

# “COME AND SEE”

## A WORD FOR THE NEW YEAR

winter 2026 prevue



*John 1:35–42 (NRSVUE)*

*The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).*

### **Dear Church family and community,**

Welcome to 2026. My heart and prayers are with each of you as we step into a new year together. As I’ve been reflecting on our goals and priorities, I’ve been asking what grounds our thinking—but also, what engages our imagination as a community of faith? A few days ago, during my devotional time, I found myself lingering in John 1, especially verses 35–42: the calling of Andrew, the first disciple named in John’s Gospel. Did you know that in the Orthodox Church, Andrew is known as the Proto-Kletos—“the first called”? I love that. In these few verses, we see how discipleship begins not with a program or a test of belief, but with recognition,

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relationship, and invitation. John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God, Andrew responds, and soon he is bringing his brother Simon to meet Jesus—who, seeing who Simon is and who he will become, gives him a new name: Peter.

What strikes me most about this story is how gentle and human it is. The calling of Andrew and Simon is not a dramatic interruption by a stranger, but the deepening of relationships already forming. Some scholars even suggest Jesus may have already known Andrew and Simon through John the Baptist and their shared life around Capernaum.



And notice Jesus' first words to those who follow him: it's not "Do you believe the right things?" or "Are you ready to commit?" but "What are you looking for?" Their response is vulnerable and honest: "Where are you staying?"—where do you abide? They want presence, proximity, a place to be with him. Jesus' reply is beautifully simple: "Come and see." No argument. No pressure. Just invitation.

This story resonates deeply with me right now because I see it lived out again and again at First Church. People find us and join in this ministry because they want to be close to others who are practicing discipleship and working together to reveal God's kin-dom right here in our community. So often, people show up because they knew someone or because someone invited them. It also reminds me of earlier seasons in our life together, especially during the pandemic, when everything felt uncertain. In that moment, I kept returning to three simple practices: celebrate, dream, and invite. We celebrated where we could see God at work, even in the midst of challenge. We dreamed about new ways of being the church. And then we invited others to step into that unfolding work.

As we move into 2026, this feels like an invite year. The last few years have been times of celebration and deepening our identity, and of dreaming into new structures, new gatherings, and new spaces for community. Now, it's time to widen the circle. The invitation story in John's Gospel reminds us that discipleship multiplies through relationship and welcome. My hope and prayer is that you will feel empowered to invite others into the life and work we share here at First Church. I am so grateful to walk this journey with you, and I am excited for who we will become together in this new year.



**With gratitude and hope,  
Pastor Duane (he/him)**

# Building a Stronger Digital Home for First Church

First United Methodist Church of West Lafayette is beginning work on a new website designed to better serve our congregation and community, made possible through a Resource Grant from the Center for Congregations. This grant supports Indiana congregations as they invest in resources that strengthen their capacity and advance their mission. For First Church, that investment means creating a digital home that more clearly reflects who we are, how we serve, and how we stay connected with one another.

The decision to pursue a new website grew out of an honest assessment of our current one. While it has served us well, the site is reaching the limits of its capabilities and no longer fully meets the needs of our congregation. A new website will improve the overall user experience, making it easier to find information, stay up to date on ministries and events, and engage with First Church whether you are a longtime member or visiting for the first time.

After thoughtful discussion, the First Church Governance Board worked alongside church leadership to approve the project and move forward with applying for a Center for Congregations grant. The application process was spearheaded by John Lewandowski, a member of First Church and retired Sr. Program Manager at Purdue University's Daniels School of Business.

"Helping coordinate the Center for Congregation grant application behind the scenes was a meaningful way for me to contribute to our shared vision as a congregation," says John. "The updated website will build on that work by giving us a clearer, more welcoming way to stay connected, share information, and support one another."

The new website will be designed by SmallBox, a creative agency that partners with organizations to strengthen their visual identity and build thoughtful, user-centered digital experiences. SmallBox previously led First Church's 2021 rebrand and will be working in partnership with Evergreen Strategic Communications, First Church's marketing agency, on this next phase of work. Beginning in March 2026, First Church, SmallBox, and Evergreen will engage in audience research and surveys to gather feedback from the congregation and broader community to help guide the website's design and structure.

We are grateful for the support of our congregation as we embark on this exciting project, and we look forward to sharing updates along the way. This new website represents a step forward in connecting our community, sharing our story, and welcoming *all* who come to First Church.





# Meet Amelie “Milly” Coolman

## Our New Family Ministry Team Member

My name is Milly, I'm 19 years old and I'm studying psychology in the Lafayette area! I love dancing, singing, hanging out with family and friends, and watching movies!

I am a Family Ministry Team Member! My role is to help support members by providing care for children during services, or other church activities. As a Family Ministry Team Member, I also help teach the lessons of Christ, and how to use these lessons in your life!



My favorite thing about Family Ministry is making that connection with the kids. They provide me with so much joy and laughter, and I love watching them learn and use their creativity. I can learn so much from them!

One of my favorite moments that illustrates the impact of Family Ministries starts with a ladybug. One day, one of the children found a ladybug struggling indoors. This week, we were also learning about creation, and how the ladybug was a creation of God. All of the kids came together to provide shelter for a ladybug, and came together to find it a nice home. It made me super happy to see the kids form bonds over this ladybug, and how much they loved the insect. Family Ministries helps shape commutative and kind children, who care for eachother and the creations of God.

Family Ministry is here to support families who want their children to have a fun and special experience with the teachings of Christ. It is also a great experience for children to form friendships and learn how to be there for others.

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## Family Ministry at First Church

At First Church, children are a vital part of our community. Through a variety of ministries, we provide a firm foundation in faith, helping children grow in their understanding of what it means to be children of God. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, there's a place for you here.

To learn more about Family Ministry at First Church, please contact Talitha Huber at [thuber@fumcwl.org](mailto:thuber@fumcwl.org).



# Why Community Matters

By Pastor Duane

I told this story in my sermon recently, but I really wanted to share it again here. It's one of those stories that quietly reminds me why community and relationships matter so much—what sociologist Robert Putnam called social capital in his book *Bowling Alone*. Social capital is simply the value of relationships and networks that strengthen a community. Or, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put it so beautifully, it's our “inextricable network of mutuality.”

A couple of years ago, our friend Dennis—a member here at First UMC—was transitioning out of his small business, which was closing due to market changes. Dennis is visually impaired, which presents unique challenges when it comes to employment. As he searched for work, he was talking with me and Todd—not as pastor and parishioner, but simply as friends.



Around that same time, we were in regular conversation with Brianna and Erica Ginn during their pregnancy and family journey (lots of prayers then!). Somewhere along the way, Dennis's job search entered those conversations. Brianna mentioned that her company worked with Purdue and said, “Let me see if I can make a few calls.” She did—and through that simple act of paying attention, Dennis was offered a job. The year went well, and Dennis found both purpose and stability in that work.

Then summer came. The work slowed. And when fall approached, Dennis didn't get the call he expected. Anxiety crept in. He began networking again—talking with people from the congregation, checking in with his job coach, Kyle, who many of you know as the creative director of Acorn Players, one more thread in this First UMC web of relationships.

At the same time, Brianna was transitioning back into a management role at the Purdue site so she could be closer to home with baby Rowan. One day she looked around and noticed someone missing. “Where's Dennis?” she asked. That question set everything in motion. Brianna followed up with site coordinators. Conversations happened. A communication gap was discovered. And suddenly, a door reopened.

Dennis wasn't alone in this—he was surrounded by friends, coworkers, church members, family, and advocates who noticed, asked questions, and cared. That's social capital at work. That's community. We really are woven together—and when we look out for one another, lives are changed.



## We're Out 2025 📷

On November 22, 2025, First Church hosted our fifth annual We're Out event, a celebration of LGBTQIA+ joy, belonging, and community. We are deeply grateful for the continued support of our church family and community as we live out our commitment to social justice.

This past year's event focused on uplifting and affirming our transgender community. Through powerful panel conversations, we heard stories that invited us to grow as allies and to embody love and care for the families and friends who walk alongside them. Congregants, community partners, and neighbors gathered to engage in panel discussions, enjoy live music and storytelling, and connect with local organizations through community resource tables.

We are thankful to Pride Lafayette and We All Belong Greater Lafayette for partnering with us to help create such a meaningful and impactful event.



## Breakfast with Santa

Our 2025 Breakfast with Santa was a rousing success and a lovely time for all. Over a hundred community members—kids, parents, and grandparents—joined us Saturday morning, December 12th, to celebrate the Advent season; we decorated cookies and Christmas cards, enjoyed breakfast snacks, and crafted ornaments and nativities. We were blessed by the helping hands of five volunteers from the Harrison High School Keyettes who manned the craft tables, along with a visiting Santa from one of the families within the First Church congregation. With such wonderful help from all quarters, one can't help thinking perhaps next year can include a coffee and hot chocolate bar! But in any case, we were so thankful to spend a beautiful morning together with our community families.



## LUM Jubilee Christmas

It was a festive morning that began right at 9:00 AM, and excitement filled the host site. This year, 33 families were served through LUM Jubilee Christmas, a special initiative organized by the Lafayette Urban Ministry to bless families during the holiday season. In total, 87 children ages 0–12 and 23 teens were represented—each one hoping for a bright Christmas.

The room was cheerful and warm, with Christmas music playing in the background as volunteers went right to work. Everyone knew exactly what to do, and the day flowed smoothly from the start. Families were invited in to shop through tables of new toys, choosing just the right gifts for their children. Smiles and laughter filled the space as parents found something perfect.



But Jubilee Christmas offers more than toys—every family received a quilt, a food certificate, and a tin of cookies, helping to make Christmas dinner and Christmas morning a little more special. By 11:00 AM, just as the snow began to fall outside, the work was nearly done. Volunteers were finishing up, families were heading home with full bags and full hearts, and the day closed with a sense of joy, accomplishment, and Christmas love shared with our community.





## Welcoming Statement

We, the people of First United Methodist Church West Lafayette, welcome everyone, through all life's stages, with arms that are open, respectful, and loving. And by everyone, we mean regardless of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, race, ability, bank balance, or background. As a Reconciling Congregation, we welcome you into our church family, for it is by joining hands that we support one another and share our faith journey together. Whoever you are, and wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here.



## Mission, Vision & Core Values

**MISSION:** To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**VISION:**

1. Adopt & Embrace the Families of the Klondike School District in partnership with Klondike Elementary School & Teachers
2. Embrace the Purdue Community in partnership with Wesley Foundation;
3. Ensure our First United Methodist Church Community is connected & growing in their walk with Christ.

**CORE VALUES:** We are a loving & joyful church committed to celebrating God's love in all that we do. Welcome, Acceptance, & Support; Christ-centered Worship; Spiritual Growth Towards Discipleship; Active Christian Service.

