

GOOD NEWS NEWSLETTER



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From Our Pastor Rev. Annie Epling

Dear First Pres Members and Friends,

Welcome to the second edition of the Good News newsletter. This newsletter is full of Good News! In it you'll read all about the important ministry the Schools Team is doing. The Schools Team is a sub-group of the Mission Committee, and they work with South Wayne and Washington Elementary Schools. They are responsible for the Blessings in a Backpack program, where the church provides a backpack of food to every student at Washington Elementary every weekend. They also provide shoes for students at South Wayne, support the teachers with gifts or meals on conference nights, and provide socks, underwear, and sweatpants to students. The Schools Team is doing great work, and I'm glad you finally get to read about it here.



Also in this edition, you get to read all about our newest members. When you see them at church, make sure to introduce yourself. We are blessed to have them at First Pres!

There's so much happening at First Pres. Thank you for making it the great church it is!

Blessings,
Annie Epling, Pastor

The Schools Team Highlights by Taff Silliman



The Schools Team, because of the generous contributions from the congregation, was able to provide fun activities for the children and support for the teachers at South Wayne and Washington elementary schools in the first half of this school year. In November we delivered box lunches for the teachers to have during parent/teacher conferences. The teachers really appreciate the support it gives them during those hectic days. In December, both schools invited Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehabilitation Center to bring their program to the schools. Soarin' Hawk brings birds that are being rehabilitated to the schools to teach kids about birds of prey.

Kids making smoothies with blender bikes (see the smoothie on back tire)

It's quite impressive to see the birds up close! Mr. Mark, administrative assistant at Washington, dressed up like a hawk so that the kids could learn the body parts. The older kids get bird pellets (dried bird poop) to dissect to find out what the birds have been eating. They loved it and asked if they could do it again! Unfortunately the resident eagle has been in quarantine for a transmissible bird disease and was not able to be brought to the school. That was disappointing, but it didn't really dampen the enthusiasm the kids had for seeing and learning about the birds.



Kids dissecting bird pellets

Also in December, Washington school asked for a small amount of money that paid for them to do one special activity a day for the month of December. Among the activities were salt dough ornaments, scratch Christmas trees for them to create, fruit for the kids to make blender bike smoothies, wood ornaments for the kids to paint and take home for gifts, and luminaries. It was a fun and busy month!

Hana Klub: First Event in 2022 by Brittney Bressler

On Friday, January 28th, Hana Klub hosted a Lunar New Year (known as 설날 Seolnal in Korea) celebration at Naked Tchopstix. Seolnal is one of the most important traditional Korean holidays. There were around 35 attendees, both members and non-members of First Presbyterian Church, who came to enjoy a delicious meal together. During this time we offered guests the opportunity to try Sikhye (식혜), a traditional Korean rice punch, Maxim instant coffee, the most popular Korean coffee brand, and a variety of Korean snacks given out in gift bags. After dinner, we had a wonderful time playing Jegichagi (제기차기) and Yutnori (윷놀이), two popular traditional Korean games. When playing Jegichagi, guests competed to see who could kick a weighted paper "jegi" to keep it in the air the longest. Guests were then divided into teams by table to compete in a game of Yutnori, a board game typically played during Seolnal.

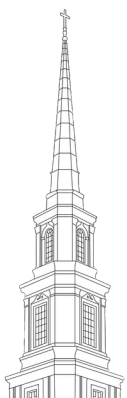




The winning team was offered gift cards to Naked Tchoptix. It was a joyous, successful event in which people of different backgrounds came together to share their love for Korean culture and kick off the New Year. It was also an opportunity for those unfamiliar with Korean culture to learn more and be welcomed into a new community. Hana Klub will host 3 more cultural events in 2022 and all are welcome. If you are interested, please join our Facebook group, "Hana Klub Fort Wayne," for updates!



KLM: Korean traditional bow time during the Lunar New Year Celebration on January 30



MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS!!



Tyler and Stephanie Paulson

"Our current hobbies have been mostly overshadowed by diapers, laundry and arguing with toddlers over the necessity of putting toys away. However, we are avid travellers and adventurers attempting to see as much of God's beautiful creation as we can."

David Belew

"I have been singing with the choir for the past year or so. It's also perfect that the church has its own theater! My initial attraction to the church was its strong stance on affirmation and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community, and I've found a great community of people here."



Beth Hague

"I was a care giver in our Stephen Ministry at my previous church and currently tutor with FWCS Study Connection program, both dear to my heart."

Ryan and Stephanie Mallory

"We appreciate Pastor Carrie's commitment to youth programs. We also appreciate the involvement in Blessings in a Backpack and Project 216. It has been great to learn more about Korean culture."





Jenni Stone



Marilyn Lassiter



Matt and Ashley Morley



Jack Patton

New Member Focus Group

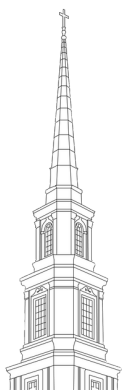
by Kathy Beatty

Wow! Pastor Annie had another great idea and we're pleased that the Ambassador Committee was able to bring it to fruition on Sunday, February 6, the day our two most recent new member groups were introduced and welcomed by the congregation. We had invited those folks to join us at 10:00 in the Youth Lounge on the second floor. Five were able to accept our invitation and two brought along spouses, so seven people contributed to our discussion. It was led jointly by Kathy Beatty, chair of the Ambassadors Committee; Tony Belton, Director of Community Outreach and Communications; and Annie Epling, pastor.

We asked 4 questions. Here are some answers.

- 1) They live in the far north, northwest, northeast, and southwest areas of Fort Wayne.
- 2) They heard about the church from online searches for streamed worship services, from seeing an op-ed by Pastor Annie in the newspaper, or by searching websites for a covenant church: open, affirming, and welcoming to all people.
- 3) They were drawn to visit and continue attending by the nature and caliber of the sermons, the thoughtfully created worship services, and the glorious music. Appreciation for Pastor Carrie's leadership of the youth program and obvious thoughtful and purposeful orchestration of other programs was expressed. The theater was another draw. The level of comfort they felt with the services and among the congregation kept them coming. The mission work with the schools was important. Having people say, "We are so glad you're here. Your presence is important to us," felt really good. The integration of the Korean ministry and members with others in the congregation at times was highly appreciated.
- 4) They are needing opportunities to reach out and give to others, even in small ways; an LGBTQ Christian group for fellowship; space to question and explore, to not be told exactly what must be believed; and a vital youth group.

By the way, since the beginning of the pandemic, First Pres has received 29 new members.



“I’m Gonna Let It Shine”

by Pastor Carrie

There is a twinkle in the building, and it’s visible Monday through Friday, 6:30am to 5:30pm. Each week, that twinkle ebbs and flows like the stars in the night sky as our Day School students learn, play, and grow together. Their presence truly brings light to our church, and it is an honor to watch them shine!

Every Wednesday, several of our Day School students join Mister Brent and me (Pastor Carrie) for weekly chapel time! During our twenty minutes of pure joy, we typically share a story from the B-I-B-L-E (yes, that’s the book for me!), and then we join for a song or two that reiterates just how much God loves each of them for exactly who they are.

While the kids are used to coming into the chapel with all the lights on, one day we changed it up and entered in the dark. Some of the kids were concerned that there were no lights, and many sat in quizzical silence. But then something magnificent registered on their tiny faces as a single candle was lit. Even as it was a battery-operated LED candle, together, we reveled in the light. We noticed the shadows, how the light flickered on the walls and the stained-glass window, and we talked about God’s light shining in each of us.



In true twinkle fashion, the kids’ faces lit up as they each were handed their own LED candle with a sticker that read, “You are the light of the world! Matthew 5:14” When everyone had their twinkling candle in hand, we held them high, and we sang, “This Little Light of Mine.” It should be no surprise that my own eyes were twinkling behind tears of joy and excitement for the next generation.

Friends, if you ever find your light dimming in the darkness of life, I invite you into a personal “chapel time” with your inner child. Imagine your candle twinkling in your heart, dispelling the shadows of doubt and isolation, and lighting up all the cool places that God created just for you. Be proud of your light and share that light with others, for you truly are the light of the world. So, let it shine, let it shine. Let it shine.