



Tower Tidings

December 2025

Palmyra First UMC



Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat
Please put a penny in the old man's hat
If you haven't got a penny, [then] a ha'penny will do
If you haven't got a ha'penny, [then] God bless you!

While Christmas is coming, I have no idea if the goose is getting fat. Nor do I care! I don't believe I've ever eaten goose for Christmas or any other time of the year. And a penny just doesn't go as far as it used to go. In fact, it has so little value US mint discontinued making the penny (ok, technically a one-cent coin!) on November 12th because they cost over 3 cents to produce. The ha'penny (half penny) was discontinued by the US mint in 1857.

One thing that has not changed is the meaning of Christmas. In the words of the Gospel recorded by John, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us . . ." (John 1:14a) Christmas means God became human to live with us, show us a better way, and ultimately die for our sins before rising to new life. It means the last part of the old song is still relevant, **"God Bless you."**

God has indeed blessed us as individuals and as a community of faith. In my case, God blessed me with the memories of great parents, wonderful siblings, great girls and grandchildren, and fabulous friends. I am blessed with a roof over my head, food on the table, clothing to wear, and oil in the fuel tank.

As a community of faith, *Palmyra First* has been blessed with spiritual forebearers who built our building, giving us space for a variety of ministries, maintained the *Seltzer Retreat Center* as a place for spiritual growth, and provided us with a legacy of generosity. We are blessed with donors who keep the bills paid, volunteers who serve people around the world by assembling cleaning (flood) buckets, and health kits for distribution through the *United Methodist Committee on Relief* and help people locally through agencies such as the *Caring Cupboard*, *Lebanon County Christian Ministries*, *The Lebanon Rescue Mission*, *Salvation Army*, and *Habitat for Humanity*.

We are blessed with volunteers who operate our Awakenings Coffee Shop, teach Sunday School, and lead various study groups. We have volunteers who maintain the properties by doing minor repairs, cutting grass, pulling weeds, and raking leaves. Other volunteers act as a hospitality committee, welcoming people to worship, pickleball, dinner and a movie, and so much more.

In this Advent and Christmas season, may each of you feel the blessings of God. Merry Christmas, and in the words of Tiny Tim, **"God bless us, everyone!"**

Grace & Peace,

James D. Anderman, Pastor



December is the month of preparation for the arrival of the King of kings. Yes, we will prepare for the celebration of Christ the King, but we should also be preparing for the second coming of Jesus. Beginning at the end of November, we transition to purple as our liturgical color (the color of royalty) and use the color for 4 Sundays before shifting to white for the 12 day Christmas season.

Since Advent is a season of preparation for the arrival of God on earth in the form of Jesus Christ, our Advent messages will be in the form of a sermon series on “The Big Picture.” Often, we focus on what Jesus’ birth means to us as individuals, but the big picture is a plan for all people. Attend all four Sundays of Advent to hear “The Big Picture.”

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

December 7th - The Second Sunday of Advent: This week, we turn to Isaiah 11:1-10 to hear how God will bring about his plan for a new relationship with **all God’s people**. Our readings will be supplemented with selections from Psalm 72. The message is “Justice and Righteousness.”

December 14th – The Third Sunday of Advent: Even before the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed by Congress, God had a plan to give all people the opportunity for a personal relationship with God and eternal salvation. Nothing, not disabilities, nor social standing, nor the lack of income can keep anyone from the love of God. Our message, “Opportunities for All” will be based on both Isaiah 35:1-10 and Luke 1:47-55.

December 21st – The Fourth Sunday of Advent: Signs from God can be powerful revelations, but too often we don’t see the sign or misinterpret them. This week, we will read about a king who didn’t want to ask for a sign, but was promised one anyway and a distraught fiancée who wasn’t looking for a sign yet understood the sign he was given. Our message, based on Isaiah 7:10-16 and Matthew 1:18-25, will be “Seeing and Understanding the Signs.”

December 24th – Christmas Eve: Our Christmas Eve services are scheduled to begin at 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM. The 3:00 PM service will feature both the Bell Choir and our vocal choir with Preston Ziegenfus playing the organ. The 7:00 PM service music will be played by Shirley Fortna. Both services will include the sacrament of holy communion and the traditional candle lighting.

As in previous years, we will hear the story of the first Christmas from Mary’s perspective. We’ve heard the story so many times we can practically recite it from heart. But the Christmas story means nothing unless we take some action. Our readings will be Isaiah 9:2-7 and Luke 2:1-20, and the message will be “Go, See, Share.”

December 28th – The First Sunday of Christmas: One of the Christmas-related stories we rarely read in United Methodist Churches is found in Matthew 2:13-23. It is the ugly story of the slaughter of the Holy Innocents. Why is this story in the Bible? How can we make sense of senseless acts of violence? In addition to Matthew, we will read from Isaiah 63:7-9 as we ask, “O God, Where Are You?”

January 4th – The Second Sunday of Christmas: At the beginning of a new year, it is fitting and appropriate for us to renew our covenant with God. This year, we will again use the Wesleyan Covenant service featuring the covenant prayer and our promises to live godly lives. Our message will be based on Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 25:31-46, and will be titled “Choose Rightly or Be Left.” This will also be our first opportunity for communion in 2026.



United Women in Faith

Christmas Caroling

Wednesday, December 17th at 6:30 PM

we will be meeting at the *Palmyra First* church to walk around the neighborhood singing carols of the season. EVERYONE is invited. Snacks and fellowship back at the church will follow caroling.

Knit, Crochet, & Pray

Due to the busyness of the season, *Knit, Crochet, and Pray* will not meet in December. However, we are collecting blankets, bibs, & booties for infants as well as hats, mittens, & scarves for adults and children through January 24th. On that day, these donations will be given to a *Lebanon Family Health Services* representative for distribution to their low-income clients. All donations may be dropped off at the cradle in the *Fellowship Hall* or the craft closet in the *South Wing*.

Baby Shower for Jesus

United Women in Faith will hold our annual Baby Shower for Jesus on **Saturday, January 24th beginning at 9:30 AM** in the *Fellowship Hall*. All interested women are invited to join us for breakfast and fellowship. There is no cost, but we do encourage you to sign up to attend so we will know how many to plan for. The sign-up sheet is on the table in the *Fellowship Hall*.

We are also collecting items for *Lebanon Family Health Services* in the cradle in the *Fellowship Hall*. These include baby blankets, bibs, booties, diapers, and other baby items, as well as hats, scarves, mittens, and gloves for all ages.

T.E.A. (Through the Eyes of Another) Book Club

T.E.A. is meeting Thursday, December 18th at 7:00 PM at Amy Dellinger's home. Patti Flannery will lead our discussion of *Surely You're Joking Mr. Feynman*. New readers welcome!

Christmas Cards for the Incarcerated

160 Christmas cards with handwritten messages were delivered to the conference office to be distributed to those in prisons around our region. Many thanks to friends at *Palm Lutheran Church* who contributed almost half of these cards. Thanks to all the *Palmyra First* folks who took the time to write, think about, and pray for those in prison.



Bake Sale Follow-Up

Our election day bake sale was a great success! Once again, donations of delicious baked goods, soup, and hot dogs filled the tables in the Narthex for voters to take home by free-will donation. We took in over \$700, most of which will benefit local, regional, national, and international outreach agencies. Thanks to the bakers and sellers for your help! It couldn't happen without you.

Thanks from United Women in Faith

Thanks to everyone who helped make and package the mammogram reminder gifts in October. We gave away about 100 reminder gifts to attendees of the conference event, teachers of *Noah's Little Ark*, *Celebrate Recovery* folks, friends, relatives, and neighbors. Hopefully, these tokens will just be a reminder nudge to women that need to schedule a mammogram.

Merry Christmas from Noah's Little Ark!

The Christmas season is always full of fun in preschool, from special crafts and activities, and of course our annual Christmas Pageant. We always enjoy sharing the story of the birth of Jesus with our families. Also, our Pre-K students have a special Gingerbread House Day at the end of the month where they get to build a gingerbread house with their special grownups. Our teachers work hard to make this season magical and also teach them the true meaning of Christmas!

We were happy to have a few of our students share songs during worship at *Palmyra First* on Sunday, November 9th. We hope the congregation enjoyed them being a part of the service!

We wish you a very blessed Christmas, and a Happy 2026!

Discovery Dunes

In November, the students learned about David's life. They threw balls at a statue of Goliath (built by Betty and Fred Adams) and knocked him down, just as David did. They sent notes to the unwillingly absent and they also participated in the NLA Preschool Sunday School. They collected food for the *Caring Cupboard*, painted fall trees, heard a story about autumn, and helped with *Rise Against Hunger*.

December's theme is The Birth of Jesus.

Dec. 7 A Baby is Coming

Dec. 14 Mary and Joseph

Dec. 21 A Baby is Born

Dec. 28 The Shepherds Visit



Please consider helping with the children's Sunday School. By law we must have 2 adults with clearances (they are obtained free and we will help you get them). We need both helpers and teachers. You will only need to help one Sunday a month.

Have a wonderful Advent Season!

Peace and Joy,

Discovery Dunes Staff

Social and Physical Exercise Opportunities

What do you do to keep in shape physically, socially, and mentally? Are you curious about pickleball, but don't know how to play? If you would like to learn the game, 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. Players rotate in and out, offering everyone a chance to socialize, support one another, and play 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.

Small Group Studies

The Blessed Misfits

The Blessed Misfits will be taking a bit of a break during December. On December 17, we will join with others for some caroling in the neighborhood. We will worship in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve, December 24, and simply, take a break for December 31st, New Year's Eve. We will begin a brand-new study on Wednesday, January 7, 2026.

The Misfits meet in the *South Wing*, and via *Zoom* on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM. We invite you to join the group as a part of a new spiritual discipline for 2026.

Sunday with the Wired Word

With all the bad news we hear daily, how should we, as Christians, react? *The Wired Word*, our Sunday morning study group, is based on this basic idea. Lessons, based on recent headline stories, are emailed to participants on Thursday. 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.



Extending the Table

Extending the Table is a program of lay visitation taking the sacrament of Holy Communion to our unwillingly absent members. Each Sunday or Monday following communion at the church, the volunteers extend the communion table by going to individuals, sharing the love of Jesus, and the communion element taken from the Sunday service.

If you would like to be a part of the ministry as a server, talk to pastor Jim who will be happy to provide a brief training, including the expectations of the servers, and logistics of how to serve communion, and who can and should be included when serving the sacrament. If you enjoy visiting people, this ministry just might be your calling.

The "Unwillingly Absent" are those who, for whatever reason, cannot attend our services. It could be a transportation problem, disability, or work commitments that keep them away. Anyone who wants to be here but can't make it, is one of our "unwillingly absent." If you are interested in receiving a visit from the *Extending the Table* ministry team, please call the church office so the arrangements can be made.

Extending the Table does not replace pastoral visits. It supplements them. If you would like a visit from the pastor, just give him a call at either the church office 717-838-2521 or via his cell phone at 717-473-0042.