

First Presbyterian News



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Pastor's Column

Building upon a Legacy

We are blessed to be able to gather and worship in the building that I consider to be Galena's most beautiful and distinctive landmark. That is thanks to the foresight and generosity of the first generation of First Presbyterian Church members, not to mention the faithful ministry of our founding pastor, Rev. Aratus Kent, who dared to give up his pastorate in long-settled New York so he could travel to what was then the untamed fringes of our nation in his attempt to "win the west for Christ."

It is a legacy of courage and fervent discipleship bequeathed to us by that generation. And now it is our turn. God has called us to this specific time and place to build on that legacy in ways that will help extend it far into the future.

Thinking about passing the torch from one generation to another is particularly appropriate in this era of our life together as we approach my inevitable time of retirement.

Whenever that time may arrive, it will obviously lead to changes in a variety of aspects in the life of this congregation. That, in turn, will require our members to step up to do things they may not have been accustomed to doing — perhaps for decades.

To help ease that transition, I have written a series of worship

services and sermons that could be used after my retirement while the congregation searches for an interim pastor. Of course, if you prefer, they could also be placed quietly in the recycling bin.

However, what cannot be discarded is the need for all our members to give some thought to what a change in pastoral leadership after 33+ years will mean to them specifically.

That's where our 2025 stewardship campaign, "Building upon a Legacy," comes in.

For five weeks beginning October 19th, we will explore together how your ongoing faithfulness in sharing your "time, talents and treasure" can impact the health of this congregation, especially during a time of transition such as this.

The campaign will actually begin a few days earlier when a letter will be mailed to our members and friends to get them thinking along the lines of how their God-given gifts can be used to extend the life of this congregation while we search for God's guidance to the future God has planned for First Presbyterian. The campaign will also feature five sermons related to this theme and another mailed letter before wrapping up Sunday, November 16th.

Upcoming Events in October

World Communion Sunday

Each year, the first Sunday in October is designated as World Communion Sunday. Here's how Wikipedia described that event:

"World Communion Sunday is a celebration observed by several Protestant denominations, taking place on the first Sunday of every October, that promotes Christian unity and ecumenical cooperation. It focuses on an observance of the Eucharist. The tradition was begun in 1933 by Hugh Thomson Kerr who ministered in the Shadyside Presbyterian Church. [...] Dr. Kerr first conceived the notion of World Communion Sunday during his year as moderator of the General Assembly (1930). [...] It was their attempt to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity—in which everyone might receive both inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is, and how each congregation is interconnected one with another. It was then adopted throughout the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1936 and subsequently spread to other denominations. In 1940, the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches), led by Jesse Moren Bader, endorsed World Communion Sunday and began to promote it to Christian churches worldwide."

Stewardship Campaign Begins

Our annual stewardship will begin on Sunday, October 19. As outlined above in the Pastor's Column, the theme this year is "Building upon a Legacy."

Chili Meal

After worship on Sunday, October 26, the Church Life Committee will host a chili meal. They will provide the chili and invite those who wish to attend the meal to bring something to share that will go with that main course.

October Lectionary

10/5: Lamentations 1:1-6
Lamentations 3:19-26 or
Psalm 137:1-9
2 Timothy 1:1-14
Luke 17:5-10
10/12: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7
Psalm 66:1-12
2 Timothy 2:8-15
Luke 17:11-19
10/19: Jeremiah 31:27-34
Psalm 119:97-104
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5
Luke 18:1-8
10/26: Joel 2:23-32
Psalm 65
2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Luke 18:9-14

News of the Family

Rachel Lenstra was one of the people who spoke during the public comments section of a recent Galen City Council meeting. Her topic was the proposed move of the police station was downtown to a property on Chetlain Lane.

Blackhawk Presbytery Name Change

At its September meeting voted to begin the process of changing its name. Why?

The short version is that the name was apparently elected initially as a way to honor the native American, chief of the Sauk tribe and someone who played a significant role in the history of our region. However, thanks to the work of a presbytery committee known as the Land and Name Acknowledgement Committee (also known by its

initial as LANA, whose membership includes our own Kathy Pearson), it has been discovered that rather than seeing our use of that name as an insult, not a way of honoring him. In fact, the Sauk tribe considers his name to be holy. Once we understood that, something needed to be done.

As actor/director Ron Howard once wrote, "I believe in so-called political correctness. I prefer to think it's social politeness. If I call you Chuck and you say you prefer to be called Charles I'll call you Charles. It's the polite thing to do. Not because everyone is a delicate snowflake, but because as Maya Angelou put it, when we know better, we do better. When someone tells you that a term or phrase is more accurate/less hurtful than the one you're using, you now know better. So

why not do better? How does it hurt you to NOT hurt another person?"

Therefore, following a presentation on the issue at the September meeting, presbytery voted 3-1 in favor of changing the name.

The search is currently on for a new name. Until that name is found and approved, we remain Blackhawk Presbytery.

LANA has developed a lengthy process by which that new name will be selected. Their hope is to involve as many of our church members as possible. Unfortunately, the deadline for submitting proposed names was September 22, too early for this newsletter. However, voting on those name will continue throughout most of October until the 20th.

If you are interested in voting on one of the names, please go to blackhawkpresbytery.org to register your vote.

Thank you Letters

Dear Friends,

We thank you for your generous contribution to the United Churches of Galena's Apple Tree Project.

Through this program, which has existed for over forty years, Galena's disadvantaged students are provided with necessary school supplies.

This year, because of your kindness, 67 students, Pre-K through High School, were able to meet the first day of classes with essential items, from crayons and pencils to calculators and computer mice. Your donation also provided classroom products necessary to keep these children healthy and in school to team.

Never think that one person cannot change the world, for that's the way it has always been. And through your selflessness, you have changed the world for these 67 students.

On behalf of the students, their parents, and teachers, we again extend our deepest gratitude for your continued support of this very important program.

May God bless you.

Apple Tree Chairpersons,

Pam McKinsey and Helen Carroll

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your recent gift of \$710.00 through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. Your congregation's generosity is changing lives in the name of Jesus Christ.

God's reign is extended when hunger is alleviated, disadvantaged children are educated, young people grow in their faith, communities are safe and clean water is plentiful. All gifts in the Giving Catalog help us

move closer to God's vision for our world. The needs are great, but every single gift makes a difference. Indeed, small gifts make a big impact!

We have enclosed a beautiful, fair-trade, handcrafted ornament, a small token of thanks. To share your joy of giving with others in your congregation, simply visit honorcards.pcusa.org where you can personalize and send an e-card, including having it sent on any day you choose. Prefer a paper card? The option to print or order cards is also available through the provided link.

The Presbyterian Giving Catalog has been generating excitement across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for 10 years in 2024 because of transformative gifts like the one you just made. Thank you for being part of this effort, which is helping even more people participate in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s witness in the world. You can help grow this movement by encouraging those in your congregation and others to visit the Giving Catalog's website — presbyteriangifts.org.

Thank you for your gift, which enables all people to know God's life-giving welcome in Jesus Christ. You are a deeply valued partner in mission.

Grateful for our service and ministry together,

Rev. Wilson Kennedy

Associate Director for Special Offerings and Appeals

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Hymn of the Month

As noted in last month's newsletter, we are planning to use the Celebration hymnal to learn some new hymns. To do that, Carolyn will select a hymn that may be unfamiliar

to us each month and we will sing it for the middle hymn each Sunday of that month.

The hope is that, after singing it four Sundays in a row, it will start to feel familiar to our congregation.

The Hymn of the Month for October will be "We Are God's People," which is number 399 in the Celebration Hymnal.

A Reminder: Date Change for the Noisy Offering



Now that we have started a children's Sunday school on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, we have made a change in the dates on which we accept the Noisy Offering.

Ever since we began the Noisy Offering, we have been scheduling it for the second Sunday of each month.

However, since the kids enjoy being the ones to collect it and since those same kids will now be in Sunday school, we have moved the date of the Noisy Offering collection to the third Sunday of each month.

The gifts given in the Noisy Offering are split in two ways:

One half goes to the Linus Waruiru school in Kanyakene, Kenya.

The other half stays here, being added to our General Fund to help pay our various bills.

Halloween: letting your Christ light shine

Dusk descended onto the little village, but the sleepy stillness that usually followed was nowhere to be found. It was Halloween in Salem — upstate New York, that is, not the one in Massachusetts known for its late 17th century witch trials. As a new pastor, I'd been informed by my congregation that this night was not to be missed.

“Wait till you see the crowds of children that come into the village,” said an excited elderly woman, who offered to sit with me outside the church to hand out Halloween candy to the children who walked by.

[...] Some children would take the long walk over to us. Others would wave as they continued walking on the sidewalk. I couldn't blame them. The path they were on led to the Methodist church, which had been offering apple cider and hot dogs on Halloween night for many years. They had excelled at Evangelism to Kids 101 — meet the children where they were and give them what they needed. In this case, it was food for their bellies.

When I realized what was happening, I coaxed the woman sitting with me to move the candy table closer to the sidewalk. It took some doing. There was a nip in the air, and she wanted to be closer to the kitchen to refresh her mug of hot tea. Even with the move to a better location, though, the children kept passing by on their way to the cider and hot dogs. It was a beloved community tradition, and no amount of candy from the Presbyterians — who never had a presence in the village on Halloween night — would change that. Until the following year.

Days before Halloween, on one of the many rural backroads I drove, I spotted a weathered farmhouse whose sagging front porch overflowed with carved jack-o'-lanterns. There must have been more than 30 designs, ranging from the traditional triangle eyes and one-tooth grin to artistic renderings of animals. I've always loved carving pumpkins. It was a childhood tradition that I carried into adulthood, and even when I couldn't persuade friends — or spouse — to join me in the fun, I'd do it by myself. I pulled the car over to admire the “pumpkinpalooza” in front of me. I realized then that this road didn't get much traffic, so this person wasn't doing this for others. He or she did this out of the simple joy it gave them. And still, the carved pumpkins touched someone. Me.

That's when the idea came. I didn't need to carve my one, lonely pumpkin anymore. I could share my passion with others in my congregation. And rather than carving faces on the pumpkins, we could carve out an inspirational message. And rather than keep the message for ourselves, we could place the pumpkins on the front lawn of the church so that on Halloween night, when hundreds of children came trick-or-treating, they would see God's word lit up.

Halloween came. The pumpkins were carved and lined up in front of the church. As the sky grew darker, the message grew brighter: Let God's light shine. Ninjas, Darth Vaders and princesses didn't walk by. They stopped and stared. Parents stopped, too, and took their children's picture in front of the pumpkins. Little children who couldn't read would ask what the pumpkins said. I would tell

them and then hand them a piece of candy, because after all, Halloween just isn't Halloween without candy. A church family who didn't agree with Christians acknowledging Halloween even stopped by to see the good word presented in a new way. They, too, took pictures.

Over the years, the Presbyterian pumpkins have become a beloved tradition along with the Methodist cider and hot dogs. There have been many different messages and many ways in which the project came together. One year, the children and youth carved the pumpkins; another year, adults did when there were no children or youth. One year, a local farm heard about the “pumpkin fest for God,” as it became known, and invited the church to glean their pumpkin fields. And yet another year, the church's mission team allotted money to support a little boy's pumpkin business. His mom later told me how surprised her son was when he came home from school to see a crisp \$100 bill and a thank-you note from the church in his rusty tin lockbox.

No matter how the pumpkins were secured or who carved them, though, one thing has been clear to me. God can take our passions and turn them into ministries. I mean, really, I never thought my love for carving pumpkins would be used to reach out to a community. But it did. So what gives you joy? What are your interests? Don't push them aside. Rather, see how your passions can connect with God's purposes — and start letting your light shine.

Donna Frischknecht Jackson is editor of Presbyterians Today and a rural pastor in Washington County, New York. Reprinted with permission.

September 14th Moment for Mission: Changes at the Dubuque Rescue Mission that affect our 1st Presbyterian Mission

Last week Pastor Jim let you know that the Dubuque Rescue Mission no longer offers any meals on Sundays. That will affect us as we have provided food twice each year and helped serve that Sunday's noon meal. During the many years we have worked with the Rescue Mission, many members of this church have participated by giving food for the meal, helping prepare the meal, giving money for the food, serving the Mission clients, and taking photos of our members interacting with clients so we could bring the experience back to our congregation. The heart of this mission is the interaction between our members and those receiving the meal.

Now we are looking at this change as an opportunity to make this interaction better for Mission clients and for our members too.

The new Manager of the Rescue Mission kitchen is Clarissa. She

indicated that they currently offer lunch Monday through Saturday; and offer supper Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

They are very flexible in the amount of participation they will allow us:

- We could continue to provide food for the entire meal or only provide the dessert (homemade cakes and milk) and serve the meal.
- We could provide the dessert and give money to help cover their cost of the meal.
- We could increase the frequency of our participation to once a month, six times per year, or stay at twice per year. What day of the week works best for our people?
- In all these options, we could continue to serve the meal.

Right now, we need feedback from you. If you have questions, you can ask them now or you can send me an email with your thoughts and questions. I particularly want to hear from those who have given to the program by providing food, money, and making the trip to the mission to serve. It is also an opportunity to

become involved with the program if you have not helped in the past.

So please help Mission & Stewardship Committee determine our direction with the Rescue Mission moving forward.

Nan Colin for the Mission & Stewardship Committee

Stewardship

"If some people did business like they give to the church, they would say to the electric company: "No, I don't think I want to make any promise to pay each month. I'll just drop in now and then and pay what I happen to have with me."

To the daily paper: "Yes, you may have the boy deliver a paper every day, and every once in a while I'll make a donation, whatever I feel I can."

To the telephone company: "I want a phone, but I don't favor paying any definite sum monthly. I'll just drop in from time to time when I'm able and pay what I feel I can spare at the time. That's the way I think the phone company ought to be supported."

To Uncle Sam: "I appreciate living in America. I think its a wonderful country and wouldn't live any place else in the world; but the idea of regular taxes is ridiculous!"

To the grocer: "I'll buy in your store regularly because I do get hungry but I'll pay you every now and then when I have the money left over after buying the luxuries I need."

Well, why belabor the point, eh? Undergird your church with your regular pledge payments."

Anonymous



Worshipping and Sharing Across Racial Lines

A shared faith and joint worship are building a bridge that is helping two Denver congregations cross a racial divide. Central Presbyterian, a predominantly white congregation, and Peoples Presbyterian, a predominantly African American one, began this journey on Martin Luther King Day this year. Central members traveled the 2.3 miles that separate the two congregations to worship with Peoples. The following Sunday, Peoples visited Central.

Not long afterward planning began on a joint women's retreat, and Peoples hosted a vacation Bible school with children from both churches attending. Two additional joint worship services were held last spring, and more are anticipated in the future. "In past times, we had pulpit exchanges, but this is something much more than a pulpit exchange," says Rev. Louise Westfall, Central's pastor. "It's a desire to be together."

Theresa Varnado, a ruling elder at Peoples, is enthusiastic about the increasing level of understanding. "Sometimes the ideas we share just among ourselves can become redundant," she says. "When we spend time in community, conversing and participating in joint activities, the opportunity to learn new and fresh ideas is greater. We are building bridges as well."

Peoples Presbyterian Church congregation attending Central Presbyterian Church

The joint worship services that set this relationship in motion were part of a Colorado Council of Churches initiative called Soulful

Sunday. Denver Presbytery uses a portion of its Peace & Global Witness Offering receipts to support the Soulful Sunday initiative across Colorado. Tom Sheffield, presbytery pastor, admits that simply holding joint worship services can be superficial. "But," he says, "the experience of Central and Peoples shows that they can lead to deeper relationships and honest conversations about each other's lives."

Our fractured world stands in desperate need of deeper relationships and honest conversations across racial lines. On this World Communion Sunday, we join Christians around the world who are gathering at the Lord's Table, a place where divisions are healed and hope is proclaimed. May we cross the barriers Christ calls us to traverse as we lean into the hope of Christ's redemption.

Pat Cole, Communications Specialist, PC(USA)

Who Benefits from Your Gifts?

When you sit down to write a check for the support of God's work through [First Presbyterian] Church, have you ever wondered just who benefits from your gift?

Look to 2nd Corinthians 9:8-14 for your answer. There, the apostle Paul says there are four beneficiaries of your gifts — four.

First, your gifts supply the needs of God's people and the funds essential to perform God's work. And for that, God is grateful. So both God as well as God's work are two beneficiaries.

Another beneficiary of your gifts is our church and the folks who

worship there; the children who are told of Jesus there; parents with a troubled teen; others with deep heartaches; those desiring Christian fellowship; those seeking divine guidance, spiritual comfort, peace of mind; those desperate for answers to personal problems; those trying to salvage a marriage; those longing for communion with Jesus — this is the church. This is the beneficiary of your gifts.

The fourth beneficiary? Well, it's you. God's response to your generosity is that God will make all grace abound to you. Does that mean spiritual benefits or material blessings? It means both.

Remember it is God who provides you the means to be generous. Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give." God is all powerful. God promises to replace what you give and to multiply those gifts to the point that at all times and in all things you will have all you need.

If you believe that God does indeed love you and takes great care to watch over you — and if you are confident in that belief — then any anxiety you have about writing a check for God's work will vanish.

Who benefits from your gifts to God's work? Look around you the next time you are in God's house, when you're in prayer, when God lays a loving hand on your shoulder and says, "thank you." Then you'll know your answer.

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." — 2 Corinthians 9:8)

Bethel United Presbyterian Church *UpBeat* newsletter

The Peace-Positive Spirit of Christ

Peace-positive, or peace-negative? The choice makes all the difference.

I recently asked one of our Mid-Kentucky Presbytery pastors if she felt that the congregation with which she served was peace-positive, or peace-negative. To be fair, I didn't define those terms. At first, the pastor vociferously answered yes, and seemed a little concerned that I might be implicating that her congregation's environment was hostile. But then I provided the following clarification:

Peace-negative is generally defined as the absence of overt conflict or violence. A ceasefire in Syria or Afghanistan is negative peace. In the congregational setting, a negative peace may exist when all expressions of disagreement or conflict are suppressed. Members put on their "happy-church" faces, pretend to get along, and avoid raising uncomfortable or difficult subjects for fear of angering one another. The absence of conflict or violence does not lead to a positively-defined condition. Hence, peace is characterized as negative.

Peace-positive, on the other hand, parallels the biblical concept of shalom. Every person is acknowledged and feels valued. There is a right relationship between each person. Not only is conflict absent, but an esprit d'corps also exists. People are motivated by each other and strive for excellence. A balanced blend of personal, internal competition (How can I improve?) and external cooperation (How can I help the other person do better?) predominates. People are excited

about their faith, their calling, and their service.

To her credit, the pastor asked if she could rethink her answer. Without any hesitation, she assured me that her congregation most likely exhibited peace-negative behavior. I think that most Christ-followers would prefer to have positive peace around them. Yet many congregations are satisfied with negative peace.

September 2 marked the beginning of the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Season of Peace. The season continues through World Communion Sunday (October 7). It is a time to "depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14). It is a time for individual believers and congregations to not just settle for tamping down hostility and celebrating what isn't there, but to aggressively search out and encourage those practices that build respect, empathy, cooperation, and community. It is a time to become peace-positive and experience the difference that comes through actively seeking peace, and relentlessly pursuing it.

Let me encourage you to consider initiating the following activities during this season of peace:

- Invite someone you don't know well or who has alternate beliefs than you for a meal.

- Read and implement Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement.

- Identify a hands-on project to be funded by your congregation's portion of the Peace and Global Witness Offering, a Special Offering to be received on World Communion Sunday.

May the peace-positive Spirit of Christ attend you and your congregation during this Season of Peace and always.

This piece was written by Rev. John Odom, Presbyter for Community Life at Mid-Kentucky Presbytery, for their presbytery newsletter originally published on September 4, 2018.

In addition to John's suggestions of activities to engage during a Season of Peace, might we add:

- Collecting the Peace & Global Witness Offering in your congregation, or donating to the Offering online.
- Download or subscribe to our Path of Peace daily reflections.

Reprinted with permission from <https://pcusa.org/being-peace-positive-during-the-season-of-peace>.



So why are you a member?

The following is an edited article written by the Rev. David Lenz when he was pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Iowa. He was the minister who followed my father as pastor for the congregation.

“So why are you a member of First Presbyterian Church?”

I have asked many of you that question since I arrived. There have been a variety of answers.

Many of you — far more than I first realized — are members of First because you grew up in this church. You have relatives who attend with you. You sit with your mother, your son, a brother, or a niece. First Presbyterian has been a part of you for as long as you can remember.

Some of you came to First because you lived in the neighborhood. You were intrigued by the sermon titles on the signboard, or the beautiful flowers, or you thought “I’ll try there first.” What you found made you comfortable, and you never left.

Some of you are here because the gifts God has given you will blossom most fully at First. You know that First not only needs you but will appreciate you.

These reasons are all logical, fine reasons to be a part of First Presbyterian Church.

It is interesting to me that I have yet to meet a person who said, “I joined because someone from First extended a personal invitation to me to visit here.”

I am sure such people exist! I hope to meet you soon. That it is taking me a while to find you underscores an important point. All of us must share our excitement —

our reason for being a member of First Presbyterian — with our friends and acquaintances who do not have a church home.

“So why are you a member of First Presbyterian Church?”

There are many answers to that question. But it is my sincere hope that all of us can say, in the end, we are here because this is a place where we can make a profound witness for Jesus Christ; because this is a place where our faith is nourished and challenged; because this is a place which feels like home — where we look forward to being with our friends, our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Your Pastor,
Dave Lenz

Voice of the Martyrs — Columbia



Salome was 10 years old when her mother was killed. On the night of March 6, 2011, two men knocked at the front door of their home in Colombia, awakening Salome’s parents, James and Rocio Pino. When they opened the door, the men asked for help with their motorcycle. While James went outside to help, one of the men stayed by the door with Rocio. Moments later, the man shot Rocio three times and the two men sped away on their motorcycle before James could stop them.

Salome and her family believe Rocio was killed by members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a militant

guerrilla group. Rocio had recently shared the gospel with a young guerrilla fighter and encouraged her to leave the FARC.

After a rushed funeral, friends helped Salome and her family go into hiding. FARC militants searched for them for several years, forcing them to move constantly, and each time their location was discovered they wondered who had told the FARC. Salome knows what would have happened if they had been caught.

“They would have killed my dad,” Salome said. “We would have been kidnapped. We would have been part of the FARC. They would probably make us, force us, to be one of them.”

The Pino family struggled after Rocio’s death. Frequent moves made it hard for Salome and her sisters to settle into a school, and finances were tight. During the pandemic, Salome and her family struggled financially, living on 70,000 pesos (less than \$20) a week. But God always provided. “God multiplied those 70,000 pesos to pay everything,” she said. “You know, I have seen how great my God is. I have never been alone.”

Salome currently serves as a Sunday school teacher in a church that she loves, and she is also pursuing a degree in graphic design and working to support her family. She is the only child in the family to pursue a college degree, and her tuition is paid for by the global body of Christ through VOM.

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need.” Acts 2:44-45



For those who wish they could do more

This is for people who wish they could do more. That includes a lot of people. They wish they knew more people so they could invite them. They wish they knew more about the Bible or could witness. Many feel limited and wish they could do more. Here is a word of encouragement.

Never underestimate the witness of your presence. A few more in

Bible study or worship means a great deal. Your presence in a Sunday school class, even if you never speak, is an encouragement to the entire class.

Your presence in worship adds to worship. Your off-key voice singing a hymn adds to the worship experience of all. Milton said, "They also serve who only stand and wait." Let's add, "They also serve who simply attend."

Remember this when you are uncertain about whether to attend. You may feel you do not benefit every time you are here.

On days when you feel tired or sleepy, you may feel your attendance doesn't matter. It may not seem to matter to you, but it does matter to others.

St. Mark's United Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, FL