



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1780

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2017

## At Church on Sundays:

- ◆ Early Informal Service  
8:30 am
- ◆ Regular Service 9:30am
- ◆ Sunday School 9:30 am

## We are on the Web:

[www.fumceg.org](http://www.fumceg.org)

## Church Office Hours:

9 am to 2:30 pm M - F

Phone: (518) 477-9693

Fax: (518) 477-4336

## Email:

[office@fumceg.org](mailto:office@fumceg.org)

BELL/Bulletin (only) Email:

[editor@fumceg.org](mailto:editor@fumceg.org)

Youth Ministries Email:

[FUMCEG.youth@gmail.com](mailto:FUMCEG.youth@gmail.com)

**Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,**  
*Pastor*

**Gail Welkley,**  
*Administrative Assistant*

*Dear Members and Friends,*      Happy New Year!

Mountains were very important to the author of the gospel of Matthew. When Jesus was tempted to worship the devil in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world, it happened on a mountain. When Jesus preaches the same sermon in Matthew he does it on a mountain. That's why we call it the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus often went to the mountain to pray. Four Sundays from now (Feb. 26, 2017), we celebrate the Transfiguration Sunday before we embark on a forty day Lenten journey beginning March 1, 2017.

What is it about something happening on a mountain that adds such special significance? In the Jewish Tradition Mountains were holy dwellings of God, places where God's presence was known and God's laws were given. Mountains become symbols of the way things would be when God's rule finally would extend over the earth.

Whatever we make of this story in the gospel of Matthew (Chapter 17) of the transfiguration, it is no accident it happened on a mountain. On a mountain the glory of Jesus is revealed and the voice from heaven says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

For the Samuel family, mountains have a very special place in our hearts. Deb, having grown up in the State of Maine, used to take all of us for drive up Cadillac Mountain to watch the sunset at least once, every time we were in Maine. We would also drive after sunset to watch the stars, meteor showers, while feasting on Maine wild blueberries till our tummy's ached! It was always breathtaking and terribly humbling to climb the likes of Boar Mountain and Little Squaw Mountain to catch the majesty and beauty of God's creation! A drive through the mountains always gave us a different perspective on things.

I know some people, who would invest a lot of time and money in mountain-climbing. That's not for exercise. It was about mastering the mystery and standing where few have stood. Funny thing though, that we rarely hear of stories about the treacherous descent down a mountain, even though that is great exercise. The stories are always about climbing the mountain, risking it all to get to the top, and spending time on some high

*(Continued on page 2)*



*A Reconciling Congregation*

*(Continued from page 1)*

peak that causes people to see things, and maybe even them, differently.

We like mountains. We even describe some of our greatest moments as mountain-top experiences, but we can't stand on the mountain forever. The emotional level is too intense. However, we can take with us what we experienced on the mountain into the valley.

We all know that mountain-climbing is great, but on Monday people have to go back to work. The honeymoon is great, but then we start to notice the dirty dishes, and the clothes left lying around, and all those annoying habits. We realize we are being led down the mountain and back into other areas of life.

Worship ought to be the closest thing we know on a regular basis to the kind of mountain that was so important to the gospel writer Matthew. Worship is that occasion in which the unseen and unknown God is experienced. Here we anticipate some revelation, here we expect some word from the Lord, and even if it is a word we have heard many times before. Here some ray of hope ought to lift our spirits and challenge our minds and encourage our best actions.

To me it happens in a line of a hymn that I have sung a thousand times, a new anthem I have learned for the first time and the words and music which lift my heart. It may happen as the words of scripture are read and we hear something that we have never heard before. It may happen when we gather around the Lord's Table and the power of these simple symbols deepens our appreciation for what it means to be followers of Jesus. However it happens, worship ought to be the one place we can count on to experience something of the Sacred.

Let me be clear about what I am talking about here. This is not a matter of coming to church for a few moralistic instructions about what to do and not do. Worship is much deeper than that, much more compelling. In worship we express our love for God, and in turn we experience that same love and it shapes us into new people. As we yearn to be heard by God in worship, we are drawn to those in our community who yearn to be heard by us. When we dare to say that our worship is done in the presence of God, we begin to recognize that all of life is lived in that holy presence. Sunday after Sunday, word, song, and act, we rehearse the story of God's saving grace, and each time we are drawn into it more fully.

When we leave it is only natural to see the world and its people through the lens of this grand old story which calls people together in love and peace. We worship in a place full of symbols that point to profound mysteries. When we leave we do so with the reminder that in all of life there is always more going on than we can see with our eyes.

Bishop Willimon writes that in worship we are confronted with a grand vision for the world, and our puny, little horizons are exposed. Something happens when we worship that evokes a response, and that response is to live out daily as we share life in our homes and move about in the community and serve this world that God loves so much.

The key is spending the right amount of time on the mountain. We know we need to be in

*(Continued on page 3)*

**THE BELL** is published monthly (with the exception of August) by the First United Methodist Church, 1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1780. February 2017, Volume 19 Issue 2. G. Herrick, **Editor**; S. Samuel, G. Welkley, **Editing Team**; J. Van Ornam, **Proofreader**; K. Van Buren, B. Van Ornam, **Production Team**; R. Reineke, **Photographer**

**The Church Staff:** Rev. Sundar R. Samuel, **Pastor**; Heidi Gran, **Director of Children's Christian Education**; Nick Morrow, **Youth Leader**; Jacqueline Krahforst, **Organist**; Bruce Wagner, **Choir Director**; Cynthia Reineke, **Coordinator of EmBELLishments & Children's Music Program**; Gail Welkley, **Administrative Assistant**; Christopher Chartrand, **Custodian**; Zarina Khan, **Child Care Provider**; Cate Strebing, **Peer Minister, Cornerstone Protestant Campus Ministry, The University at Albany**; Finda Quiwa, **Regional Missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, based in Freetown, Sierra Leone.**

(Continued from page 2)

worship regularly, but if we only worship and never move into the parts of the world that need loving then we have stayed too long. On the other hand, if we don't stay in worship long enough, or fail to immerse ourselves fully in it while we are here, then we will encounter challenges and problems for which we will have inadequate amounts of hope and energy.

The call of Jesus is extended to all of us to go up the mountain, to experience the Holy One, and to see the world as God wills for it to be. The call of Jesus is also to come down the mountain and into the lives of those who are lonely and oppressed. As long as Jesus tells us to stay, we stay on the mountain and when he tells us to come back, we should come back. This is God calling, from the mountain and the street corner, from the sanctuary and the soup kitchen; listen to him!

Shalom, *Pastor Sundar*

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

**LOVE KITS** The Sunday School will be supporting the Love Kits mission again this year! Members of the congregation can fill a bag with toiletries; shampoo, soap, razors, washcloths, etc, and brings it back to the church. The youth group then brings the filled bags to the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless. When a guest of the shelter comes in off the street, they are handed a bag to freshen up with! Watch the table in the church foyer in the next few weeks for the bags and the list of items for a Love Kit. It is a church-wide mission, that involves our youngest Sunday School kids, to our oldest church members!

**PRETZEL SUNDAY** is March 5th! It is the day the Sunday School makes pretzels in preparation for Lent. So mark your calendars! It is a favorite day of the Sunday School!



## UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

What's happening in UMYF? Last month we had a lock-in where we had snacks, played minute-to-win it games, we had a devotion, and we watched a movie. This month two highlights are the biggest fundraiser of the year, Superbowl Sub Sunday and the Newsboys concert on the 17th!



Then, starting at 7:00 p.m. on the 24th we will host the **DCYM Over-night**. Come enjoy this overnight event with a late night paint and sip, a scavenger hunt, and more! Explore our theme "**Like a Boss**", **B**uilding **O**ur **S**piritual **S**taories. There is a great video and more details about the event on the District

Council on Youth Ministries website <http://albanydcym.weebly.com/>. Check it out and see what you will be missing if you don't attend. As always, if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas please contact Nick at [FUMCEG.youth@gmail.com](mailto:FUMCEG.youth@gmail.com) or text at (518) 961-6133.

Friday, February 3 - Game Night/ UMYF Meeting: 7:00 p.m. -9:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 4 - Super Bowl Sub Day: Prep: 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 5 - Super Bowl Sub Day

Friday, February 17 - Newsboys Concert, Palace Theater

Friday/Saturday, February 24 — 25 Albany District Over-night Event "Like a Boss"

Friday, March 3 - Game Night: 7:00 p.m.

## MUSIC REMINDERS

There will be no Cherub or Chancel Choir February 19 or February 26. Also there will be no CHIMettes February 20. And no EmBELLishments February 21.



Thank you. *Cindy Reineke*

## WORSHIP AT FUMC FOR FEBRUARY



"I believe that God put the sun and moon up in the sky. I don't mind the gray skies, cause they're just clouds passing by." That is one of the lines in the hymn "Come Sunday", #728 in our UMC Hymnal. Some of our great American songs: "Mood Indigo" (1930), "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" (1932), "Sophisticated Lady" (1933), "Solitude" (1934), "In a Sentimental Mood" (1935), "Caravan" (1937), and "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" (1938) were written by the same man that wrote "Come Sunday" in 1943. His name was Duke Ellington. And he is our introduction to Black History Month for 2017 where the theme is "Black Family Lives Matter". Let us take some time over the days of February to focus some of our thoughts and prayers on this theme.

First, a service outside our own church. **"Stop The Hate"**, an Interfaith Prayer Service will be held **Wednesday, February 1** at 7:00 pm at the Hubbard Interfaith Sanctuary at the College of St. Rose. "No matter what you believe, no matter who you voted for...Stop by and help us make HATE the enemy." All are welcome.

**February 5** "No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house." (Matthew 5:15) A line and thought from one of the lectionary readings for this Sunday. In the early service Pastor Sundar will be speaking about "What would Jesus say about materialism?" Later in the week we will celebrate National Marriage Week USA (February 7-14). Here is "an invitation to join a campaign to encourage marriage, reduce divorce rates, curtail poverty, and benefit children".

**February 12** "You have heard it said... but I tell you." This week and next week the lectionary readings from Matthew show us some rules of relationships. Worth a look. In the early worship service Pastor Sundar will be looking at the question "What would Jesus say about medical care?"

**February 19** This day's lectionary reading from Leviticus helps us define Social Holiness — loving your neighbor, whatever their condition, as you love yourself. In early worship Pastor Sundar looks at the question "What would Jesus say about war?" The next day, **Monday February 20**, is President's Day. What words would your prayer for our President include?

**February 26** A mountain top experience, the Transfiguration of the Lord. That's this Sunday. At the early worship service Pastor Sundar will conclude the "What would..." series of messages with "What would Jesus say about the media?"

**March 1** Lent begins with our Ash Wednesday evening worship service at 7:00 pm. The following Wednesday our community series of noontime Lenten worship and luncheon gatherings will begin.

Here is the lectionary for February:

- February 5 **Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany** Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 112: 1-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12; Matthew 5:13-20
- February 12 **Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany** Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37
- February 19 **Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany** Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18; Psalm 119:33-40; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23; Matthew 5:38-48
- February 26 **Transfiguration of the Lord** Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
- March 1 **Ash Wednesday** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

On Sunday, February 26 the UMW will have a meeting to discuss the upcoming Thrift Sale restructuring. We will be going over some changes to hours of accepting donations, the interior signs and price list. If you have ever worked on the sale, especially cashier, we would like your input. The meeting is at 10:45 a.m. after the worship service.

The UMW is again hosting a breakfast the District Council on Youth Ministries Over-night on February 25 early in the morning. We try to keep it simple with cereal, bagels, juice, milk. If you would like to help and don't mind getting up a little early please let Patty Chartrand know.



On February 18 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon we will be doing Kitchen cleaning. We will be doing some reorganizing of the kitchen to make it better function for all groups to use. We had some issues come up so we want to address these issues and hopefully make the kitchen more functional for all.

Looking forward -- Blanket Sunday. Blanket Sunday is usually held one Sunday during the month of February. As of this writing a date has not been set. Envelopes will be in the bulletin when a date is chosen. Ten (\$10.00) buys a blanket to help someone who is in crisis around the world. Make checks out to the "United Methodist Women". Thank you

The Church Library is looking for anyone interested in reading. There are lots of books for young and old to enjoy. Please browse and find some good reading.

### AFGHANS, BABY BLANKETS, HATS, PRAYER SHAWLS CREATING COMFORT FOR OTHERS

Wednesday, February 15 at 10:00 a.m. and/or 6:30 p.m. in the Youth Lounge.



If you knit or crochet, or would like to learn, join us for ideas and encouragement. Our focus this month is on Change the World Sunday in May. We will be taking Afghans and Quilts to the VA Hospital where they are distributed to the patients to take home. Last year we delivered more than 20 afghans. We have some yarn and would appreciate any donations of yarn. If you know anyone who might be comforted with an afghan or prayer shawl we have a supply available now. Join us for this great winter project working together to create comfort for others. Aleta Schweigert 479-3182.

### STYROFOAM SUCCESS



Our first foray into Styrofoam recycling was a great success. A fully-loaded truck and sedan delivered the Styrofoam to Shelter Enterprises Inc. in Cohoes which processes it to create rigid foam insulation. The largest donation of Styrofoam was from a family that retained, cleaned, stacked and stored all their takeout containers for several years in hopes that they may be recycled some day! Be sure to start your collection now, because the Eco-Team will conduct another Styrofoam recycling campaign next year. Remember, it must be clean and free of tape and staples. Thank you!

### JANUARY BLOOD DRIVE

The Red Cross Bloodmobile came to our church on January 27 to collect donations. The members of our church and the community who donated 35 pints of blood. The need for blood donations continues. Watch for other opportunities in the community and at the Red Cross Center where, if you missed our day, you can still donate.





## CABIN FEVER COFFEE HOUSE A SUCCESS

The Cabin Fever Coffee House on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January was deemed a great success! We raised \$250 for the Long Term Family Assistance Fund in our church, a fund that helps our own families in crisis. Fourteen fabulous acts, a feast of delectable foods as well as laughter and fun were shared by all. THANK YOU performers, kitchen workers, sound crew and audience members for a great evening. The St. Patrick's Day Coffee House will be held on Friday, March 24 at 7:00 p.m. Save the date!



## ADULT LENTEN BIBLE STUDIES



In March, we will begin two sessions for a five week study based on Reverend N.T. (Tom) Wright's DVDs "Evil" and "Resurrection." Each week, in a small-group setting, we will view a video segment and discuss the issues it covers. In "Resurrection," Reverend Wright brings clarity and insight to one of the most profound mysteries in human history and the most important event in the Gospels. In "Evil," Reverend Wright emphasizes that it's not good enough to say that if we all try a little harder we can create a perfect world, rather he presents a solution to the problem of evil, if only we have the honesty and the courage to name it and understand it for what it is. The study sessions are approximately 90 minutes and are held in the youth lounge starting Monday, March 6 at 6:30 pm, or Tuesday, March 7 at 9:30 am. Please register for either session with the church office by March 1. Please see Kevin Conley (253-4907) or Pastor Sundar for more information.



**A Special Charge Conference** was held on January 22 following our morning worship service. The main purpose of the meeting was to elect people to fill leadership roles in our church. Elected as Trustees were Noreen Jenkins and Jim Perry. Elected to be our new Church Lay Leader was Beth Berkun. A complete list of the leadership chosen at that meeting is available in the church office.

## ENDOWMENT

The Endowment Funds generated \$4,540 of interest and dividends during the year 2016. The Endowment Committee awaits proposals from any one and any group within the Church community wishing to access these funds to add to the Church's mission. If you have a suggestion, speak to Pastor Sundar, Peter Larson, Carl Eno, Kirsten Downer or Marshall Wagner.



◆ A reminder: The **Annual Meeting of the Capital Area Council of Churches** will be held on **February 6** at 6:00 p.m. at St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church in Albany. All are invited to attend to hear about ecumenical and inter-faith activity in the Capital District. Contact the church office or speak to George Herrick for more information and for reservations.

◆ Please contact Carrie Larson (732-2098) if you have or know of a decent **2nd hand car** that might be donated to a church family in need. Thank you.

## JOSEPH'S HOUSE DINNER

Thanks to all who helped prepare and serve the meal at Joseph's House Homeless Shelter: Susie Calyer, Carrie Larson, Fred Henson, John and Janet Schmidt, Aleta Schweigert and Kevin and Cindy Conley. "Code Blue" was rescinded during the weekend, so the meal we prepared will cover two dinners at the shelter. The Mission Team plans to sign-up again in a few months, so keep your eye on The Bell for the next volunteer opportunity.

## YEAR END FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The year-end financial statements for contributors to our church were sent out on January 20, 2017, These statements give an official record of the giving of each donor. Becky Frament, our Financial Secretary does a great job keeping track of the giving in our church and getting these statements out in a timely manner. She also prepares and electronically transfers a summary of each week's income from a donation tracking system to the church's accounting system each week.



The church leaders look at financial statements that Art Sanderson, our church treasurer, prepares from the church's accounting system. These statements inform the leadership of the church as to how we are doing with our various income and expenditure items. The financial statements are prepared and reviewed monthly at Finance Committee and Administrative Council meetings.

The end of the year statement gives us a look at how the church did over the course of the year. The table below is a summary of the bottom line figures from the end of the year reports for 2015 and 2016.

Year	Budgeted Income	Actual Income	Budgeted Expenses	Actual Expenses	Gain/ (Loss) Budgeted	Gain/ (Loss) Actual
2015	\$286,500	\$290,987	\$299,191	\$294,791	(\$12,691)	(\$3,804)
2016	\$290,300	\$295,259	\$317,186	\$303,083	(\$26,886)	(\$7,824)

As you can see the church has expended more than it has received in the General Fund each of the last two years. However, we have been fortunate in that we have spent under what we estimated in the budget and received more than we estimated we would. We have been able to handle small operational losses like these because of a surplus of funds that we have received in other years or that was transferred from bequest money that had been given to the church. In general, bequests should be used for special projects (i.e. sound system improvements, musical instruments).

So it is up to the donations made to the church and other income to pay for our day to day expenses such as staff, utilities, insurance, office supplies, building maintenance, missions, and various program expenses like the Christmas Musical that the Sunday School puts on. The operating losses that we have experienced over the last several years are not huge, but it would be nice to have a few years of surplus from time to time to balance things out.

If you are wondering how you could help out with these operating losses, here are a few suggestions:

If you are currently pledging, consider raising your pledge by a couple of dollars per week. If all of our pledgers increased their pledge by just \$1 per week, the church would have over \$5,000 more in income for the year.

If you are not contributing regularly, consider starting a regular pattern of giving. We have an on line giving option that might help you with this.

Whatever you decide to do, we are thankful for whatever support you can give.

The Finance Committee

## COFFEE HOUR HELP NEEDED!



Between last September and the end of January this year, our Sunday morning coffee hour was hosted by 16 different committees/groups. We enjoyed fellowship over a cup of coffee and many times some delicious snacks. Juice and crackers or cookies were provided for our children. Instead of putting the responsibility on one or two people, we "shared the wealth". As we approach the remaining five months, we are looking for your help again. **Would you please consider hosting one of our remaining coffee hours?** Floyd Hunt prepares the coffee for us, and the UMW provides juice for the children. The job only requires setting up 2 tables in Fellowship Hall, serving coffee and juice, and cleaning up. Two or three people can handle the job. Snacks are always welcome but not necessary. Please sign up on the sheet in the foyer. Thank you.

## THE COMMISSION ON A WAY FORWARD

At the last UMC General Conference in early 2016, the formation of what is now called "The Commission on a Way Forward" was authorized in the wake of intensifying church debate about the status of LGBTQ individuals. The following are some lines from a January 27 UM News Service press release about that commission.



"The United Methodist group charged with bridging divisions around homosexuality spent its first meeting mainly getting to know and trust each other but also took first steps toward possible outcomes.

"The Commission on a Way Forward, **which includes 32 United Methodists from nine countries**, formed six working groups that will examine the question of how to do church together from multiple directions. These groups will do "homework" between meetings – speaking to experts, doing research and engaging in conversation....

"Matt Berryman, [a] commission member, said he was... hopeful.

"There is universal agreement, pretty much, that we are not there to talk about whether LGBTQ people will be included but how," said Berryman, the executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network. His organization advocates for LGBTQ individuals to be included in all aspects of church life.

"A bishop said the topic is difficult, but he drew encouragement from the spirit of the meeting....

"Any proposed changes to the Book of Discipline will need approval at General Conference. The Council of Bishops is considering **calling a special General Conference in 2019.**"



The Hunger Action Network of New York State and Focus Churches of Albany are working together to end hunger. **Come Sunday, February 12 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the Elks Lodge, 25 South Allen Street, Albany** and you can, for only \$25, pick out a beautiful hand-crafted ceramic bowl donated by area artists, and enjoy all the wonderful soup and bread you like. All proceeds will go to feed the hungry and fight against the conditions that cause hunger. Pre-registering is encouraged by calling FOCUS at 443-0460 or HANNYS at 434-7371.



**YOU ARE  
WANTED ON  
MAY 21**



**CHaNGE**  
**THEwORLD**