Reverend Dr. James Palmer, Jr.

Rev. Dr. James Palmer, Jr., Retired U.S. Army Chaplain Colonel, is a seasoned Christian minister, educator, counselor, and servant leader, ordained through the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. A native of Petersburg, Virginia, Dr. Palmer has devoted more than three decades to Christian ministry, spiritual care, leadership, and service to others.

Dr. Palmer earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, in 1988, followed by a Master of Divinity degree from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in 1991. While pursuing his Master of Arts degree in American Studies at The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, he served as Interim Pastor of Historic First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, gaining valuable experience in congregational leadership and pastoral ministry. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Regent University in 2003, where his doctoral project was entitled *Preventive Maintenance for Couple Success Training: Ministering to Military Families*. In 2004, he earned a Master of Arts degree in American Studies from The College of William & Mary.

In December 1992, Dr. Palmer entered the United States Army as a Chaplain, beginning a remarkable 31-year career of military ministry and leadership. Throughout his service, he provided spiritual care, religious education, and leadership to Soldiers, Families, and communities around the world.

As a result of his exemplary performance, Dr. Palmer was selected for the U.S. Army Senior Service College Fellowship Program at George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

One of the most significant highlights of his military career came in July 2021, when the Army Chief of Chaplains selected him to serve as the 44th Commandant of the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School, now the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership, at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. With this historic appointment, Chaplain Palmer became only the second African American chaplain to serve as Commandant in the school's 107-year history. As Commandant, Rev. Dr. Palmer was responsible for the training and education of thousands of newly commissioned chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists serving in the Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard.

His military service was recognized through numerous awards and decorations, including three Legion of Merit awards and the Bronze Star Medal. After 31 years of faithful and distinguished service, he retired from the United States Army, concluding a remarkable chapter of military ministry while continuing his lifelong commitment to serving God and His people.

Following his military retirement, Dr. Palmer continued to invest his time in faith and community. He is a faithful member of First Nazareth Baptist Church and remains actively engaged with the Columbia Branch of the NAACP. He serves as a board member of Gozo Health Corporation and is a Life Member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. In July 2024, he was inducted into the Columbia Greek Hall of Fame in recognition of his distinguished military career and significant contributions to the community.

In June 2026, Dr. Palmer was elected to serve as the 13th Pastor of Historic Zion Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina. This new pastoral assignment represents a natural extension of a life dedicated to spiritual leadership, service, teaching, mentorship, and the care and development of people.

Rev. Dr. Palmer is married to the former Faith A. Turner of Richmond, Virginia. Together, they are the proud parents of three children: two sons, James III and Jeremiah, and a daughter, Jordan