

If you attended worship on November 22, 2026, you heard my announcement that I will be retiring effective July 1, 2027. At that time, I will have completed 35 years of pastoral ministry and 8 years as pastor of Palmyra First Church. I believe these 8 years we have been productive in our quest to be about the business of ***Serving Christ, Changing Lives.***

Here are a few ministry additions I'd like to highlight (in no particular order):

1. Creation of the Awakenings ministry of hospitality to our neighbors where we serve coffee (or tea) and enjoy a social time together.
2. Regular sessions of Pickleball on Monday and Thursday evenings with occasional Tuesday mornings thrown in.
3. Annual Blessing of the Animals service using the pavilion (except one year when it rained and we moved to Fellowship Hall.
4. Addition of our Celebrate Recovery ministry on Friday evenings.
5. Served the needs of other churches through the ministry of the Seltzer Retreat Center

We've also made some major strides in building maintenance and upgrades:

1. We replaced the main boiler for the sanctuary building.
2. We upgraded the fire alarm system, which now includes carbon monoxide detection as well as heat detectors.
3. Repaid the money we borrowed to pay for items 1 & 2 above.
4. Replaced the roof at the Seltzer Retreat Center.
5. Upgraded the water system at Seltzer. (with no debt on items 4 & 5)
6. Changed the look of the Narthex, making it a cleaner, more welcoming space with our mission statement and communications system for announcements.
7. Upgraded our sound, audio-video capabilities, and now live stream our services.
8. Preserved our history by bringing the original stain glass from the chapel out of storage and displayed them where they can be seen and appreciated by everyone.

Thanks to this wonderful congregation, we are indeed ***Serving Christ, Changing Lives*** in many exciting ways.

For those who are wondering what comes next, our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will be working with the District Superintendent (DS) and the Bishop as they evaluate the needs of Palmyra First Church and the gifts and graces of the clergy member of the Annual Conference.

If you have been United Methodist, you may be familiar with the process. If you come from a Catholic background, you may understand the system, but if you were Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, you need to understand that our system is completely different. United Methodist pastors serve under the appointment of the Bishop. In 2019, Bishop Peggy Johnson appointed me to serve the Palmyra Community through the ministry of First Church. Since then, each year, I have been reappointed to serve Palmyra. In 2027, a new pastor will be appointed by Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi. In our system, the responsibility for finding the new pastor lies with the Bishop and Cabinet (all 4 District Superintendents). We do not need a "search committee," trial sermons," or a congregational vote. Once the Bishop identifies a potential pastor, SPRC will meet with the DS and the candidate. Assuming there are no "red flags" in the field, the appointment will be set. Once everything is in place, an announcement of the appointment will be made here and at the church the pastor will be coming from on the same Sunday. The appointment will be effective July 1, 2027.

I will continue as the pastor of Palmyra First Church until June 30, 2027, but after that the new pastor will be the one you should turn to for pastoral care and guidance.

You may wonder what I'll be doing in retirement; well, in some ways, so do I. My plans are not yet complete, but I do plan to move to Pocono Summit to the home built by my parents when I was a child. In addition, I will be a part of the 2027 Wesleyan Heritage Pilgrimage to England sponsored by the Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church. I will continue serving as a mentor to a few relatively new clergy colleagues. I'll still be serving on the Eastern Pennsylvania Loan Fund Board of Directors. Beyond that, we'll see what opportunities God has in store for me. I'm looking forward to this next chapter in my life.

Thanks to each of you for your support. You have been a blessing to my life.

Grace & Peace,



James D. Anderman, Pastor

Historic Windows Back on Display

After years of being hidden away in the basement of the South Wing, the original stained glass from the chapel has returned to a position of visibility, but this time in the Narthex. The windows were reset in new frames crafted by Greg Spar and hung in the southwest corner of the narthex. Next, a donor stepped up to fund the cost of adding backlighting to the displays. Now you can see the windows in their full glory.

Each of the 12 windowpanes tells a part of our mission as a church. The depictions include: Instructing the Ignorant, The Prophecy, Clothing the Naked, Burying the Dead. Giving Drink to the Thirsty, Ransoming the Captive, The Holy Bible, Visiting the Sick, Feeding the Hungry, the Eucharist, Harbouring the Harbourless, and the Law.

Over the next few months, we will include in the Tower Tidings a description of how First Church is fulfilling each of these 12 responsibilities of the Christian Church. And yes, we do them all.

As December begins, we will be in the season of preparation we call Advent. While we often think of Advent as preparation for Christmas, it is really about being ready to meet Jesus face to face. Our theme this year is "Preparing for the End."

The color for Advent is purple – the color of royalty. For the 12 days of Christmas, the color changes to white, which is the color we use for "High Holy Days" and the seasons of Christmas and Easter.

Our worship themes for December and early January are as follows:

December 6th – The Second Sunday of Advent: In keeping with our theme of "Preparing for the End," our message, based on both Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8, will ask us to consider "Have you Prepared?" We will of course also be celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion as we do each first Sunday of the month.

December 13th – The Third Sunday of Advent: John the Baptist played a pivotal role in the transition from the time before Christ to the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. John was very popular with some and despised by others, yet he had an important message to share with all people. This week our message will be "Welcoming the Messenger and the Message," and is based on Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and John 1:6-8, 19-28.

December 20th – The Fourth Sunday of Advent: Sometimes we are overwhelmed by life's demands. We think we are doing as much as we can, but are we? Sometimes we want to do something special, but it's just not the right task for us. In 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, David has a grand design in mind, but God says, "No, not you!" In Luke 1:26-38, Mary is asked to do something she never even dreamed about! Our message will ask us to consider our role in advancing the Kingdom of God by asking ourselves if we are "The Right Person for the Right Job**"**

December 24th – Christmas Eve: As has become our custom, we will have 2 Christmas Eve services, one beginning at 3:00 PM and the other at 7:00 PM. The first service will allow those who should not drive in the dark to get home before sunset. It also allows families to get home, eat, and, as Clement Clarke Moore in A Visit From St. Nicholas, a.k.a. 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, "settled down for a long winter's nap." The 7:00 PM service, at a more traditional time, can serve as a wonderful ending to the long hours of preparation for Christmas.

Our message will be "Out of Our Comfort Zone," based on Titus 2:11-14 and Luke 2:1-20. We will also celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion at both services.

December 27th – The First Sunday of Christmas: In Charles Dickens' classic story, "A Christmas Carol," Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by 3 ghosts, including the Ghost of Christmas Past. For most of us, the past includes great memories of Christmas past, and on this first Sunday after Christmas, you will be asked to share your memories, stories, and reflections as we give thanks to God for all the Lord has done for us. To set the tone, our scriptures will be taken from Luke 22-40.

January 3rd – The Second Sunday of Christmas – Epiphany Sunday: Sometimes we need to make hard choices. For the preacher, this Sunday offers too many options! It is the Second Sunday of Christmas; it can be used to celebrate Epiphany, and it is the beginning of a brand-new year! What's a pastor to do? This pastor will choose to recognize it as a day of new beginnings and fresh starts. We will incorporate the Wesleyan Covenant service as a time of recommitment to the work of God. Our message will be "Thy Kingdom Com" and will draw from Revelation 21:1-6a. This will also be our first opportunity to celebrate communion with the whole congregation in the new year.

United Women in Faith

December and January are *United Women in Faith's* time to collect items for our annual Baby Shower for Jesus. This event is scheduled for the Saturday morning of January 23rd, and all women of the church, along with friends and relatives, are invited. We enjoy breakfast together, get updates from mission efforts, play a couple of shower games, and help pack up donations for *Lebanon Family Health Services*. We are collecting baby items such as blankets, bibs, and booties, etc., as well as hats, scarves, mittens/gloves for all ages. Baby bibs made by our *Sew What* group are among the donations going to *Lebanon Family Health Services*.

United Women in Faith would like to thank everyone who helped make the Election Day Bake Sale successful. $860.00 was brought in, which will help support a variety of local missions as well as *United Women in Faith* across the world.

Knit Crochet & Pray

Currently, *Knit, Crochet, & Pray* is working on making baby blankets and booties for *Lebanon Family Health Services*. The recommended baby blanket size is 30" x 30" to 30" x 36", in washable yarn.
We have had a busy fall with our annual distribution of handmade mammogram reminders and bandanas for the animals at the Pet Blessing.

Beginning in February, we will be making lap robes for the VA hospital in Lebanon. These should be 36" x 42". Anyone interested in knitting or crocheting for charity is welcome to join *Knit, Crochet, and Pray*. We meet the second Wednesday of the month at 1:30 PM in the South Wing Library. The next gathering is December 9th. We have donated yarn available to those working on our projects.

T.E.A. (Through Eyes of Another) Book Group

We will meet December 17th to discuss *I Still Dream About You* by Fannie Flagg. Both serious and with much humor, Flagg touches on some important issues. Our discussion leader will be Sue McKelvie.

The book for January 21st is *A Girl Called Samson* by Amy Harmon, a novel based on a real young woman who disguised herself as a man and served in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. New readers are always welcome.

HUB News

Throughout the year 2026, we have donated 258 cleaning buckets, 455 hygiene kits, 229 pairs of shoes, 4 computers, 4 large bags of toiletries, and 5 donations of various medical supplies to *Mission Central*. In addition, we sent $500 to aid in the work of *Mission Central* in shipping items to areas in need.

We will not have a packing event in December. We will resume packing in January, which will give us time in December to restock supplies. Thank you*, First Church*, for your willingness to help those in need!
For the month of December, we are specifically looking for N95 Respirator Dust masks (1-3 mm thickness, non-surgical).



Small Group Studies

The Blessed Misfits

The Wednesday night *Blessed Misfits* group meets in the South Wing and via Zoom at 6:30 PM, with only an occasional week off using short-term studies, so you can join the group for just a few weeks if you would like. If you want to join, please contact Pastor Jim so he can add you to the email list and get you any material you may need for the study. The Zoom link is sent each week, so it is easy to find if needed.

For the Advent season, we are using Matthew Skinner's book "Voices of Advent," which is also being used by our Sunday morning study group (replacing the *Wired Word*). After Christmas, we will begin a brand-new study for the new year.

Sunday with the Wired Word is Changing!

As mentioned above, the Sunday morning study group will be using *Voices of Advent* for the 4 Sundays leading up to Christmas. After Christmas, look for something new and exciting for 2027.

Annual Charge Conference

A long tradition of all the branches of Methodism (including the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ) is the "Conference." The Charge Conference is the highest decision-making body in the local church. At one time, Charge Conferences were held Quarterly but are now generally an annual affair.

This year's Charge Conference will be held in the South Wing on December 15th with the Rev. David Williams as the presiding officer. All members of the Charge Conference (which is the same folks who serve on the Church Council) are urged to be present.

Tithe Envelopes

Tithe envelopes for 2027 have arrived. You can find them in the Narthex to be picked up. If you do not have a tithe envelope and would like one, please let Pastor Jim or Heidi know in the office, and we will assign you a booklet.

Poinsettia Flower Orders

Thanks to everyone who ordered a poinsettia this Christmas in honor or remembrance of a loved one. They really make the church look beautiful for the Christmas celebration. Please remember to take them with you AFTER the second Christmas Eve service. Any flowers left behind will be donated.



Tithe Envelopes

Tithe envelopes for 2027 are here. Look for them soon in the Narthex with your name and assigned number on them. If you do not receive tithe envelopes and would like a pack, ask Pastor Jim or Heidi in the office, and we would be happy to sign you up.

Men's Breakfast

We will be having another men's breakfast **Saturday, January 16th,** *at the Seltzer Retreat Center* located at 183 Lindbergh Dr., Palmyra. We'll be serving at **8:00 AM**. Contact Tim Yingst if you are interested.

Cash For You Trash!

Before you toss your trash, check to see if it's on the following list of items collected here at church.

- Redner's receipts
- Glossy magazines/catalogs
- Can tabs
- Gently used children's books
- Non-perishable food items
- Knitted items/yarn supplies
- Canceled/used stamps



Items can be dropped off in the Community Corner located in the Fellowship Hall of the church.

Unwillingly Absent Members

Just a reminder that when you come in the parking lot entrance, there is a board that holds cards for our unwillingly absent members. These folks would love to hear from members of the church, and this certainly helps them to feel connected to the church. This might be especially appreciated around the holidays. Feel free to pick up a card or two and send a note to those who might not be able to attend on Sunday mornings. If you know of someone who should be included on this list, please contact Heidi in the church office so we can add them to the board.

Church Directory Updates

We will be updating our *Palmyra First* directory in 2027. Look for forms to fill out with your information on them. We will be including photos of everyone and their families. If you do not want to be in the directory or do not want your personal information in it, you are not obligated to do so. It is a great way to keep in touch with your church family. Look for the forms, which will be coming out soon.