FIRST MERCHANTS CORP Form 8-K February 05, 2009

> UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION Washington, DC 20549

> > FORM 8-K

CURRENT REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

DATE OF REPORT (Date of earliest event reported): February 5, 2009

FIRST MERCHANTS CORPORATION (Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

TNDTANA (State or other jurisdiction (Commission file number) of incorporation)

0-17071

35-1544218 (IRS Employer Identification No.)

200 East Jackson Street P.O. Box 792 Muncie, IN 47305-2814 (Address of principal executive offices, including zip code)

(765) 747-1500 (Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

Not Applicable (Former name or former address, if changed since last report)

Check the appropriate box below if the Form 8-K filing is intended to simultaneously satisfy the filing obligation of the registrant under any of the following provisions:

- [] Written communications pursuant to Rule 425 under the Securities Act (17 CFR 230.425)
- [] Soliciting material pursuant to Rule 14a-12 under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.14a-12)
- [] Pre-commencement communications pursuant to Rule 14d-2(b) under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.14d-2(b))
- [] Pre-commencement communications pursuant to Rule 13e-4(c) under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.13e-4(c))

ITEM 2.02 RESULTS OF OPERATIONS AND FINANCIAL CONDITION.

On February 5, 2009 First Merchants Corporation issued a press release to report its financial results for the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2008. A copy of

the press release is furnished as Exhibit 99.1 to this Current Report on Form $8\mathchar`-K.$

The information in this Current Report on Form 8-K, including Exhibit No. 99.1 hereto, shall not be deemed "filed" for purposes of Section 18 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or otherwise subject to liability of that section. The information in this Current Report shall not be incorporated by reference into any filing or other document pursuant to the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, except as shall be expressly set forth by specific reference in such filing or document.

- ITEM 9.01 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND EXHIBITS.
- (a) Not applicable.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) Exhibits.

Exhibit 99.1 Press Release, dated February 5, 2008, issued by First Merchants Corporation

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the Registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned hereunto duly authorized.

First Merchants Corporation (Registrant)

By: /s/ Mark K. Hardwick

Mark K. Hardwick Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (Principal Financial and Principal Accounting Officer)

Dated: February 5, 2009

EXHIBIT INDEX

Description

Exhibit No. -----99.1

-----Press Release, dated February 5, 2009, issued by First Merchants Corporation.

First Merchants Corporation

Exhibit No. 99.1

Press Release, dated February 5, 2009

N / E / W / S R / E / L / E / A / S / E

February 5, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE For more information, contact: Mark K. Hardwick, Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, 765-751-1857 http://www.firstmerchants.com

SOURCE: First Merchants Corporation, Muncie, Indiana

FIRST MERCHANTS CORPORATION ANNOUNCES 2008 EARNINGS OF \$20.6 MILLION.

First Merchants Corporation (NASDAQ - FRME) has reported 2008 diluted earnings per share of \$1.14, a decline of \$.59 from the 2007 total of \$1.73. Net Income for the year totaled \$20.6 million compared to the 2007 total of \$31.6 million.

Total assets reached a record \$4.8 billion at quarter-end, an increase of \$1 billion, from the December 31, 2007 total of \$3.8 billion. Of the \$1 billion increase, the completion of the merger with Lincoln Bancorp on December 31, 2008 accounted for \$876 million of the increase.

The completion of the Lincoln Bancorp acquisition continues the corporation's direction of pursuing stronger growth markets. More importantly the board of directors and management of First Merchants Corporation believe the strategic focus on the Indianapolis marketplace through the addition of Lincoln and its 17 banking centers will accelerate First Merchants position in many of the fastest growing counties within Indiana. Lincoln's operating earnings did not impact First Merchants Corporation's net income during 2008 as the acquisition was completed on December 31, 2008. By contrast the December 31, 2008 balance sheet is consolidated to include Lincoln.

Loans and investments, the Corporation's primary earning assets, totaled \$4.20 billion, an increase of \$876 million, or 26.3 percent, over the prior year. Loans accounted for \$846 million of the increase as investment securities increased by \$31 million. Of the \$876 million increase, Lincoln accounted for \$637 million in loans and \$122 million in investments.

The Corporation's allowance for loan losses as a percent of total loans increased from .98 percent to 1.31 during the year, a \$20.7 million increase. Provision expense exceeded net charge-offs by \$12 million and Lincoln Bank added \$8.7 million to the Corporation's allowance for loan loss total at year-end. The increased allowance for loan losses total is comprised of a \$2.4 million increase specific impairment reserves, \$4.1 million in the general historical loss component and a \$14.2 million increase in environmental factors. None of the increases in specific reserves were related to Lincoln as all recognized impairments were charged down to the fair value prior to closing the transaction. Total specific impairment reserves are \$9.8 million or 20% of the total allowance methodology.

Non-performing loans totaled \$88 million, including the addition of \$34 million from Lincoln. Of the \$88 million in non-performing loans, commercial real estate loans totaled \$29 million, land and lot development loans totaled \$20 million, 1-4 family residential properties totaled \$18 million, commercial and industrial loans totaled \$16 million and other loans totaled \$5 million. The Corporation's exposure to land development, single-family residential development, condominium

and duplex development projects is limited to \$76 million. Non performing loans totaled \$88 million, including the addition of \$34 million from Lincoln.

The Corporations total deposits increased during the year by \$875 million as Lincoln Bank accounted for \$655 million of the increase. Total borrowings increased by just \$50 million including the \$137 million increase from Lincoln Bank. As of December 31, 2008 the Corporation's tangible capital totaled 5.01%, tier 1 leverage ratio totaled 7.86%, tier 1 risk based capital totaled 7.31% and total risk based capital totaled 9.84%. The decrease in the Corporation's capital ratios for the year is primarily attributable to two factors.

The first factor of note is the decline in First Merchants other comprehensive income of \$12.8 million resulting from investment security write-down's under FASB 115 totaling \$1.3 million and the decline in pension plan asset valuations totaling \$11.5 million during the year. The second factor is a combination of items related to the Lincoln Bancorp acquisition. The Corporation used cash of \$16.8 million as part of the \$77.3 million purchase price resulting in increased common equity of \$60.1 million to acquire an \$876 million institution. Additionally, as a result of the acquisition First Merchants added \$32.3 million of intangibles from the closing of Lincoln Bancorp.

Core deposit intangibles totaled \$12.4 million, while purchase accounting adjustments to Lincoln's assets and liabilities totaled \$11.6 million resulting in Goodwill. The remaining \$8.3 million is reflective of the premium paid by First Merchants Corporation over Lincoln Bancorp's tangible equity at year-end. The purchase accounting adjustments of \$11.6 million reduced total risk based capital by 30 basis points, but they will positively accrete to income over the life of the individual instruments. When combining our thorough due diligence and pre-closing efforts, with our April 2009 integration efforts, First Merchants expects Lincoln to be accretive in year one.

The Corporation recognizes the difficulties of the economy and the importance of continuing First Merchants history of being "well capitalized". On November 12, 2008 the Corporation applied for participation in the U.S. Department of Treasury's Capital Purchase Program in an amount totaling \$116 million. The application has been approved by the Corporation's primary regulator and was forwarded to the Treasury Department on January 16, 2008. The addition of \$116 million in preferred stock would improve the Corporation's Total Risk Based Capital Ratio to 12.80%, comfortably above the "well capitalized" guidelines.

Net-Interest margin expanded by 29 basis points from 3.55 percent in 2007 to 3.84 percent in 2008. As a result, net-interest income increased by \$16.3 million, or 14.4 percent. Net interest margin remained strong even during the forth quarter as the Federal Reserve Board lowered the target Fed Funds rate to just 25 basis points. Aggressive deposit pricing and the use of interest rate floors on over \$360 million of the Corporation's rate prime indexed loans helped preserve the Corporation's net interest margin.

Provision expense totaled \$27.6 million in 2008, an increase of \$19.1 million over the prior. The increase in provision expense exceeded the expansion of net interest income by \$2.9 million.

Total non-interest income decreased by \$4.2 million in 2008. Income from changes in the cash surrender value of bank owned life insurance (BOLI) declined by \$3.9 million. During the fourth quarter the corporation recorded a loss of \$2.1 million due to declines in market value below the stable value wrap. BOLI losses are not tax deductible resulting in a \$3.9 million decrease in Net Income. On December 18, 2008, management changed the investment elections under the separate account policy structure to more conservative investments. The Corporation also lost \$1.5 million on Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation preferred stock. The Corporation has no additional equity exposure to FHLMC and FNMA and no remaining exposure to private label mortgage backed investment

securities.

Additionally, the Corporation elected to expense \$1.2 million of its \$15.5 million original book balance trust preferred pooled investment exposure. The loss is attributable to a Trapeza IV pool, the only pool deemed to be other than temporarily impaired as of year-end. The remaining \$13.5 million of exposure to trust preferred pools is diversified among eight FTN PreTsl investments.

Total non-interest expenses for the year increased by \$7.2 million or 7% as salary and benefit expense increased by \$4.5 million. The remaining increases in other expense include an increase of \$1.8 million in other real estate expense and \$860,000 of professional services related to loan workouts. First Merchants also sold the assets of Indiana Title Insurance Company, LLC resulting in a \$560,000 loss during the month of December.

Michael C. Rechin, President and Chief Executive Officer, stated that, "First Merchants Corporation's management team is focused on five objectives in 2009 including capital & liquidity management, asset quality, net interest margin management, expense management and the success of the Lincoln acquisition. We remain confident that our people, strategies, capital, liquidity, and commitment to endure the current environment will prove successful in the short and long-term time horizon."

Rechin continued, "As complex and uncertain as the Banking environment has become, First Merchants is pleased to earn more than \$20 million in net income, while improving it's allowance to loans recognizing the negative economic trends nationally and in the mid-west."

CONFERENCE CALL

First Merchants Corporation will conduct a conference call at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, February 5, 2009. To participate, callers in the US/Canada should dial (Toll Free) 800-860-2442 while international participants should use +1 412-858-4600. Please reference First Merchants Corporation's fourth quarter earnings. A replay will be available until 9:00 AM ET on February 13, 2009. To access replay, US/Canada participants should dial (Toll Free) 877-344-7529, or for International participants, dial +1 412-317-0088. The replay requires a pass code of 426723.

During the call, we may make Forward-Looking Statements about our relative business outlook. These Forward-Looking Statements and all other statements made during the call that do not concern historical facts are subject to risks and uncertainties that may materially affect actual results.

Specific Forward-Looking Statements include, but are not limited to, any indications regarding the Financial Services industry, the economy and future growth of the balance sheet or income statement.

Detailed financial results are reported on the attached pages:

First Merchants Corporation is a financial holding company headquartered in Muncie, Indiana. Subsidiaries of the Corporation include First Merchants Bank, N.A., First Merchants Bank of Central Indiana, N.A., Lafayette Bank & Trust Company, N.A., Commerce National Bank, Lincoln Bank and First Merchants Trust Company, N.A. The Corporation also operates First Merchants Insurance Services, a full-service property casualty, personal lines, and healthcare insurance agency

First Merchants Corporation's common stock is traded over-the-counter on the NASDAQ National Market System under the symbol FRME. Quotations are carried in daily newspapers and can be found on the company's Internet web page

(http://www.firstmerchants.com).

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CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS (in thousands)	Decembe	er 31.
(In chousands)	2008	51 J1 /
Assets		
Cash and due from banks	\$ 84,249	\$
Federal funds sold	66,237	
Cash and cash equivalents	150,486	
Interest-bearing time deposits	38,823	
Investment securities	481,984	
Mortgage loans held for sale	4,295	
Loans	3,721,952	2,
Less: Allowance for loan losses	(48,946)	
Net loans	3,673,006	2,
Premises and equipment	59,641	
Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan Bank stock	34,319	
Interest receivable	23,976	
Core deposit intangibles and goodwill	165,974	
Cash surrender value of life insurance	93,222	
Other real estate owned	18,458	
Other assets	40,568	
Total assets	\$ 4,784,752	\$3,
iabilities		====
Deposits		
Noninterest-bearing	460,519	
Interest-bearing	3,258,292	2,
Total deposits	3,718,811	2,
Borrowings		
Fed funds purchased	100 011	
Securities sold under repurchase agreements Federal Home Loan Bank advances	122,311 360,217	
Federal Home Loan Bank advances Subordinated debentures, revolving credit	112,000	
Subordinated debentures, revolving credit lines and term loans	135,826	
Total borrowings	618,354	
Interest payable	8,844	
Other liabilities	42,840	
Total liabilities	4,388,849	З,
tockholders- equity		
Preferred stock, no-par value		
Authorized and unissued - 500,000 shares		
Cumulative Preferred Stock, \$1,000 par value:		
Authorized - 600 shares	105	
Issued and outstanding - 125 shares	125	
Common stock, \$.125 stated value		
Authorized - 50,000,000 shares		
Issued and outstanding - 21,178,123 and	2 - - -	
18,002,787 shares	2,647	

Additional paid-in capital	202,299	1
Retained earnings	206,496	2
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(15,664)	
Total stockholders' equity	395,903	3
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 4,784,752	\$3 , 7
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FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHIS	Three Months Ended			
(in thousands)	Dece 2008	ember 31, 2007		
NET CHARGE OFF'S	\$ 4,372	\$ 1,857		
AVERAGE BALANCES				
Total Assets	\$ 3,870,159	\$ 3,735,931		
Total Loans	3,082,061	2,873,989		
Total Deposits	3,009,123	2,812,760		
Total Stockholders' Equity	353,164	335,649		
FINANCIAL RATIOS				
Return on Average Assets	.02%	1.00%		
Return on Avg. Stockholders' Equity	0.25	11.10		
Avg. Earning Assets to Avg. Assets	91.15	90.70		
Allowance for Loan Losses as %				
of Total Loans	1.31	.98		
Net Charge Off's as % of Avg. Loans				
(Annualized)	.57	.26		
Dividend Payout Ratio	2,300.00	45.10		
Avg. Stockholders' Equity to Avg. Assets	9.13	8.98		
Tax Equivalent Yield on Earning Assets	6.21	7.13		
Cost of Supporting Liabilities	2.33	3.47		
Net Int. Margin (FTE) on Earning Assets	3.88	3.66		
(in thousands, except share data)	Three Months Ended December 31,			
	2008	2007		
Interest income	2000	2007		
Loans receivable				
Taxable	\$ 48,433	\$ 53,338		
Tax exempt	349	302		
Investment securities				
Taxable	2,907	3,487		
Tax exempt	1,511	1,623		
Federal funds sold	-,	39		
Deposits with financial institutions	194	194		
Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan Bank stock	335	344		
Total interest income	53 , 736	59,327		
Internet empres				
Interest expense	15 (00)	22.200		
Deposits Technick for the construction	15,638	22,398		
Federal funds purchased	108	692		
Securities sold under repurchase agreements	502	1,182		
Federal Home Loan Bank advances Subordinated debentures, revolving credit lines	2,583	3,250		
Suboraliacea debencares, revolving create lines				

\$

and term loans	1,757	1,910
Total interest expense	20,588	29,432
Net interest income		
Provision for loan losses	33,148 9,654	29,895 2,450
110013101 101 1011 103363		
Net interest income		
After provision for loan losses		27,445
Other income		
Services charges on deposit accounts	3,346	3,206
Fiduciary activities	1,831	2,094
Other customer fees	1,634	1,686
Commission income	1,271	
Earnings on cash surrender value		,
of life insurance	(2,130)	1,186
Net gains and fees on sales of loans	531	546
Net realized gains (losses) on sale of		
available-for-sale securities	(914)	1
Other income	717	383
Total other income	6 , 286	10,133
	, 	·
Other expenses		
Salaries and employee benefits	16,219	14,738
Net occupancy	2,299	1,619
Equipment	1,713	1,619
Marketing	610	505
Outside data processing fees	1,128	872
Printing and office supplies	361	329
Core deposit amortization	809	789
Write-off of unamortized underwriting expense		
Other expenses	6,458	4,776
Total other expenses	29,597	25,247
Income before income tax	183	12,331
Income tax expense	(38)	3,021
Net income	\$ 221	
Net income	\$ 221 =======	\$ 9,310 ======
Per Share Data		
Basic Net Income	.01	.51
Diluted Net Income	.01	.51
Cash Dividends Paid	.01	.23
Average Diluted Shares	. 2.3	. 2.3
Outstanding (in thousands)	18,257	18,138
outstanding (in thousands)	10,201	10,100

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December 31, September 30, June 30,

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS (in thousands)

2008	2008	2008
66 , 237	7,818	\$ 80,996
		80,996
38,823	15,623	7,267
481,984	388,808	408,324
4,295	2,062	3,234
	3,078,768	3,018,596
(48,946)	(34,985)	(31,597)
59,641	44,402	44,232
		25,455
165,974	135,701	
		72,948
	16,916	17,243
		19,852
\$ 4,784,752	\$ 3,864,074	
		2,460,483
	57,600	151,356
122,311	100,227	90,872
360,217	237,225	228,196
135,826	•	
	571,308	
8,844	6,529	6,658
42,840	19,861	18,525
4,388,849	3,511,981	3,475,068
125	125	125
2,647	2,266	2,258
		140,258
•	•	206,059
(15,664)	(2,680)	(4,308)
395,903	352,093	347,392
	2008 \$ 84,249 66,237 150,486 38,823 481,984 4,295 3,721,952 (48,946) 3,673,006 59,641 34,319 23,976 165,974 93,222 18,458 40,568 \$ 4,784,752 460,519 3,258,292 3,718,811 122,311 360,217 135,826 618,354 8,844 42,840 4,388,849 125	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$

Total liabilities and stockholders' equity		\$ 3,864,074	\$ 3,822,460
NON-PERFORMING ASSETS	December 31, 2008	September 30, 2008	June 30, 2008
Non Accrual Loans Renegotiated Loans	87,546 130	135	34,410 136
Non Performing Loans (NPL) Real Estate Owned and Repossessed Assets	18,458		17,243
Non Performing Assets (NPA) 90+ Days Delinquent	106,134 5,982	54,930 8,056	51,789 3,538
NPAs & 90 Day Delinquent	112,116	 62,986	
Loan Loss Reserve YTD Charge-offs	48,946 15,602		31,597 7,524
NPAs / Actual Assets % NPAs & 90 Day / Actual Assets % NPAs / Actual Loans & REO (%) Loan Loss Reserves / Actual Loans (%) NCOs / YTD Average Loans (%)	2.22% 2.34% 2.83% 1.31% 0.52%	1.42% 1.63% 1.77% 1.14% 0.38%	1.35% 1.45% 1.70% 1.05% 0.26%
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF INCOME			
(in thousands, except share data)	December 31, 2008	September 30, 2008	June 30, 2008
Loans receivable Taxable Tax exempt	\$ 48,433 349	\$ 49,828 321	\$ 49,023 178
Investment securities Taxable Tax exempt	1,511	2,943 1,379	1,452
Federal funds sold Deposits with financial institutions Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan	7 194	10 146	3 133
Bank stock Total interest income	335	351 	370 54 106
		54,978	54,106
Interest expense			
Deposits	15,638		
Federal funds purchased	108	502	577
Securities sold under repurchase agreements	502	650	632
Federal Home Loan Bank advances Subordinated debentures, revolving credit	2,583		2,825
lines and term loans	1,757	1,635	1,602
		01 801	21 022
Total interest expense	20,588	21,724	21,933
Total interest expense Net interest income	20,588 33,148		

Net interest income

After provision for loan losses	23,494	26,160	25,103
Other income			
Service charges on deposit accounts	2 246	3,568	3,157
Fiduciary activities		1,932	
Other customer fees		1,696	
Commission income	1,271	1,457	1,427
Earnings on cash surrender value			
of life insurance	(2,130)	519	606
Net gains and fees on sales of loans	531	648	668
Net realized gains (losses) on sales of			
available-for-sale securities	(914)	(1,255)	13
Other income	717	655	570
Total other income	6,286	9,220	10,334
Other expenses	1 (010	15 220	15 600
Salaries and employee benefits	16,219	15,330	15,698
Net occupancy	2,299		,
Equipment	1,713	1,649	1,643
Marketing	610	605	612
Outside data processing fees	1,128	1,068	1,009
Printing and office supplies	361	281	291
Core deposit amortization	809	809	808
Other expenses	6,458	5,516	4,593
Total other expenses	29 , 597	27,115	26,404
Income before income tax	183	8,265	9,033
Income tax expense	(38)	2,516	2,491
Net income	\$ 221 =======	\$ 5,749 =======	
Per Share Data			
Basic Net Income	.01	.32	.37
Diluted Net Income	.01	.32	.36
Cash Dividends Paid	.23	.23	.23
Average Diluted Shares	10 057	10 100	10 150
Outstanding (in thousands)	18,257	18,196	18,159
FINANCIAL RATIOS			
Return on Average Assets	.02%	.60%	.69%
Return on Average Stockholders' Equity	0.25	6.58	7.46
Avg. Earning Assets to Avg. Assets	91.15	91.02	90.94
Allowance for Loan Losses as %			
of Total Loans	1.31	1.14	1.05
Net Charge Off's as % of Average Loans			
(Annualized)	.57	.49	.61
Dividend Payout Ratio	2,300.00	71.88	63.85
	2,300.00	9.09	9.30
Average Stockholders' Equity to Average Assets			
Tax Equivalent Yield on Earning Assets	6.21	6.39	6.41
Cost of Supporting Liabilities	2.33	2.48	2.56
Net Interest Margin (FTE) on Earning Assets	3.88	3.91	3.85

December 31, September 30, June 30,

(in thousands, except share data)	2008	2008	2008
Commercial and industrial loans	\$ 904,646	\$ 851,233	\$ 815,137
Agricultural production financing and other loans to farmers	135,099	136,176	125,125
Real estate loans:	10 , 000	100,170	123,123
Construction	252,487	167,512	181,598
Commercial and farmland	1,202,372	966,259	954,672
Residential	956,245	731,065	718,065
Individuals' loans for household and			
other personal expenditures	-	145,345	
Tax exempt loans	28,070	34,010	22,553
Lease financing receivables, net of			
unearned income	8,996	9,262	9,158
Other loans	32,405	37,906	
Allowance for loan losses	3,721,952	3,078,768 (34,985)	
Total loans	\$ 3,673,006 ========	\$ 3,043,783	\$ 2,986,999 =======
DEPOSITS	December 31, 2008	September 30, 2008	June 30, 2008
(in thousands)			
Demand deposits		\$921,034	
Savings deposits	721,387	540,596	546,951
Certificates and other time deposits of		460 406	444 067
\$100,000 or more	509,730 1 251 427		444,967
Other certificates and time deposits	1,351,427	983,227	939,700
Total deposits	¢ 2 710 011		
	\$ 3,718,811 =========	\$ 2,914,283	\$ 2,863,635 =========