



# Year End Review

First United Methodist Church



First  United<sup>®</sup>

Methodist Church of Lancaster  
29 E. Walnut St., Lancaster, PA 17602  
EngageGodFirst.org . 717-394-7231

# 2025

# 2025 Report from Pastor Jason

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Friends, we come to another Charge Conference, giving thanks to God for His blessings. We continue to journey together, experiencing God's grace and serving together, believing in His promises and trusting He will provide for our needs and the needs of our community.

I'm grateful to be part of a church that shares its mission of loving, caring for, serving, and sharing the good news of the Gospel with all. We reach out to connect people to Jesus, and we grow Christian disciples who serve the world and relieve suffering.

Every Sunday, I finish the worship Service with the invitation to be the Jesus someone can meet; to be the reason someone believes in the goodness of God. With that in mind, we strive daily to live out the vision of loving boldly, serving joyfully, and leading courageously.

The church envisions itself as the hub of Christian life in the city. We achieve this by building community and conducting outreach. We have created spaces where the church can connect and engage with families. Spaces like the small groups, outreach events, and community events continue the tradition of connecting with friends and families to celebrate important occasions in the church's life.

These activities have given us opportunities to share our faith and build community. We connected with families, heard their needs, and our Staff and committees continue to work hard to develop spaces and ministries that foster a strong connection between the church and the community. We also partnered with Anchor Lancaster, NA, and AA groups, educational and musical programs, and other churches to use our space as a missional tool. Our facilities are busy every day with people being served and engaged.

Our goal is for the church to be a vital part of people's lives. It is a difficult road in the world we live in, but one we continue to take, knowing that the work we do can make an impact on our community and the world. The mission of The United Methodist Church is to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 22:36-40). This mission is achieved through vital congregations that equip and empower people to be disciples of Jesus Christ in their homes and communities worldwide. First UMC Lancaster is striving to be the vital congregation our city and surrounding communities need.

Over the past months since my arrival at First UMC, I have seen how the church continues to be vital and have heard the stories of people and their relationships with the church. I have journeyed through small group meetings and met with nearly 200 people. Most of them acknowledged the gifts of the church, such as music programs and mission partnerships with local nonprofits and international ministries. It is the church's hope to engage more deeply with younger families and strengthen its congregational care program. The church acknowledges the importance of being a relevant church for new generations.

Here are the ways the church is vital:

## **Worship**

The average attendance at our worship services continues to trend upward. People enjoy each worship service, and we are blessed with a great worship staff and talented people. Our media resources are an essential tool to connect with people who cannot attend our facilities for various reasons. Our social media engagement has grown, connecting more people to our church.

We plan to use a new provider to strengthen our community engagement, communication, and virtual presence. The church is renowned for its exceptional worship events, and it is a strength to have such a talented team leading the services.

The restart of the Taizé Service has been a blessing for those looking for a contemplative space for prayer.

## **New Disciples**

We have seen new faces in our worship services, and family members have joined our family of faith, and some are returning to be part of our congregation.

We have people participating in service each Sunday, from greeters, ushers, liturgists, acolytes, and our choirs. Our Congregational Care Ministry and its volunteers play a crucial role in keeping the community engaged and cared for. The church received new members in the first part of the year, and we plan to have a new membership class on March 21, 2026.

# 2025 Report from Pastor Jason Cont.

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## **Small Groups**

The church creates spaces for small groups of various ages and plans to develop affinity groups and revive existing small groups, such as United Women of Faith (UWF). Book Studies and Sunday School create spaces for people to engage their faith and grow in fellowship.

## **Mission Engagement in the community**

The church partners with local non-profit organizations, such as Anchor Lancaster, NA, and AA Groups. We also have multiple groups and churches using our facilities. The church generously supports local and international missions. We also have an excellent Early Childhood Program, Discovery Corner Academy. People volunteer in programs such as Anchor Lancaster and LUMINA. We also have a tax ministry.

## **Giving**

First UMC Lancaster is an extravagant, generous church. The church embodies this practice well and supports not only the congregation's mission but also local and international causes and ministries.

As part of my pastoral duties, I have met with and visited people and supported our staff and ministries. I participated in the District Meetings and Conference meetings.

## **Things to look forward to:**

We will ask congregants to share their stories and voice their ideas on how our church can be fruitful and relevant to new generations.

We will have new ways to worship creatively.

We will develop new spaces where people can develop their faith.

We will provide an integrated process that moves guests into the church's life (Discipleship Pathway).

We will provide small groups intended to care for those in need.

We will continue to grow in worship attendance.

We will continue to find ways to give back to the community and create new ministries that impact people's lives.

We want to increase our giving and accomplish our goals.

## **In this season, I celebrate:**

Our church continues to engage in ministry and seeks ways to connect with the community. I'm hopeful for what God is doing in and through the church's life.

## **Challenges we face:**

Relevance to new generations

This season, I give thanks for all God is doing in and through the life of the Church. I am deeply grateful to our leadership and staff for our collaborative efforts in keeping our ministry fruitful. The work has been extra challenging in these past months. Adapting to a new church and a new season is always challenging, but I'm grateful for your love and care for my family and me. Additionally, I am grateful to my wife and son for their support of my ministry.

I give thanks to our Lord for his blessings. I trust God will continue to guide us. All in all, my perceptions are that God has been faithful, and our congregation continues to be loyal in such times. As of this writing, we still have a couple of weeks of the year to go, but there will be every reason to sing the doxology at the end of this year as we praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to God and First United Methodist Church.

With a grateful heart!

Rev. Jason Ríos

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# Passionate Worship

Passionate worship is about gathering in ways that are meaningful, life-giving, and honest. It's when people come together expecting to be encouraged, challenged, comforted, and inspired. Passionate worship doesn't mean a particular style or emotion—it means showing up fully and offering our best, trusting that something important happens when we pause, reflect, sing, pray, and listen together. At its heart, worship helps us reconnect with what matters most and reminds us that we are not alone.

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)*

# Practices of Fruitful Congregations

## Passionate Worship

### Sunday Worship

- Average Attendance about 250
- 3 worship services
- 10:45 AM streaming online
- Nursery and children's program at all 3 services
- 4 vocal choirs
- 2 handbell choirs
- Worship Band
- Supported by acolytes, ushers, communion stewards, sound techs, media team, fellowship hour volunteers, welcome center volunteers

### Special Worship Services

- Ash Wednesday
- Holy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Easter Eve
- Spring Cantata Honoring Appenzeller
- Celebrate Pastor Joe DiPaolo
- King's Brass
- Welcome Pastor Jason Ríos
- Youth Sunday
- All Saints Day
- Celebrating Peter Omundsen
- Contemporary Christmas
- Christmas Eve

### Celebrate!

- Amazing celebrations for Pastor Joe, Pastor Jason and Peter Omundsen
- Additions to the organ
- Monthly Taizé Services
- Increased use of media including announcement slides & slides for each sermon series.
- Creative elements to support message including: Star words, Remembering your baptism, Online survey

## Youth Vocal & Handbell Choirs – Peter Omundsen (peterthetuner@gmail.com)

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### Chapel Choir (Youth in Grades 7-12)

The choir sings for 8:15 and 10:45 AM traditional services, once a month, from September through May. The Chapel Choir rehearses Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 PM, in the lower level Choir Room.

### Wesley Handbell Choir

The Wesley Handbells is the adult handbell choir and open to anyone who reads music. The Choir rings once a month for the 8:15 and 10:45 AM services, and rehearses Thursday nights from 6:30 to 7:30 PM in the Handbell Room, located on the lower level of the building.

### Youth Handbell Choir (Grades 7-12)

The Youth Handbell Choir is open to middle and high school age ringers. The choir rings for 8:15 and 10:45 traditional services approximately once every other month from September through May. The Youth Handbells rehearse Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 7:00 PM.

## Children's vocal choirs – Jan Betty (jan@mycyberlink.net)

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### Cherub Choir (Children Age 3 - Grade 2)

Choir practice is on Saturdays, 10:30-11:30 AM in Room 209

### Carol Choir (Children in Grades 3-6)

Choir practice is on Wednesdays, 7:00-8:00PM in Room 203

## Contemporary Worship Band – Brian Close (contemporary@engagegodfirst.org)

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The Contemporary Worship Band leads worship at the 9:30 AM service in the Celebration Center. Most Sundays the team includes two vocalists accompanied by acoustic guitar, piano, and drums. Other musicians join the band on special occasions including Easter and Christmas.

**Contemporary Christmas:** This year the band led a Contemporary Christmas Worship Service for the second year on December 23 to provide an alternative for those traveling on Christmas Eve or for those who just wanted a more relaxed worship experience. 50 people attended with many visitors. The service concluded with cocoa and cookies.

**Band Members:** Barb St. John, Amanda Newell, John Thorbahn & Hollis Thorbahn

**Tech Team:** Steve St. John, Lincoln Newell, Jeff Butts & Eric Molzahn

## Wesley Singers – Ted Maurer (tedamaurer@comcast.net)

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The Wesley Singers have been entertaining retirement community residents since 1987. This "all male" chorus sings two different seasons per year: spring and fall providing musical concerts to the many retirement communities within Lancaster County with an audiences that varies from as few as 20 to 200 residents, depending on the size of the community. We also selected a new conductor/director this year with Paul Richer having moved to Florida. While our membership numbers have declined recently, we continue to provide a very resonant sound. One member continues to provide the necessary funding to compensate our director and accompanist. We look forward to attracting new singers and successfully continue our musical mission outreach. Come join us if you enjoy singing and hanging out with fellow retirees who enjoy spreading God's word in song.

## Chancel Choir (Adult) – Brian Norcross (brian.norcross@fandm.edu)

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The Chancel Choir sings anthems for most 10:45 AM services (September through May) and 8:15 AM services on select festival services. The choir is open to all singers, high school age and older.

Two rehearsals are offered for singers to choose from:

1. Thursday nights 7:45 to 9:15 PM working on the anthem for the week, anthems for future Sundays, and a major work
2. Sunday mornings 9:30 to 10:30 AM, working exclusively on the anthem for that week.

The Chancel Choir generally prepares two major works each season, which are performed in worship services. The repertoire of the Chancel Choir is highly varied ranging from "classical" music to spirituals. Major works usually include full orchestra accompaniment. To join, come to rehearsal located in the choir room on the lower level of the building.

Below are some music highlights from the past year:

- **Two cantatas presented with orchestra and Chancel Choir:**
  - a. April 27, 2025: "All Is Yours," James Ra. This cantata was commissioned and premiered by FUMC in 2019 celebrating the Appenzellers. This was the second performance of this unique cantata.
  - b. December 7, 2025: "Winter Rose," Joseph Martin
- **Epic Easter Eve:** April 19, 2025: Full orchestra combined with artistic creativity of Brian Lehman. Music included: Respighi-Church Windows; Holst-Mercury and Jupiter from the Planets; Hovahannes-And God Created Great Whales
- **Epic Christmas Eve:** with orchestra and combined Chancel and Chapel Choirs for the 4:00 and 10:00 services, and orchestra, soloists and Cherub and Carol Choirs. Soloist John Darrenkamp
- **Premiere of Psalm 95:** in honor of Joe DiPaolo, composed by Brian Norcross
- **Chancel Choir:** presented at 36 Sunday morning services, plus 2 Christmas Eve services
- **Summer Choir:** at 13 summer Sunday morning services
- **Chapel Choir:** presented at 18 Sunday morning services
- **Wesley Handbells:** presented at 9 Sunday morning services, plus 3 Christmas Eve services
- **Youth Handbells:** presented at 9 Sunday morning services
- **Carol Choir:** presented at 9 Sunday morning services plus Christmas Eve
- **Cherub Choir:** presented at 4 Sunday morning service plus Christmas Eve

FUMC celebrated Peter Omundsen's 40 years of service as organist, and director of Chapel Choir, and Handbell Choirs. Part of the celebration included commissioning Jason Krug to write a new work for Handbells to be premiered by FUMC

## Media – Christian Faux (youth@engagegodfirst.org)

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the media team is to support and enhance worship by recording and live-streaming Sunday morning services. The team also manages PowerPoint projections and video presentations to create a meaningful and engaging worship experience. The 10:45 AM service is livestreamed every week. Services can be viewed at any time on the church YouTube channel.

**Volunteers:** Thanks to the ingenious efforts and hard work of the effortlessly handsome man who runs the traditional service projector and stream, we've managed to substantially reduce the work required to run everything on a Sunday morning. That means that anyone who is willing to volunteer and learn new skills will have less to have to do!

# Radical Hospitality

Radical hospitality is about how we treat people—especially those who are new or different from us. It means creating a community where people feel genuinely noticed, welcomed, and valued, not as visitors, but as people who belong. This goes beyond being polite or friendly; it's about paying attention, listening well, and removing barriers so others can feel at ease. When we practice radical hospitality, we look for ways to open our lives and our spaces so that everyone knows they matter.

*"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)*

# Practices of Fruitful Congregations

## Radical Hospitality

**Welcoming Team:** Ushers, greeters, welcome center volunteers

### Inviting

- 5,000 household targeting mailings at Easter and Christmas
- Social media
- Newspaper listing Lancaster Online
- Fig Magazine 2 issues per year
- Equipping members to be inviters through printed Christmas and Easter invites

**Creating Welcoming Environment:** Trustees, Mighty Men and Women, Green Team, Facilities Director, Resident Artist

### Events

- **Family Events:** Valentine's Party, Easter Egg Hunt, Fall Fest, Gingerbread House Party
- Epic Easter Eve
- Christmas Eve
- King's Brass
- Korea Events
- Pancake Breakfast
- NT Live Seminar

**Bus Ministry:** About 40 different people attend church each year from Willow Valley and the number is growing.

### Sharing Our Space to Serve Our Community

- **Churches:** Anchored Church (formerly Christ Saves Church), House of Potter, The Church of Pentecost
- **Recovery Groups:** Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Lancaster Recovery Sangha
- **Musical Groups:** Allegro Orchestra, NextGen Youth, Allegretto Youth Orchestra
- **Social Services:** AARP Tax Ministry, Anchor Lancaster, Have a Heart Prison Ministry, IU13, Lancaster Reading Solutions Micro-school

### Celebrate!

- **Subscription to Subsplash:** providing new website, church app, improved communication platforms and so much more! Coming in 2026!
- Korea Events
- Return of Pancake Breakfast

# Subsplash, Korea & Celebrations – Laura Sambrick (Isambrick@engagegodfirst.org)

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## A New Way to Stay Connected – Subsplash

We're excited to share that our church has partnered with **Subsplash**, a digital platform designed to help us stay better connected as a church family. Subsplash gives us one easy place to access sermons, event information, online giving, small group resources, and important announcements—right from a phone, tablet, or computer. This new tool will help us communicate more clearly, respond more quickly, and make it easier for everyone to engage in the life and ministry of our church, whether you're here every week or joining us from afar.

We know that not everyone feels comfortable with new technology, and we want to assure you that this change is meant to support our communication, not complicate it. We will be offering clear, patient training to help anyone who would like assistance, and no one will be left to figure this out on their own. Printed communication will **not** disappear—it will simply be used a bit less as we add this new option. Our hope is that Subsplash will make it easier for all of us to stay informed, connected, and engaged in the life of our church, in ways that work best for each person.

## From Lancaster to Korea: 140 Years of Faith, Music, and Mission

This year, our church joyfully joined with partners in Korea and the wider Methodist family to celebrate the **140th anniversary of the arrival of Henry and Ella Appenzeller in Korea on Easter Sunday, 1885**—a moment whose spiritual fruit continues to bless generations. The year-long celebration unfolded through three beautiful events that highlighted the enduring legacy of faith, education, and cultural exchange sparked by the Appenzellers' ministry. In January, we were honored to host the **Methodist Theological University Choir of Seoul**, who opened the anniversary year with their moving concert, "Proclaiming True Joy to the World," offering sacred music at the "Mother Church" of Korean Christianity. In March, that celebration continued with a powerful concert by the **Ewha Woman's University College of Music**, whose performance of Western classical and traditional Korean works honored the deep historical ties between Lancaster and Ewha—connections shaped not only by Henry Appenzeller's pioneering work but also by the leadership and devotion of his daughter, Alice Appenzeller.

The celebration reached its joyful culmination during **Appenzeller Weekend, April 26–27**, a rich gathering of worship, learning, and music. Our choir, joined by a full orchestra, presented James Ra's cantata "All Is Yours," a work that beautifully wove scripture, hymns, and global Christian witness in honor of the Appenzellers and the Korean church. We were also blessed by the presence of Dr. K. Kale Yu, whose insightful presentations deepened our understanding of Korean Christianity and its global significance. From open rehearsals and shared meals to worship-filled sanctuaries, each event testified to the remarkable harvest that began 140 years ago—reminding us that faithful obedience, rooted in Christ, continues to bear fruit across cultures, generations, and continents.

As a meaningful continuation of this anniversary year, **Pastor Jason Ríos has been invited to travel to Korea in June**, offering an opportunity to deepen our historic relationship and strengthen the living connection between our congregation and the Korean church shaped by the Appenzellers' witness.

## Honoring Faithful Service, Embracing New Beginnings

This year marked a remarkable season of transition and thanksgiving in the life of our church. We celebrated **Pastor Joe DiPaolo's retirement after 40 years of faithful ministry**, giving thanks not only for his leadership but for the deep and lasting impact he has had on our congregation and far beyond. Hundreds gathered for a combined worship service and lunch to honor Joe and Susan, and together we surpassed an extraordinary **\$450,000 in mission giving**, supporting ministries in Lancaster, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan. Joe and Susan also received a beautiful piece of art, and a financial gift. It was a powerful reminder that a life of faithful service inspires generosity that continues God's work long after a chapter closes. We also honored **Peter Omundsen**, our beloved organist, on his **40-year anniversary**, celebrating his ministry of music with a joyful reception, heartfelt cards, and the commissioning of a special musical piece—fully funded by the generosity of the congregation and gifted to him as a lasting expression of our gratitude.

## Subsplash, Korea & Celebrations continued...

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At the same time, we joyfully welcomed new beginnings. We received **Pastor Jason Ríos** with open arms through worship, a reception, cards, a gift card shower, and small group gatherings where more than 200 people shared their stories and hopes for the future. These moments mattered because they reflected who we are as a church: a community that honors faithfulness, celebrates gifts, embraces new leadership, and walks together through seasons of change with joy and purpose. **Thank you to everyone who gave, volunteered, attended, wrote cards, prayed, and showed up**—your presence and generosity made these celebrations meaningful and deeply reflective of God's grace among us.

## Worship Arts – Brian Lehman (brianslehman@gmail.com)

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At our two big annual “night before” celebrations, Easter Eve and Christmas Eve, First Church excitedly pushed our unique form of worship forward through art, music, lighting, and movement. It was a joy not only to see the end results, but heartwarming to work with so many dedicated people along the way. I have said it multiple times to many who cherish these events, we can only pull it off when everyone volunteers their time and effort to make it happen. Our Advent tear down, for example, was disassembled, packed, put away and cleaned up in just 3 hours due to the over one dozen individuals who volunteered their time to get it all done. I am so grateful for the dedication of the entire church. These events look great due to all of you!

Beyond our large-scale events, the Taizé Worship Service was resurrected this year with effort to create a quiet, meditative platform for worshippers to experience communing with our Heavenly Father in a prayerful, meditative setting. Our version of the Taizé Cross was constructed in an effort to view a crucified Christ which is not normally displayed in Methodist Iconography. The Taizé service is intended to be modelled in a more interdenominational approach.

We facilitated a set for the Bible School Stage in June and offered drawing/art instruction in 6 sessions spread throughout the fall. What talented people we have in our congregation. Look for a small display of drawings in the glass display case going up mid January.

Thanks again for all of your support in the previous year and know that I look forward to working with many more in this coming year of Worship Arts!

# Membership Report – Katherine Spear (kgs.130@gmail.com)

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The year 2025 saw many joys and losses within the membership of First United Methodist Church.

## **Five (5) MARRIAGES were celebrated:**

- Thomas Browere and Sarah Kuhn – March 22, 2025
- John Darrenkamp and Carolyn Moody – May 17, 2025
- Kyle Yeager and Danielle Calandra – July 12, 2025
- Austin Reth and Liz Mazer – July 27, 2025
- Christopher Karshin and Telisha – August 9, 2025

## **We praised God for Eight (8) BIRTHS:**

- Keelan Deemer – 5/11 – son of Scott Deemer
- Margot Reinert – 6/15 daughter of Devon & Ari Reinert
- Jamie Gentile – 6/16 – son of Katie Davis and Nick Gentile
- Hudson Zaczekiewicz – 9/22 – son of Morgan Lee and Koy Zaczekiewicz
- Noah Reth – 9/25 – son of Mark and Maggie Reth
- Elijah Menta – 10/03 – son of Michael and Carly Piersol Menta
- Josephine Thorbahn -11/26 – daughter of Jonathon Thorbahn and Amanda Mazer
- Calla Tyler – 12/09 – daughter of Tyler and Rachel Coder

## **Pastor Joe baptized (4) persons before leaving First Church:**

- Teresa Bench
- Irma Hernandez
- Jose Hernandez
- his little granddaughter Charlotte Petraco

## **First Church gained (8) NEW MEMBERS:**

- Allen and Jane Forbes
- Reagan Miller
- Wilson Schonour
- Joni Sonefelt
- Caroline Stadden
- Daniel Testa
- Leila Testa

## **Eleven (11) members transferred to other congregations:**

- Matthew & Kristen Greenwood
- Christopher Karshin
- Dorothea Lippart
- Kimberly Lowe
- Luke & Ashley Salter
- Salvatore (Sal) Viscusi
- Carren Stika Weidler
- George & Pat Werner

## **Forty (40) folks withdrew their memberships from First Church:**

William & Iva Brimmer, Katie Charles, Sarah Clarke, Andrew & Tracy Cutler, Winfield Devonshire, Craig & Anne Esbenshade, Matthew Flick, David Grove, Janine Haar, James Harsh, Matthew Hoffman, Derek Johnson, David Kerr, Jane Knerr, Scott & Dawn Krady, David Kramer, Charles Kuhn, Ann Logan, Ann Lontz, Karen Minnig, Sheri Pierce, Warren & Merry Phillips, David & Christina Poorbaugh, John & Cynthia Rathvon, Mark & Mollie Schimmel, Joel & Karen Schreiner, Erin Shelor, Dana & Megan Stauffer, and W. Joseph Weder.

## **Death claimed (25) of our members:**

George Adams, Joan Burks, Shirlene Cerceo, William Coakley, George Coder, Ellen Connors, Faye Dissinger, Sarah Young Fisher, Amy Frey, Carolyn Gallup, John Gross, Lois Ivin, George Kantra, Mary Ann Lewis, Howard Lorah, Janet Mahoney, Elsie Mearkle, Jane Moore, Bernice Quay, Dorothy Riedlinger, Peggy Schneebeli, Lois Snyder, James Thorbahn, Joan Trott, and Julianna "Pat" Webber.

At the end of 2025, we have **811 professing members.**

# Intentional Faith Development

Intentional faith development is about helping people grow—at every age and stage of life. It means creating opportunities for learning, asking questions, building relationships, and exploring how faith connects with everyday life. Growth doesn't happen by accident, so we are thoughtful about providing pathways that help people deepen their understanding, strengthen their values, and develop practices that sustain them over time

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42)*

# Practices of Fruitful Congregations

## Intentional Faith Development

### Adult Discipleship

- 3 Sunday School Classes
- **7 Small Groups:** Book club, FLOW, Sisters in Faith, Wesley Women, men's breakfast, Willow Valley North, Woodcrest
- **FLOW young adult ministries:** weekly bible study, monthly meals, weekend retreat at beach
- Lent Study with the pastor
- Fall Study with the pastor
- Yearly membership class

### Events

- NT Live with Walk Thru the Bible
- **Appenzeller Weekend:** Saturday speaker, Sunday 9:30 speaker
- **Amos Stoltzfus:** Local leader speaking on homelessness
- **Meet the Pastor small groups:** 200 people!

### Children's Discipleship

- Sunday School
- Jr. Church
- Nursery
- **Family Events:** Valentine Party, Egg Hunt, Fall Fest, Gingerbread House
- Vacation Bible School
- Pocono Plateau

**Discovery Corner Academy:** 3 classes with 36 students

### Celebrate!

- 200 people met with Pastor Jason in small groups
- NT Live Event
- FLOW group growing
- Sisters in Faith growing
- Women in Faith planning to launch in 2026
- More people attending and volunteering at summer camp
- **Nursery makeover:** \$1,000 in new toys and furniture

## Adult Sunday School (Sundays, 9:30 AM)

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There are four adult Sunday School classes that meet Sundays at 9:30 AM. Each week includes a time for sharing, praying, and teaching. Many teachings are video or book studies. The class is usually led by members of the group. The pastors and outside speakers are also invited to speak on specific topics. The classes include:

### Christian Journey

- Meeting in Room 232/234
- Led by Wanda Whare (wwhare@n-hlaw.com), Don Herneisen, Jim Goudie

### God's Wild Kingdom

- Meeting in Room 240
- Led by Steve & Laurie Beeler (Imbeeler.0204@comcast.net)

### Koinonia

- Meeting in Room 201
- Led by Jeff & Nancy Bradley (nancy.bradley6@gmail.com) , Regina Karshin

### Wesleyan

- Meeting in Room 214/215
- Led by Carol Pyfer (ctpyfer@comcast.net), John & Katherine Spear, Lois Green, Susan Graybill, Wayne Adams

## Summer Sunday School

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From Memorial Day to Labor Day, all the adult Sunday School classes combine and meet in room 214/215. The class is led by the Associate Pastor, Laura Sambrick.

## Adult Small Groups

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There are at least six small groups that met regularly throughout the year. Approximately 60 people are on the roster of these groups.

- **Book Club** - Third Friday of each month, 9:30AM Katherine Spear (kgs.130@gmail.com)
- **F.L.O.W.** - Young Adults Group- Tuesday evenings, 7 PM Christian Faux (youth@engagegodfirst.org)
- **Sisters in Faith** - Thursday mornings, 10:30AM Karen Senkowski (ksenkowski@comcast.net)
- **Wesley Women** - 2nd & 4th Tuesday, 9:30AM Carol Pyfer (ctpyfer@comcast.net)

## Book Club - Katherine Spear (kgs.130@gmail.com)

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In 2025, the 15 women who usually participate in the monthly book discussion read an amazing array of books. The third Friday of the month at 9:30 AM is the magic time of discovery.

- In February we learned about improved care of women during the 15th century in **LADY TAN AND HER CIRCLE OF WOMEN** by Lisa See.
- Then we were off to Burma to discover the wonders of **ELEPHANT COMPANY**, where the huge animals transported an escape over the mountains to India.
- With **JAMES: A Novel** by Percival Everett, we took a raft trip on the Mississippi River with Huck Finn.
- In **THE GILDED YEARS: A Novel** by Karen Tanabe we were challenged by race relations.
- With **THE WOMEN** we tended the wounded with the nurses in Viet Nam.
- Then it was off to Nigeria with **THE GIRLS WITH THE LOUDING VOICE** by Abi Dare .
- **A PASSAGE TO INDIA** by E M Forster unveiled racial tensions in every aspect of life.
- **THE WOMAN THEY COULD NOT SILENCE** fought for women's rights in the mental asylum.
- **BEARTOWN: A Novel** by Fredrik Backman challenged local residents with commitment to town and people in this distant hockey town.
- And Everyone appreciated all the adventures in **BAD ASS GRIEF** by our own Jennifer Hassel.

Come join the adventure and delight each month at our own Book Club.

# Children's Ministry – Faith Kickery (fkickery@engagegodfirst.org)

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**Purpose:** Children's Ministry strives to grow future disciples, by teaching children about the light of Jesus through Sunday School, Jr Church, Vacation Bible School and Family Events.

## **Sunday School and Jr. Church:**

We offer meaningful opportunities for children during all three Sunday morning worship services.

- Jr. Church meets during the 8:15 AM and 10:45 AM services.
- Sunday School meets at 9:30 AM.

This schedule allows the entire family to attend church together, knowing there is something engaging and faith-building for everyone.

## **2025 Family Events:**

Our seasonal Family Events bring families from the church and community together for fun, joy, and fellowship, while sharing a special message of faith with children. With **over 100 families participating**, these events are one of our largest outreach opportunities. Families also receive regular invitations to grow deeper in their faith and stay connected to the church.

## **2025 Family Events included:**

- Valentine Party
- Community Easter Egg Hunt at Musser Park
- Fall Fest
- Gingerbread House Event

## **Vacation Bible School (VBS): True North: "Finding Your Way in a World Gone Wild" (June 23–27, 2025)**

At True North VBS, children learned that **Jesus is our true north – our steadfast and unshakable friend forever**. Kids were thrilled to participate in our high-energy Worship Rally featuring skits and music, then rotated through engaging stations where they learned how Jesus guides them through every part of life.

## **Pocono Plateau Summer Camp (July 21–25, 2025):**

In 2025, First Church sent children, youth, and **five volunteers** to Pocono Plateau Summer Camp. It was an incredible experience where kids built friendships, participated in daily Bible lessons, and enjoyed fun, hands-on activities such as hiking, swimming, boating, fishing, pond studies, and more. We look forward to welcoming even more families to join us in **2026!**

## **Goals for the Future:**

- Grow the Children's Ministry by welcoming more children and recruiting additional volunteers
- Encourage families to grow deeper in their faith through Sunday School and worship services
- Continue offering Christ-centered programs that nurture spiritual growth, including:
  - Sunday School
  - Jr. Church
  - Valentine Event
  - Community Easter Egg Hunt
  - Vacation Bible School
  - Pocono Plateau Summer Camp
  - Fall Fest
  - Gingerbread House Event

## Youth Ministry – Christian Faux ([youth@engagegodfirst.org](mailto:youth@engagegodfirst.org))

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**Sunday School:** Sundays, 9:30 PM

**Youth Group:** Sundays, 6 PM

Attendance has remained stable, with a consistent core group of six participants attending each week. We also hosted several successful events, including Youth Sunday, which was extremely well received and showcased the youth group's strong talent, creativity, and dedication.

### 2025 Special Events:

- **February:** Arcade and bowling alley at Park City Mall
- **March:** Paintballing
- **May:** Pizza party to celebrate the end of the school year
- **July:** Trip to Hershey Park
- **August:** Lock-in
- **September:** Joined the church picnic
- **October:** Celebrated a successful Youth Sunday with a pizza party
- **November:** Escape Room & Gretna Glen
- **December:** Christmas Party

**Confirmation Class:** Sundays, 9:30 AM (September -May)

This past year's confirmation class was an excellent experience for all involved! The students brought a lot of energy and effort into the classes, and worked well together to create a meaningful and personal confirmation service – a first for the program! Instead of simply having the confirmands receive their confirmation in worship they were responsible for preparing and leading the entire service, taking on meaningful adult responsibility in the life of the church! We're looking forward to seeing this year's class do the same!

## Young Adult Ministry – Christian Faux

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Tuesdays, 7:30 PM

This year, the Young Adult group, **F.L.O.W.** (Friends Living On the Word), has continued to grow, with several new individuals joining. We have explored new studies, including the book of Daniel, and are currently in the midst of a study of the book of Revelation.

Our beach trip to Ocean City, NJ was a great success and gave us great time to bond and enjoy fellowship with each other, even worship together on the boardwalk!

## Taizé Services – Judy Williams

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TAIZÉ SERVICES RETURNED TO FUMC IN 2025

This September, after an interval of 14 years, Taizé worship was reintroduced at FUMC. The original prayer services, held from 2002 to 2011, were led by Rev. Sharon Freudenberger and Juliet Dodge. This hour of ecumenical evening prayer, modeled after an interdenominational service developed in the French community of Taizé, was held monthly in our sanctuary. Similarly, the current Taizé services are scheduled each month, every 4th Saturday at 6:00 pm.

Four services have been held to date and have offered our church members and the Lancaster community a quiet and meditative approach to communing with our Heavenly Father. Held in a quiet, candlelit sanctuary, these services have incorporated sacred readings from Scripture, prayers of reflection, times of silence, and chants accompanied by a medley of instruments from piano, flute, guitar and recorder.

All are welcome and encouraged to explore this meaningful addition to commune with our Lord and Comforter. For questions regarding these services, please contact Judy Williams, Iris and Brian Lehman or Kathy Seaber.



# Risk-Taking Mission & Service

Risk-taking mission and service is about showing up for others in meaningful ways, even when it stretches us. It means caring about the needs of our neighbors and our world and being willing to step outside our comfort zones to make a positive difference. This kind of service is not about checking boxes or staying safe—it's about relationships, learning, and mutual respect.

*"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." (Mathew 25:40)*

# Practices of Fruitful Congregations

## Risk Taking Mission and Service

### Serving Our Church

- 32 different volunteer teams
- Caring Connections
- Meals for Mothers and Others
- Prayer Shawl
- Ministry Green Team
- Ministry Grocery Card

### Serving Our Community

- Wesley Singers
- **AARP Tax Ministry:** (not an organization of First UMC but many volunteers from First UMC)
- **Anchor Lancaster:** (not an organization of First UMC but many volunteers from First UMC)

### Serving Our World

- **Mission trips:** Sierra Leone, Korea, Nicaragua

### Outreach Team (Resourced by the Family of Funds)

- **Global Mission:** Sudan Rebirth, Africa Sunrise, Wycliffe Bible
- **Church Outreach:** First UMC Social Service Fund, Fall Fest, Gingerbread House Event, Christmas Eve Service, Easter and Christmas (mailings, invites, yard signs, social media posts), Back to Church Sunday Pancake Breakfast
- **Local:** Lumina, Tenfold sleeping for sleeping bags, Food drive for Lancaster Food Hub, Connection event with recovery groups, LifeCycles

### Mission Teams (Resourced by the Family of Funds)

- **Global Mission:** Rev. Mutwale in Tanzania, living wage for pastors in Tanzania
- **Church Outreach:** DCA Scholarships, Refugee Resettlement, church HVAC
- **Local:** Lumina Food Boxes, sleeping bags for homeless neighbors through Ten Fold, Prison Ministry (Undies for Easter, Christmas Cards for the Incarcerated, Bibles for Lancaster County Prison), fresh water for West Virginia

### Celebrate!

- Go! Generosity Unleashed. A campaign for others. Over \$450,000 given to Anchor Lancaster, Maternity Clinic in Sierra Leone, and Medical Clinic in South Sudan
- Sierra Leone Trip
- Hosted Jacob Guot of Sudan Rebirth and Africa Sunrise
- Apartment Buildings - Partnership with Chestnut Housing
- Jess Henry applying to be a volunteer spiritual advisor at Lancaster County Prison
- Refugee Resettlement families continuing to move forward. One family bought their first home and started a business!

## From Property to Ministry: Partnering with Chestnut Housing to Love Our Neighbors

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We are excited to share that our church is beginning a new partnership with **Chestnut Housing** as part of our desire to make the rental properties we own on our block more of a ministry and less of a simple business transaction. Chestnut Housing works to provide affordable rental housing to people experiencing homelessness, grounded in the belief that a stable home is the foundation of a healthy and fulfilling life. Through this partnership, we hope to use what God has already placed in our care to create tangible opportunities for compassion, dignity, and restoration right in our neighborhood. While we are still learning the details and discerning the best path forward, our intention is clear: to connect our faith with meaningful action by offering safe, affordable housing and by making thoughtful updates to the property that reflect care for both residents and the wider community. This partnership is one small step in living out our calling to love our neighbors in practical, life-giving ways.

## AARP Tax Ministry – Bill Crabtree ([wdc1904@comcast.net](mailto:wdc1904@comcast.net))

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Bill Crabtree heads the First UMC AARP Tax-Aide ministry team. There were 35 participants that included 10 members from FUMC. They served rolls as Greeters, Facilitators, Appointment Schedulers, and Counselors.

There were **601 appointments available with 558 being processed**. This was a 26% increase over last year. Total refunds for our clients were \$558,567, an increase of over \$70,000 from last year. We also processed returns with a balance due of \$125,480, a \$30,000 increase over last year.

Our tax year was Feb 3 to April 15. We processed taxes on Mondays and Tuesdays only. We thank First Church for providing rooms 232, 235, and 240 for our use.

If there is one thing that could help us improve our ministry, it would be to find someone bi-lingual in Spanish and English. Preferably the person could serve as a greeter or facilitator and not need to train to prepare taxes so they could be called upon to translate as needed. A bi-lingual tax preparer would be a tremendous asset if that person would like to be certified to prepare taxes. CONTACT Bill Crabtree @ [wdc1904@comcast.net](mailto:wdc1904@comcast.net) if you can assist!

## Green Team – Judy Williams ([snjwill@comcast.net](mailto:snjwill@comcast.net))

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The mission of the FUMC Green Team is to educate First Church staff and members to take action to protect natural resources and to incorporate sustainable ideas and practices into everyday habits. Since 2018, the Green Team has run a recycling program that it designed for the church and for Anchor Lancaster.

### Some of our accomplishments in 2025 were:

- Recycled church bulletins, copier toner cartridges, office paper, water bottles, cans, cardboard from multiple areas of the church, egg cartons, chipboard, plastic caps from Anchor, and paper supplies from Discovery Corner Academy each week.
- Picked up litter around FUMC property weekly.
- Conducted a January battery recycling drive. More than 109 pounds of batteries were recycled!
- Presented a Mission Moment on April 13 for Earth Day.
- Collected 191 pairs of sneakers in August for recycling at the Lancaster Nike Outlet.
- FUMC youth made posters and presented Mission Moments at church services.
- Produced a brochure describing the many ways we recycle at church and can recycle at our homes, and distributed this brochure at the FUMC Ministry Fair. This brochure will also be included in new member packets and be available at the Welcome Center.
- Planted two parking lot urns before Easter and Christmas.
- Welcomed new FUMC Green Team members Jan Betty, Barbara Hill (liaison to FUMC Trustees), and Brian Lehman. They join Chair Judy Williams, Steve Franz, Ginny May, Peggy Martinson, and Ve Wolfe.

# Congregational Care Ministry – Karen Senkowski (ksenkowski@comcast.net)

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A team of dedicated volunteers, each helping in a particular area, bringing encouragement, comfort and connection to our congregation.

## **Card Ministry**

- Our pastors send birthday celebration cards to our Friends at Home, as well as to those in our congregation celebrating their 90+ birthday and 50+ anniversary.
- Another group of volunteers send cards to our Friends at Home to remind them of our love and prayers, connecting them to their church family.

## **Caring Connections**

For folks who cannot attend our Sunday service, this loving ministry is a vital link joining the past to our future.

- 19 volunteers visit 43 of our Friends At Home offering Christian fellowship and communion.
- The pastors connected with our friends at Willow Valley Manor North and Willow Valley Lakes every month.

A Caregiver's Support Group meets monthly for lunch at Greenfield Inn to encourage one another in prayer and discussion.

## **College Care Packages**

22 packages were lovingly prepared and sent to our students to maintain a connection with them to their church family.

## **Hospitality:**

### **Fellowship Time**

- This ministry encourages folks to meet, greet and eat on Sunday mornings between services. Many volunteers help with set up, clean up, donating funds or foods to make this important ministry happen.

### **Receptions and Events**

- This year has been a year to say "good bye" and "hello". Congregational Care provided support to Pastor Joe's Celebration in June and welcoming Pastor Jason in July.
- Peter Omundsen was celebrated for his 40 years in the church's music ministry.
- Sunday School starting in the fall was celebrated with a Pancake Breakfast.
- Congregational Care offered volunteer power for set up and serving during the New Testament Event, King's Brass, Safe Sanctuary training, and 4 funerals.

### **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

A group of knitters and crocheters led by Alice Alhfeld and Paula Banzhaf provide handmade shawls - pocket size, regular, baby baptism blankets, lap blankets for warmth and comfort to those who need to know of God's love and care.

### **Roses for Remembrance**

40 roses were given to family members on All Saints Sunday who had a loved one pass during the last year.

### **Transportation**

With the help of Bruce Thompson of Willow Valley and LuAnn Ziegler of Executive Coach, people from Willow Valley are transported to church every Sunday for the traditional service plus special events.

## Gift Card Sales – Lois Greene (lois.j.greene10@gmail.com)

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### Support Missions Through Your Grocery Shopping!

We sell grocery gift cards for three stores, Giant, Stauffer's of Kissel Hill, and Weis. We buy the cards from Giant and Weis at a 5% discount. For SKH, we buy gift cards at 5.5% discount. You pay for and use the cards at their full value!

Here's the 2025 profits for missions from 1/1/2025 to 12/21/2025:

- Giant sales were \$41,250. Our profits to donate to missions are \$2,062.50.
- SKH, sales were \$16,250. Our profits for missions are \$893.75
- Weis gift card sales totaled \$10,325. These sales raised \$516.25 for missions.

**The total for all three stores is \$3,472.50 for missions.**

The money raised during the last three months have been designated for our capital campaign, Generosity Unleashed. The portion of this year's receipts for Generosity Unleashed is \$1,362.75.

A special thanks to our volunteers who sell the gift cards each week... Carol Pyfer, Pam Reth, Leslie Lee, Beth Coder, Katherine Spear, Diane Styer and Ve Wolfe.

# Anchor Lancaster – Patty Eastep (director@anchorlancaster.org)

**Mission and Purpose:** Anchor Lancaster is dedicated to supporting individuals experiencing homelessness or hardship by providing free breakfast, showers, laundry services, a day center, and case management. Our mission is to help guests achieve long-term stability and self-sufficiency through holistic support and community partnerships.

**2025 in Review:** God’s faithfulness is rarely dramatic. It is repetitive. It is persistent. It is quiet. Morning after morning. Door after door. Plate after plate. In 2025, Anchor served 45,891 breakfasts, welcomed 4,200 showers, and was carried by nearly 10,000 volunteer hours – hours given before work, after long days, in cold mornings, in ordinary obedience. Laundry turned. Coffee poured. Names remembered. Stories held. Needs met without spectacle. These numbers exist to testify to a ministry shaped by presence rather than pace. This year also required groundwork. Zoning permits were approved for the E. King Street Day Center just as the longest Code Blue since 2022 arrived. We said farewell to Aftan with deep gratitude for her faithful labor and welcomed Catherine and Bruce into the team. FIG Magazine captured a glimpse of this work, though far more remains unseen.



**Christmas at Anchor:** Christmas at Anchor drew the work into sharper focus, revealing what faith looks like when it costs something and still stays. While much of the city closed its doors and gathered its tables, Anchor remained open. Over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, more than 75 neighbors came through the Day Center each day, carrying illness, mental strain, and the kind of loneliness that deepens when the world celebrates without you. Anchor remained open because the Lord provided a faithful team. Breakfast was prepared before dawn. Supplies, volunteers, and laundry were coordinated with care. Long shifts were filled with patience and steadiness. Social services were sustained through days that required discernment, calm, and compassion – all under God’s steady guidance. At times, emergency medical care was needed. At other moments, what mattered most was presence – someone willing to stay. There were cookies and music, and ornaments crafted by hand, but more than celebration, there was fidelity. Christmas passed. What remained was a witness: You are loved!



**Gala Provision:** Asking can feel uncomfortable. Scripture never pretends otherwise. Yet again and again, God provides not through what one person holds alone, but through what He distributes across a community. We know this invitation comes early (*please save September 25, 2026*, for our Gala), but partnership works best when it is unrushed. Early conversations allow businesses to engage not just as sponsors, but as partners whose generosity creates opportunity throughout the year. Sponsorship levels are designed to fit a range of capacities, each offering meaningful impact and visibility. As you consider this invitation, think broadly—the right connection may be closer than you realize. The QR code links to a simple sponsorship form for easy sharing, and we would be grateful to explore any possibilities with you. You may also reach out directly to Catherine at [catherine@anchorlancaster.org](mailto:catherine@anchorlancaster.org) for any questions.



**Looking Ahead to 2026:** As Anchor prepares for 2026, the need before us is clear – and growing. Not because this work is failing, but because it is bearing fruit. Expanded hours, deeper case management, and rising demand require an additional \$150,000 in our 2026 budget to sustain this work with integrity. In January alone, one family and one couple moved into permanent housing. One eviction was prevented and two more households are actively being stabilized. These outcomes do not happen quickly, cheaply, or without care. Housing is not a transaction—it is a rebuilding: of trust, of rhythm, of lives long disrupted. Case management is holy work done quietly: documents reviewed, systems navigated, relationships repaired, dignity protected. Much of the work goes unseen, yet all of it carries a cost. We trust deeply that God provides what is needed—and Scripture reminds us that He so often does so through His people. If you are able, we invite you to give.

## How to Give:

**Online:**  
Scan QR Code for  
secure donation



**Mail:**  
Anchor Lancaster  
29 E. Walnut St. Lancaster, PA  
(Memo: [Day Center Fund](#))

## Discovery Corner Academy - Kathy Seaber (kathyseaber1076@gmail.com)

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Discovery Corner Academy's mission is to help children and their families experience Christ's love in a safe, nurturing learning environment. DCA is open to all children regardless of ethnic, social or economic background. We offer classes for children aged 3-6 years of age. The school day is four hours with an extended day available for two additional hours. Our kindergarten day is from 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

There are 36 students presently enrolled in DCA. Seven of these students receive scholarships to help with their tuitions. Money is raised each year for the Scholarship Fund. There are times when this fund is used for a hardship case. For example, if a parent loses a job and can only afford part of the tuition, with the approval of the Board of Directors, the fund kicks in to pay the other part of the tuition.

Throughout the school year, parents are invited to join a variety of classroom activities alongside their child. Students also take part in both an evening Christmas program and an End-of-the-Year/Graduation program. Additionally, field trips are scheduled during the year, offering opportunities for students and their parents to participate together.

Each year, the DCA students participate in a service project. This year they collected food for Anchor.

DCA has a committed director and staff of dedicated teachers. We have 3 lead teachers and 3 assistant teachers.

Each month, Kathy Seaber leads a chapel service for the students. This special time includes a Bible story, a review activity, singing, and prayer. The children always enjoy participating in this meaningful time together.

DCA was a recipient of a generous grant from the Clark Foundation. We have been able to get a SMART board for each classroom. This is a wonderful tool for interactive learning with the children. The grant has also allowed the purchase of new outside tables, chairs and activity centers for the Courtyard. We also hope to get a canvas cover to allow for some shade on the upper part of the Courtyard. Another part of the grant will be used to create a library area for the children to go to and get a library book. We appreciate the generosity of the Clark Foundation.

Growing DCA is a goal for our future. The Kindergarten class established last year, has been very successful. We hope to attract more students to this class.

Discovery Corner Academy is not only a place of academic learning, but also a place for learning about Christ's love.



# Extravagant Generosity

Extravagant generosity is about sharing what we have—time, skills, resources, and compassion—in ways that reflect gratitude and care for others. It's not about how much we give, but about giving freely and joyfully so that good things can happen beyond ourselves. When generosity becomes a way of life, it strengthens trust, builds community, and makes a lasting impact

**1. General Fund** supports the ongoing ministries of First United Methodist Church including things like utilities, salary, curriculum, building maintenance.

**2. Mission & Outreach** giving supports organizations locally and globally that relieve suffering and spread the good news of God's love. If you are giving online, you will see a drop down menu that lists the many organizations supported by First UMC.

**3. Family of Funds**, the Endowment Fund for First United Methodist Church, distributes approximately \$225,000 per year to various programs of the church. This is a gift that keeps on giving!

## How to Give

**1. In person.** Offering is received weekly. Giving envelopes are available upon request.

**2. Online.** Many people prefer the safety and convenience of online giving. There are many ways to give online:

- a. Scan the QR Code printed on the back of the bulletin each week.
- b. Go to [EngageGodFirst.org/Donate](https://EngageGodFirst.org/Donate)

**3. Snail Mail.** You can mail your gift to:

First United Methodist Church  
29 East Walnut Street  
Lancaster, PA 17602

## Generosity Team - Kent Kroehler (kent.joy32@gmail.com)

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Our Generosity Team had a BIG project this year – our Generosity Unleashed Capital Campaign for Others and in honor of Pastor Joe DiPaolo. Most congregations do capital campaigns for themselves. In the past 20 years, we designated \$200,000+ for others in 2 campaigns. In 2025, we gave 100% to others.

In January, we recommended to Church Council a \$600,000 campaign for 6 mission projects. They agreed to \$300,000 for 3 projects. We combined the campaign with celebrating our former pastor's 10 years with us, his 40 years in ministry, and his retirement.

Members unleashed their generosity. The current total is \$478,405.89, with more coming! Each project will receive more than \$160,000. Our three projects and their progress are:



### 1. Anchor Lancaster:

What began as a hot breakfast program 9 years ago now includes showers, case workers, a year-round day center, and many partners. Breakfast guests regularly number 190–200+. Anchor Lancaster has created an endowment fund with their gift, and those funds will provide annual funds and can be used for a capital project in the future.

### 2. Women's Health Center - Kabala, Sierra Leone:

For more than 50 years, our friend and FUMC member, Dorcas Kamada, has had a passion and calling for women and children's health in rural Sierra Leone. She has led creation of Mamaland Children's home and Nar Sarah Clinic. Our funds are helping build and furnish a 2-story Women's Medical Center. The 2nd (and top) floor is complete, and the work is proceeding.



### 3. Rising Hope Medical Center in Bor town, South Sudan:

For more than 20 years, our friend and FUMC member, Jacob Thon Guot, has had a passion and calling for serving his people in central South Sudan. Jacob lost his father to an awful 25-year civil war in then-Sudan, walked 1000 miles across Africa with thousands of young children, spent 17 years in a refugee camp, and emigrated to the USA. He organized Africa Sunrise Communities, and we have helped him build, staff, and operate Rising Hope Medical Center with pharmacy (shown) and exam clinic. The center opened on Dec. 28, 2025.



In addition, the Generosity Team created a Legacy Community of members and friends who include First Church in their legacy plans. We hope to create a culture that has every Christian including legacy gift(s) in their plans. Our Team also plans and oversees the Fall Generosity Pledge Emphasis. Our pledges help the Finance Committee plan, and more importantly, they offer each of us a spiritual nudge to examine our charitable giving and to grow as disciples.

# Resources



## Church Council – Katherine Spear

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Church Council is the administrative group of the church that helps guide the mission and ministry. It works to plan and carry out programs that nurture our faith, reach out to others, share the gospel, and manage our resources. They are responsible for the "big picture" work of the church, while the staff and volunteers handle the day-to-day details. The council includes people who represent the program ministries of the church. Our council meets the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM. These are open meetings although only council members may vote. Council members are elected at the yearly Charge Conference meeting which is also open. The specifics regarding the function and membership of Council can be found in *The Book of Discipline*, ¶ 252. The Church Council.

### FIRST UMC COUNCIL MEMBERS 2026:

**Lead Pastor:** Jason Ríos

**Associate Pastor:** Laura Sambrick

**Chairman:** Carol Pyfer

**Secretary:** Susan Kepner

**Lay Leader:** Kathryn Kepner

**Committee on Staff-Parish Relations:** Anne Griswold

**Representative of Trustees:** Wayne Betty

**Committee on Stewardship and Generosity:** Kent Kroehler

**Committee on Finance:** Kathy Johnson

**Committee on Nominations and Lay Leadership:** Bonita St. John

**Church Treasurer:** Larry Kepner

**Lay Member 1 to Annual Conference:** Kathy Barone

**Lay Member 2 to Annual Conference:** Susan Davis

**Reserve Lay Member to Annual Conference:** Sue Kepner

**Family of Funds:** Catherine Herneisen

**Outreach Team:** Jennifer Lipsett

**Mission Team:** Jessica Henry

**Young Adult Representative:** Natalie Reed

**Membership Secretary:** Katherine Spear

**At Large Members:** John Spear, Pamela Reth, Allen Popjoy, Betty Helms

## Trustees – Lloyd W. Henry (Bill) (lwhenry1951@gmail.com)

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### 2025 accomplishments (This is above ongoing maintenance of the building):

- Organ pipe project completed. (donation by Kathy Seaber)
- Infrastructure and painting for organ project completed by Trustee's.
- New flooring was installed in DCA office.
- New flooring was installed in room 214-215.
- Balcony men's bathroom was completed.
- Celebration Center bathrooms shower renovations were completed.
- New security system was installed. Door fobs, cameras and monitors.
- IT system upgraded.
- New HVAC unit installed.
- New projectors were installed in the Celebration Center.
- Numerous fluorescent lights that no longer function were changed to LED's.
- Parking lot lights changed from timer to photocell.
- Apartment 1, building 340 North Duke St. being renovated. It should be completed by the end of 2025.

## **Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) - Kathy Johnson** (klj165@gmail.com)

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**Purpose:** The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is responsible for developing personnel policies and procedures for evaluating staff including clergy, hiring staff, setting salaries and supporting clergy and staff to excel in their leadership. Meetings of SPRC are open to appointed members of the Committee. Here, at First Church, our priority is to keep our Pastors and Staff in our prayers and to support them as they minister to the Congregation and members of the Community.

2025 was a busy year for the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Along with our regular tasks of policy review, job description reviews and compensation recommendations, the Committee was tasked with leading the planning for Pastor DiPaolo's retirement celebration, Pastor Jason's welcoming and Cottage Meetings, and Peter Omundsen's 40th Anniversary with First Church.

SPRC divided into sub-committees, who collaborated with the Staff to invite and prepare announcements and invitations for Pastor DiPaolo's retirement celebration. Another sub-committee planned and invited parish members to donate cookies, serve as hosts, as well as prepare and serve approximately 300 individuals a plated Italian dinner. The program sub-committee arranged for cards to be collected and assembled into a keepsake book and a "roast" hosted by SPRC where the gift of cards was presented.

During February, SPRC met with District Superintendent, Jennifer Freymoyer, who introduced Pastor Jason, Yaya and Jayden Ríos to the Committee. During this meeting we had a time of fellowship and an opportunity to interact with our new pastor and his family. SPRC sub-committees were formed to plan a welcome reception for Pastor Jason and his family. Staff members supported SPRC by pulling together materials for Pastor Jason to learn about First Church before his arrival. Parish members again generously donated cookies and other baked goods for the reception, along with cards and gifts for Pastor Jason and family.

In the summer, a new sub-committee was created, bringing together staff, parish members, and SPRC to organize Cottage Meetings. SPRC members attended 20 Cottage Meetings with Pastor Jason to serve as note takers and hosted six Cottage Meetings at the Church.

Peter Omundsen's 40th Anniversary celebration was also planned by sub-committees of SPRC. Staff and parish members created a video featuring current and former choir members for Peter. We again asked parish members to donate cookies, baked goods and other snack items for the celebration.

In December, after Charge Conference, I informed the Committee that Anne Griswold would be assuming the role of Chairperson for Staff Parish Relations. It has been an honor to work with First Church staff, parish members and committee members over the last five years.



# Hub of Christian Ministry

**Our Vision: To be a central hub of Christian ministry in Lancaster County & beyond.**

## **A Place of Welcome and Community**

Every week, hundreds of people walk through the doors of First UMC. Our vision is to serve our community by making our building a resource that blesses others. As a result, three churches call our space home, alongside various recovery groups, local music ensembles, and social service organizations.

First UMC is one of the most active churches in our community—a place where our neighbors find support, connection, and a safe space to grow in faith and meet their needs. We are honored to share what God has given us to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

### **Churches**

- Anchored Church (Formerly Christ Saves Church)
- House of Potter
- The Church of Pentecost

### **Recovery Groups**

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Lancaster Recovery Sangha

### **Musical Groups**

- Allegro Orchestra
- NextGen Youth
- Allegretto Youth Orchestra

### **Social Services**

- AARP Tax Ministry
- Anchor Lancaster (breakfast, day center, showers & case management)
- Have a Heart Prison Ministry
- IU13
- Lancaster Reading Solutions Microschool

# FIRST UMC STAFF



**Rev. Jason Ríos**  
Lead Pastor  
jríos@  
engagegodfirst.org



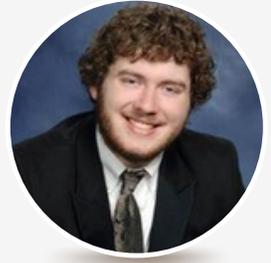
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# Letter from the Lead Pastor



Dear Church Family,

As we come to the close of this year, I want to pause and give thanks to God for the life we share together as a congregation. This past year has been marked by faithfulness—faithful worship, faithful service, faithful generosity, and faithful care for one another and our wider community.

The enclosed Year-End Report is an opportunity to reflect on where we have seen God at work among us. Within these pages, you will find stories, milestones, and highlights from our ministries—signs of how Christ continues to shape us into a people of love, justice, and grace. None of this would be possible without your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness.

As we reflect on the year behind us, we also look ahead with hope. God is not finished with us yet. The same light that has guided us this year continues to lead us forward—into new opportunities for discipleship, deeper relationships, and renewed mission in our community.

Thank you for being the church. Thank you for walking this journey of faith together. May this report be both a reminder of God's faithfulness and an invitation to step boldly into the year to come.

Grace and peace,  
Rev. Jason Ríos