431.

—Carrie Jo Miller

Salvation Army Pantry Needs

PANTRY ITEM FOR AUGUST: PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS (shampoo, soap, body wash, deodorant, shaving cream, toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, lotion, etc.). Please place your donation(s) in the cart in Fellowship Hall.

VOLUNTEERS are also needed to serve at the pantry for 12:45-3:00 pm shifts. Please sign up on the bulletin board behind the information desk!

HIRONS FUND: The Bill and Carol Hirons Fund (for the Salvation Army pantry) still needs your help! Many thanks to those who have already responded to the need for funds to replenish the Bill and Carol Hirons Fund. As summer is a time of great need and demand is up at the food pantry, more funds are needed. Please make your checks to First Presbyterian Church, memo: "Hirons Fund". A donation of any size will be most appreciated.
Help Welcome BSU Students!

Lemonade Stand

Wednesday—Friday, August 15, 16 & 17

First Presbyterian will serve lemonade, bottled water and homemade cookies to BSU students as they move into their dorms Wednesday through Friday, August 15, 16 & 17.

How would you like to help?

• Donate cookies? These can be left anytime in the church's kitchen freezer, marked "Lemonade Stand" (obtain key to freezer from church office).

• Serve a two-hour shift? Call the church office, e-mail Cathy (cathy@firstpresmuncie.org) or sign up at the information desk on Sunday, August 12th.

The lemonade stand is an excellent way for us to introduce the church and ourselves to the students. Watch for more details in upcoming weeks. Hope you can help in some way!
Branches’ Upcoming Events

To glorify God, Branches’ activities provide education, fellowship, mission, stewardship, and worship experiences for all junior high and senior high students. All gatherings are from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the church unless otherwise noted and will usually include dinner. Always check your email for more details and last minute changes. If I don’t have your email address, please send it to cathy@firstpresmuncie.org.

August 1 (Wed.) Tools for Schools-Part 2
We will meet here at the church at 12:45 and head to The Gathering to pack more backpacks. Let me know if you are available.

August 5 Mystery meeting

August 12 No meeting

August 19 State Fair
We will leave after the 8:30 service to attend Worship Fest, which is held from 1:00-3:00. Watch your email for updates.

August 25 All-Church Picnic
We had a great water balloon fight last year! Join the fun!

August 26 College Care Packages
We will shop for college care packages for our FPC college students. Bring $$ for a fast food dinner.

September 2 No meeting (Labor Day)

“\(\text{I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.}\)” John 15:5

Branches’ Summer Mission Trip Pictures!

Our group traveled to the Ozarks (Cook Station, Missouri) to work at Mound Ridge Camp and Retreat Center, June 24-29. Missionaries included: Jack Alexander, Ian Bretz, Megan Brown, Jessica Burkey, John Burkey, Mackenzie Clinger, Lucas Clay, and Allison Simmons. Chaperones included: Dan Alexander, Marie Burkey, Aaron Burton, Jacqueline Burton, and Thea. Thank you to everyone who prayed for us while we were gone.

They say a picture is worth 1,000 words, so here is our report. Enjoy!
This heat has been hard on our tomatoes...and on the Vinedressers! We have been weeding, clipping, and watering our heirloom tomato plants, and are praying for a bumper crop despite the drought! The proceeds from our harvest will go to the First Presbyterian account at Second Harvest Food Bank. Thank you, in advance, for supporting this youth mission project.

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his path.” Micah 4:2

**Vinedressers Update**

**We Welcome Children and Families on Sunday Mornings to First Presbyterian!**

Infants through 3 year olds receive child care and Christian nurturing in Room 101 with Marie Burkey and her helper throughout Sunday morning from 8:15 am to noon.

**During Summer Worship Services:**

*Children's Worship Center*

Children 4 years old through 2nd grade join their parents in the garden/sanctuary for the beginning of worship and are dismissed with a leader for Children's Worship Center. Children's Worship Center, held in Youth Hall, is a way to be in worship with young children. It is a way that adults and children can grow in love for God and for one another. It uses storytelling as a primary means for encountering God, so God is experienced, not just learned about. Children in the 3rd grade and older remain in worship with their parents.

**Sunday School News from the Christian Education Committee**

Sunday School for Children and Youth (9:45-10:30 am) will resume on September 9 (after Labor Day).

- **NEW!**
  - We will be combining middle and high school students into a single Sunday morning class. This class will be taught by Aaron and Jacqueline Burton in the Senior High room.

- **NEW!**
  - We will also combine our elementary classes into a single class. This class will be taught by Jeff and Tracey Clinger in Room 104. We are purchasing a new curriculum called The One Room Sunday School. It provides comprehensive Bible study, application of Bible lessons and a variety of age-appropriate activities.

Combining age groups has been successful for us during VBS and Youth Club, and we are excited about these changes!
On Sunday, October 21, First Presbyterian will host an art exhibit of works created by members and children of the congregation. The works can be viewed before and after the worship services that day. They may be picked up after 1:00 pm on that Sunday or on Monday, October 22.

Original artworks from the following art areas are eligible (limit three):

- Beadwork
- Basketry
- Cake decoration
- Calligraphy
- Ceramics
- Collage
- Crochet
- Drawing
- Digital artwork/photography
- Design
- Decorated egg art
- Fabric design
- Fiber/textile art
- Floral arranging
- Gourd art
- Graphic art
- Handmade ornaments
- Jewelry
- Knitting
- Literature
- Metal work
- Miniature art
- Needlework
- Painted china
- Painting (acrylic, oil, watercolor)
- Papercrafting
- Pastels
- Photography
- Poetry
- Printmaking
- Quilting
- Sculpture
- Sewing
- Stained glass/glass work
- Wood carving
- Wreath making

Entry forms are available at the information desk. Completed entry forms must reach the church office by October 12.

If you have questions or need more information, please contact Aileen Howard, Bob Wadsworth, or Tom Schwartz.

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**Churchwide Cookout/Picnic**

**Saturday, August 25 @ 6:00 pm**

*Bring a salad, side dish, or dessert to share*

*Burgers, hot dogs & drinks provided*

*A bonfire & fellowship in the woods will follow dinner.*

*Plan now to invite others to come with you!*

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**Mark Your Calendar!**

**Progressive Cookout**

**Saturday, September 29 @ 6:00 pm**

We’ll gather in various members’ homes/on their decks for a cookout, then all come together at the church for a dessert and fellowship.

Children will be served dinner together at the church, joining their parents later for dessert and fellowship.

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**First Presbyterian Church**

**24th Annual Golf Outing**

benefiting the Gishler College Scholarship Fund

**Delaware Country Club**

**Sunday, September 16, 2012**

**2:00 pm Tee Time**

Register your team today!

Brochures/registration forms are at the information desk or at www.firstpresmuncie.org - Gishler Golf Outing
An Exclusive Fraternity

A small group of men, separated by style and ideology, form a unique fraternity in America. The fact that unites them is that they have all served as president of the United States. In *The Presidents Club* (973.918 GIBB) authors Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy explore the unique brotherhood of former presidents.

The informal fraternity dates back to the inauguration of Eisenhower when former presidents Hoover and Truman laughingly decided to form a club. In some cases, rivalries formed during election campaigns have long endured. In others, surprising friendships and alliances have been made. Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter turned a deep enmity into an alliance. Every year Bill Clinton rereads a letter from Richard Nixon.

The authors are editors at *Time* magazine. They believe the nation should make better use of the experience and wisdom of the members of the Presidents Club.

A New Relationship with God

You know that God loves the world. But do you sometimes wonder if God really loves you? Learning to accept the love of God may be a lifelong process, according to Joanna Weaver. In her book *Lazarus Awakening* (226.5 WEAV), she guides readers toward profound relationship with God that is not only accepted by the head but also felt in the heart.

Just as Jesus called Lazarus forth to new life, He wants to free everyone to live fully in the light of His love, the author asserts. The book includes a study guide for individual reflection or group discussion.

War Story

The bestseller *Unbroken* (940.54 HILL) is the true story of heroism, survival, and redemption. It tells of the triumph of one man against fearful odds.

As a youth, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. He brawled, he stole, he ran away. As a teenager he became a champion distance runner. He represented the United States in the 1936 Olympics. In World War II, he became an Air Corps bombardier flying missions in the Pacific. When his plane was shot down, he alone survived. He drifted on a tiny raft in shark infested waters. Eventually he was picked up – by an enemy ship. As a prisoner of war, he became the particular target of a brutal guard. The story of his survival against terrible odds is both incredible and inspirational.

The author is Laura Hillenbrand, an award-winning journalist, who is a founder of Operation International Children, a charity that provides school supplies to children through American troops.

Mother Teresa Speaks

Quotes, stories, and prayers of Mother Teresa have been compiled by Jose Luis Gonzalez-Balado. The book packs a lot of wisdom in just a little over 100 pages.

Mother Teresa never wrote a book or article. So her words are those that she spoke to the poor people she devoted her life to. In some cases, quotations are from her speeches. Here are a few samples:

“Today it is very fashionable to talk about the poor. Unfortunately, it is not fashionable to talk with them.”

“The poor do not need our condescending attitude or our pity. They only need our love and our tenderness.”

“How many things we own that we do not give away because we feel so attached to them. It is better to have less in order to give it all to Jesus.”
THANK YOU to all who participated in the Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC)’s "Imagining the Future" luncheon event on Sunday, June 24th, and the Focus Groups held during the weeks of July 8th and 15th! Check the PNC bulletin board on the ramp to Fellowship Hall for information/results gleaned from these meetings.

Please also continue to check the bulletin board periodically for updates from the PNC on where we are in the process of identifying a new senior pastor candidate to bring before the congregation.

If you have questions or concerns to bring to the PNC, feel free to e-mail pnc.footsteps@gmail.com!

Your First Presbyterian Church Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC):

John Linder, Chair               Chris Hostetler
Dan Alexander                    Mike McCauley
Missy Arnold                     Bill McCune
Jacqueline Burton                Bill Rogers
Tracy Clinger                    Claudia Sursa
Jong Koo Hong