

# First Reports

First Presbyterian Church  
Evansville, Indiana



NOV  
2025

[www.fpcev.org](http://www.fpcev.org)

## Hope for the Future

*The prophetic tasks of the church are to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, grieve in a society that practices denial, and express hope in a society that lives in despair.*

- Walter Bruggeman

### Are We Ready?

It is easy to imagine that prophetic work is the work of individuals - preachers, theologians, educators, politicians, writers, and the like - and perhaps there is some truth in that. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, I'm convinced that prophetic work is far more likely to be the work of community, and I'd posit that it is



particularly the work of communities of faith, and more specifically for us, the work of the Church.

Walter Bruggeman said, "The prophetic tasks of the church are to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, grieve in a society that practices denial, and express hope in a society that lives in despair." This sentence has captured my attention in my search for the role of the Church in this particular time in the life of the citizens of the United States of America.

I've tried to articulate my understanding of the continuing role of First Presbyterian Church of Evansville, Indiana, as a prophetic voice and presence through my preaching and leading in this first year of my work here. I hope my challenge to you has been clear: our commitment to life in this community of faith is one of the most effective acts of resistance that exists. Let's look at Bruggeman's words about the prophetic tasks of the church.

### ***Tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion.***

That we are part of a society that lives in illusion seems obvious. One possible reason this congregation has experienced consistent growth this year could be our commitment to telling the truth about what's happening in the world - particularly what's happening in this country - in our worship services (in our prayers, our liturgy, our music, and in the preaching). It seems that many congregations these days are dancing around the truth of this day and time. Some say they are privileging preaching the Truth of Jesus Christ as they avoid talking about anything that could be considered political. Jesus was political. Jesus lived in a time when the empire was threatened by his very presence. A few people have asked me if I'm afraid (or they seem to think I should be afraid) when I preach. I'm not. I haven't always been fearless, and I will avoid being reckless, but I really don't know of any other way to live into this particular calling. In case you haven't been around very long, here's an example of truth vs. illusion:

Truth: *"Christian" nationalism is sin. Christianity was never intended to be subservient to one's citizenship. We can talk about things that are political without becoming partisan in the way we understand faith.*

Illusion: *"We are a Christian nation." "The founders of this nation were overtly Christian." "The idea that there should be a separation of church and state is a misreading of the founding documents." [To be clear - these statements are false!]*

(continued on p. 2)

### ***Grieve in a society that practices denial.***

If you are awake, you are aware of the deep divisions among the citizens of this country, and you realize that a significant number of our families, co-workers, and neighbors not only practice denial but also live in it. The idea that it is prophetic to grieve may seem counterintuitive. But until we acknowledge what we have lost, what we are losing, what we may lose, we cannot grieve those losses. People who would deny that democracy is in danger can live in an imaginary world that labels the changes that have happened and are happening in our nation as necessary to “save” democracy. People who would privilege single-issue thinking at the city, county, state, or national level can imagine that their “issue” is in and of itself more important than all the accompanying unintended consequences of that tunnel vision. We all may practice some level of denial. But there comes a point where we must identify loss so that we can grieve and eventually heal (not “get over it!”).

### ***Express hope in a society that lives in despair.***

Despair hangs heavy in the air this November. Even as courts have ruled that SNAP benefits must continue (using the funds already set aside in case of a government shutdown), this has simply moved us more quickly into urgency about food insecurity. The loss of federal and state resources has meant that the non-profits that provide food are working hard to meet more needs with less money. As we move toward winter, more and more people will be forced to choose between keeping their electricity on, purchasing medicine, and eating. And still, we talk about hope; not hope the feeling but hope the action.

It may seem ridiculous to talk about a 2.5-million-dollar *Campaign for Our Future* to fund our ongoing budget of operations and to fund dreams and needs for the *Future Hope* of this congregation. It is not ridiculous. This congregation has an urgent responsibility to come alongside folks in need in our community and world. This congregation has an amazing opportunity to grow into the future in a way that can ensure its faithful presence, ministry, and mission fifty years from now, one hundred years from now. We are called to do both. In truth, we must do the amazing now so that we can continue to meet urgent needs in the future.

What is urgent may shift - it may expand and contract - but urgent needs will always exist. Every church building or property has value, and it could be argued that the sale of buildings or properties could provide “x” number of meals, etc. For some congregations, that may be the only way forward. For First Presbyterian Church, however, that would be incredibly short-sighted. And that is why this congregation decided decades ago to stay on the corner of SE Second and Mulberry. We can certainly figure out ways to more effectively use and share our space, and we can continue to grow as a congregation into the future.

### ***So, are we ready?***



As a community of faith, we are ready to embrace the prophetic work to which God calls us. In many ways, this has been the role of this congregation throughout its history. One of my favorite new hymn texts is *Hope Will Not Fail* by David Bjorlin. The text is a powerful reminder that hope, peace, joy, and love will not fail. We'll be learning it in the coming weeks and will use it during Advent. Today, we are learning and becoming the congregation God intends us to be. Today, we continue as a people who are growing in grace, rooted in faith, and reaching for legacy as God leads us toward a future and a hope. And that hope will not fail.

Peace and Presence from your pastor,  
MB

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Beth".

### ***Hope Will Not Fail* (text by David Bjorlin)**

Hope will not fail, no, hope will not fail.  
Though anguish and apathy seem to prevail,  
no, hope will not fail; hope, hope will prevail.  
Peace will not fail, no, peace will not fail.  
Though vengeance and violence seem to prevail,  
no, peace will not fail; peace, peace will prevail.  
Believe in the coming, the coming of peace!  
Though vengeance and violence seem to prevail,  
no, peace will not fail; peace, peace will not fail.  
Joy will not fail, no, joy will not fail.  
Though mourning and misery seem to prevail,  
no, joy will not fail; joy, joy will prevail.  
Love will not fail, no, love will not fail.  
Though hatred and hopelessness seem to prevail,  
no, love will not fail; love, love will prevail.  
Believe in the power, the power of love!  
Though hatred and hopelessness seem to prevail,  
no, love will not fail; love, love will prevail.

- Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

## Lunch and Learn!

Each year, the Mission Committee distributes a portion of your offering to others doing God's work in our community and the world. You are invited (encouraged!) to come and learn more about the work of these and other organizations at Lunch and Learn gatherings.

The next Lunch and Learn program is Monday, November 17, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The speaker of the day is Ely Sena-Martin, Executive Director of Evansville's **Immigrant Welcome and Resource Center**. The Center serves as a trusted partner and advocate for immigrants, providing opportunities that help them thrive in their new home. In the last fifteen months they have supported 1,155 new Americans from 21 countries.

We'll gather in fellowship hall - bring your own lunch as early as 11:30. The presentation will begin at noon and last as long as an hour (including time for questions). Drinks will be provided. Join us in learning how the center empowers individuals and families by providing services and connecting them with community resources.



## It's Jiffy Time!



Calling all shoppers! It's time to stock up on Jiffy Cornbread Mix and bring it with you to church. The Mission Committee encourages you to help feed our neighbors by bringing Jiffy Mix for the Evansville Rescue Mission's annual Gobbler Gathering. They expect to provide Thanksgiving food boxes to over 2,000 households.

First Pres' goal is 500+ boxes of Jiffy Mix - you can bring them to the church now through Sunday, November 16. If you're not a shopper, monetary donations are always welcome - make your check to First Pres (or [give online!](#)) and designate as "Jiffy Mix" Thank you for sharing with our neighbors in need!

## Justice Work Opportunity

CAJE (Congregations Acting for Justice & Empowerment) invites everyone to the 2025 Community Problems Assembly on Monday, November 10, 6:30 p.m. at Central United Methodist Church, 300 Mary St., Evansville. At this gathering, community leaders and those personally affected by injustice will share their stories. Together, we will identify and vote on the most pressing issues our community should address. Your voice matters - come, listen, and help shape the change we need! Please contact [Jake Kohlmeyer](#), [Tracy Shaw](#), or [Gina Robinson Ungar](#) for more information.



## Interfaith Thanksgiving Service



First Pres is delighted to host this year's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on behalf of the Mayor's Interfaith Advisory Committee on Wednesday, November 19. Join our neighbors in faith in the First Pres Sanctuary at 6:30 p.m. as we give thanks for all God has done. You are invited to bring non-perishable items to help stock food pantries in Evansville. Additionally, a reception will follow in Fellowship Hall; if you are interested in helping provide refreshments, go to [tinyurl.com/fpcthanks2025](https://tinyurl.com/fpcthanks2025) to sign up or contact [Jake Kohlmeyer](#).

## Congregational Meeting/Future Hope Town Hall



*Future  
Hope*

Please plan to attend the Congregational Meeting on **Sunday, November 16 at 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall**. On the agenda is the election of officers to begin service in 2026 as well as approval of the Pastor's Terms of Call.

This brief but important meeting will be followed by a Town Hall gathering for our *Future Hope* campaign. Bring your coffee cup, your ideas, and your questions!

## Music Department Doings!

### First Friday Recital - November 7 at 7:00 p.m.

We welcome Clare Marie Hopp to the Fisk organ bench for our November First Friday Recital. Invite your friends to start the weekend downtown with some wonderful music from this talented IU Jacobs School of Music student.

### Soup and More Sale - Sunday, November 9 at 9:30 and 11:30 a.m.

Stock up your pantry with treats from the Music Department's fall Soup and More fundraiser. Soups and baked goods will be offered at value prices to raise funds to send young First Pres musicians to summer camp experiences.



### Breakfast with Santa - Saturday, November 22 from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Pancakes with the jolly elf himself is back! See the back page for ticket information. Can't attend? Consider donating tickets for neighborhood families who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend!

## LGBTQ Group Gathering

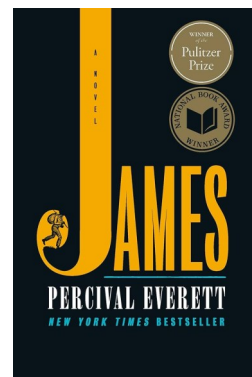


All First Pres LGBTQ folks (including LGBTQ friends of FPC) are invited to the home of Scott Wylie at 900 Colony Drive, Evansville for lunch on Sunday, December 7. Join us for a meal and conversation. For more information or to RSVP, contact [Rev. Jerusha](#).

## Calling All Readers!

Book Group at First Pres meets next on Monday, November 10, 6:30-8:00 p.m. in Room 105 in the Ed Wing. A Zoom option is available; contact [Francie Hubbard](#) to learn how to sign in.

November's book is the multiple award-winning novel, *James*, by Percival Everett. The book is loosely based on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (No need to have read or to remember *Huck Finn* to appreciate *James*). In Everett's telling, enslaved-but-attempting-escape James and white-runaway-boy Huck make their adventure-filled way down the Mississippi River. Among his peers, James is revealed to be much more thoughtful, resourceful and insightful than is assumed and assigned by the white society in which he is trapped. Prepare to be intrigued.



## We Make the Road By Walking - Join anytime!

**WE MAKE THE ROAD BY WALKING: A Yearlong Quest for Spiritual Formation, Reorientation, and Activation** by Brian McLaren is described as a *brilliant retelling of the biblical story and a thrilling reintroduction to Christian faith*. *We Make the Road by Walking* is described as a guide to exploring the difference that an honest, living, growing faith can make in our world today.

### Weekly Conversation Groups:

Sundays at 9:30 a.m., Wednesdays at noon and 7:00 p.m. (All times are CST)

Zoom links can be found on the church [website](#).

Books are available in the church office for \$11.

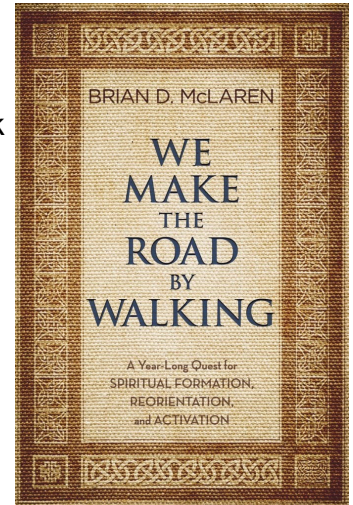
*Hello Friends,*

I so appreciate all of you who are on this journey with me as we discuss what it means to be alive using the book, *We Make the Road By Walking*. We will continue this year-long journey well into August before we start reading the book again for year two. Anyone who is interested in joining the groups can begin at any time and continue through with us until each reaches the end of their one year of reading.

I can see real growth in all of you as you are learning and sharing with each other. As our desire to follow the way of love grows, we are being reformed and shaped by God's spirit of aliveness. Please ask questions if you are thinking about being a part of this; I would be glad to talk with you. You can find details about the reading and discussion group dates and times on [fpcevv.com](http://fpcevv.com). Click on any Sunday or Wednesday in [the calendar](#) to see the information and find the Zoom links.

Dreaming of a just and peaceful world,

- Rev. Jerusha



## 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres

**DO WHAT MATTERS. LEARN WHAT MATTERS. TOGETHER.**



**An Engaging, Intergenerational Gathering for Service, Learning, Worship and a Meal** on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday evening of each month.

*Please note: November's gathering will take place from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.*

Come and experience a new way to connect with God and each other. Planned to be a gathering of all ages around a monthly theme, we'll explore the connections between simple service projects (putting together hygiene kits or school supplies, for example), arts, crafts, prayer stations, activities, an uncomplicated time of worship (some songs and scripture expressed through storytelling, skits, movement, and art) with communion, followed by a simple meal (might be pizza, might be tacos, might be spaghetti, might be a baked potato bar...come and see!) Who is this for? **EVERYONE!**

**November 23    LIVE IN COMMUNITY**

**December 28    HOPE\***

*\*On the Sunday after Christmas, December 28, 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres will happen in the morning! There will be **One Worship Service with Communion at 9:30 a.m.** with Wide Awake and Sanctuary Worshippers followed by breakfast.*

# First Presbyterian Church

# FIRST LIGHT

## Youth Group 2025

November  
December

|                  |                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NOV<br><b>2</b>  | <b>Affirming People Who Are Marginalized</b><br>GAME NIGHT – 5:30–7 P.M. – BRING A SNACK TO SHARE                                      |
| NOV<br><b>9</b>  | <b>Centering Voices from the Margins</b><br>FLYG with Evening Prayer – 5:30–7 P.M. [6:15 s'mores; 6:45 Evening Prayer]                 |
| NOV<br><b>16</b> | <b>Working for Liberation - Challenging Oppression</b><br>SERVE NIGHT – 5:30–7 P.M. – BRING A SNACK TO SHARE                           |
| NOV<br><b>22</b> | <b>SATURDAY BREAKFAST WITH SANTA</b><br>7:00 a.m. to 11 a.m. (in shifts!) YOUTH & MUSIC SUPPORT FUNDRAISER                             |
| NOV<br><b>23</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres - The Unity of Diversity</b><br>5:30–7 P.M. [new time] SIMPLE SUPPER – SOUP AND BREAD |
| NOV<br><b>30</b> | <b>Hear Hope - ADVENT EVENT</b><br>ADVENT PROJECTS & GAMES – 5:30–7 P.M. – SNACK PROVIDED                                              |
| DEC<br><b>7</b>  | <b>See Hope - ADVENT EVENT</b><br>ADVENT GAMES & PROJECTS – 5:30–7 P.M. – SNACK PROVIDED                                               |
| DEC<br><b>14</b> | <b>Share Hope - FIRST LIGHT CHRISTMAS PARTY</b><br>FLYG SUPPER & PARTY AT 5:30 [6:15 s'mores; 6:45 Evening Prayer]                     |

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 4:30 P.M. – **LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 5:00 P.M. – **CHRISTMAS EVE** (FLUTES AT 4:40 P.M.)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 9:30 A.M. *DIFFERENT TIME* – **ONE WORSHIP SERVICE**  
(IN THE STYLE OF 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAYS AT 1<sup>ST</sup> PRES WITH DONUTS AND BACON!)

## Happy November Birthday!

Joanna Fleming 1  
Lydia Fleming 1  
Abigail Poulisse 1  
Luca Cirignano 2  
Matteo Cirignano 2  
Mia Cirignano 2  
Finch Parker 3  
Judy Althoff 4  
Emily Boyle 5  
Michelle Haywood 5  
Kathryn Van Camp 6  
Mack Gramooré 7  
Casey Schraeder 7  
Juliette Cirignano 9

Gail Riecken 9  
Brian Uhde 9  
Connor Boyle 11



Jessica Montgomery 11  
Caitlin Hein 12  
Emily Rosenquist 12

Marylu Sonntag 12  
Elliot Halvorsen-Apple 14  
Nell Clay 15  
Lilly Singleton 16  
Bev Attinger 17  
Lily McReynolds 20  
William Cross 21  
Connie John 21  
Lacey Apple 22  
Elesha Downs 24  
Ron Attinger 27  
Mike Wolf 28  
Jingle Hagey 29  
Suzanne Rosenquist 29



## WEEKLY EVENTS

- 1 SATURDAY  
8:30 a.m. Outside Cleanup Crew
- 6 THURSDAY  
4:00 p.m. Future Hope Leadership Gathering
- 7 FRIDAY  
7:00 p.m. First Friday Recital: Clare Marie Hopp
- 9 SUNDAY  
*All Morning* Music Support Soup & More Sale  
6:15 p.m. Evening Prayer
- 10 MONDAY  
10:30 a.m. Feeding Mission at UCS  
6:30 p.m. Book Group
- 11 TUESDAY  
1:00 p.m. Presbyterian Women Planning Meeting  
5:30 p.m. *Little Lambs Executive Board Meeting*
- 12 WEDNESDAY  
9:00 a.m. Deacon Meeting  
6:00 p.m. Finance Committee  
7:00 p.m. Deacon Meeting
- 16 SUNDAY  
9:40 a.m. Congregational Meeting/  
Future Hope Town Hall
- 17 MONDAY  
11:30 a.m. Mission/Presbyterian Women  
Lunch & Learn
- 18 TUESDAY  
6:00 p.m. Session Meeting
- 19 WEDNESDAY  
6:30 p.m. Mayor's Interfaith Council  
Community Thanksgiving Service
- 22 SATURDAY  
8:30 a.m. Breakfast with Santa
- 23 SUNDAY  
5:30 p.m. 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres
- 25 TUESDAY  
4:45 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal  
6:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

### SUNDAYS

- 8:30 a.m. Wide Awake Worship  
9:30 a.m. Fellowship Time, Adult Sunday School,  
Choir Rehearsal, We Make the Road  
10:30 a.m. Sanctuary Worship, Follow Me Time  
11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hour  
5:30 p.m. First Light

### MONDAYS

- 6:30 p.m. *NA Group*

### TUESDAYS

- 11:30 a.m. Staff Meeting  
3:45 p.m. Teen Rehearsal  
4:45 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal  
5:45 p.m. Chorister Rehearsal

### WEDNESDAYS

- 12:00 p.m. We Make the Road  
1:00 p.m. *Little Lambs Store Open*  
7:00 p.m. We Make the Road

### THURSDAYS

- 4:00 p.m. Choir Beginners  
5:00 p.m. Chorister Rehearsal  
6:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

### FRIDAYS

- Church Office Closed

### SATURDAYS

- 10:00 a.m. *Little Lambs Store Open*



*\*Items in italics are  
non-FPC events*

Breakfast with Santa - November 22!

# Breakfast with Santa



**Saturday, November 22, 2025 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.**

at First Presbyterian Church  
Corner of Second and Mulberry Streets in downtown Evansville

*Join the choir and youth of First Presbyterian and Santa himself  
for a sausage, egg, and pancake breakfast!*

**Cost: \$10 per person** (use the QR for tickets)

*All proceeds benefit the Choir and Youth of First Presbyterian Church*



**First Presbyterian Church**  
609 South East Second Street  
Evansville, IN 47713-1107



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## EVENTS

October 26

*Future Hope: Growing in Grace*

November 6

*Leadership Gift Event*

Co-chair Scott Wylie will host a leadership giving gathering for those interested in hearing more about the comprehensive campaign Thursday, November 6, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at 900 South Colony Road.

In addition to enjoying fellowship and sociable beverages and nibbles, attendees will have the opportunity to be leaders in giving by making early commitments to Future Hope. For more information or to RSVP, email Scott.

November 9

*Future Hope: Rooted in Faith*

8:30 a.m.

Wide Awake Worship

10:30 a.m.

Sanctuary Worship

November 16

*Future Hope: Reaching for Legacy*

8:30 a.m.

Wide Awake Worship

9:40 a.m.

Congregational Meeting  
to Elect Officers and approve  
pastor's terms of call.

9:55 a.m.

*Future Hope Town Hall*

10:30 a.m.

Sanctuary Worship

November 23

*A Future and a Hope:  
Commitment Sunday*

8:30 a.m.

Wide Awake Worship

10:30 a.m.

Sanctuary Worship

December 7

CELEBRATION SUNDAY



*Future  
Hope*

We've recently introduced a *Campaign for Our Future*. This campaign will span three years of giving. Members and friends of First Presbyterian Church of Evansville, Indiana, are invited to consider a three-year commitment to maintaining and enhancing our ongoing ministries through regular pledged giving to the operating budget, while also planning to support a vision for this congregation's future ministry and mission. We believe we will raise 2.5 million dollars over the next three years.

Our operating budget is currently just under \$450,000 per year. We are hoping that we can receive pledges that total 1.5 million dollars for 2026 through 2028. This will allow us to expand the hours of some of our part-time staff, to expand our ability to do ministry and expand our involvement in mission and justice ministries.

At the core of our request (beyond regular pledged giving to the operating budget) is a gift to the ***Campaign for Our Future*** for **Future Hope: Highest and Best Use**. This gift, given with the broadest parameters for use, allows the Session of this congregation to discern the best use of funds that are pledged with the least restrictions, once the monetary goals for each sub-fund are reached.

The **Historic Sanctuary Fund (\$300,000)** sets the stage for the renovation and restoration of our historic sanctuary. This is a long-term project that will require funds beyond the scope of this three-year campaign. Our priorities with the sanctuary renovation and restoration begin with stopping water intrusion and restoring the structural integrity of the towers. While the exterior challenges of the sanctuary are being met, a team (likely several teams) will discern the way forward with enhancements that will make the space more comfortable and flexible for the ways the sanctuary is used for worship and for our community - ways that are consistent with the historic beauty of the building.

After the exterior work is complete, we can turn to the interior of the sanctuary. The repair and restoration of the plaster walls; the cleaning and restoration of the Tiffany window; the replacement of subfloor and flooring; the restoration or replacement of seating (we will most likely restore some of the historic pews, but it is unlikely that all of them can be restored - decisions about seating will require careful consideration, including structural evaluation and bids on restoration); addressing accessibility to the chancel, and the possible placement of a restroom in the narthex, etc.

When we are ready to start work on the interior renovation and restoration of the sanctuary, it will be necessary to have the Fisk organ and console fully wrapped to protect it during the renovation. At the same time, we will have the Steinway grand piano and the 1889 Giesecke organ (made in Evansville and owned by

Evansville AGO) moved to Fellowship Hall, where the service that is normally in the sanctuary will happen during the renovation. We won't be able to estimate how long we will be out of the sanctuary until much closer to the beginning of the interior renovation.

As you can see, the restoration and renovation of the Historic Sanctuary is not a simple task - this fund will get us started on that work.

The **Accessibility and Improvement Fund (\$300,000)** will allow us to make necessary repairs and enhancements to our whole historic facility and to ensure its accessibility to ALL in our community. Desperately needed roof repairs (one temporary repair on the roof of the education wing has been completed, and the contract has been signed and submitted for the replacement of the second-floor



roof). We need an elevator to the second floor to fully use that space. We need to add an exterior ramp on the Chandler Avenue side of the Kerr Chapel so that the education wing can have an accessible entrance separate from the courtyard entrance. We need to add accessible family restrooms in the education wing - a crucial need that will impact the whole church property. Once an accessible entrance by the chapel and accessible family restrooms in the education wing are completed, it will be possible to add doors that will allow us to make the education wing independent of the rest of the building, expanding its use in the evenings. As we do this work, we will rethink the use of all office and classroom spaces - converting some single-use spaces to multi-use spaces, rethinking the size and configuration of professional offices, etc.



Unlike the restoration of the sanctuary, most of the projects envisioned for the Accessibility and Improvement Fund can be completed either independently or simultaneously. We could start with the accessible family restroom, for example. Then we could consider installing the accessible entrance by the chapel. The elevator to provide access to the second floor could come after that. There is flexibility in how we approach these necessary projects, which will dramatically improve our ability to serve all people and to better use our space.

Fully funding the **Professional Ministry Fund (\$200,000)** allows us to invest in our people, support our unparalleled music programs, expand our compassionate mission and social justice outreach, and provide thoughtful worship, education, and preaching for our congregation and our community. This fund will help us expand part-time ministry areas (for example, potentially increasing the hours for the Minister of Spiritual Formation and Connection from 20 hours per week to 30 hours per week (from half-time to three-quarter-time) and potentially adding some part-time administrative positions for ministry with children and youth or a part-time parish visitor or parish associate position. Resources for these areas of ministry are necessary as we anticipate the expansion and development of our staff in ways that support the growth of our congregation.



And for those of you who are so inclined, we hope to discuss legacy giving to our **Endowment Funds (\$200,000)** to ensure that the welcoming place that embraces us now holds that same role decades in the future. This could include planning to endow all or part of your regular pledge so that it continues beyond your life. This could include adding to current endowment funds. This could include creating new endowments (for example, endowing part or all of the Director of Music position). If this interests you, we can connect you with people who can help you plan these gifts.

... THIS EFFORT TO SUSTAIN, EXPAND, AND BUILD ON THE LEGACY OF THIS CONGREGATION - WHETHER THROUGH MINISTRY, MISSION, OR CARING FOR OUR PHYSICAL RESOURCES - IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST ACTS OF RESISTANCE TO THE STATE OF THE WORLD AND THE STATUS QUO THAT ANY GROUP OF PEOPLE CAN UNDERTAKE.

As of the writing of this article, we have received a **Lead Gift of \$100,000** (not a *pledge* - a *gift* that has already been received) for the Future Hope campaign. We have also received an anonymous **Leadership Challenge Pledge** (from someone outside of the congregation) of **\$150,000 for Future Hope: Highest and Best Use**. This challenge pledge will match new gifts to *Future Hope: Highest and Best Use* dollar for dollar. Once new gifts totaling \$150,000 for Highest and Best Use are received, the challenge is met, and we will have a total pledged commitment of \$300,000 (for a total commitment of \$450,000 when added to the Lead Gift that has already been received). I hope our Campaign Co-Chairs will be able to announce that the Leadership Challenge Pledge has been met (and exceeded) by November 16 (the week before everyone will be invited to bring their completed pledges to the *Campaign for the Future* to worship on November 23).

Of course, the giving that is foundational to the *Campaign for Our Future* and makes all of this dreaming for our *Future Hope* possible is your pledged giving to the ongoing operating budget of this congregation. If annual pledging is part of your regular practice of stewardship and generosity, thank you! We hope you will first consider how you will support the operating budget of First Presbyterian Church and *then* consider how you might give toward our *Future Hope*. We know that a three-year commitment to the operating budget may feel like an impossible thing to know, so please remember that a pledge is your best intention for your giving. It can be changed if your circumstances change. It is not a contract or an obligation with legal ramifications. Because we are asking for a three-year commitment rather than a one-year commitment (which is our normal practice), we know that this feels weighty. We trust that God is already at work in and through us and that God will make a way for us to do the things God is calling us toward.

It is entirely possible that, considering the state of the world, you are not all that certain about why we would even consider this BIG DREAM at this time. As your pastor, let me assure you that this effort to sustain, expand, and build on the legacy of this congregation - whether through ministry, mission, or caring for our physical resources - is one of the biggest acts of resistance to the state of the world and the status quo that any group of people can undertake. You may wonder why we would consider raising funds for the operating budget and a building when there are people without affordable housing, people at risk of losing SNAP benefits, and people facing rising costs for health insurance.

The “why” seems clear to me. Even as we are in the midst of incredibly challenging times, we are in a position to do the work to solidify the role of a *people* and a *place* for the future. Securing a stable way of doing ministry here so that you can be nurtured and challenged and sent out into the community to do the work of the church there. You are the people. This is the place. We have the privilege of gathering in this place so that God can use this time to sharpen us for whatever lies ahead.



Peace and Presence,  
*Mary Beth*

*The Campaign for Our Future*  
**2026-2028**  
2.5 million dollars over three years

| First Priority: <i>Pledged Giving</i>         |                    | Next Priority: <i>Future Hope Giving</i>   |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Pledged Giving to the Operating Budget</b> | <b>\$1,500,000</b> | <b>Future Hope: Best and Highest Use</b>   | <b>\$1,000,000</b> |
| 2026 operating budget                         | +/- \$450,000      | <i>Historic Sanctuary Fund</i>             | \$300,000          |
| 2027 operating budget                         | +/- \$450,000      | <i>Accessibility and Improvements Fund</i> | \$300,000          |
| 2028 operating budget                         | +/- \$450,000      | <i>Professional Development Fund</i>       | \$200,000          |
|                                               |                    | <i>Endowment Funds</i>                     | \$200,000          |

So far...

A **Lead Gift of \$100,000** (not a pledge - a gift that has already been received) has already been received for the *Future Hope* campaign. We have also received an anonymous **Leadership Challenge Pledge** (from outside of the congregation) of **\$150,000 for Future Hope: Highest and Best Use**. This challenge pledge will match new gifts to *Future Hope: Highest and Best Use* dollar for dollar. Once new gifts totaling \$150,000 for Highest and Best Use are received, the challenge is met, and we will have a total pledged commitment of \$300,000 (for a total commitment of \$450,000 when added to the Lead Gift that has already been received).

# Future Hope Team *Reflections*



## SCOTT WYLIE Future Hope Co-Chair, Serving Deacon, Liturgist



My parents were not church-goers, but they dutifully took me to Sunday School and church at the Presbyterian Church in Carmi, Illinois every week as a child. The gig was that I would be able to make my own decision on whether to continue to attend once I was old enough to decide on my own. Rather than feeling alone at church, I was instead warmly embraced (including from Robert Nicholls' Grandmother who was my Kindergarten Sunday School Teacher) and gifted with another lifelong family who continues to provide unconditional acceptance and affection. The work we are doing now on our *Future Hope* campaign is my way of paying those kind and loving people back for helping make me the person I am today by making sure we are doing that for future kids needing a church home.

## SARAH CROSS Future Hope Co-Chair, Serving Elder, Liturgist, Worship, Handbells

I did not attend First Presbyterian Church as a child. I began attending in 2010 when my father had a medical procedure and was unable to drive himself to church. What started as a daughter's obligation, quickly and quite unexpectedly blossomed into a deep love for this church and its people. I came regularly, started my own family here, and now find myself involved in many facets of our ministry. My children are so fortunate to be involved with the youth here and they are learning so much about loving all people by following Jesus' example. Eventually, my mother joined us. My vision and hope and prayer for this church is that we will continue to shine Christ's light in this world for generations to come. I've often said that while I'm sad I didn't get to grow up here, I am so excited to grow old here.



## TONY AIKEN Future Hope Team Co-Chair, Serving Deacon, Wide Awake Band



I grew up in the United Church of Christ tradition at St. John's - a church that at one time had two locations in Evansville. One thrived, and the other did not. I have great memories of the latter, downtown church. I make a point to walk by it when I've helped at the United Caring Shelter serving lunch. At one time, I even called it a cautionary tale, or a 'tale of two churches'. I don't see it in such gloomy terms, but I do receive the instruction.

I have found at First Pres a vibrancy I remember at both of my former church campuses. I, thankfully, grew up in the progressive, inclusive UCC tradition, so that spirit, too, feels familiar to me. Our church is growing. The needs of our community are growing, too. The work that I have been called to do with the *Future Hope* campaign is necessary to address growth. What a wonderful opportunity to live our faith and build for what is seen and unseen!

### JOHN STRANGE Future Hope Team, Liturgist, Elder

I have been a life-long Presbyterian; however, First Presbyterian is actually my second Presbyterian church! I was led to this church when my last church was in transition to a new pastor, who eventually led that congregation away from the Presbyterian Church USA. It became a now-defunct, non-denominational, evangelical church. I heard of First Presbyterian from a good friend, who had family that attended here at the time. After attending here for a year or so, I brought my dad to our loving congregation. I love telling this story. My mom had died, and my dad was still attending the other church. Something was said at a senior friends luncheon that my dad had attended. The statement was anything but one of inclusion and love for all of God's people. My dad decided that it was no longer a place for him. He started attending First Pres with me, and he decided, very quickly, that he wished to transfer his membership. I will never forget what Rev. Kevin Fleming said on the day my dad, officially, became a member of our loving church. Kevin said that, usually, it is the parent who brings the child to church. Today, he said, it is the child who has brought his dad to join our congregation!



Our church, this space, is a place for all people, and we must ensure that the physical building that hosts, houses our space will be accessible and available for decades to come. It is part of OUR stewardship to engage in this mission, for it is our hope for the future!

### SUE SCHRIBER Future Hope Team, Serving Elder, Liturgist, Worship Chair



Each Sunday, as I sit and admire the Rose Window while listening to the anthem, I marvel at the beautiful sights and sounds of First Presbyterian Church. Sights and sounds that have filled the sanctuary for more than a century because our ancestors had faith and the conviction of things not seen (or heard). And now, through *Future Hope*, we can further our faith and conviction for generations to come. I am honored to be a member of this church community of open-minded, open-hearted disciples, who covenant to support and encourage one another, as we explore God's grace on our journey of faith.

### JILL GRIFFIN Future Hope Team, Serving Elder, Generosity Committee, Choir

For more than a century, members of First Presbyterian Church have given generously so that this congregation could worship, grow, and serve. The *Future Hope* campaign continues that tradition by inviting today's members and friends to invest in the future of our remarkable church. For me, that means maintaining the historic splendor of our church so future generations can experience its power to uplift and unite. It means supporting our ministry that brings hope and touches so many lives. And it means growing our endowment to serve as a lasting foundation for generations to come.



First Pres has shaped my life and the life of my family in countless ways. The ministry is welcoming and affirming in a way that resonates deeply with my worldview. The music fills the sanctuary and lifts my spirit every week, offering a glimpse of the divine. And the congregation nurtures a spirit of love and empathy in a world where both seem to be in short supply. This church has been a steady light along my journey, and I hope to help keep its flame burning bright for those who come after me.