

**February 23, 2025  
Seventh Sunday After Epiphany  
11:00am — Sanctuary**



“Joseph Comforts his Brothers” by Shoshannah Brombacher; pastel and ink on paper , 24 X 18 inches,  
New York, 2008



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

WEST WAYNE STREET

## Welcome to First Presbyterian Church!

Whether you are worshipping with us for the first time or you're a longtime member, we are thrilled to have you join us as we explore our shared journey with Christ. I hope you find the worship service uplifting and meaningful.

Here at First Presbyterian Church, we hold our 193-year-old history in creative tension with 21st-century challenges. We honor traditions that have shaped generations before us while exploring how Jesus's message speaks to the complexities of life today. Our members come from different backgrounds, carry unique stories, and approach faith with a variety of perspectives. Some of us may have questions, others may have doubts, and many of us are navigating challenges—yet we come together as one body to worship and grow in faith.

You're welcome to visit our website at [www.firstpresfortwayne.org](http://www.firstpresfortwayne.org) for more information about the church, and I invite you to talk to any of the pastors, stop by the Welcome Table in the narthex (lobby) after church, and/or join us for coffee in McKay Hall following worship. We have many programs and community groups to feed your soul and expand your spirit. Try one out. And, if you are looking for a church home, we hope you'll get connected at First Presbyterian. It would be an honor to be your church family.

Blessings,  
Annie Epling Pastor/Head of Staff

### —> **Hearing Loops**

To use the “Hearing Loop” during the service, please switch your hearing aid or cochlear device to the “T”, T-Coil or telephone position.

### —> **Families with Children**

Jesus loves the little children, and we do too! But should you decide that today would be a good time to explore the nursery, your child, ages 6 months thru five years, is always invited. Our nursery meets in the first-floor day school wing, so please ask an usher or the front office volunteer for assistance and a key fob.

*\*Those who are able, please stand*

***Congregation responds in bold***

## **GATHERING**

### **Prelude**

Air

Gerre Hancock

### **Tolling of the Hour**

### **Call to Worship**

Our salvation is from the Lord;

**God is our refuge in times of trouble.**

The Lord helps us and rescues us;

**God saves us because we take refuge in our Lord.**

### **\*Hymn No. 403**

Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty

UNSER HERRSCHER

### **\*Call to Confession**

The world says that we get what we deserve. When we believe that, we hide our true selves from God and pretend to be without sin or deny the reality of our falling short of our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches us the truth. Grace is God's gift to us. God is merciful. God's love is the final word. Trusting in the grace, mercy, and love of God let us confess our sin together.

### **\*Prayer of Confession**

**Loving God, you call us to your merciful, gracious love freely given without expectation or strings attached. While we are eager to experience your mercy and grace in our own lives, we are quick to make our extension of your mercy and grace conditional for others. We would rather show mercy to those we judge worthy. We would rather extend grace to those who will show us grace in return. We would rather love those who are easiest to love. Forgive us, Redeeming God. So transform our hearts with your amazing grace and unconditional love that our relationships are transformed as we extend your mercy and grace as an expression of our gratitude for your saving love we know in Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **\*Assurance of Pardon**

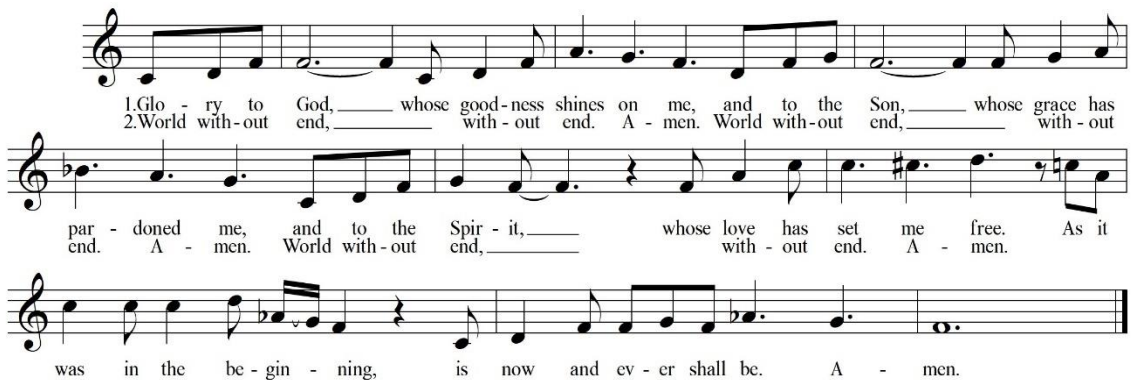
God's grace overflows and brings us new life. Friends, trust the good news:  
Through the grace of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God! **Amen.**

### **\*Passing the Peace of Christ**

The peace of Christ be with you.  
**And also with you.**

*As you are comfortable, we invite you to take a moment to share the Peace of Christ  
with those around you with a smile, wave, or other signs of connection.*

### **\*Responsive Hymn No. 582 Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me**



1. Glo - ry to God, \_\_\_\_\_ whose good-ness shines on me, and to the Son, \_\_\_\_\_ whose grace has  
2. World with-out end, \_\_\_\_\_ with - out end. A - men. World with-out end, \_\_\_\_\_ with - out

par - doned me, and to the Spir - it, \_\_\_\_\_ whose love has set me free. As it  
end. A - men. World with-out end, \_\_\_\_\_ with - out end. A - men.

was in the be - gin - ning, is now and ev - er shall be. A - men.

## **HEARING THE WORD**

### **Time with Children**

*Children and youth in kindergarten thru 9th grade are encouraged to head to  
Sunday School after the Time with Children.*

### **Prayer for Illumination**

### **Old Testament Reading**

Genesis 45:3-11

This is the Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God!**

**Anthem**

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

arr. Mark Hayes

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven,  
Feed me now and evermore;  
Bread of heaven,  
Feed me now and evermore.  
Open now the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing waters flow;  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through.  
Strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.  
Strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.  
When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side.  
Songs of praises, I will ever give to Thee;  
Songs of praises, I will ever give to Thee.

**Gospel Reading**

Luke 6:27-38

**Sermon**

"Are You Talking To Me?"

Rev. Dr. Anne Epling

**RESPONDING TO THE WORD****\*Affirmation of Faith**

We trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father. In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature,

and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation. In everlasting love, the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people to bless all families of the earth. Hearing their cry, God delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage. Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant. Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child, like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home, God is faithful still. Amen.

**\*Hymn No. 754**

Help Us Accept Each Other

BARONITA

## Announcements

### Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

### Invitation to the Offering

#### Offertory

Help Us Accept Each Other

arr. Emily Maxson Porter

### \*Responsive Hymn No. 606 Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

The image shows the musical notation for the hymn 'Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow'. It consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the hymn, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow; praise God, all crea-tures here be-low; praise  
God a-bove, ye heaven-ly host; Cre-at-or, Christ and Ho-ly Ghost. A-men.

### \*Prayer of Dedication

O God, may these gifts be used as a witness to your love, peace and justice at work in the world, renewing the face of the earth. Amen.

## **SENDING**

**\*Hymn No. 769**

For Everyone Born

FOR EVERYONE BORN

**\*Benediction**

**\*Postlude**

*Chant from Music for a Sunday Morning*

Wilbur Held

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## **Assisting with Worship this Morning**

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**Pastor:** Rev. Dr. Anne Epling (she/her)

**Elders of the Month/Greeters:** Carol Rhudy, Tom Swihart

**Ushers of the Month:** Eric Evans, Penny Pulz, June Schwertfager, Anita Wolfe

**Interim Organist and Handbell Choir Director:** Irene Ator

**Interim Chancel Choir Director:** Jonathan Busarow

**Assistant Organist:** Kathryn Miller

**Chancel Choir**

**Live Stream Operator:** Dick Florea

**Sound Board Operator:** Marj Sapp

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## **Prayer List**

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|----------------------|-------------------|
| • Mark Chasse        | • Jane Gastineau  |
| • John Ruble         | • Jeff Linville   |
| • Art & Lou Brickman | • Barbara McCants |
| • Bill Fish          | • Carol Kettler   |

**If you are in need of prayer or an encouraging word, let us know.**

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## News and Events

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### **Indiana University Singing Hoosiers — Today, Sanctuary**

Join us at 4pm for the return of the Indiana University Singing Hoosiers. One of the premier college show choirs of our time, they will sing pieces you will recognize, music from the Great American Song Book, and music that will inspire you through your week. Bring a friend, come early to get a seat, and we hope to see you here!

### **FWCS Clothing Bank**

The Schools Team wishes to remind everyone that a designated bin is available in the Small Dining Room to deposit gently-used clothing for the Fort Wayne Community Schools Clothing Bank. Through school referrals, the Clothing Bank has provided clothing for thousands of students and families in need, sometimes enabling the attendance of students who have no appropriate clothing for school. All types of gently-used clothing in all sizes (baby to adult) are needed, as well as shoes, coats, boots, gloves/mittens, and hats. (Socks and underwear must be new.) If you're paring down your wardrobe, please remember to bring in a bag of wearable items for the FWCS Clothing Bank bin. Thank you!

### **Touchy Topics Book Club — February 26, Parlor**

Join Dr. Annie Epling for the next Touchy Topics Book Club this Wednesday at 6:30pm. We will read "A Father's Fight: Taking on Alex Jones and Reclaiming the Truth About Sandy Hook" by Robbie Parker. Parker's daughter was killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School mass shooting in Newtown, CT in December 2012.

This book is about the aftermath of that tragic event, Parker's and his family's grief journey, and Alex Jones's lies that it never happened and how that affected Parker. The book is emotional and hopeful. The book is also timely with the play "26 Pebbles" opening in the theater on March 14, since the play is about the ripple effects of Newtown.



### **Annual Meeting — March 2, McKay Hall**

The Session has called for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation to take place March 2 immediately following worship. The following business will be presented: annual reports, financial report for the preceding year, budget for the current year (information only), changes in the terms of call for the pastors, Nominating Committees report for church officers, and electing members to serve on the nominating committee.

### **Ash Wednesday Worship — March 5, Chapel**

Join us as we begin the season of Lent with a special **Ash Wednesday Worship Service** on **March 5 at 7:00 PM in the Chapel**. This solemn service will include the imposition of ashes and a time for reflection, prayer, and renewal. Come and enter this sacred season with a heart prepared for the journey ahead. All are welcome!

### **“26 Pebbles” — Opens March 14, Theater**

On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School and killed 26 innocent souls before taking his own life. These 26 innocent deaths, like pebbles thrown into a pond, created ripples and vibrations that were felt far beyond the initial rings. This is the story of those vibrations.

Similar in style to The Laramie Project, 26 Pebbles is a heartbreaking and riveting docudrama. Playwright Eric Ulloa conducted interviews with members of the community in Newtown and crafted them into an exploration of gun violence and a small town shaken by a horrific event.

The play runs March 15, 16, 21, and 22 at 7:30pm and Sunday matinees at 2:00pm on March 16 and 23. It is directed by John O’Connell. For tickets, call the Artstix box office 260-422-4226 or online at <https://tickets.artstix.org/>

### **2025 Presbyterian Scholarship — April 1, 2025**

The 2025 selection period for First Presbyterian scholarships is now open. Scholarships in the amount of up to \$1,000 are made available to members of First Presbyterian Church Fort Wayne, and their families to provide financial assistance in pursuit of post-secondary education.

Scholarship recipients may be of any age if they are/will be full-time students taking degree-directed courses. No one can receive the scholarship more than four times.

If interested, please email Sarah Kelley ([skelley@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:skelley@firstpresfortwayne.org)) in the Financial Office for more information and an application. Completed applications, along with a carefully edited essay, a listing of church participation and activities, and a cumulative high school or college transcript, must be received by April 1, 2025.

### **Lent 2025, Thursday Night Bible Study: The Message of Jesus — March 6 - April 10**

More than 3 billion people claim to follow Jesus, but aside from a handful of verses, how many actually know what he taught? In fact, much of what people think he taught, he never actually said.

Join us for our special **Lent Bible Study Series, “The Message of Jesus”**, where we’ll explore six of the most important themes in Jesus’s teachings, why they matter and how they speak to us today. Jesus’s message is not only life-changing; it’s world-changing.

**When: Thursdays, 6:15-7:15 PM**

**Where: The Parlor**

This study will deepen our understanding of the Lent focus in upcoming sermons and help us live out Jesus’s true message in our daily lives. Don’t miss this opportunity for meaningful discussion and spiritual growth!

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## GETTING CONNECTED

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### **MEMBERSHIP**

Whether you live in the Fort Wayne area or worship with us online, we welcome you to join our family of faith. Through Coffee with the Pastors, you'll learn more about First Presbyterian Church, its history, and its current ministry in a relaxed atmosphere. Whether you're sure membership is right for you, or you're just beginning to wonder if this might be your spiritual home, we'd love to have you join us for coffee. We will be hosting Coffee with the Pastors on May 4 at 9:15am in the Session Room. All are welcome.

### **ADULT EDUCATION**

#### **Wired Word — Sunday Mornings, 10am**

Join us each week as we delve into a topic inspired by recent news and explore how the Bible speaks to the events shaping our world today. Each Sunday brings a fresh topic, making this group perfect for those with busy schedules who may not be able to attend every week. Topics are emailed each Thursday, so please let Pastor Carrie know if you'd like to receive that email. All are welcome — come as you are and join the conversation.

#### **Touchy Topics — Quarterly Meetings**

This group reads a book (religious or not) about a touchy topic and then comes together to talk about it. Previous books include *Fever in the Heartland*, *Canary in the Coalmine*, and *This is How It Is*. Information on upcoming books can be found in the Friday e-news and News & Events section of the bulletin.

#### **Men's Bible Study — Fridays, 10am**

This group is led by Rev. Youngsoo An and meets on Zoom. For more information, email Rev. An at [ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org).

#### **Women's Bible Study — Fridays, 1pm**

This group is led by Rev. Ann Pitman and meets on Zoom. For more information, email Rev. Pitman at [apitman@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:apitman@firstpresfortwayne.org).

### **English and Korean Small Group Study — 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, 9:15am**

The lessons are published in both Korean and English, and the study is led by Rev. Youngsoo An and Rev. Annie Epling. Email them for more information at [ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org) or [aepling@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:aepling@firstpresfortwayne.org).

### **Table Talk for Women — Wednesdays, 10am**

This group reads a book at their own pace and is led by members of the group on Zoom. Look for more information about the group in the Friday e-news or New & Events section of the bulletin when they begin a new book.

## **FELLOWSHIP GROUPS**

### **North and South Dinner Groups — 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, 5:30pm**

A great way to get to know other First Pres members is through our local area Dinner Groups. These groups meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month. The South Dinner Group meets at Hall's Coventry (5745 Coventry Lane) at 5:30pm. No need to RSVP, just ask for the First Pres tables. It's a big group, so you can't miss it! The North Dinner Group meets at 5:30pm at Don Hall's Factory. Please RSVP to Sondra Mergenthal at (260) 437-9892 or by email at [lisoninc@aol.com](mailto:lisoninc@aol.com). We look forward to seeing you!

### **Faith, Fiber, and Fellowship — Mondays, 3pm**

This group meets weekly at 3pm on Mondays in Room 302 on the 3rd floor. Bring your latest fiber project for a time of fellowship and crafting.

### **Body, Brain, and Belief (3B) — Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30PM in McKay Hall**

Maintaining balance is essential as we age. A decline in stability increases the risk of falls, impacting independence and quality of life. Good balance helps prevent falls, supports daily activities, and reduces the risk of serious injuries.

Join us for 3B, a lifetime fitness class designed to improve balance, flexibility, and strength using chairs and other provided equipment. These free classes are open to all adults aged 50 and older and are filled with fun, fellowship, and fitness. Our holistic approach combines proven physical therapy exercises, healthy brain activities, and opportunities for spiritual, emotional, and social growth. Classes meet twice a week in McKay Hall. We'd love to have you join us!

## **Growing and Gaming — Second and Fourth Mondays, 2:30PM in McKay Hall**

Research shows that playing games together promotes growth in many areas — intellectual, social, relational, and emotional. Games challenge us in the moment, teach us to handle both losses and victories, and encourage us to think, act, and interact with others in new and engaging ways.

If you're retired or simply available for a bit of fun and growth, we'd love for you to join us! Enjoy games like Uno, dominoes, and a variety of card games in a relaxed and friendly setting. We meet on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 2:30PM. Come for games, stay for the friendships!

## **CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES**

### **Sunday School for Children and Youth**

Two Sunday School classes for children and youth are offered during the worship hour. We all begin worship in the sanctuary, then the children head to Sunday School after Time with Children. Please note: Sunday School classes will not meet on Communion Sundays so that we may all participate in that sacrament as a family.

#### *Holy Moly — for children in Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade*

Join Mrs. Rachel and Friends for another fun semester of learning from the Holy Moly curriculum from SparkHouse. Each class includes a Bible story, video, and craft time, with an opportunity to earn Bible Bucks for fun prizes and treats.

#### *Level Up — for youth in 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades*

Taught by Pastor Carrie and other members of the church, we explore big questions about our church, our faith, and the world, such as science, politics, social justice, and environment.

### **Youth Group — 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month, 12:15-2PM, lunch provided**

Building relationships while burning off some energy is important! Through service, games, food, and more, we have many events to decompress from school and extracurriculars throughout the year. All 6th-12th graders are encouraged to join this amazing group of young people!

## **MISSIONS**

Through our Missions Ministry, many of our members and friends are engaged in volunteering and advocacy. Our programs include making and serving dinner at the Rescue Mission on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month, providing a meal for the residents of St. Joseph Missions monthly, packing weekend meals for Washington Elementary students on Sundays after worship in McKay Hall, and our annual Hands On Fort Wayne day of service. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month, we collect food for local food banks. We also maintain mission partnerships with many local, national, and international partners. They include:

- Help Not Handcuffs
- Washington Elementary School
- South Wayne Elementary School
- South Side High School
- St. Josephs Mission
- Wellspring Interfaith Services
- East Wayne Street Food Bank
- United Faith Presbyterian Church Food Bank
- Amistad Presbyterian Church
- Matthew 25 Clinic
- Rescue Mission
- Reproductive Rights Action Committee with Plymouth UCC
- PC(USA) Mission Co-Workers in Costa Rica, Taiwan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon

## **Green Team**

Our Green Team is active throughout the year. In the winter, you can find them distributing the “Bag of Bags,” which are reusable grocery bags. In the spring, they have a booth at Eco Fest, sponsor a recycling drive at Hands ON Fort Wayne, and host our biennial Pet Blessing with a collection of items for local animal shelters. Throughout the year, they sell Fair Trade chocolate with proceeds supporting our food bank ministry.

## **FINE ARTS MINISTRY**

The **Fine Arts Ministry** consists of the Art Gallery, Music Series, and the Theater. Throughout the year, the three art forms together present exhibits, concerts and shows which seek to enhance our faith through visual art, music, and drama all while highlighting themes and challenges within our world. The mission of the Fine Arts Ministry is to *Enrich Our Faith Through the Arts*. This important ministry seeks to create artistic beauty and to help us grow in our faith with God right along with the mission of the church. A full listing of these events can be found at <https://firstpresfortwayne.org/arts/>.

The **Music Ministry** at First Pres has several ensembles open to anyone who loves to make music with others. From Labor Day through Memorial Day, the Chancel Choir meets in the Music Room on the second floor from 7-8:30pm and the Handbell Choir meets in Room 206 from 5:30-6:30pm, both on Thursday evenings. The Children's Choir rehearses for three-week periods throughout the year and sings in the 11am Worship Service at the end of those rehearsal times. Anyone is welcome to join with no experience necessary.

Our **Theater**, established in 1968, creates entertaining, educational, and inclusive theatre productions to inspire and motivate our audiences. We produce comedies, musicals, and dramas that teach us about ourselves and the world we live in. Our engaging productions have something for everyone, including pertinent messages like love, compassion, and bravery, while focusing on the human condition which can be funny and traumatizing.

## CALENDAR

Today

10:00 am

**Wired Word.**—2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Parlor

11:00 am

**Worship.**—Sanctuary & Livestream

**Korean Language Worship Service.**—Chapel & Livestream

**Sunday School.**—2<sup>nd</sup> floor classrooms and Youth Lounge

12:15 pm

**Blessings in a Backpack.**—McKay Hall

4:00 pm

**Indiana University Singing Hoosiers.**—Sanctuary

This Week

**Mon Feb 24**

1:30 pm

**Body, Brain, and Belief (3B).** —McKay Hall. Lifetime fitness class for adults aged 50 and older.

2:30 pm

**Growing and Gaming.**—McKay Hall. Enjoy games like Uno, dominoes, and a variety of card games in a relaxed and friendly setting.

3:00 pm

**Faith, Fibers, and Fellowship.**—Room 302. Bring your fiber project for a time of fellowship and crafting with other women.

5:00 pm

**St. Joseph Rescue Mission.**—Offsite. Bring your meal to serve to the women of St. Joseph.

**Wed Feb 26**

1:30 pm

**Body, Brain, and Belief (3B).** —McKay Hall. Lifetime fitness class for adults aged 50 and older.

6:30 pm

**Touchy Topics.**—Parlor. We will read “A Father’s Fight: Taking on Alex Jones and Reclaiming the Truth About Sandy Hook” by Robbie Parker.

**Fri Feb 28**

10:00 am

**Men’s Bible Study.**—Zoom. Email Rev. Youngsoo An [ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org) for more information.

1:00 pm

**Women’s Bible Study.**—Zoom. Email Rev. Ann Pitman [apitman@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:apitman@firstpresfortwayne.org) for more information.

Coming Up

**Wed Mar 5**

7:00 pm

**Ash Wednesday.**—Chapel

**Thu Mar 6**

6:15 pm

**Lent Bible Study.**—Parlor. Join us for our special series, where we’ll explore six of the most important themes in Jesus’s teachings.