

First Reports

First Presbyterian Church
Evansville, Indiana



DEC
2024

www.fpcev.org

There is SO MUCH TO SAY

But I'm going to start with three kinds of thanks:

- 1) **Thank you** all for an amazing two months. I couldn't be more delighted with the start that I've had as your pastor. So many of you have reached out, sent cards, and connected with me in numerous ways. Murray and I are both filled with gratitude for the welcome we've received and the sense of belonging we already feel. In addition to the amazing elders on Session, the conscientious and caring deacons, the talented and committed musicians and dedicated committee and team members, you have a stellar staff. I couldn't be happier with the way our work is unfolding.
- 2) **Thank you** for your ongoing support of this congregation through the generosity campaign. As we've explored the theme "Rooted in Faith ~ Growing to Serve," sixty-five of you have stepped up to pledge \$355,298 to date. As we watch for another 20 or so individuals or families to turn in their pledges (and possibly have some new folks pledge for the first time) we are well on our way to \$431,000 (which is the amount we need to reach to move forward with a budget similar to 2024.) I'm confident that we can do it. If any of you have resources you've been thinking about gifting First Presbyterian Church (stock certificates, bonds, properties) this December would be a great time to do that.
- 3) **Thank you** for your willingness to adapt and adjust to some new ways of doing things. I realize that anytime things change it can be uncomfortable while people get used to the differences. I am doing my best to listen and observe, and to approach things with curiosity. It is interesting to hear your stories about why certain things are (or have been) done in certain ways. It is also interesting to hear the different versions of answers to my curiosities! This will be a year of figuring each other out. This will be a year of learning about each other and the ways we can best work together. I'm incredibly excited about our potential.

This leads me to three challenges:

- 1) **Attend in person OR online as often as possible.** Simply showing up (in person or online) is foundational to the work we need to do together. The Church in the world is changing. We are not going back to the 50s or the 70s or the 90s or the 2010s. We can only move forward. This means that we will have to reimagine many of the things that we are used to doing. Some things need to be transformed, some things need to continue, some things need to rest.
- 2) If you are a leader (or if you have been a leader) **please take care of yourselves.** You have moved with grace and strength through nearly five years of dramatic change and loss. It is okay to be tired. It is okay to still be grieving. It is okay to be excited about new possibilities. It is okay to feel all of the things at once! It is normal to not be able to identify exactly what you are feeling as we begin this work together. So if you need to take a break from leadership - take a break. If you are ready to continue - please do! If you have been on the sidelines for a bit and are ready to re-engage, let me know. The nominating committee is getting a late start this year, but I feel sure that the right people for the positions that are open will say 'yes' when asked. Again, reach out to me so we can talk about where you might get engaged in the ministry and mission of First Pres.
- 3) **Continue to offer grace to each other** (to the staff, to the volunteers, to the elders, to the deacons, to the teachers, to the youth, to the children, to the older members, to everyone!) Let's make this first year together, this new Church year and this upcoming new calendar year one for the record books. As you offer grace, know that we need to practice receiving grace too.

Friends, I can't wait to see what God has in store for First Presbyterian Church of Evansville, Indiana. Let your neighbors and friends know that God is up to something here and they are welcome to join us on the journey. I'm praying for God's peace and presence to be with us all.

Your pastor,

Mary Beth



December Worship

Happy new year! The new worship year began on December 1 with the First Sunday in Advent, and there are many special things happening in our worship this month:

December 8 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.	A Service of Advent Lessons and Carols <i>The service takes the form of a dialogue between the Word and music.</i>
December 21 4:30 p.m.	A Service for the Longest Night <i>A time of healing and hope held on the winter solstice.</i>
December 24 5:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship <i>A celebration of the birth of Christ with Carols, Candlelight, and Communion.</i>
December 29 10:30 a.m.	One Worship Service <i>A casual, low stress worship service on the Sunday 'in-between'.</i>



Look for more details on worship opportunities throughout this issue and make time to worship with your First Pres family this new year!

“Green” Tea!



Presbyterian Women invite all to the Green Tea on Sunday, December 15, after both services. Tea, punch, and a variety of snacks will be served in hopes that you will contribute some “folding green” to the **Independent Living Program** of the United Methodist Youth Home. The UMYH serves at-risk youth who have experienced abuse, neglect, truancy, lack of stability or guidance at home, or court-ordered placement.

The Independent Living Program prepares young people to live on their own as successful community members. They learn about cooking and nutrition, housekeeping and basic home maintenance, and budgeting and finance. They also acquire job readiness skills and explore career and higher education opportunities. As they transition to responsible adulthood, the Program can also provide help with bus tokens, groceries, transportation, and supplies and furnishings for their first home. Join us for fellowship, sweet treats, and an opportunity to nurture our community’s youth.

Longest Night Service

Join us Saturday, December 21 at 4:30 p.m. for the Longest Night Service. We’ll gather to acknowledge that the expansive darkness of this time of the year can complicate the way we experience the Advent and Christmas seasons. It is our hope that you experience God’s love and comfort in the time we are together. Sunset is at 4:35 p.m. on December 21 so the candles we light will be welcome as the evening darkens.



While feelings of loss and grief are often associated with the loss of a loved one through death, it is important to remember that there are other sources of grief, sadness, or even fear: the loss of community connection due to the brokenness of partisan politics, the loss of a job or career (or meaningful work), the loss of a relationship, disconnection from family or friends, the loss of physical mobility or ability, the experience of chronic or potentially terminal illness, the loss of mental acuity through dementia or other illness, and so much more. We also know that some may come to this service to pray with and for others who are experiencing a difficult season; everyone is welcome.

All experiences of loss are important to God and worthy of our attention as a community of faith. You may participate in whatever way is meaningful for you. You may join in the responses and prayers or stay silent; you may sing or listen; you may come forward to light a candle or simply be still. Your presence is enough.

First Light Youth Group



Our First Light Youth Group says “thank you!” to the congregation for being so generous in giving to our Candy Drive for Halloween. Thanks to you, we were able to give over 200 treat bags of candy to our neighbors during the trick or treating hours on Halloween, *and* donate approximately 200 treat bags to students at Glenwood K-8 School.

Four of our youth attended the Fall Youth Retreat at Camp Pyoca in Brownstown, Indiana from November 22-25. We enjoyed the fall weather, meaningful small group discussions, and joyful worship under the leadership of Josiah McCruiston, who has served as youth pastor and program director at Witherspoon Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. The theme for the weekend was *Faith in Action: Living Out the Gospel in a Divided World*.

The youth are creating mosaics during First Light. We look forward to sharing the Advent-inspired art with you toward the end of the month.

The Perfect Gift

When Jesus was born among us, he came as a helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace, and salvation to his people. This child, God’s Word made flesh - fully human and fully God - became one of us. One with us. One among us. In all of our vulnerabilities, struggles, and triumphs, Jesus became one of us - leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal life.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God’s perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us - past, present, and future - who have pointed us to God. Join with Presbyterians around the world in giving back as we receive this special offering on December 22.



Rooted and Growing



The Generosity Committee is pleased to report that we are well on our way to our 2025 Stewardship campaign goal of \$431,200. *Thank you* to everyone who has returned a pledge! If you haven’t yet turned in a pledge card - *there’s still time!* Pick one up in worship and put it in the offering plate or send it to the church office or fill one out [online](#)! If you have questions, or need a card, please contact [Lora](#) in the church office (lora@fpcev.com; 812-423-6297). Thank you for helping bring God’s *Impossible Promises* to life!

Meal Train

We recently learned that Jeff Haywood has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Please hold Jeff in prayer, as well as Michelle and their daughter, Laura. His prognosis will be more clear after surgery on December 9. Michelle is taking leave from the library through the Christmas holidays to be with him and provide more care. To show our love and support, a [meal train](#) has been set up for the First Pres family and Michelle’s EVPL North Park family to provide support. Thank you for helping care for one another!



Second Adults

Advent and Christmas are always a full and busy time of the Liturgical year for our choir and musicians. Please pray for them as they rehearse to sing and play God's praises! As is our custom, Robert invites all graduates and former choristers of The Choir School program to join the choir on Christmas Eve. Be in touch alumni, graduates, and parents!



Safeguarding our children during music program rehearsals is an important role you can help with. Best safeguarding practices means Robert is seeking a "Second Adult in the Room" so no adult is ever alone with children. The requirements are simple: be present and quiet! You'll get to hear our amazing kids working hard and having fun in rehearsal, and get a sneak preview of upcoming anthems and hymns. 2nd Adult slots are available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. The Music Support Committee uses the *SignUpGenius* website to make the process easy. Contact Robert or any member of the choir for the link, or click [HERE](#). The church runs background checks on all volunteers who are in the presence of children.

The New Year is also a great time to join our church's music programs. Contact Robert to see where your elementary through adult voice or musical enthusiasm might fit in!

Thanks for your help!
- Robert

The Sunday 'In-Between'

What will you be doing the First Sunday after Christmas?! We hope you will plan to come to One Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall! The Wide Awake Band will lead us with carols and Pastor MB is planning a casual, low stress worship experience for everyone.

Arrive at 10:00 to get your coffee, donuts *and bacon* (there will also be some fruit and cheese available if you're not a donut person) and enjoy connecting with the church community before the service.



First Fridays and More!

We welcomed music students from the IU Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington for the First Friday Recital on December 6 at 7:00 p.m. This group is taking the new *Performance Diploma in Organ Improvisation* and presented an entirely improvised concert called *An Advent Journey*. If you couldn't join us in person, you can see it on our YouTube channel: youtube.com/@firstpresbyterianevansville.

For the First Friday recital on January 3, our own Robert Nicholls will present a concert of Christmas music for organ, including works by Bach and parts of Olivier Messiaen's remarkable and monumental *La Nativite du Seigneur*. What better way could there be to start the year?!



Save the date! On Sunday, January 19 at 4:00 p.m. The Choir School and Saint Benedict Cathedral are jointly sponsoring a special presentation by one of the USA's premiere choirs, *Audivi*, performing Joby Talbot's *Path of Miracles*. This extended work was commissioned by London-based choral group Tenebrae in 2005 and describes the four main posts along the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route. *Audivi* last performed in Evansville at First Presbyterian Church as part of the Art Council's Classics by Candlelight Concert Series.

Introducing Jim McGill

In the Book of Acts, Luke tells us that Jesus' last words to his disciples before his ascension were: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - Acts 1:8

In other words: Take the Good News of Jesus Christ to the whole world.

Presbyterian Church (USA) Mission Co-workers today take this good news to many worldwide settings - not only in words, but also in deeds that demonstrate God's commitment to justice and well-being for all people.



Inspired and challenged by Transitional Pastor Anna Van Winkler's service as a Mission Co-worker in Cameroon, the Mission Committee has established a relationship of support with PCUSA Mission Co-worker Jim McGill. Jim and his wife Jodi began their mission service in 1995 in Malawi. More recently, they have worked in Niger where Jodi served as a nursing and public health educator. She is now in the United States with their six children, but Jim remains in Africa working in the rural development of Niger and South Sudan. He partners with the Evangelical Church in the Republic of Niger, the largest Protestant church in a country which is 95% Muslim.

Jim is a facilitator for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programs with a goal of ensuring sustainability for clean water and sanitation at both community and user levels. Niger and South Sudan are among the poorest countries in the world and reliable access to is key to their health and development.

The Mission Committee encourages you to pray for Jim's work and invites you to learn more at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/james-mcgill/>. If you are interested in helping to plan and present more opportunities to support and learn about Niger and the McGills' work, contact Debbie Meyer at DebbieJMeyer@outlook.com.

Walk for a Good Cause



Save the Date - Saturday, February 22, 2025 - for the *Coldest Night of the Year* event. This is a walk to raise money for United Caring Services of Evansville. First Pres is the starting and ending point for the walk. Go to <https://cnoy.com/location/evansville> to find out more. (We may even want to start a team or two - maybe an 8:30 Service Team and a 10:30 Service Team or a Youth Team and an Adult Team for a little friendly competition?)

Coming Soon

Winter Bible Study

Watch for information about a *Winter Bible Study* to be offered in January and February. There will be three options:

- 1) in person on a weekday morning,
- 2) in person and online on a weekday afternoon, and
- 3) online only on a weekday evening.



Connection Groups

Watch for information about *Connection Groups*. Pastor Mary Beth is working with the Deacons to offer times for folks to meet their deacons and each other. Various times and types of gatherings are being planned (a weekday bring-your-own-lunch to the church or afternoon coffee in fellowship hall for example). Watch your email and the weekly bulletin for information as this unfolds.

DECEMBER



- 1 SUNDAY
9:45 a.m. New Member Inquiry Meeting
- 2 MONDAY
6:30 p.m. *Book Group*
- 3 TUESDAY
1:30 p.m. Generosity Committee
- 4 WEDNESDAY
4:00 p.m. Chorister Rehearsal
7:00 p.m. Education Committee*
- 6 FRIDAY
7:00 p.m. First Friday Recital: *An Advent Journey*
- 7 SATURDAY
10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal
- 8 SUNDAY
11:45 a.m. December Decorating
2:00 p.m. Crèche sale at Marylu's
- 10 TUESDAY
5:00 p.m. Finance Committee
- 11 WEDNESDAY
4:00 p.m. Chorister Rehearsal
6:00 p.m. Session Meeting
- 14 SATURDAY
10:30 a.m. *Little Lambs' Cookies with Santa*
- 15 SUNDAY
9:30 a.m. Green Tea
11:30 a.m. Green Tea
Justice/Peacemaking Committee
- 17 TUESDAY
12:00 p.m. Staff Meeting
- 18 WEDNESDAY
5:00 p.m. Worship Committee
6:30 p.m. *Yoga By Candlelight*
- 21 SATURDAY
10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal
4:30 p.m. Longest Night Service
- 22 SUNDAY
9:45 a.m. New Member Inquiry Meeting
5:00 p.m. First Light Christmas Party

- 24 TUESDAY CHRISTMAS EVE
12:00 p.m. Church Office Closes for the Holiday
3:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
4:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal
5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship

- 25 WEDNESDAY CHRISTMAS DAY
Church office closed through December 27

- 26 THURSDAY
Church office closed through December 27

- 29 SUNDAY
10:30 a.m. One Worship Service (*only!*)

- 31 TUESDAY NEW YEAR'S EVE
12:00 p.m. Church Office Closes for the Holiday
Regular office hours resume on January 6

WEEKLY EVENTS

- SUNDAYS
8:30 a.m. Wide Awake Worship
9:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hour
5:30 p.m. First Light
- MONDAYS
3:45 p.m. Staff Meeting
6:30 p.m. *NA Group*
- TUESDAYS
3:45 p.m. Choir Teens
4:45 p.m. Handbell/Chime Rehearsal
5:45 p.m. Choristers Rehearsal
- WEDNESDAYS
1:00 p.m. *Little Lambs Store Open*
- THURSDAYS
4:00 p.m. Choir Beginners
4:45 p.m. Choristers Rehearsal
6:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
- FRIDAYS
Church Office Closed
- SATURDAYS
10:00 a.m. *Little Lambs Store Open*

*Meets via Zoom
Items in italics are non-FPC events

I've Been Wondering About...

Baptism

Pastor Mary Beth would love to talk to you or your family about baptism! Baptisms can be scheduled for any worship service and only require a simple conversation with the person to be baptized (and / or their adults if they are too young for conversation on their own.) Baptism of the Lord Sunday (January 12, 2025) is just around the corner and would be a memorable day to be baptized. Reach out to Pastor MB if you are interested or if you have any questions.

Confirmation

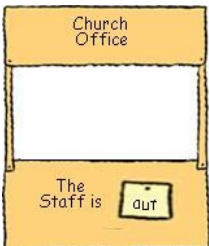
Plans are underway for a confirmation class in the spring and / or fall. Contact Pastor MB if you have questions or preferences regarding days/dates/times. Watch your email for a survey about all things children and youth in the coming weeks.

Membership

If you are curious about church membership plan to stay after the 8:30 service or come early for the 10:30 service to talk with Pastor Mary Beth. Or call or email to schedule another time to talk. The next "formal" membership inquiry session will be Sunday, December 22 at 9:45 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. But she's available to schedule time during the week too. Making your connection to First Pres "official" is fairly simple and is a huge encouragement to those who are members. Whether you've been around so long people assume you are already member or you've just been coming for a few weeks - we'd love to welcome you to become even more connected.



Holiday Office Hours



During the Christmas/New Year season, the church office will be open on a limited schedule, closing at Noon on each of the "Eves", and reopening the following Mondays. (See the calendar on page 6.) And don't forget - you can always reach Pastor Mary Beth by cell or email (812-872-4882; mb@fpcev.com).

Happy December Birthdays!

Elena Nicholls	Dec 1
Morgan Kunkle	Dec 2
Noah Henson	Dec 8
Amelia LeGate	Dec 9
Daryl Mottley	Dec 11
Elliott Groves	Dec 12
Genevieve Groves	Dec 12
Andrea Hancock	Dec 13
Laura Weaver	Dec 14
Elli Rinks	Dec 16
Kay Qualls	Dec 18
Janet Cash	Dec 19
Nick Cirignano	Dec 19
Rob Henson	Dec 20
Susanne Stein	Dec 21
David Logsdon	Dec 23
Brett Wheatley	Dec 23
Joan Fedor-Bassemier	Dec 29
Wayne Rinks	Dec 30



Join Us this Christmas Eve!

Christmas Eve

Carols, Candlelight,
and Communion

5:00 p.m.

Childcare Provided

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