I am still astounded how, every now and then, a portion of Scripture seems to be able to speak directly into what I have been experiencing or praying about. The Bible is not some sort of mystic talisman or even a panacea for all that woes us. In actuality, the Bible is the inspired word of God. It consists of the inspiration and awareness our Creator wishes to share with all of us. Knowing that, maybe I shouldn’t be so surprised when I encounter something that seems so personal and applicable inside Holy Scripture.

Most recently, it has been Hebrews 12 that has resonated with me so strongly. It is a portion of God’s Word that highlights so many moving and powerful realities, especially during this season we are all enduring. Community, perseverance, peace, and more. I encourage you to pick up your Bible and read this remarkable text.

For now, I simply want to echo some of the opening words: “And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” Friends, we have the way ahead marked out for us. It is a continued season of social distancing and caution. But it is also a path rich with the opportunity to grow in our faith. If nothing else, times such as this afford us almost no choice but to fix our eyes on Christ and seek out all of the affirmation and inspiration we so desperately need. Let’s look at Jesus right now, wherever He might be found. As difficult as it may be, let’s keep running this odd and new road. And let’s do those two things together.

- Pastor, Matt Wilcox

God’s grace. In worship on Sunday, May 3, designated as Legacy Sunday, we will spend a few minutes encouraging everyone to continue their planning to address their future needs related to health and family. We also ask you to consider First Presbyterian Church and other charitable organizations as opportunities to help the next generations as you reflect on the legacy you want to pass on.

Resources will be available to assist everyone and simplify your efforts. Legacy Committee members are always available to field your questions. You can obtain information on the church website at firstpresnormal.org/legacy or contact Rob Kelley at (309) 532-8859 or e-mail at grc.kelley@gmail.com.

Creating a will and keeping it up to date make up the foundation of planning responsibly for the future so that we can use the gifts we’ve received to serve others as faithful stewards of
Hey, senior high kids and adults who are going on the Senior High Mission trip! You should have received an email from Dana Sutton asking you to complete the Youthworks registration, including the covenant to sign. Please complete this as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please call Dana Sutton at (309) 530-7552 or dana.ksutton@comcast.net or dana.k.sutton@gmail.com. We can’t wait for Benton Harbor, Michigan!

A gift to the Pentecost Offering helps the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also addresses the needs of at-risk children. 40% of the Pentecost offering can be retained by individual congregations wanting to make an impact in the lives of young people within their own community. The remaining 60% is used to support children-at-risk, youth, and young adults through ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. If you would like to support this special offering, please mail checks to: First Presbyterian Church, 2000 E College Ave, Normal, IL 61761. Please write “Pentecost Offering” on the memo line. Please only give as you are able. We appreciate your support of this annual offering.

**MEMORIAL GARDEN UPDATE**

We are pleased to report that as of the end of March, we have had eight niches purchased for our members. Because they may select an available niche, they are NOT all in a row! In addition, three members have asked for their cremains to be scattered in the Garden.

The plans for landscaping in the Garden are feeling the effects of COVID-19 which put the pavers on hold. However, now that the weather is OK, plantings around our columbarium wall will soon appear.

Contact us for more information: Carole Ringer, John Heitz, Barb Lemmon, Jerry Ringer, Carol Schrantz, Kurt Swearingen, John Wolter.

The Adult Discipleship committee would like to invite you to participate in the creation of virtual small groups. As we continue to physically distance ourselves, we want to make sure we can come together to promote our spiritual connectedness. The committee will sponsor a kickoff group in the month of May (details to be announced), and facilitate as many new groups as needed to help connect our congregation and friends of congregants who wish to participate. Please email Doug Schwalm at dschwalm@gmail.com with your interest in joining a virtual small group, and any particular type of topic you are interested in.
With bad jokes, awesome prizes, and lots of great food, this year’s party was going to be monumental. But our carefully made plans suddenly all came unglued when the Governor declared it non-essential. So, you’ve already guessed what we’re sorry to say, the party is canceled for now, but remember when this crisis subsides, and if things go our way, Cinco De Mayo might be in September.

2020 SUMMER CAMP
After careful deliberation and much conversation, CAMP will be postponed until August. After speaking with the camp staff, we are excited to offer a weekend camp, August 14-16. Camp documents are available at firstpresnormal.org, under the “Resources” tab. There is an option again this year for Day Camp and Overnight Camp. - Ann Lamkey

DO YOU NEED MASKS?
Church member, Dorothy Lambert, is offering to provide masks for anyone in our congregation who would like one. Please call her at (309) 663-8964 and let her know how many you need. She will give you her address and leave them on her porch for pick up.

MAY Birthdays

| Ian McAllister | 1 | Curt Trout | 10 | Dustin Sutton | 25 |
| Sandy Peyton | 1 | Jennifer Woodward | 10 | Sharry Zimmerman | 25 |
| Todd Smith | 2 | Heather Flitz | 10 | Tristan Bishop | 26 |
| Haley Mullins | 2 | Peter Kelly | 10 | Elizabeth Redd | 27 |
| Louise Crumpler | 3 | Becky Byrd | 11 | Don Peters | 28 |
| Benjamin Koh | 3 | Andrew McAllister | 11 | Allison Hoepker | 28 |
| Robin Seyller | 3 | Elaine Thede | 15 | Susan Rink | 29 |
| Jaren Frankowiak | 4 | Knox Echeverria | 15 | Preston Cryer | 29 |
| Sarah Jome | 5 | Kim Kern | 16 | Linda Speers | 29 |
| Kayla Benckendorf | 6 | Melissa Homler | 18 | Brad Ehredt | 30 |
| Roger Reimann | 6 | David White | 19 | Nathan Hansing | 30 |
| Larry Thede | 7 | John Barnet | 20 | Emmet Hoffman | 31 |
| Bryan Freeman | 8 | Nick Pull | 21 |  |
| Martin Hobbs | 9 | Tom Dulee | 21 |  |
| Debbie Brown | 9 | Alison Smith | 24 |  |

If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please contact Anne Lunt, Administrative Assistant at alunt@firstpresnormal.org.

We are thrilled to announce that we have hired our new Director of Student and Young Adult Ministry: Juliette Ramsey! Juliette will graduate this month from Eastern University with a bachelor’s degree in Youth Ministry. In addition, Juliette has spent the last three years serving as an Associate Director of Youth Ministry at Church of the Good Samaritan in Paoli, PA. Juliette will be bringing with her an inspiring testimony of how God has moved in her life as well as a great energy and passion for helping students and young adults find their identity and calling in Jesus Christ. We can’t wait to welcome her in person!

Thank you so much to the search team for all of their thoughtful and diligent work this past year in searching for the person God had been preparing!
CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE
The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted just about every aspect of our “normal” lives. The impact has not been experienced equally by everyone, but everyone has been affected in some way. How can we respond to the needs of the most vulnerable among us?

Through your financial contributions to First Pres, you support a number of local and global ministries. Many of our local mission partners are on the front lines of serving the most basic human needs, such as food, housing, and medical care. Those agencies include Home Sweet Home Ministries, Western Avenue Community Center, Midwest Food Bank, Community Healthcare Clinic, Mid Central Community Action, Salvation Army, Boys & Girls Club, PATH, Faith in Action, Project Oz, and Kemmerer Village. We also support emergency assistance programs at Fairview School in Normal and Sheridan School in Bloomington. Our other partners work more directly in the areas of social justice and practical assistance for marginalized populations such as immigrants and ex-prisoners; those partners include Immigration Project, Illinois Peoples Action, Mom and Me Camp, Joy Care/Jobs Project, and Labyrinth. Virtually all our mission partners have had their operations impacted in one way or another by the coronavirus pandemic. Some have suspended most or all of their operations to practice safe social distancing. Those that are compelled to maintain operations, because their services are essential, have instituted the most stringent safety measures possible. Many have modified their operations in response to current developments. Some have suspended or curtailed the use of volunteers, while others are in need of volunteers but are finding the volunteer pool to be drying up. Many are facing financial challenges as demands for services have increased. Many of these partners have current information on their websites that may be of interest to you. Another good source of local information is the BN Prepared website, under the Community/Resources tab (bnprepared.org/resources).

We have reported previously on our recent efforts to establish a food pantry at Sheridan Elementary School in Bloomington. In addition to the financial and volunteer resources provided by First Pres, we have been successful in leveraging our support with a grant from Presbytery of Great Rivers. Here is an update on our work with Sheridan:

How are we responding to the needs of Sheridan families during the pandemic?
Since the Pantry inside the school building cannot be accessed, First Pres is providing Walmart gift cards for families to use. We also participated in a school supply drive so that students could obtain what they needed to continue learning at home. Thank you to everyone who donated!

How do they know who needs assistance?
Teachers and staff are in regular communication with every family. Before schoolwork and paperwork, maintaining positive relationships with families is a first priority.

How do we know that others aren’t providing the same help?
There is a collaborative of 15 non-profit agencies (United Way, Boys and Girls Club, The Baby Fold, Midwest Food Bank, for example) that work together to assist families in need in District 87. First Pres has partnered with E-Free Church to focus on Sheridan Elementary.

Continued on next page...
HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATE?
• See the Sheridan School message under the Resources tab at firstpresnormal.org
• Most importantly, continue to pray for our community, especially those in greatest need. Place this article on your kitchen table to serve as a daily reminder!!

DENOMINATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC
Just like each of us as individuals, and First Pres as a local congregation, our denomination is facing the challenge of responding to humanitarian needs while protecting the safety of staff, volunteers and recipients of services. A good information source is the “Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resources for Congregations and Members” section of the PC(USA) website (pcusa.org/covid19/). The “Responding to Community Needs” bullet is especially interesting when thinking about a local response. This section contains a number of links to other practical information.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is one of the programs supported by the recent One Great Hour of Sharing special offering (the others are Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self-Development of People). PDA is working on an overall response to COVID-19, but is finding its traditional methods of responding to natural disasters, such as tornadoes, are being challenged by travel restrictions, social distancing requirements, etc. Volunteer trips have been suspended through June.

The PC(USA) recently requested all mission co-workers with the US as home base (including US citizens and permanent residents) to return to the US. With numerous mission co-workers scattered around the globe, a great deal of individual coordination was required to determine the best course of action. In some cases, borders and airports were closed. In other cases, the mission co-workers made the decision to shelter in place. Bob and Kristi Rice, mission co-workers to South Sudan, have returned to Bloomington-Normal. Timing of their return to South Sudan is unknown at this time.

So, while you’re enduring forced isolation, why not spend some time exploring the PC(USA) and Presbyterian Mission Agency websites? You’ll be inspired and challenged, and will find more information than you can digest at one time.