FIRST MERCHANTS CORP Form 8-K

October 23, 2006

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): October 23, 2006

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))

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ITEM 2.02 RESULTS OF OPERATIONS AND FINANCIAL CONDITION.

On October 23, 2006, First Merchants Corporation issued a press release to report its financial results for the third quarter ended September

30, 2006. A copy of the press $\,$ release is $\,$ furnished as Exhibit $\,$ 99.1 to this Current Report on Form 8-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 October 23, 2006, issued by First Merchants Corporation

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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: October 23, 2006

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EXHIBIT INDEX

Exhibit No.

99.1 Description

Press Release, dated October 23, 2006, issued by First Merchants Corporation.

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First Merchants Corporation

Exhibit No. 99.1

Press Release, dated October 23, 2006

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

October 23, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Mark K. Hardwick, Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, 765-751-1857 http://firstmerchants.com

SOURCE: First Merchants Corporation, Muncie, Indiana

FIRST MERCHANTS CORPORATION ANNOUNCES 3rd QUARTER EARNINGS PER SHARE

First Merchants Corporation (NASDAQ - FRME) has reported September 30, 2006 year-to-date diluted earnings per share totaling \$1.22, equaling 2005.

Third quarter diluted earnings per share totaled \$.42, a \$.02 decline from second quarter earnings per share of \$.44 in 2005. Net income for the quarter totaled \$7.7 million compared to \$8.2 million in 2005.

Total assets reached a record \$3.5 billion at quarter-end, an increase of \$233 million, or 7.2 percent from September 30, 2005. Loans and investments, the Corporation's primary earning assets, totaled \$3.1 billion, an increase of \$229 million or 8.0 percent over the prior year.

Net income declined by \$169,000 for the nine months ended September 30, 2006, reflecting the challenges of a sustained and increasingly inverted yield curve. Net-interest income declined by \$24,000 despite increases in earning assets as the Corporation's volume variance totaled a positive \$4,180,000 mitigated by a negative rate variance of \$4,204,000.

Non-interest income declined by \$745,000 resulting primarily from reduced gains from the sale of mortgage loans totaling \$668,000. Year-to-date operating expense increased by a modest 1.3 percent as management continues the process of streamlining its operating structure.

The allowance for loan losses has increased during the year by \$1.8 million as the Corporation's provision for loan losses declined by \$1.4 million. As of September 30, 2006, non-performing loans totaled 87 basis points of average total loans and the allowance for loan losses as a percent of total loans equaled 1.02 percent.

Michael L. Cox, President and Chief Executive Officer, stated that, "High single digit growth of loans and deposits coupled with expense management and talent acquisition continues to be the most positive representations of the controllable items in this business. Management is pleased with balance sheet growth, but the yield curve remains a challenge."

CONFERENCE CALL

First Merchants Corporation will conduct a conference call at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Monday, October 23, 2006. To participate, dial (Toll Free) 877-407-9210 and reference First Merchants Corporation's third quarter earnings. A replay will be available until October 30, 2006. To access replay, US/Canada participants should dial (Toll Free) 877-660-6853 or for International participants, dial 201-612-7415. The replay will require the Account # 286 and

Conference ID # 216501.

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., Madison Community Bank, N.A., United Communities National Bank, First National Bank, Decatur Bank & Trust Company, N.A., Frances Slocum Bank, N.A., Lafayette Bank & Trust Company, N.A., Commerce National 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 and is a majority member of Indiana Title Insurance Company, LLC, a title 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).

* * * *

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

(in thousands)	Septe	ember 30,
	2006	2005
Assets		
Cash and due from banks	\$ 65,641	\$ 81,310
Interest-bearing time deposits	8,717	10,708
Investment securities	468,074	436,794
Mortgage loans held for sale	3 , 395	5,026
Loans	2,641,644	2,443,931
Less: Allowance for loan losses	(26, 975)	(25,149)
Net loans	2,614,669	2,418,782
Premises and equipment	40,511	38,473
Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan Bank stock	23,620	23,165
Interest receivable	23,946	19,561
Core deposit intangibles and goodwill	136,666	139,597
Cash surrender value of life insurance	63,539	43,230
Other assets	23,261	21,792
Total assets	, -, ,	\$ 3,238,438
Liabilities	========	========
Deposits		
•	\$ 324 601	\$ 346,318
Noninterest-bearing		
Interest-bearing	2,369,690 	2,118,975
Total deposits	2,694,291	2,465,293

Borrowings	419,146	423 , 959
Interest payable	10,236	5,643
Other liabilities	26,075	25,153
Total liabilities	3,149,748	2,920,048
Stockholders' equity		
Preferred stock, no-par value		
Authorized and unissued 500,000 shares		
Common stock, \$.125 stated value		
Authorized 50,000,000 shares		
Issued and outstanding 18,334,811 and 18,507,970 shares	2,292	2,313
Additional paid-in capital	143,688	148,004
Retained earnings	184,555	171,419
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(8,244)	(3,346)
Total stockholders' equity	322,291	318,390
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 3,472,039	\$ 3,238,438
	========	========

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

(In thousands)		ths Ended aber 30, 2005		ths Ended ber 30, 2005
NET CHARGE OFF'S	\$ 467	\$ 1,736	\$ 3 , 226	\$ 3 , 808
AVERAGE BALANCES				
Total Assets	\$3,424,504	\$3,202,198	\$3,328,120	\$3 , 185 , 815
Total Loans	2,613,805	2,444,131	2,541,589	2,429,530
Total Deposits	2,613,507	2,419,204	2,505,027	2,420,268
Total Stockholders' Equity	318,327	316,615	317,282	314 , 856
FINANCIAL RATIOS				
Return on Average Assets	.90%	1.03%	.90%	.95
Return on Avg. Stockholders' Equity	9.72	10.38	9.47	9.62
Avg. Earning Assets to Avg. Assets	91.26	90.83	91.25	90.75
Allowance for Loan Losses as %				
Of Total Loans	1.02	1.03	1.02	1.03
Net Charge Off's as % Of Avg. Loans				
(Annualized)	.07	.28	.17	.21
Dividend Payout Ratio	54.76	52.27	56.56	56.56
Avg. Stockholders' Equity to Avg. Assets	9.30	9.89	9.53	9.88
Tax Equivalent Yield on Earning Assets	7.08	6.40	6.87	6.15
Cost of Supporting Liabilities	3.42	2.40	3.09	2.19
Net Int. Margin (FTE) on Earning Assets	3.66	4.00	3.78	3.96

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF INCOME

(in thousands, except share data)Three Months Ended
September 30,
2006Nine Months Ended
September 30,
2006

Interest income
Loans receivable

Taxable	\$ 48,738	¢ 40 853	\$137 , 475	\$116 ,
Tax exempt	\$ 48,738 189			ų⊥⊥∨ ,
Investment securities	-	=		
Taxable	3 , 289	2,427	9,097	7,
Tax exempt		1,595		4,
Federal funds sold	13	51	41	
Deposits with financial institutions	144			
Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan Bank stock	307		938	
Total interest income		45 , 567		130,
Interest expense				
Deposits	20,291	12,172	51,624	32,
Federal funds purchased	635		1,749	
Securities sold under repurchase agreements		523		
Federal Home Loan Bank advances Subordinated debentures, revolving credit lines	2 , 796	2,549	8,062	7,
and term loans	•	1,894	•	5,
Other borrowings	60			
Total interest expense		17,427		47,
Net interest income		28,140		83 ,
Provision for loan losses		1,794		6,
Net interest income		5.6	- 000	7.5
after provision for loan losses	26 , 066	26 , 346	77 , 966	76 ,
Other income				-
Fiduciary activities	1,863	1,794	5,763	5,
Service charges on deposit accounts	3,055	2,836	8,252	8,
Other customer fees	1,386	1,389		3,
Net realized gains on				
sales of available-for-sale securities		16		
Commission income	971	870	3,421	3,
Earnings on cash surrender value	710	4.4.1	1 57/	1
of life insurance	719			1,
Net gains and fees on sales of loans Other income	493 348	770 664	1,558 1,145	2, 1,
Other Income				
Total other income	8,835	8 , 780	25 , 843	26 ,
Other expenses	1/ 033	10 201	41 O.C.Q	41
Salaries and employee benefits Net occupancy expenses	14,033 1,477	13,384 1,570	1 300	41 ,
Net occupancy expenses Equipment expenses	1,4// 2,035		4,388 5,991	4, 5,
Equipment expenses Marketing expense	2,035 586	1,901 446	5,991 1,424	5, 1,
Outside data processing fees	841		•	1, 3,
Printing and office supplies	367			- '
Core deposit amortization	762		•	2,
Other expenses	3,854	3,923	11,841	11,
Total other expenses	23,955		71,637	70,
	10.046	11 005	20 170	2.0
Income before income tax		11,825		32,
Income tax expense	3,207	3,605		9 ,
Net income	\$ 7 , 739			\$ 22,

Per	Share	Data
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• 12	.45	1.23	1
.42	. 44	1.22	1
.23	.23	.69	
18,381	18,590	18,455	18,
	.23	.42 .44	.42 .44 1.22 .23 .23 .69

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

(in thousands)				March 31, 2006	
Assets					
Cash and due from banks	\$ 65,6	541	\$ 71,275	\$ 59,176 9,104	\$ 70
Interest-bearing time deposits					
Investment securities				441,651	
Mortgage loans held for sale	3,3	395	5,338	5,170	4
Loans	2,641,6	544	2,591,440	2,491,488	2,457
Less: Allowance for loan losses	(26,9	975)	(25,884)	(25,623)	(25
Net loans				2,465,865 39,029	
Premises and equipment	40,5	511	41,122	39,029	39
Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan Bank stock	23,6	620	23 , 889	23,421	23
Interest receivable				19,035 138,174	
Core deposit intangibles and goodwill					
Cash surrender value of life insurance					
Other assets				43,964 25,346	
Total assets	\$ 3,472,0	039	\$ 3,408,263	\$ 3,269,935	\$ 3,237
Liabilities		=	=	=	
Deposits					Ţ
				\$ 325,548	
Interest-bearing				2,120,524	
Total deposits				2,446,072 469,002	
Borrowings	419,1	L46	527,347	469,002	508
Interest payable	10,2	236	6 , 927	6,412	5
Other liabilities	26,0)75	25 , 585	31,711	2 6
Total liabilities				2,953,197	
Stockholders' equity					Ţ
Preferred stock, no-par value					Ī
Authorized and unissued 500,000 shares					
Common stock, \$.125 stated value					
Authorized 50,000,000 shares					
Issued and outstanding				2,305	
Additional paid-in capital	143,6	688	142,037	146,374	145
Retained earnings	184,5	555	181 , 042	177 , 975	174
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(8,2	244)	(12,357)	(9,916)	(9
Total stockholders' equity			313,004	316,738	
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 3,472,0	039	\$ 3,408,263	\$ 3,269,935	\$ 3,237
		-==	=======	=======	

NON-PERFORMING ASSETS

(in thousands)	Sept	tember 30, 2006	Ċ	June 30, 2006	Má	arch 31, 2006		cember 31, 2005
90 days past due Non-accrual loans Other real estate	\$	4,253 16,524 2,194	\$	8,818 12,611 2,497	\$	5,188 11,424 3,209	\$	3,965 10,030 2,835
Total non-performing assets	\$ ===	22 , 971	\$ ===	23,926 =====	\$ ===	19,821 ======	\$ ===	16,830 ======
Average total loans for the quarter	\$2,	,613,805	\$2,	,534,675	\$2,	,474,759	\$2,	,447,794
Total non-performing assets as a percent of average total loans		.87%		.94%		.80%		.69%
Restructured loans	\$	93	\$	111	\$	114	\$	310

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF INCOME

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF INCOME			
			ree Months Ended
(in thousands, except share data)	September 30, 2006		March 31, I 2006
Tetanget Teamo			
Interest Income			
Loans receivable	ć 40 720	¢ 45 650	^ 42 070
Taxable		\$ 45,658	
Tax exempt	189	231	168
Investment securities			
Taxable		3,082	
Tax exempt		1,613	
Federal funds sold	13		
Deposits with financial institutions		132	
Federal Reserve and Federal Home Loan Bank stock		320	311
Total interest income		51,047	
Interest expense			
Deposits	20,291	16,914	14,419
Federal funds purchased	635	625	489
Securities sold under repurchase agreements	852	1,053	835
Federal Home Loan Bank advances	2,796	2,610	2,656
Subordinated debentures, revolving credit			
lines and term loans	2,067	2,020	1,991
Other borrowings	60	59	83
Total interest expense	26,701	23,281	•
Net interest income		27 , 766	27,589
Provision for loan losses	1,558	1,729	1,726
Net interest income			
after provision for loan losses	·	26,037	·
Other income			
Fiduciary activities	1,863	1,949	1,951

5 5			
Service charges on deposit accounts	3,055	2,771	2,426
Other customer fees	1,386	1,389	1,355
Net realized gains (losses) on sales of			
available-for-sale securities		(9)	9
Commission income	971	946	1,504
Earnings on cash surrender value			
of life insurance	719	432	423
Net gains and fees on sales of loans	493	511	554
Other income	348	422	375
Total other income	8 , 835	8,411	8 , 597
Other expenses			
Salaries and employee benefits	14,033	13,543	14,392
Net occupancy expenses	1,477	1,477	1,434
Equipment expenses	2,035	2,007	1,949
Marketing expense	586	438	400
Outside data processing fees	841	921	883
Printing and office supplies	367	424	304
Core deposit amortization	762	761	762
Other expenses	3,854	4,323	3,664
Total other expenses	23,955 23,894		23,788
Income before income tax	10,946	10,554	10,672
Income tax expense	3,207	3,263	3,163
•			
Net income	\$ 7,739 ======	\$ 7,291 ======	
Per Share Data			
Basic Net Income	\$.42	\$.39	\$.41
Diluted Net Income	.42	.39	.41
Cash Dividends Paid	.23	.23	.23
Average Diluted Shares			
Outstanding (in thousands)	18,381	18,463	18,526
FINANCIAL RATIOS			
Return on Average Assets	.90%	.88%	.93%
Return on Avg. Stockholders' Equity	9.72	9.20	9.49
Avg. Earning Assets to Avg. Assets	91.26	91.21	91.27
Allowance for Loan Losses as %			
Of Total Loans	1.02	1.00	1.03
Net Charge Off's as % Of Avg. Loans			
(Annualized)	.07	.23	.21
			=
Dividend Payout Ratio	54.76	58.97	56.10
		58.97 9.54	56.10 9.78
Dividend Payout Ratio	54.76		
Dividend Payout Ratio Avg. Stockholders' Equity to Avg. Assets	54.76 9.30	9.54	9.78

LOANS

(in thousands)	September 30, 2006	June 30, 2006	March 31, 2006	Dece
Commercial and industrial loans Agricultural production financing and	\$ 497,280 \$	501,238	\$ 486,411	\$ 4

other loans to farmers	104,147	95 , 352	87,433	
Real estate loans:				
Construction	175 , 753	178,254	175,784	1
Commercial and farmland		813,171		7
Residential	757,116	744,552	746,410	7
Individuals' loans for household and other	,	•	,	ľ
personal expenditures	215,237	208,768	202,478	2
Tax exempt loans		13,656		P
Lease financing receivables, net of unearned income				P
Other loans		27 , 860		ľ
Other Toans		27,860		
			2,491,488	2,4
Allowance for loan losses			(25, 623)	
		(23,004)		
Total loans	\$2,614,669	\$2,565,556	\$2,465,865	\$2,4
			========	
DEPOSITS				
(in thousands)	September 30	June 30.	March 31,	Dece
(In chousands)	-	2006		DCCG
	2000	2000	2000	I
Demand deposits	\$ 743,154	\$ 758,132	\$ 671 , 027	\$ 6
Savings deposits	512,112		526,554	. 5
Certificates and other time deposits of	~,-	~ = ~ , · ·	~ = ~ , · · ·	
\$100,000 or more	394.724	313.751	320,213	2
Other certificates and time deposits	,	952,639	,	8
other certificates and time deposits				
		\$2,535,400		
	========	========	=======	====