



First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors

From the Pastor's Desk....

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When I was little I remember going to worship late on Christmas Eve, lighting candles and singing Silent Night – the one night we stayed up WAY past our bedtime to celebrate Jesus' birth. We then went to bed as fast as possible, excited for Santa to visit and gifts the next morning.

Over the years, the wake-up grew later for the kids, but my dad still got up at 5am each year waiting with excitement for the family gift exchange. Even today, gifts given with love and celebration with family are a hallmark of the holiday season for many of us.

In the church, we celebrate the season of Advent, which is derived from the Latin word meaning “coming.” These four weeks before Christmas are a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again. Each week we will sing beloved Christmas carols and light the Advent Wreath, moving in worship and within our hearts closer towards the coming celebration of Christ's birth.

Our worship will center around the gifts of Jesus named in the Advent candles: hope, peace, joy, and love. We will unwrap each of these gifts as we remember Christ's gifts for us and how they impact and change our lives today. I hope you will pick up the accompanying devotional guide in the Main Lobby or consider joining a short-term class I will lead to dig more into these gifts on Sundays 9:45-10:45am Nov 30 – Dec 21. You can find more information deeper in the newsletter.

In January, we will begin the new year by reading together the Old Testament book of Esther. This is the only book where God is not mentioned outright, but who is very present in the life of Esther and the Jewish people. We will look together at how God shows up in unexpected ways in those days and in our lives today. We will have a reading guide available starting Jan 4 as we read together Esther in January.

I look forward to celebrating this season with you – to celebrate again the coming of Christ, wrapping the gifts and then being reminded of God's presence in unexpected ways and places in our lives. See you soon in worship!

-Pastor Mira



**Sunday Morning Enrichment | 9:45-10:45 | Sunday Mornings****Sunday School:**

As summer comes to a close, our Sunday School classes will be resuming towards the end of August and kicking off by September 14th! This is a wonderful opportunity to find consistency and accountability in your faith journey while studying God's Word. Here are the list of opportunities for enrichment during the Sunday School hour (9:45-10:45 AM). We look forward to growing together!

♦ Growing in Christ, B006

A welcoming group that enjoys digging deeper into the Scriptures to seek the knowledge and wisdom to apply Scriptural truths in our everyday lives. The class generally consists of prayer, a video, and a group discussion. Drop in for a single class, or a specific study, or stay as long as you like! If interested, contact Marjorie Snyder at 57masnyder@gmail.com.

December Study: *Names for the Messiah* by Walter Brueggemann

In Isaiah 9:6, a divine utterance is given to us using four royal titles- Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. *Names for the Messiah* ponders each royal designation and how the people understood it then, how Jesus did or did not fulfill the title, and how Christians interpret Jesus as representative of that title. Christians have claimed from the beginning that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. In this study, Walter Brueggemann tackles the questions: "What were these expectations?" and "Did Jesus fulfill them?"

♦ Christian Fellowship, Room B003

A friendly and caring group of adults, eager to apply God's Word to life's challenges. The class generally explores scripture and faith themes through book or video-based series. If interested, contact Wayde Leister at waydeleister@outlook.com.

December Study: *Waiting Here for You* by Louie Giglio

The story of Christmas is one of waiting. It is a story of how the people of Israel waited years and years for the promised Messiah to arrive. But the story of Christmas is also one that reveals how God works during seasons of waiting-times in which he is developing us to carry out his plans in our lives. In *Waiting Here for You*, bestselling author and pastor Louie Giglio leads you through the season of Advent and show how your waiting is never wasted when you are waiting on God.

♦ Helping Hands, Room B004

A group of active seniors who focus on encouraging instructions for faithful living, and who enjoy fellowship activities together outside of class. If interested, contact Bob Wertz, Sr., at robert_wertz@plantsitelogistics.com.

Winter Study: Cokesbury's Adult Bible Study

Beginning in December, we will be considering two major questions: Who is Jesus? Who are we? These lessons and Scriptures around the theme of "Light. Life. Salvation." will build up our faith and deepen our relationship with God as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

♦ Guyer Class, Room 123

This class, comprised of a wonderful group of seniors who are young at heart, is taught by a variety of church leaders. Lessons follow the Adult Bible Study series which includes daily devotions. If interested, contact Steve and Deb Noss at sdppp@msn.com.

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Small Groups:

There are also Small Groups that regularly meet during the Sunday School hour and strive to not only support each other through faith growth in a classroom space, but also through fellowship and connection as they navigate similar stages of life.

◇ **Faithful Families**

Contact: Bob and Tracy Wertz at wertzfive@gmail.com. An active group of parents with college-aged and young adult children who study Scripture, encourage one another and celebrate life together in and out of the classroom.

◇ **Faith in Everyday Life**

Contact: Amy at amyerno@gmail.com or Jenell at jparis@messiah.edu. A group for adults of all ages focused on fellowship and friendship/mutual support in and outside the classroom.

Discipleship Opportunities:

No matter whether you are just beginning to explore faith, growing as a disciple, or becoming a fully devoted follower, there is always something new to learn on our journey with Jesus. First Church is here to help by providing a variety of offerings for your next faithful step:

- **Daily Bible Reading Plan**

God speaks to us through His Word, and our daily Bible reading plan is customized to go along with our weekly sermons! You can find the plan in our weekly worship bulletin and on our church website, fumchurch.com.

- **Wednesday Men's Group – 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, at 8:00 p.m.**

This group enjoys great fellowship while focusing on discussion-based Bible studies. Contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if interested in more information.

- **United Women in Faith Circle Groups:**

United Women in Faith Circle groups are small, local communities within the United Women in Faith organization, a mission-focused group for women within the United Methodist Church. These circles are where women gather for spiritual formation, mutual support, fellowship, mission education, and to take action on issues of justice at local and global levels.

- * **Martha Circle** – Leader: Marley Ann Schmick

- This circle meets in the church Fellowship Hall on the first Tuesday of the month (September meets on 2nd Tuesday) at 1:00 PM, and members rotate in helping to lead lessons.

- * **Deborah Circle** – Leader: Sandy Walton

- This circle meets every other month at church in room 105 at 7:00 PM (Jan 6, Mar 3, May 5) and meets together off-site for a meal on the opposite months. This circle has been studying women of the Bible.

- **Growing Together – Sunday January 4th | 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM | Hardwood Café**

Paul writes to the Philippians that he is truly happy when believers are “agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose” (Phil 2:2). We too, value learning and serving together with one heart and one mission. Several times throughout the year, we will have a Growing Together opportunity following the 11:00 AM service. Stick around after service at the round tables in the green chair side of the sanctuary. We will provide lunch and a learning/service activity for any and all ages. Registration is encouraged to help us plan for food and accommodate any dietary restrictions. Registration is on Church Center and at the Registration Table. Reach out to Katie Knorr with questions. Future Dates: January 4, March 15, April 19

Advent Study with Pastor Mira – Sunday Mornings 9:45 -10:45 AM | Room 105

Join Pastor Mira in a 4-week Advent study called “*Waiting Here for You*” by Louie Giglio. Come for one week or all four. This study does not require a participant’s book. Offered during the Sunday’s of Advent: November 30 - December 21

Advent Devotional Books

If you grabbed an Advent book and wish to follow along with the sermons in the Sunday Worship services leading up to Christmas, we are following the UMC Advent candles in the order of:

November 30 - Hope
December 7 - Peace
December 14 -Joy
December 21 -Love



From the Library

Writing the December newsletter always makes me jittery—I begin to think of all the things I have not yet done or even thought about doing till just this very minute. But as I recall, ready or not, Christmas arrives every year. And you know I don’t remember my favorite gift, but I do have fond memories of family and friends, laughter and love. One of my favorite memories that you might share is when the church is darkened on Christmas Eve and then one candle is lighted, then another until the church is bright with candlelight, and we all remember Christ is the light of the world. And everything else is just trivial stuff. I hope that brought happy memories to you. But onto the new Christmas books. If you are really busy, you can make every day just like Christmas by reading them into the new year.



The first book is *On a Midnight Clear: A 3-in-1 Christmas Novella Collection* written by some of your favorite authors, Tracie Peterson, Karen Witemeyer, and Misty M. Beller. All three stories are set in pioneer times, and the settings are Christmas of course, but also lots of snow. Romance and resilience abound with touches of the original Christmas story thrown in. Each story is just a hundred pages, so it is easy to stop and start as duty calls.

Beverly Lewis doesn’t usually write a Christmas book, but this year her new book is *The Christmas House: An Amish Christmas Novella*. Yes, a shorter book, just 160 pages, as this author seems to understand there is not as much reading time available just now. Set in Lancaster County, main character Liz Lantz helps her family run a buggy tour business. Her new assistant, Mathew Yoder, is a great help but also a distraction as she herself is pulled to him. But there is a problem in the community. Some of the Englishers have lavishly decorated their houses and the Amish community worries that there will be too much traffic and attention. See if Liz finds love and harmony this Christmas in this sweet story.

If neither of these two books interests you, we have a couple other new Christmas books, plus we will display some from past years that you may have missed. Just ask our volunteer to help you find just the right book for you. Plus, if you’re looking for holiday inspiration, the library has several holiday puzzles that you can borrow.

Hoping you have a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

See you in the library,

Annette, Marge, Pam, Mary, Deb, & Donna

Praying Follower



Prayer Room (Tower Room located off the back of room 216)

We learn in scripture that Jesus often withdrew and found a quiet place to pray: “Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went out to a solitary place to pray (Mark 1:35).” A place where

his focus could be on his Father. We have a new prayer room, and it's a perfect place of quiet where you can sit with God. The prayer room will be available on Sunday mornings during the Sunday enrichment hour (9:45 AM-10:45 AM) and during the weeks of Advent there will be prayer prompts centered on the themes of Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love. We welcome you to visit the space and use it for your place of prayer.

Joy in the Morning

A small group invitation, Monday December 8th, 1pm. If you live with chronic pain or ongoing health challenges, we invite you to join in sharing discussion and supportive friendship with this small group. We meet monthly at 1 pm on a Monday afternoon at Bethany Village's West Apartments Commons Room. Janice Bowen facilitates, drawing upon readings and devotionals.. For more info., information, contact Janice ([717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com)

Coffee Ministry

Coffee is available before the Sunday Enrichment hour (9:45) and the 11:00 Gathering Service. Coffee is located in the main lobby (near the mailboxes), and we hope you find it a welcoming space on Sunday mornings. Contact Lisa Aronson at discipleship@fumchurch if you have any interest in helping support this expression of hospitality.

Christmas Card Greetings!

We encourage you to reach out to one another this holiday season by sending Christmas card greetings! Please help yourself to a supply of Christmas cards found at the card display in the main lobby. Save stamps and deliver your cards using the church mailboxes. If you'd like to send cards to some of our members at home, a suggested list is also available at the Christmas card display.

Visiting with Friends!

If you miss seeing a special friend at church, Janice Bowen would like to hear from you! Janice enjoys taking people with her for visits so that friends can remain connected by visiting in-person with one another! Whether you find yourself "stuck at home" and no longer able to get out to church, or you are missing your friends who are "stuck at home", Janice would love to hear from you! [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com.

2026 Women's Retreat – Register Now! Early Bird Due December 14, 2025 Women's Retreat, January 23 to 25, 2026

Our 2026 women's retreat, "Awakening Awe, Rediscovering God's Greatness." will be held at Rhodes Grove Retreat Center, 7693 Browns Mill Road, Chambersburg. Lisa Aronson will lead us in experiencing a central element of worship: Awe. We will explore the profound importance of rekindling our sense of wonder in a culture that often dulls our spiritual sense. Together we will learn to stand in awe of God and reignite our hearts with amazement, empowering us to carry that sense of awe back into our daily lives. Join us for a weekend filled with fellowship, fun, food and faith! Program starts on Friday evening and concludes on Sunday before noon. Hotel-like accommodations and 4 meals are included. We are pleased to offer a One-Day option (lunch and dinner included)! You can find the registration form at the sign-up table in the church lobby (outside the multipurpose room), on the Church Center App or send an email to Lisa Aronson at discipleship@fumchurch.com. All women are welcome!





AWAKENING AWE
*Rediscovering God's
Greatness*

2026 Women's Retreat
January 23 to 25, 2026

Rhodes Grove Retreat Center, 7693 Browns Mill Road, Chambersburg

Program starts on Friday evening and concludes on Sunday before noon.

Hotel-like accommodations and 4 meals included.

One Day Saturday Option Available!

Registration and more details also available on our Church Center App

Please return registration with payment (payable to FUMC)

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Medications: _____ Emergency Contact _____

Allergies or Diet Restrictions _____

Send payment to Lisa Aronson, 135 W. Simpson Street, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 **OR**
via the Church Center Registration (link is available on the app).

Early Bird Registration due by **12/14/2025** is \$170. After that date, fee will be \$180. **All registrations due by 1/11/2026.** Financial assistance available upon request, contact Lisa Aronson.

___ Full weekend early bird payment enclosed \$170

___ Full weekend payment enclosed (if paying after 12/14) \$180

___ One Day (Saturday) payment enclosed \$50

Is this your first retreat? Yes ___ No ___ Any special concerns? _____

**There is a limited number of individual beds per room, are you comfortable with a bunk mate, if yes, please indicate your bunkmate: _____

Questions, contact Lisa Aronson, discipleship@fumchurch.com or 716-510-8948.



Service of Remembrance and Hope – Sunday, December 7th at 4:00 pm

If you are feeling the weight of grief this holiday season and missing your loved ones, please join us for a time of worship and reflection at our Service of Remembrance and Hope in the sanctuary. Contact Janice Bowen for more information - [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com.

Christmas Caroling 2025– Sunday, December 21st at 4:00 pm

Join us to enjoy the Christmas tradition of Carol Singing and spreading cheer together as we sing around our Christmas Tree in the Main Lobby! Cocoa and cookie fellowship will follow immediately afterwards!

Christmas Caroling Opportunity

Would you like to spread some Christmas cheer this year by bringing Christmas carols to some of our members at home? We encourage small groups to consider planning a time to go caroling! Janice Bowen would happily provide you with a suggested caroling route and music sheets. For additional information, please contact Janice at wecare@fumchurch.com.

Men’s Breakfast – December 6th & January 3rd 7:30 a.m., Brothers Restaurant

An open invitation is extended to all men who want to gather for good food and light-hearted fellowship on the first Saturday of each month (Brothers Restaurant is located at 705 Gettysburg Pike, Mechanicsburg, 17055). Please contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if you are interested in attending.



Women’s Morning Meet-Up –Dec. 13th & Jan. 10th, 7:30 a.m., Down To Earth Café

Start your morning with a warm cup of coffee and great company. Order food or a drink, or just grab a seat and connect with other women of faith, share stories, and find support in a welcoming atmosphere. Down to Earth Café is located at 100 Legacy Park Dr. Suite 108, Mechanicsburg, 17055

Wear Your Name Tag!

We encourage everyone to wear their name tags! Name tags help us connect and build relationships within our church family. Need a name tag? Contact the church office.

Lent Devotions

Help us create a First Church devotional for Lent. Lent is a season of preparation - a time of deep reflection and honest confession as we move with Jesus towards the cross and to the personal challenge of sharing in Christ’s sacrifice and living fully for Him. You can submit a Lent Devotional to Lisa Aronson any time before January 11th (the sooner, the better!)

Devotions should include the following

- A scripture reference
- A few paragraphs centered on the idea of “Pause”, 300 words or less (prompt question below)
- A one to two sentence prayer
- Your name

Lent is a time to pause, to take a breath, and reflect. We see Jesus intentionally stepping away to be with his Father as he readied himself for Holy Week. Let’s do the same – pause with intention. Let us find a place of stillness that helps us to reflect.

What scriptures have given you pause in your life?

Is there a scripture that caused you to reflect on a characteristic of God?

When you need to take a breath and slow down, what scripture do you turn towards?

Has a scripture helped you draw closer to God or deeper into faith?

Submissions can be emailed to Lisa at discipleship@fumchurch.com

Dedicated Missionary



Isaiah 61 Homeless Ministry

First Church is pleased to support Isaiah 61 Ministries, a local organization that serves the needs of the homeless in Dauphin County. They provide a variety of services including a soup kitchen, clothing bank and Life groups. Specifically, First Church members help serve meals to the homeless in downtown Harrisburg on the third Wednesday of each month. The next volunteer opportunity is Wednesday, December 17 and January 21 at 6:30 p.m. To find out how to get involved, contact Tiffany Holland at tholland1967@gmail.com.

First Church Service Shirts

If you still wish to order a shirt, please sign up on Church Center or email Lisa Aronson at discipleship@fumchurch.com. The First Church Service Shirts are designed to unite and identify us as we serve together in our community. Whether you're volunteering at an outreach event, helping with church ministries, or participating in a mission project, these shirts are a simple and powerful way to represent First Church with love and purpose. Wearing a service shirt not only helps others recognize who we are, but it also shows that we're working together as the hands and feet of Christ.

Operation Christmas Child

Thank you for making Operation Christmas Child a huge success! This year we collected 217 boxes (including the virtual boxes filled online). Continue to pray for the journey these boxes will take and the children who will receive them.



Relationship Builder



Pickleball! Tuesday 5-7 pm

Please join us for weekly Pickleball in the church multi-purpose room! No experience is necessary. Paddles/balls will be available to borrow if you'd like to learn how to play! Contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com) with questions or to be added to the Pickleball email list for updates.



FUMC Volleyball! Wednesdays, 6 - 8pm

If you enjoy volleyball, please reach out to Geri Nuss (717-802-1329) for more information about playing Wednesday evenings!

Mom Connection | Monday, Dec. 15, 6 p.m.

This group connects moms of children (newborns through high school age) with other moms who are seeking friendship, support and encouragement along the parenting journey. The group meets on the 3rd Monday of the month, September through May. Meetings begin with family-style dinner followed by a theme-based topic designed to help develop connections and offer support, inspiration, and resources for Christ-centered parenting. Sign up on Church Center Questions? Contact Katie Knorr, Director of Children and Family Ministry.



Soupy Saturday! - January 31st - 9 am

If you enjoy cooking, we invite you to the church kitchen to cook-up some delicious soup and muffins to share with a friend, neighbor, or church member at home! Questions? Contact - Janice Bowen wecare@fumchurch.com - 717-766-4611 x112

Jingle Jam: Family Christmas Event- Sat. Dec. 6th 9-11 am

Looking for something exciting for the entire family to do this Christmas? Don't miss Free Family Christmas Event! Join us for an unforgettable Christmas Experience complete with fun, games, and music! Invite your friends, family, and neighbors for a morning to get you in the Christmas spirit and learn about the true meaning of Christmas. This is an event for kids and families to participate all together, this is not a drop-off event. Register on church center or at fumchurch.com/jingle. If you have any questions, please email Katie Knorr, Director of Children and Family Ministry at kidscount@fumchurch.com.

Sensory Santa Saturday, Dec. 13th

Sensory Santa is a one-on-one experience for you and your family to spend some time with Santa in a calm and quiet way. This Sensory Santa experience is designed especially for children who get overstimulated easily and need some extra guidance and care going into new environments. This event is open to all, but time slots are limited. Registration is required, no walk-ins will be permitted. Register on church center or at fumchurch.com/santa2025. If you have any questions, please email Katie Knorr, Director of Children and Family Ministry at kidscount@fumchurch.com.

Cookie Walk

Fill your Christmas table with a yummy selection of Christmas cookies. The youth will be having their annual cookie walk on December 13th in the Multi-Purpose Room (Gym) from 9:00-12:00 (or until cookies run out). Purchase and fill a provided box with cookies, and don't be late – the cookies go fast! All proceeds benefit summer youth mission trips.



The Marketplace of Miracles is Back!

We are pleased to announce that the Marketplace of Miracles will once again be held alongside the Youth Cookie Walk on Saturday, December 13 from 9:00 am to noon. This year, we welcome, Peace Promise, She's Somebody's Daughter, Greenlight Operation, Northstar and Hope.Inspire.Love. These organizations provide support and advocate for survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. Information about their organizations will be available along with items for purchase to support their mission. This event is sponsored by the United Women in Faith. If you would like to learn more about any of these organizations or United Women in Faith, please contact Lori Hoffnagle at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com.

Save the Date: Community Dinner, February 15, 2026

The next community dinner will be held at Buhrig's Gathering Place, Mechanicsburg on February 15 at 5:00 p.m. The dinner is a collaborative event with other local churches to bless the downtown community with a meal, music and games, free of charge. The concept comes from the book 'Welcome to Dinner, Church,' which encourages churches to share a meal with their neighbors. Watch for details on how you can participate or contact Lori Hoffnagle at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com for more information.



Save the Date: Cooking and Caring for our Community at Broad Street Elementary, March 16, 2026

First Church will once again be partnering with other community churches to cook and serve a meal for Broad Street Elementary families on Thursday, March 16 at 5:00 p.m. First Church will be providing the BBQ and volunteers. First Church is responsible for 70 pounds of BBQ (the amount is increased due to more people attending the meal) using a simple recipe provided by the school (see below). We plan to serve over 300 for dinner and provide take-home meals to families unable to attend. Please consider making a 5 lb. batch of BBQ or more for the families at Broad Street. Questions or if you can provide BBQ, please contact Lori Hoffnagle at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com.

5 lbs. Ground Beef (80% lean or higher)

1/2 cup White Vinegar

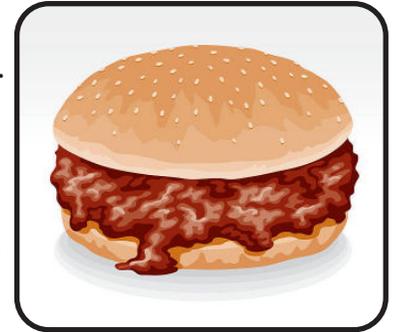
1/2 cup Brown Sugar

3 and 3/4 cups Ketchup

1/4 cup Mustard

Cook beef and drain fat, mix in other ingredients and heat thoroughly.

Thanks for cooking and caring for our community!



Church Center:

First Church uses Church Center as a platform for sharing information and registrations for events. Church Center can be accessed on both desktops and mobile devices, and will prompt you to create an account to log in. This platform can also be used for electronic giving, registrations, and to access our directory. However, to access the directory, you will need to receive an email invitation, which serves as a security measure to protect the information you share - you can email the office or sign up to receive an invitation at the Registration Table. Additionally, there are steps you must take on the profile you create to make it visible to others in the directory. Information cards are available on the tables as you leave service today, which have a QR code to make accessing Church Center as easy as possible. Other churches do use this platform, and as part of signing up, you will choose First Church as your main church affiliation.

How do I make my profile visible to others who have directory permission?

Mobile Device Directions:

- Click the profile circle in the top right when in the Church Center app
- Click the > next to your name in the top segment
- Click the > next to "Directory Profile"
- Anything showing a green check mark will be visible. Click to remove the green check mark for areas you wish to keep hidden.
- Click "update" in the top right corner to save your preferences.

Desktop Directions:

- Once signed into the website, funchurch.churchcenter.com, click on the circle in the top left corner (circle may contain your picture or your initials).
- Click on the line "My Profile and Settings"
- Click on "Directory Profile"
- Anything showing a green check mark will be visible. Click to remove the green check mark for areas you wish to keep hidden.
- Click "update profile" at the bottom of the page to save your preferences.



Financial Report

Through October 30, 2025

General Fund

2025 Budget	\$869,000
Expected Income YTD	\$724,167 (83.3% of year complete)
Actual Income YTD	\$635,778 (73.1% of budget)
Actual Expenses	\$689,990 (79.4% of budget)

The financial report through October 30 continues to show revenues falling short of our budget for revenue. We have shared information in services that the gap between expected and actual revenue has continued to grow to where we are \$88,388 behind what we budgeted for. We continue to be fortunate and conservative with expenses and as a result they continue to be less than expected for this point in the year.

Our Parsonage loan currently stands at \$38,386.99 and the Bell Tower Loan principal balance is \$30,272.83. We thank those who continue to give in service of our debt.

We are thankful for all gifts received by our Church in service of its missions and ministries. As we approach the holiday season we ask that you continue to think of the Church as part of your gift-giving for the year 2025, toward specific missions or facility projects, and in legacy discussions around estate planning. All are welcome to contact Brian Sanker, Finance Committee Chairperson, at sankerb@gmail.com, with any questions on how to support First Church.

Cookie Walk

Calling All Cookie Bakers!

It's time for the annual Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser, the Cookie Walk!

This year we will be having our annual cookie walk on December 13th. This event has become popular in part because of wonderful bakers like you! Try out a new recipe or stick to grandma's secret recipe. Anything will do! To have a great enough quantity of cookies, we ask bakers to provide 4-5 batches (8-10 dozen) per style of homemade cookie. Fill out the form below (and place it at the display in the main lobby) or sign up on Church Center. Please help us continue this tradition and raise money for the youth mission trip. Any questions please email Lynn Rapp at minion.youth17@gmail.com. (Cookies need to be at the church no later than 7:00 A.M. on December 13th. They can be placed in the church kitchen before the walk labeled as "COOKIE WALK" when the church is open.) If baking 4-5 batches is too much, please still reach out – we would love to have what you can make.

Please select 2 types of cookies. We will contact you with the type we need most.

Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone : _____

Cookie type 1: _____

Cookie type 2: _____

Would you be willing to make both types? Yes / No

Update From the Board of Trustees

It's been a while since I last provided an update from the Trustees, but it's certainly not because we've been lacking in work to do! With such a large facility, there's always something on the to-do list, and we continue to be diligent stewards of your generous gifts as we work to further the mission of First Church.

Today, I'm excited to share an update about our beautiful stained-glass windows. Over the past several years, we've been collecting donations specifically for this purpose, and so far, we've raised about \$80,000 for their restoration. The windows, which have been in place since the church's dedication in 1913, remain in good condition, but it's time to preserve them for future generations.

For the past year, we've been working with various vendors to create a comprehensive, multi-year restoration plan. A tremendous thanks to Bill Richie who has been leading this effort.

We are pleased to announce that Phase 1 will begin in the second half of 2026, with the restoration of the large window on Frederick Street. This is our window in biggest need of restoration.

This project is expected to take 4-6 months to complete at an estimated cost of \$112,000. This will be funded through current trustee assets and gifts from our congregation.

Following that, we'll move on to Phase 2, which involves restoring the 54 smaller windows throughout the Sanctuary, classrooms and Church Offices.

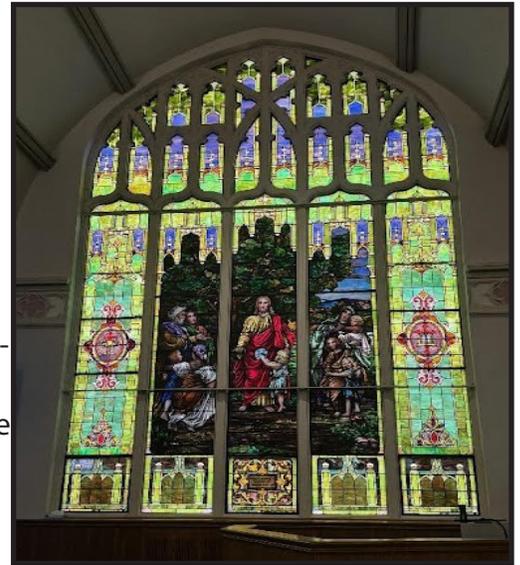
Phase 3 will focus on the restoration of the large window on Simpson Street.

Another significant project ahead in 2026 is the replacement of the large HVAC units in both sides of the Sanctuary. These units have exceeded their expected service life and we plan to replace them and add gas heat to improve energy efficiency. The total estimated cost for this project is \$140,000, which will be covered through trustee assets, congregation gifts, and support from Little Friends Preschool.

If you'd like more information or would like to learn how you can contribute, please don't hesitate to reach out to Jim Murdoch, Chair of the Trustees or Pastor Mira.

Thank you for your continued support of these important projects!

Jim Murdoch, Chair



Change for Water

Water is the foundation of our very lives. Yet, according to the United Nations, over 2 billion people lack access to clean, readily available drinking water. Help us to support well-digging efforts in Africa by dropping your loose change (or even paper bills) into the blue Change for Water bucket located in the lobby in front of the multipurpose room. Donations from November totaled \$76.86. We extend a HUGE THANK YOU to all who gave! We are grateful for your donations!



Ringling in the News!

I thought I would write a different kind of newsletter article this month and explain our fundraising, rather than talk all about it. I have had people ask how much money we are trying to raise. My answer is always "as much as we can". When we went to Liverpool in 2012, with our church and friend's help, we raised a little over \$40,000! This year our goal is much loftier – of course it is 13 years later! So I thought I'd try to explain why we are raising money.

We really are honored to be able to participate in the 22nd International Handbell Symposium. The United States has a limited number of choirs that are allowed! We will be one of 6 to 8 choirs from the US there! The Symposium is a rugged, week-long time of ringing with 800-1,000 other ringers from around the world. Our conductors are also from around the world and often need an interpreter. We also attend classes – both ringing technique classes as well as some "cultural" classes. We attend concerts by those choirs who would like to highlight themselves (no, we aren't doing that!), eat, and have fellowship together. The week culminates in a massed ringing concert – it really is quite an experience!

Each ringer attending (we have 13) has a registration cost of almost \$1,000 (It's in pounds!). We also have to take our bells and chimes, table covers, mallets, dowels, music, binders and stands for our music. We have 7 big suitcases to lug everything, but of course they will be an additional cost above our normal luggage. We also have to buy foam there to use – we are not taking our tables. Then we add hotel rooms for a week and some meals – the price keeps climbing.

Of course we are planning to do some sight-seeing while we are in Scotland! We actually have 25 people going on this trip! We offered to take more of you with us! The total cost of the entire trip is almost \$7,000 per person – a really reasonable cost! Our "extra folks" coming are paying their way, while the rest of us – the ones you see working at our fundraisers are, at this point, paying \$4,000 each.

We know we sound like we are always asking for money – but we really are trying to get out into the community as well. We have sent sponsor letters out to many local businesses. This month a group of us are playing at 6 different Nursing Homes. We will be on Good Day PA on December 12th! You can find all of us in concert at the Silver Spring Township Winter's Night on December 10th and at the Camp Hill Fredericksen Library on December 15th. We are playing at a church in Palmyra for their Christmas Tea. We helped to bring Santa Doug to Mechanicsburg in November, playing downtown then as well. AND we will be Ringing in the New Year with a concert here at First Church on Sunday, January 4th at 4:00 pm.

We THANK YOU for your support as we move forward. We hope you enjoyed your Holiday pies! We appreciate you joining us on our "dining out" evenings. January 28th, we'll be at Texas Roadhouse – you can use those gift cards many of you bought! We are planning a "thank you" party when we get through all of this – sure hope you'll join us to celebrate! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, everyone!

-Kathie Bittenbender and "The Bells"

Stained Glass Class



The red rose stain glass windows at First Church are located on the first floor, the fourth window near alley entrance and in Room 123 Guyer Class Sunday school classroom 5th window from the left.

The rose has been a common Christian symbol since the 1200s. It is also an important Catholic symbol. For Catholics, this flower represents a symbol of the rosary, which is used by Catholics during prayer. The red rose is related to Jesus Christ's life. The rose's five petals symbolize all five of Christ's wounds from the crucifixion. The red rose means martyrdom and Jesus' sacrificial blood while a white rose is associated with the Virgin Mary and means purity. The flower also represents the 'Messianic promise' (multiple predictions in the Old Testament regarding the coming of Messiah), the nativity of Jesus Christ.

There are some traditions believe that the rose had no thorns before the fall but grew them after the fall. These same traditions believe the beautifulness and fragrance of the rose is a reminder of Paradise while the thorns are a reminder of sin's devastating effects on the earth (See Genesis 3:18).



Camp, at this time of Year?

Well, here we are moving in the Winter season; however, there's no time like the present to start planning for the Summer Camp season!

As Camp Coordinators we would again like to extend to you our thanks and appreciation for making the 2025 camping season memorable and successful. We know it is hard to believe, but before you know it, we will be sharing another special Camp Sunday to kick off the year 2026!

First Church Youth

Youth Ministry at First Church

Are you a student between 4th and 12th grade? Check out the format for our Youth Ministry here at First Church and consider plugging in and joining us when you can. We would love to see you at our gatherings. For more information contact Lisa Aronson uthrock@fumchurch.com

4G YOUTH GROUPS | 6:00-8:00 | 6th-12th Grade

1st Sunday: Large group Gathering - starts in the youth lounge or gym and begins with a casual time to hang out, play games, and eat snacks. Afterwards, we dig into God's word and listen to a lesson. Our time of learning is a space to ask questions, have discussions, and support you in your spiritual growth.

3rd Sunday: Large Group Gather and Dinner - similar to the 1st Sunday, with the addition that we will begin our youth group time with a meal in the Fellowship Hall.

STUDENT SMALL GROUPS | 6:00-7:30 | 4th-12th Grade

2nd Sundays: A chance for small group interaction with Students of Similar Ages. This Space is intended to allow for conversation, questions, and age-appropriate faith topics.

- Grades 4th - Grade 7th -- Meets at First Church in the gym

- Grades 8th-12th -- Meets at First Church in the youth lounge

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES | 6:00-8:00 | 6th -12th Grade

4th Sunday: Events will vary and may be at First Church or offsite. Some service opportunities will be open to our younger students (4th & 5th graders), but that will be communicated in the information provided.

SPECIAL EVENTS - See Youth Information Page or the Youth Ministry Event page on Church Center for dates, times, and event information. *Special events may alter the pattern of Sundays

What does the 4G mean? It is our statement of purpose for the youth ministry. While we want Youth Group to be a fun place where you can spend time with your friends, we want to make sure that we GATHER together to GROW as we GAIN from God's Word and learn to GIVE back to God in how we live and treat others. (It is also handy to have a 2-letter way of referencing Youth Group for when a text message only allows a certain number of characters.)

Upcoming Youth Events:

December 13th – Cookie Walk Fundraiser

December 14th – 4G Youth Christmas Party

January 30-February 1 – Zeteo High School Conference

First Church Mission Moments...

Reverse Advent Calendar Returns!

As we approach this season of Advent, many of us look forward to opening an Advent Calendar to discover a special treat or prize to enhance our holiday season. Once again this year, we are turning things around, instead of getting a special treat, you give to others! We are collecting food items for the Little Free Pantry located on our property. The pantry provides a 'no barrier access point to food' to those in our community. The Reverse Advent Calendar lists simple items for you to collect and bring back to stock our pantry. Feel free to pick up the list and a bag for your collected items at the Missions Table located in the Main Entrance hallway. Collect the items and return to the area under the balcony in the sanctuary any time during the month of December. Thanks again for your support of the Little Free Pantry and for helping us celebrate this wonderful season of giving! Questions, contact Lori Hoffnagle or Sandy Walton.

↩ REVERSE ↪

ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX AND
HELP SUPPORT THE LITTLE FREE PANTRY
THIS CHRISTMAS.
NO GLASS OR PERISHABLE ITEMS PLEASE

<input type="checkbox"/> December 1 - box of cereal	<input type="checkbox"/> December 14 - packaged pasta
<input type="checkbox"/> December 2 - peanut butter	<input type="checkbox"/> December 15 - canned beans/veggies
<input type="checkbox"/> December 3 - canned fruit	<input type="checkbox"/> December 16 - jelly/jam
<input type="checkbox"/> December 4 - Ramen/cup of noodles	<input type="checkbox"/> December 17 - coffee/tea/cocoa
<input type="checkbox"/> December 5 - canned beans/veggies	<input type="checkbox"/> December 18 - macaroni & cheese
<input type="checkbox"/> December 6 - canned meat/fish	<input type="checkbox"/> December 19 - canned tomatoes
<input type="checkbox"/> December 7 - packaged oatmeal	<input type="checkbox"/> December 20 - canned vegetable
<input type="checkbox"/> December 8 - crackers	<input type="checkbox"/> December 21 - canned soup
<input type="checkbox"/> December 9 - canned soup	<input type="checkbox"/> December 22 - heat&eat canned meals
<input type="checkbox"/> December 10 - packaged tuna	<input type="checkbox"/> December 23 - apple sauce
<input type="checkbox"/> December 11 - spaghetti sauce	<input type="checkbox"/> December 24 - canned fruit
<input type="checkbox"/> December 12 - packaged snacks	<input type="checkbox"/> December 25- your choice!
<input type="checkbox"/> December 13 - packaged rice	

Thanks for helping to provide for the Little Free Pantry! Fill your bag with items each day in December. When finished, return your filled bag to the display in the back of the green chair section of the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church.



I want to thank the entire Church for the recent prayers, meals, and condolences on the passing of my Husband, Murph Zimmerman. I have just felt so embraced by everybody's love during this time and feel grateful for all the love and support. Thank you.

– Lela Zimmerman



Help us celebrate special birthdays for our church members turning 80 or older!



Joyce Woods.....December 1
Don Mowrey.....December 8
Darlis Aumiller.....December 21
Sandy Coover.....December 28

Pat Hutter.....January 3
Ray Powers.....January 7
MaryAnn Swartley....January 11
Judy Wertz.....January 12
Leroy Weaver.....January 15
Vicki Coover..... January 19
Don Coldren.....January 27
Ed Johnson.....January 27
Darrell Sill.....January 28



♥ Mr. and Mrs. Roy Miller married 58 years December 9, 1967.

FIRST NEWS FIRST
EDITORS: Kelsey Goll

The **deadline** for submitting articles for the February 2026 issue is **Jan. 15**. Early submissions always appreciated!