

February 2026



Tower Tidings

Palmyra First United Methodist Church



Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *Lencten*, which means "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of "spring." In many other languages, the word for this season refers to the 40-day length of the season (Cuaresma in Spanish, Carême in French, Quaresima in Italian) or to the fasting that characterizes it (Fastenzeit in German, Fastande in Swedish, Paasto in Finnish). The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter.

Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The First Sunday describes Jesus' temptation by Satan, and the Sixth Sunday (Passion/Palm Sunday), Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Readings for Holy Thursday and Good Friday describe his subsequent passion and death. Note that the readings during Lent, until Passion/Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent should be tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

Holy Week is the final week of Lent, beginning with Passion/Palm Sunday, and concluding with Holy Saturday. It is during these days the readings for our joint services will focus primarily on the last days, and suffering and death, of Jesus.

I encourage you to use the season of Lent as first intended – as a preparation for Easter and the new life promised in Christ. Rather than just giving up something for Lent, take up or renew a spiritual practice. Spend extra time in prayer or Bible reading. Spend time doing acts of kindness. Let's use this time to refocus our energies on fulfilling the vows we have made before God. Let's be ready to celebrate Christ's resurrection by **"Serving Christ, Changing Lives"** in ways that are effective for our community.

I pray that this Lenten season will find you being drawn ever closer to God through Christ.

Grace & Peace,

James D. Anderman, Pastor

FROM THE
Pastor's Desk

The history of Lent is adapted from Discipleship Ministries of the UMC at umdiscipleship.org.

As February begins, we are still in the midst of winter, but the Lenten season is just around the corner, giving us just a hint of Spring. The month begins at the tail end of the “Season After Epiphany,” which ends with the celebration of the Transfiguration. We then move to Shrove Tuesday, Fasnacht Day, Fat Tuesday, Pancake Day, or Mardi Gras, depending on your tradition. All this leads to Ash Wednesday and we begin our Lenten journey of faith.

Our liturgical colors will be green for “ordinary time” of the season after Epiphany, then white for Transfiguration, before we move to purple for Lent.

Our worship themes for the Sundays in February and early March are as follows:

February 1st: “Why?” Why would God pay such a high price to save people who have, over and over again, turned their backs on their creator? This week, we will read from John 1:1-18 and Ephesians 1:3-14 as we seek to understand God’s grace, and the reason “the Word became flesh and lived among us.” (John 1:14)

February 8th: “Are You Salty?” No, not that kind of salty! The good kind of salty. This week, we will examine the word of God spoken through the prophet Isaiah (55:1-12) and the words of Jesus recorded by Matthew (5:13-20). Our message will encourage us to be the right kind of salty.

February 15th - Transfiguration Sunday: This Sunday, we will explore why the Transfiguration is such a pivotal moment for the early Christians and Christians today. Using accounts of the event from both 2 Peter 1:16-21 and Matthew 17:1-9, we will hear the words spoken by God and hopefully begin to understand why Moses and Elijah made a special appearance on the mountain. Our message is titled, “God’s Unchanging Promise.”

February 18th – Ash Wednesday: This year, the *Palmyra Area United Methodist Association* will be holding joint Lenten services beginning with the Ash Wednesday service. We will host the service and Rev. Dave Williams, pastor of *Bethany UMC*, will bring us the message.

February 22nd – First Sunday in Lent: This week, our readings include the first account of human disobedience as we read from Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-7. We will also hear about Jesus’ resistance to the temptations of sin in Matthew 4:1-11. Since we have more in common with Adam than Jesus, our message will be, “I Need Forgiveness.”

March 1st – Second Sunday in Lent: At times, the church has struggled with the competing ideas of “Works Righteousness vs. Grace by Faith Alone.” This week, we look at both Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 and John 3:1-17 as we too will wrestle with these concepts. While we may not be able to buy a staircase to heaven, we still have the opportunity to “See the Kingdom of Heaven.”

March 8th - Third Sunday in Lent: Both Exodus 17:1-7 and John 4:5-24 feature thirsty people. In both cases, the people were provided with what they needed. In a day and age of indoor plumbing and running water, “What Do You Thirst For”? Our message will focus on quenching that thirst.



HUB News

HUB News— In January we packed 24 cleaning buckets and 50 hygiene kits for the HUB. Thanks to all who have participated in the HUB! So many have contributed to our success by donating supplies, money, and helping to pack the flood buckets and hygiene kits. Great job PFUMC!! We will not be having a packing event in February, but will be doing a shoe collection for the shoe ministry at *Mission Central*.

We will be collecting gently used shoes which will then be refurbished and sent to those in need. It's a great time to clean out the closets and share those shoes that just don't fit right but still have life in them! Through *Mission Central's* partnership with *Funds2Orgs*, these shoes are redistributed through a network of micro-enterprise partners in developing nations, including Haiti, Honduras, and several countries in Central America and Africa. Shoe donations help people launch or grow small businesses - providing jobs, stability, and opportunity. The proceeds from the shoe sales are used to feed, clothe, and house their families.

Shoes may be placed in the blue HUB collection bin located in *Fellowship Hall* anytime throughout the month of February. Our next packing event will be on Tuesday, March 17th.

Valentine Day Lunch Treat

Once again, you can enjoy the delectable “almost famous” ham BBQ made with imported (from Pittsburgh) Isaly’s BBQ sauce! The order form is in the *Fellowship Hall*.

Pick up on Saturday, February 14th,

between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM or

February 15th, between or after services



For only \$5, enjoy a sandwich and chips. 100% of the profits support ***Rise Against Hunger!*** Checks made payable to *Palmyra First UMC*. Orders can be given to Karen Douds, Judy Delvernois, Bonnie Parks, or Sue McKelvie. You can also place it in the box attached to the Welcome Desk (be sure to label the payment “Ham BBQ”). Orders are due February 8th so order yours today!

Donations Needed

Before you toss it in the trash can, is it on the following list???? These items are valuable!

Redner's receipts	Our church gets cash back
Glossy paper (magazines, catalogues)	Ronald McDonald House
Can tabs	Ronald McDonald House
HUB items (lists in <i>Fellowship Hall</i>)	Mission Central
Knitted items/yarn supplies	Multiple destinations
Nonperishable food	Caring Cupboard



Containers for all of these items are located in our church *Fellowship Hall*.

Thank you for supporting all of these efforts!!!

T.E.A. Book Group

The next book discussion for *Through the Eyes of Another* will be on February 19th at 7:00 PM in the *South Wing Lounge*. Sue McKelvie will lead the discussion of *The Collected Regrets of Clover* by Mikki Brammer.

United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith would like to thank everyone who donated to the "Baby Shower for Jesus." Again this year, close to 400 items were collected for *Lebanon Family Health Services* for use by low-income families in our county. More than half the items were hand made and donated by participants of *Knit, Crochet, & Pray*.

Update from Tanzania

Benward Joseph from Tanzania, Africa operates a preschool for economically disadvantaged in the town of Moshi. With our financial assistance, he has added a new building, which will house a government sponsored elementary school. The school opened as follows:

On January 5th, the school opened the kindergarten in Kiborloni.

On January 13th, the school opened the big school in Shantytown, which has kindergarten to class 4.



Now it's full operational from Monday to Friday although we are still working on the third classroom and washrooms, but everything is well.



Small Group Studies

The Blessed Misfits

The *Blessed Misfits* will be completing their study of Max Lucado's book "3:16 The Number of Hope" just in time for Ash Wednesday. On February 25th, we will begin a new study, likely focused on the Lenten season

The *Misfits* is an open study group. They invite you to join them in the *South Wing*, or via Zoom Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM. If you have a study you would like us to consider please let Pastor Jim know.

Consider joining the group as a part of your Lenten discipline.

Sunday with the Wired Word

Where can you discuss topics as diverse as schools' expectations of students' reading assignments to Christian's generosity at Christmas, to the impact of betting on sports?

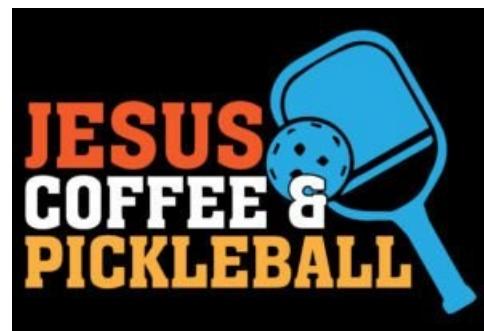
Easy answer: *Fellowship Hall* on Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM in the *Wired Word* discussion group.

Each *Wired Word*, our Sunday morning study group, is based on this basic idea pulled from the headlines. Lessons are emailed to participants on the Thursday before Sunday to give you a chance to think ahead. The material provides background information, links to the relevant stories, and some ideas as to how some Christians are reacting.

Feel free to check out the group on any Sunday morning at 10:30 AM. Better yet, let Lee Smedley know you are interested. Give him your email address and he will add you to his distribution list so you have a heads-up on the topic of the week. Because the topic changes each week, this is an ideal study for those who can't commit to a weekly study.

Awakenings Coffee and Fellowship

Every Tuesday and Thursday, The *Awakenings Coffee Shop* invites members of our community to join us for coffee hour at *Palmyra First UMC*, 520 E. Birch St., Palmyra, PA from 8:30 AM-9:30 AM. Everyone is welcome to join us!



Social and Physical Exercise Opportunities

You could join a gym, the Y, or a sports club for some physical exercise, but if you want fun with exercise and friendly conversation. you can come to *Palmyra First Church* and play a bit of pickleball.

If your excuse is you don't know how to play, Ken and Deb Fuhrman are willing to give you a few lessons. Put your name on the signup sheet in *Fellowship Hall* and they will let you know when they are giving lessons. If you want to watch a few games before giving it a try, come to the church on Monday or Thursday evening as 7:00 PM or the first Tuesday morning of the month at 9:30 AM. Players rotate in an out offering everyone a chance to socialize, support one another, play, and have fun with pickleball.

Volunteer Opportunities

Palmyra First Church offers many opportunities to put your faith into action. Below are just a few of the opportunities available:



Sunday Morning Opportunities:

Greeters: There are many opportunities to help people have a high-quality experience every Sunday morning. We are looking for people to greet our visitors, members, and friends. The task is as simple as being a friendly face, offering a bulletin, mentioning the service opportunities of the week, and for visitors, pointing the way to coffee, restrooms, Sunday School rooms, and the sanctuary.

Liturgist: Our liturgist's tasks vary depending on the service. At the 9:00 AM service, the liturgist reads the scriptures after the pastor explains what to listen for and offers the Prayer for Illumination. At the 10:30 AM service, the liturgist leads the call to worship, occasionally leads a responsive reading as well as reading scriptures.

Mission Opportunities:

Palmyra First Church is involved in a variety of missions. You can be a part of a HUB packing party where cleaning (flood) buckets and health kits are assembled. Another option is to volunteer at the *Caring Cupboard*, helping provide food for our neighbors in need. On the first Friday of the month, *Palmyra First* sponsors *First Fridays with First* when we work with *Habitat for Humanity*, rebuilding homes for first-time home buyers. With Habitat, you can learn some basic home building and repair skills. And remember, there is a job for every skill level – even if you think you have no building skills!

There are just a few of the missions we are involved in. Watch the newsletter and bulletin for other opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Property Maintenance:

We have a dedicated group of individuals who help maintain both the Birch and Green Street campuses and the *Seltzer Retreat Center*. Some cut the grass at both facilities, others rake leaves, pick up fallen tree limbs, pull weeds, water flowers, and rake mulch into place.

Inside the building, we have people who keep the kitchen equipment clean, do minor repairs, change lightbulbs, change the clocks, and so many other things.

There is a maintenance opportunity for everyone.

Audio/Video Team:

Our A/V team does all the things necessary to live cast our regular services, funerals, and other special events in the Sanctuary. For some services, it can involve projecting things to the large screen at the front of the sanctuary. Other jobs include turning the microphones on and off while adjusting volumes. A third job is to use a joystick to aim the camera where it needs to be.

Administrative Tasks:

While Heidi does a fantastic job in the church office, she can only do so much! Volunteers help with folding and stuffing bulletins as well as preparing our weekly mailings to the unwillingly absent members and friends. We also need seasonal help with special mailings to the full mailing list of members and friends.

We also use volunteers to keep the books, issue checks to pay our bills, prepare bank deposits, and prepare our financial statements.

What is God calling you to do? There is a volunteer opportunity for everyone.