



Pastor James Wilson Is New Interim At St. James UCC



Pastor James Wilson and his wife, Jayanthi, will become familiar faces around the community. Pastor Wilson is serving St. James United Church of Christ in Barnesville on an interim basis. He will likely be in the area for the next several months as spiritual leader for the congregation.

By: Karen Carpenter

Change is a part of life. Nothing stays the same for long, it seems. St. James United Church of Christ is going through a time of change at present.

The St. James congregation has welcomed a new interim pastor as spiritual leader. Pastor James Wilson began his service to the church on January 1, 2021. His first Sunday service was January 3.

Pastor Frank Picard St. James previous pastor ended his term with the congregation in the late winter of 2020. He began his service at St. James on February 1, 2017 as their interim after their permanent

pastor, Pastor Wendy Ward retired in August 2016.

Pastor Ward had served as lead pastor for St. James for eight years.

It was a matter of importance for the congregation at St. James to have the permanence and stability of a full-time pastor.

A vote was taken on January 28, 2018 to call Pastor Picard as permanent pastor at St. James UCC.

Now that Pastor Picard has left St. James to pursue other interests, Pastor Jim has stepped in to fill the position on an interim basis. He will likely be there for the next several months to a year or until a full time minister can be called by the St.

James congregation.

Pastor Wilson has served three interim positions in the United States. Those have been in Missouri, Iowa and now in Barnesville. "In addition, my work in the Church in Africa was often related to helping churches that were in transition," said Pastor Wilson.

"Over the years, I have undergone different types of training, as well as course work that has helped to equip me for doing interims. Nonetheless, such training and educational activities are always "ongoing," i.e. in order to stay relevant, and up-to-date with ministry with the people we are serving and society in general," continued Pastor Wilson.

Originally from Los Angeles, Pastor Wilson brings with him 40 years of experience in ministry. His wife, Jayanthi, is a native of India.

Over the years, Pastor Jim has served churches in California, Oklahoma, Missouri and Iowa as well as Canada.

Pastor Wilson served the United Church of Christ, in Lesotho, Botswana and South Africa from 1989 until 2017.

He has also worked at various educational institutions in the U.S., India, and Africa.

Pastor Wilson was ordained at Hillcrest Christian Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

He went on to not only serve churches in ministry, but to become an educator, writer and editor.

Pastor Wilson lectured, worked in research and curriculum development on a variety of subjects at several colleges.

He also authored or coauthored three books along with several publications. Pastor Wilson has written reviews and presented several conference papers.

Interests and studies have led Pastor Wilson to several corners of the world. At present the Wilsons are living in West Fargo, ND.

Entering a new church during these unsettling times means that Pastor Wilson will have to adapt to the constraints placed on churches at this unprecedented time.

The pandemic changed how churches handle services, gatherings and meetings.

At St. James the congregation is following the recommended



The St. James United Church of Christ building has stood on this spot on Second Avenue and Third Street in Barnesville for over 60 years. The congregation added on an addition to the building housing an elevator, offices and handicapped bathroom in 2007.

government guidelines and capacity restrictions

"We are committed to playing a pro-active role in reducing the spread of the virus," said Pastor Wilson. "We want to keep all safe, in our worship services as well as other activities that take place in the church."

The church has adopted these same principles with all other outreach activities in which they are engaged.

The St. James congregation all wear masks inside the church. "In our worship services and Sunday School classes, people maintain social distance, and make use of disposable cups used in communion," said Pastor Wilson.

"There is also a 'coffee hour' held in our Fellowship Hall after worship whereby we use disposable cups and offer packaged snacks," he continued.

For those who do not feel comfortable coming to church yet, for whatever reason, they can watch worship services online via Facebook and You Tube, LIVE.

"We are always in the process of adapting our styles of worship; the ways we communicate and how we conduct ministry," said Pastor Wilson. "St. James is committed to being a community church, committed to sharing the Good News in ways that are relevant, spiritually uplifting, and build community."

Some of Pastor Wilson's interests outside of work include reading, travel and engaging with people from varied backgrounds.

It is always interesting to hear the views of the community from the perspective of someone new to the area.

"The real blessing of Barnesville is that it is a place where people know each other and where there is a real sense of camaraderie and community," said Pastor Wilson.

"In addition, most of what is needed on a on-going basis, such as

health, banking, groceries is right in the community. And, if and when, something else is needed, one is only 30 miles away from Moorhead or Fargo."

As spiritual leader of St. James United Church of Christ, Pastor James Wilson has dreams and plans for the church while he is serving in Barnesville.

"My prayer for St. James UCC, is that it will continue to do what it does so well, to be accepting of all people who come through its door," said Pastor Wilson. "A welcome place for people from varied theological and political perspectives; and people who are married, single or with a partner."

"As an interim, my prayer is that I will no longer be needed, that the church will have found a full-time pastor to accent and continue their dynamic ministry."

Welcome Little Ones...

New arrivals in 2020...

There was two new arrival recorded in the Record-Review in the year 2020. The child's name, date of birth and parents names are:

Gunnar Alan Froslie	March 8, 2020
Alan AJ & Kylah	
Britta Maye Briese	March 20, 2020
Joshua & Katherine	

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Interim Pastor James Wilson applies ashes to a parishioner's forehead in a drive-by Ash Wednesday ritual at St. James United Church of Christ in Barnesville. The pandemic has forced churches to structure services in a different way to keep everyone as safe as possible.

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