

FIRST AND ST. STEPHEN'S  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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#### MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Kelly M. Sisson

*Pastor*

Georgi Funderburk

*Minister of Faith and Practice*

Jeffrey Beyers

*Organist and Choir Director*

#### SUPPORT

Rev. Alexander Vishio

*Asst. Minister for Social*

*Justice & Witness*

Emily Perl

*President of the Consistory*

#### SUNDAY MORNINGS

Children's Church School

and

Adult Christian Education

Service of Worship

10:30 a.m.

Celebration of Holy Communion:

First Sunday of the Month

#### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*As we become more fully God's people, First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ*

*CARES by...*

*Committing to Christ*

*Advocating for social justice*

*Rejoicing in worship*

*Empowering for discipleship*

*Sharing God's Extravagant welcome.*

#### WE SUPPORT:

Earl's Place & Prospect Place

Assistance Center of Towson Churches

The United Church of Christ

Habitat for Humanity

**"No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."**

# Spreading the Good News

November 2018

## Pastor's Column

We know the old saying that the month of March "comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." If that is true, this past October came in like a swamp and went out like a typhoon. We were already moldy and mildewy from the days and 'daze' of rains. Added to the grayness of life – we've endured the season of political ads, bomb threats towards significant personalities in the political world, and then the very dark, cold massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. Another mass shooting. More loss of innocent lives.

Part of me wants to shout, "Stop this world! I want to get off." But, I won't. And, you won't, either. Because we are people of faith. Because we have hope for a better world. Because there is more love in the world than there is hate. Because this world needs the grace and compassion of the historical Jesus.

So, we will show up, we'll take a deep breath, we will vote, and do what we can to make our corners of the world a better place in the ways we know how.

At times when we feel despair, it is healing to focus on gratitude. And, for that – I welcome November's embrace of all things for which to be grateful. If you are having difficulty finding gratitude this season, a good place to start is with the Thirty Days of Thankfulness found on the next page.

I am looking forward to sharing gratitude as we **Extend the Table** this Sunday. I am looking forward to sharing gratitude as we **Celebrate Adoptions** on November 18<sup>th</sup> in worship. I am looking forward to **Thanksgiving Day** when we spend a day in nothing but gratitude. I'm looking forward to **Advent**. And, I'm looking forward to the end of political campaigning for a few weeks.

May November refocus our spirits.

Blessings,

Kelly

## YOUTH SCHEDULE

**November 4** - Extending the Table

**November 11** - Worship planning - PLEASE BE HERE!!!

**November 18** - Youth led worship service - celebratory lunch afterwards. PARENTS!! Let me know if you're interested in helping with this!

**November 25** - No Youth Group (unless everyone is in town & wants to meet) Happy Thanksgiving!

## ADOPTION WORSHIP SERVICE

**November 18** - One of the wonderful and interesting characteristics of First and St. Stephen's is the high number of families made through adoption that are part of our community. We want to celebrate that!! The youth (adopted or not) will lead in worship on the 18th. This will be an exciting time as we look at what it means to be family and how God's love compares to adoption. Please make sure to be here on this day - you won't want to miss it!

## Christmas Tree Needed!

Last year, our faithful Christmas tree in the sanctuary sang it's last 'Fa-La-La.' We are in need of someone to donate a new artificial-but-looks-real tree with pre-strung gold or clear lights that will be festive for the next decade or more. If you are inspired to make this gift, see the pastor for more details.



## ACLU Postcards

Thank you to all who stayed after church in early October. We quickly wrote 150 postcards encouraging people to vote! The ACLU, a nonpartisan group, strives for protecting the rights of everyone and they will send the cards we wrote to potential voters. Remember to do your part on November 6th!



## ACTC Thanksgiving Baskets

If you prefer to create your own basket of food for ACTC, please follow this list of needed items:

One can sweet potatoes or yams (23 to 29-ounce can)

Two cans meat or main dish, such as beef stew or chili (15 to 24-ounce cans)

One can of fruit (20 to 30-ounce can)

Four cans of vegetables, such as green beans, peas or corn (15-ounce cans)

Two packages of macaroni and cheese

One box instant mashed potatoes

One cake or brownie mix

One bag or box of stuffing mix

Bag or box of rice (1 pound)



## ACTC Thanksgiving Basket Project

The Assistance Center of Towson Churches is looking for help collecting thousands of baskets of food to help feed needy Baltimore County residents during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Premade baskets/bags of food are available at the following locations for approximately \$23:

- Mars Supermarket, 1811 York Road, Timonium
- Giant Supermarket, 2145 York Road, Timonium
- Giant Supermarket, 6340 York Road, Towson
- ShopRite, 37 Ayelsbury Road, Timonium

Please bring the bags to First & St. Stephens by Sunday, November 11<sup>th</sup> and place them on the bench inside the front entrance. The bags will be delivered to the ACTC in time for Thanksgiving.



**Ecumenical Prayer Service on Wednesday, November 14 at 7 pm**

*Please Join Us in Prayer and Support  
ACTC's Thanksgiving Basket Project*

To coincide with Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC) Thanksgiving food drive, **Immaculate Conception Church will host an Ecumenical Prayer Service on Wednesday, November 14th at 7.** ACTC Member Church pastors from various denominations will participate in this prayer service ~ a celebration of gratitude in our lives ~ by giving thanks to God.

Although Immaculate will not have the life-size statue of "Homeless Jesus" as last year, we have a small replica to remind us that Christ is with the most marginalized in our society, and is concerned with providing for our hungry neighbors.

We come together to provide a holiday meal to over 2,000 families in our community. *We look forward to this wonderful opportunity for our community to grow in prayer together.*

## Rev. Freeman Palmer

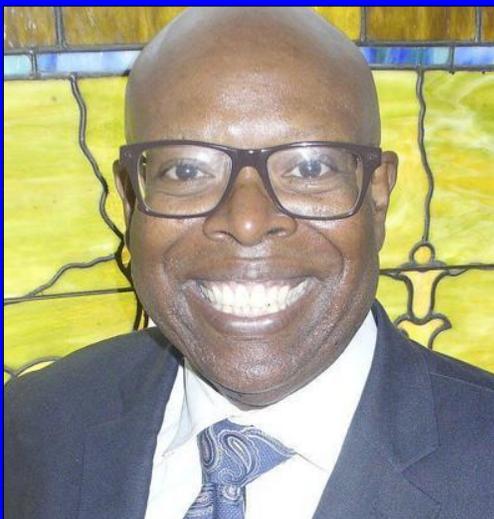
We are very excited to announce the official face to face meeting with Rev. Freeman Palmer.

Come Join Us:

November 15th  
7 p.m. - 9 p.m.  
Holmdel UCC  
Holmdel, NJ

November 16th  
12 p.m. - 2 p.m.  
St. Stephens  
Harrisonburg, VA

November 16th  
7 p.m - 9 p. m.  
Bethesda UCC  
Bethesda, MD  
Anyone wanting to go to the  
Bethesda Meet & Greet,  
Contact Pastor Kelly



## Meet Our Candidate for Conference Minister

September 22, 2018

Dear Friends,

It is with great joy that I write to you today. The Conference Minister Search Committee has completed their work and have recommended to the Board of Directors that the Reverend Freeman L. Palmer be called as our new Conference Minister.

The Board of Directors has affirmed this recommendation at our Board meeting today.

Since the Conference bylaws require election of a Conference Minister at a meeting of the Conference, the Board of Directors has authorized a special meeting for the purpose of calling the Rev. Palmer as Conference Minister. A brief synopsis of Rev. Palmer's profile is on the next page for your information.

The special meeting will be held on Saturday, Nov. 17, 2018, location and time to be determined. The agenda will include time to hear Freeman speak and a brief business meeting with vote.

Churches are entitled to send the same number of delegates as they would for the Annual Meeting. More information will be forthcoming as details for the meeting are finalized.

There will be opportunities throughout the Conference to "Meet & Greet" Freeman Thursday Nov. 15 and Friday Nov. 16. Again, more information will be forthcoming as arrangements are finalized.

We look forward to seeing at a "Meet & Greet" session and at the special meeting on Nov. 17!

Peace,

Rev. Chuck Rush

CAC President



# CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE

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## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*God is still speaking,*

### **WELCOMING FREEMAN L. PALMER**

To: Board of Directors, Central Atlantic Conference United Church of Christ

From: Rev. Freeman L. Palmer FLP

Date: September 17, 2018

Re: Ministerial Profile Summary

My name is Freeman Palmer, and I am honored and humbled to come before you as candidate to serve as Conference Minister for the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ. I thank God for this opportunity and extend my appreciation to the Conference Minister Search Committee for its work and discernment.

I come from the New York Conference United Church of Christ, where I have been privileged to serve for nine years as an Associate Conference Minister. In this role I have served as Conference Staff to Committees on Ministry and for churches experiencing pastoral transitions in the New York City Metropolitan area, including Long Island. I also serve statewide in the area of Congregational Development, which includes new church starts and affiliations, church vitality initiatives, and provide resources in areas such as governance, mission, and planning. A second career minister, I was ordained in 2004 to a call at Middle Collegiate Church in Manhattan's East Village after a fifteen-year career as an executive with CBS, Inc. My professional journey also includes financial and managerial experience in two not-for profit settings, North Jersey Community Research Initiative, one of New Jersey's largest HIV/AIDS social service organizations, and my Seminary alma mater, New York Theological Seminary.

I experienced a call to ministry early in life, growing up as a 'church kid' in an African-American Baptist congregation where my parents served as deacons. As often the case with our teenage years, I did not respond to God's call. Subsequently, I chose the path of my first career. Yet God was lovingly relentless, and thanks to a combination of providential events, timing, and people, my journey brings me here. My sense of call comes from deep gratitude for a lifetime experience of God's love, grace, and mercy. It is both a great privilege and responsibility to serve in ministry, and I see my present call as a unique and important opportunity to serve in a variety of settings. Given this, I try, every day, to make my 'calling and election sure (I Peter 9:10 KJV)' by being devoted to prayer, meditation, study, worship, and reflection.

Making an impact is something I am passionate about in ministry. I am captivated and inspired by the story of how a diverse, sometimes conflicting, and faithful witness of a small sect of Jewish believers in a resurrected Messiah changed the course of history. This is reinforced by my religious upbringing in African-American churches during the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties, where the uncompromisingly faithful pursuit of equality and justice made an indelible mark on my life and the world.

I firmly believe that churches can make an impact on anyone or anything, whether at an individual, local, or global level. While one might euphemistically term this passion as ‘making a difference’, I prefer the word impact, as this was also a passion I held from my previous career. This important component of my ‘credo’ keeps me faithful to the Church despite its human imperfections, its’ apparent deterioration in relevance, and its’ history and present of falling short of the radical inclusivity that was the hallmark of Jesus’ ministry.

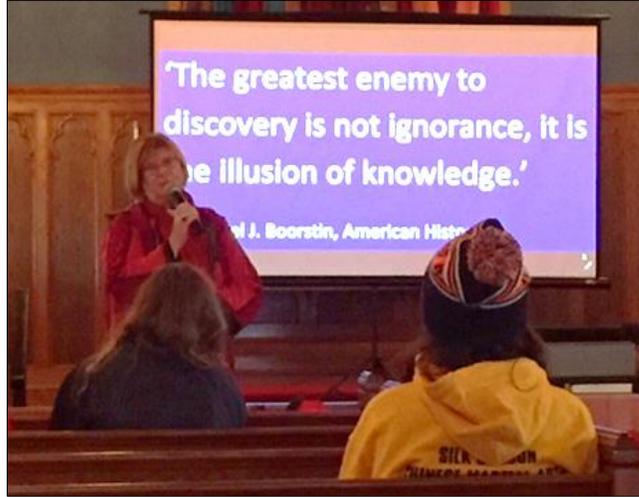
The opportunity to serve in the United Church of Christ is extremely important to me. I am grateful and proud to be part of an intentionally multicultural and multiracial, Open and Affirming, Just Peace, Accessible to All, United and Uniting church. A statement I learned in my first class in seminary was that ‘ministry flows out of being.’ I have long valued my religious education in an African-American Baptist congregation, experienced alongside a secular education in a predominantly Jewish private school (grades 7-12), followed by undergraduate studies in a Quaker institution. The result, seen through my own lens as a same gender loving person, is that I do not merely accept or tolerate diversity. I celebrate and embrace it. My vision of God’s reign is the heavenly banquet where all are fed and all have both place and voice at the table. My current call with the New York Conference is to an Open and Affirming, Just Peace, and Global Mission Conference comprised of over two hundred fifty congregations. This ministry is ‘marked’ by experience and effectiveness with congregations in all shapes, sizes, and colors located in urban, suburban, and rural areas of New York State. I am grateful for the mosaic of life experiences that enable me to serve and to be blessed by the variety of gifts in the body of Christ, birthed of the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4).

A colleague described my leadership style in my present call as being both ‘joyful’ and ‘firm.’ That is a description I both cherish and try to live up to in my ministry. Areas of strength include being an effective preacher and teacher, lifting up and celebrating the gifts of others, and due in part to my education and ‘first career,’ an ability to think through complex issues and situations. Like many ministers, an area of growth is being more vigilant with the care of my soul and maintaining a healthy balance of the needs of family, friends, rest, leisure, exercise, and the arts. These components of sound, grounded, and what the New York Times calls ‘smarter living’ serve both to inform and enhance my call.

My hometown is Washington DC, where I attended Truesdell Elementary School and Georgetown Day School. I earned a BA in Economics at Swarthmore College, an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania, and an M Div. from New York Theological Seminary, where I served as Comptroller while a student. Although I serve in the New York Conference, oddly enough, I technically reside within the Central Atlantic Conference, specifically in Jersey City NJ with my spouse Don, who is an ordained ELCA minister and adjunct professor at New Jersey City University. In some ways coming to this Conference is full circle, as it covers a region I know something about and look forward to discovering through living and serving.

As part of my morning meditation I include a prayer based on Proverbs 21:21: “Whoever pursues righteousness and love will find life, prosperity (best translated here as righteousness) and honor (NIV)”. It is my prayer through Jesus Christ that our lives together are characterized by the continual pursuit of righteousness and love, and in doing so we will find life, prosperity and honor, making us a people that glorifies God and blesses the world.

## OCTOBER PHOTOS



## Palestinian Solidarity Films



**Blessing of the Animals**

**Trick or Treat!**