



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 7

SUMMER 2020

At Church on Sundays:

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

Visit us on the Web:

www.fumceg.org
www.facebook.com/FUMCEG

Phone: (518) 477-9693

Fax: (518) 477-4336

Church Office Hours:

June 22 to August 28

9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Resuming August 28

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

Email:

office@fumceg.org

BELL/Bulletin (only) Email:

editor@fumceg.org

Children's Education Email:

egchristianedfumc@gmail.com

Youth Ministries Email:

youthleaderamber@gmail.com

Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,

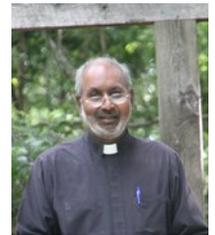
Pastor

Gail Welkley,

Administrative Assistant

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

These past few months have put a lot of stress and uncertainty on all American families and the families all over the world due to dire consequences of the pandemic. Many of us feel like we have escaped a close call while we grieve of those who couldn't make out the terrible pandemic alive. During these times we wonder where God is in the midst of all of this. Long time ago, the people of Israel faced a different kind of hardship when they were enslaved in Egypt for many years. They too wondered where God is during their life and death struggles. Whether it was thousands of years ago or now, we seem to live in a culture of disbelief, but one that is nevertheless hungry for signs and wonders. Within the space of one week, a newspaper in Nashville, Tennessee carried stories of two "miraculous" appearances of the Virgin Mary which attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors, who believed it was an image of the Mother of Christ. In other parts of the world, Christians, and skeptics alike are curious about weeping icons and miracle-working relics.



There is a reason for our simultaneous fascination with and skepticism about modern accounts of God's wondrous intrusion into human history. Both the longing and the critical attitude may be signs that the Holy Spirit is already at work within us. In addition, there is the sense that these signs and wonders, however exciting aren't enough. Taken by themselves, they're not good for much. They don't make much difference in our lives. The third chapter of the Book of Exodus presents a well-known theophany, and just as important, it offers implicit guidelines for understanding other encounters with the holy, in any time or place. It reminds us that visions are not an end in them, but connect us to others. Moses was not tending sheep in the fields of Midian in hopes of finding a burning bush. He was not seeking a sign; it happened at God's initiative. The Lord's words to Moses connected Moses with divine-human history: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses knew the stories of his ancestors, and God's statement invited Moses to test his current experience with the faith stories of trusted leaders. In the same way, when we have inexplicable, wondrous experiences, a sign of their authenticity is that they conform to God's nature and work as revealed in Scripture. They connect us to other people, rather than

(Continued on page 2)

A Reconciling Congregation

(Continued from page 1)

separating us. The Holy Spirit, at work in the Word, the individual, and the community, helps us to discern the truth of our experience.

The authentic experience of our spiritual truth put us to doing the work of God or else it just becomes head knowledge which puffs up our ego. If God's self-disclosure demanded nothing of people, Moses might never have left the wilderness of Midian. It is tempting, when we are overwhelmed and awestruck by the presence of God, to want to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration and savor the moment, to cling to this audience with the Almighty. But Moses' vision made him a servant, not a member of some spiritual elite. It must be the same with us. We should also notice that the episode of the burning bush did not give Moses the green light to start a project he'd been itching to begin for ages. He had fled Egypt years before, now God told him to return to deliver his people. It was with reluctance and hesitation that he undertook what was ultimately God's vision, not his own. This is where many of us struggle to do what God wants us to do rather than follow our own ways. An indicator that modern religious experiences are of God is that we are led where we did not expect to go. We are used by our Lord to benefit others. The saints of history have been obedient souls, faithful to God's vision for his people in the world even at great personal risk.

Genuine "wonders" inevitably result in the worship and praise of God. In chapter 3 verses 12 of the Book of Exodus reads "this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you; when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." Signs and miracles of any age must lead to the greater glory of God: the God to whom we all humanity belongs, the one who is worthy of our loyalty and adoration. It is good, but not enough when a religious experience only gives us insight, healing, or a "warm glow." As Carol M. Noreen, writes that "a vision that fosters community or inspires us to acts of justice and mercy may be quite nobler; but unless it moves us to adoration, we have turned away from the burning bush too quickly and not listened to all God has to say." The God of Moses does indeed speak and act in 2020. It is as the result of such encounters in us that others may see the flame of divine mercy, and give glory to God.

I wish you all a wonderful and safe summer. Hope you will be able to do some of the things you have long planned, safely with your family. Be faithful in joining your church family for worship each Sunday over face book live at 9:30am. We have opened our sanctuary for twenty people to come and worship in the sanctuary at 9:30am and ten people at 8:30am in the outdoor chapel. Our Sunday school leader is planning VBS on line for kids who would love to be part of it. Look for more information in the Bell. I want to thank all of you for your faithfulness in supporting financially all of our church programs. We couldn't have done it thus far without your active, faithful and generous giving. God willing we will see you soon. Keep safe and remember God's grace surrounds and sustains you and yours at all times.

Peace and Grace
Pastor Sundar

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. Summer 2020, Volume 22, Issue 7. G. Herrick, **Editor** (on sabbatical); S. Samuel, G. Welkley, **Editing Team**; J. Van Ornam, **Proofreader**; K. Van Buren, (Interim Editor) B. Van Ornam, (on sabbatical) **Production Team**; R. Reineke, **Photographer**; L. Heyer, **Mailing Coordinator** **The Church Staff:** Rev. Sundar R. Samuel, **Pastor**; Amanda Trainor, **Director of Children's Christian Education**; Amber Biechman, **Youth Leader**; Jacqueline Krahforst, **Organist**; Herb Lamb, **Choir Director**; Cynthia Reineke, **Coordinator of EmBELLishments & Children's Music Program**; Gail Welkley, **Administrative Assistant**; Christopher Chartrand, **Custodian**; Beth Duncan, **Lay Leader**; Brendan Murtagh, **Peer Minister, Cornerstone Protestant Campus Ministry, The University at Albany**; Mozart M. K. Adevu, **Missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries, based in Accra, Ghana, West Africa.**

LECTIONARY FOR JULY AND AUGUST

- July 5** – 5th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67;
Psalms 45:10-17; Romans 7:15-25a;
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
- July 12** – 6th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 25:19-34; Psalm 119:105-112;
Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23;
- July 19** – 7th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 28:10-19a; Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24;
Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
- July 26** – 8th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 29:15-28; Psalm 105: 1-11, 45b;
Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52
- August 2** – 9th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 17:1-7, 15; Romans 9:105;
Matthew 14:13-21
- August 9** – 10th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b;
Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33
- August 16** – 11th Sunday after Pentecost – Genesis 45: 1-15; Psalm 133;
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15(10-20), 21-28
- August 23** – 12th Sunday after Pentecost – Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 124; Romans 12:1-8;
Matthew 16:13-20
- August 30** – 13th Sunday after Pentecost – Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c;
Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28



Summer Services

Many of you know that on June 21 we opened our sanctuary and outdoor chapel for limited numbers of people to attend services in person. A few people (besides those participating in the services) attended each service. The report from the outdoor chapel was that the weather and environment for the service was "perfect!" Those of you who like worshipping from home don't need to worry, though. We will continue to live stream our services for the foreseeable future. For now we will continue to use the equipment and setup that Dave Caneen has developed, though we hope to upgrade the equipment to allow for more flexibility.



Safety is our priority, so we require everyone to wear masks. Thanks to Patty Chartrand, we have appropriately spaced seating marked in the sanctuary. We are asking everyone to sign up in advance if they want to come to either service and to sign in when they arrive. We keep those records on file in the church office in case they are needed for contact tracing. Links to sign up are emailed a few days before the services.

We have been so fortunate to have wonderful music during our live streamed services, and we expect that will continue through the summer. Though no singing by the congregation is allowed (another safety issue!), several choir members have volunteered to sing hymns from the balcony and Chris Chartrand will be providing music at the early service. Thanks to all of them!

Unless the situation changes dramatically, we will continue the limited attendance services throughout the summer. So as you feel comfortable, please come join us!

USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING



Services may be opening up, but our church building isn't. The Trustees are being very careful about use of the building to ensure safety and so that we know who is in the building, when and why. The building is not open for meetings at this time, and rooms are not to be used for gatherings. This applies to everyone, even if you have a key to the church. We need to protect each other, and so remember that you must wear a mask if you come into the church building. And you need to sign the register at the door.

The outdoor chapel CAN be used for gatherings and for meetings, but be sure to wear masks and to stay six feet apart. As always, please contact Gail in the church office at 518-477-9693 in advance to reserve this space.

If you wish to TENTATIVELY schedule a meeting for the fall, please contact Gail in the church office for that as well. If you need something from Gail or wish to speak with Pastor Sundar, please call first to schedule a time to come in.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Hello Sunday School Families,

I hope everyone is doing well and has had some time to enjoy the summer weather. Starting in July, Sunday School will be offering VBS online (on the SeeSaw app) for our children and youth. In addition, Sunday School will also provide all of the materials that will be needed. If you are interested, please contact me (egchristianedfumc@gmail.com) no later than July 7 so I can make sure to have enough materials for everyone. The theme will be fruit of the spirit. Games, crafts, music and much more will be part of the program, I really think our children are going to enjoy it.



In terms of the Fall, there is no good way of knowing what restrictions will be in place or if any will. As of now, the Youth Coordinator and I have been working together to plan an in-person alternative Sunday School and Youth Group program. There will be plenty of more details to come as we know more. For now, we are looking at potentially holding a special Sunday School service on an alternative night of the week in order to decrease density in the church. Stay tuned for more details!

As always, if anyone has questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

God Bless,
Amanda Trainor

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN



The **UMW** will meet to discuss our fundraisers for the fall. We will meet in the outdoor chapel for distancing and fresh air at 6:30 pm on August 10, rain date August 17. The church building is not open for meetings just yet and the chapel is fine, bring a chair if you need to distance yourself more. We would like

everyone who works on Thrift Sale, Brooks Barbecue and Roast Beef dinner to attend. Stay healthy and see you then.

SECRETARY FOR YOUTH

Secretary for Youth needed. Someone to maintain a current and up to date list of high school seniors and students who have graduated. This person will obtain and maintain a current address list and college and/or job information. You will need to follow students through post high school education and/or training. This should be someone who will maintain our church's contact with our youth. See George Herrick for details.

MISSIONS

Our church continues to support agriculture development in Ghana. United Methodist Committee on Relief missionary, Mozart Adevu, serves as the Africa regional coordinator for the Sustainable Agriculture and Development Program in Ghana. This program provides education and training of communities for transformation, including assessment of needs and assets, and training in such areas as integrated crop and pest management, nutrition improvement using moringa and soybeans; beekeeping that produces pure, hygienic honey; livestock and poverty-improvement practices, and agroforestry to protect the environment and encourage the growing of trees that produce food and income. In his latest newsletter, Mozart reports that over 60 farmers, including 25 women, in his program are currently involved in beekeeping and that most beekeepers have begun raising vegetables using organic methods. Mr. Adevu has sent us 3-4 newsletters each year since we started supporting him in 2016. If you would like an electronic copy of his latest newsletter, please send a request to mission@fumceg.org.



ECO-TEAM UPDATES

Last month we reported 10 families that either have installed solar panels on their property or have signed up for community solar through the [church's referral link](#). We learned of another and now have 11 families! If you have rooftop solar or another renewable energy source, please let us know at eco-team@fumceg.org so that we can track the growth of renewable energy in our church.

The recycling drop-off in June was quite a success. Though done on a day without the draw of church services, we collected nearly as much Styrofoam as usual, nearly 40 pounds of batteries, 14 pairs of athletic shoes to be recycled and 7 pairs that were delivered to a thrift store to be **reused** (Reused always beats Recycled).

Enforcement of the statewide ban on use of plastic bags is delayed indefinitely, but stores will still recycle film plastics. Please see the June Bell or <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/50042.html> for a list of all the plastics that may be recycled in store collection boxes.

CONGRATULATIONS CONFIRMANDS

Since January the confirmands and I have been on a wonderful journey to find and know God in our daily lives. January through March we met during church time and were able to experience worship together at the Ash Wednesday service. We learned about the special holidays and ordinances and how they relate to Jesus's life and resurrection. We had discussions on the different parts of worship and how we practice our faith through singing hymns, praying, listening to God's word and its interpretation. Then March through June 14th we started 'Zooming'. As many of you know, 'Zooming' has taken on a whole new meaning for those of us who have had to learn/teach via the Internet. We 'Zoomed' most Sundays from 1:00 to 1:45p.m. Often these 'Zooms' allowed expanded conversations with whomever we were with: grandparents, parents, family from out of state, and even the Pastor. Interestingly, as I reviewed the Webster definition for "Zoom" I found that we 'Zoomed' in multiple ways: through video chatting, through taking an up close look at topics such as the Trinity and Prayer, and also by moving right along to complete our assignments in order to be ready for our Confirmation Service at 9:30 am on June 28, 2020. Listed here are this year's confirmands: **Caroline Rumsey, Victor Giso, Garrett Wagner, Kevin Clark and Brendon Kurimsky**. These kids are wonderful gifts to all of us. I know that they will continue to grow into their faith as their roots grow deeper into the faith of their family at First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush. Pray with me this scripture from Ephesians for the confirmands and their families: Ephesians 3:17-19 Living Bible (TLB) 17 "And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love;" 18-19 and "may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself. "



Deb Samuel

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 GRADUATES

HIGH SCHOOL

Kassandra Gran is graduating from Shaker High School. She will be taking a gap year next year, and possibly going to South Africa to visit family. -- Heidi Gran

Noah Millan is graduating with high honors from Columbia High School. He plans to attend Northwestern University in the fall to study Engineering.

Stephanie Lamb is graduating from Kingston High School. She plans to attend SUNY Oneonta and study Earth Science Education. -- Herb Lamb



Madeline Naef, Granddaughter of Susan and Henry Naef, is graduating from Wahconah High School in Dalton, MA. She will be attending the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. --

Susan and Henry Naef

Grace Templeton is graduating from Columbia High School in East Greenbush. At CHS she attended TEC-SMART (Training & Education Center for Semiconductor Manufacturing & Alternative Renewable Technologies) located in Malta and affiliated with HVCC where her concentration was leadership/entrepreneurship. She is the only graduating senior from Columbia that participated all 4 years in this program and will continue under a grant at HVCC for an additional year to obtain her Associates degree. Grace intends to continue her education at a 4 year college focusing on Business Management/Music. -- Margaret Templeton

COLLEGE

Toni Lettrick received a Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences from Western New England University on May 16. She has also finished her first year of graduate school at the New England College of Optometry. --Rickey Lettrick



Julia Lettrick received an Associate Degree from Hudson Valley Community College on May 16. She will continue her journey to become a teacher this fall at the College of St. Rose. --Rickey Lettrick

Julianna Mancino has graduated from Siena College with a Bachelors of Science in Business with a minor in Human Resource Development. --Darcy Mancino

THANK YOU

Thank you members of "Cares"

Many of you know we have a very compassionate group of individuals who have been working to care for and keep connected the members of our church as we move together through this Corona Virus crisis. The Cares members have made weekly phone calls, sent weekly notes of encouragement, shopped for groceries, and responded to other needs as they have been presented. The response from recipients has been encouraging. Members of Hawthorne Ridge have sent thank you notes and let us know how important it has been for them to know they are remembered and cared for. Residents of Rosewood and Riverside Nursing homes have sent notes through their nursing home care givers and included colored pictures for us. Phone calls have connected people that may not have already been connected and allowed for some really nice relationships to develop. Please thank God for the members of the Cares team and the ministries that they continue to do: Mary McIntosh, Jean Sheviak, Carol Walkley, Fred and Kate Henson, Cindy McLaughlin, Mary Smith, Kevin and Cindy Conley, Susie Calyer, Shawna Lambert, Carrie Pierce, Deb Samuel. The generosity of heart and time have been gifts that are very appreciated!! God is really working in and among us!!! We've all heard messages of encouragement and hope during this difficult time. Knowing that our members are adaptable and connected gives us hope that we will handle all life's challenges together as we look to God believing that God's guidance and grace will continue to bind us together and protect us.



Deb Samuel

YOUR KINDNESS IS MUCH APPRECIATED

I would like to thank you all so much for the love and caring you have given me during this unbelievably sad time for me and my family. My son, Tim, was my only child and we will all miss him. He struggled so much with his battle with MS and never complained. I now know he is with our Lord and no longer suffering. The cards, the meals, and kind words have meant everything to us. Remember, even though we can't see them, there are angels all around us. God Bless you all.



IN LOVING MEMORY

Karen Terwilliger and Joe McManus



A WORD FROM THE TWIN CITIES:

As one raised in and inspired to Christian ministry by being in FUMC East Greenbush, I am humbled to write some brief observations about the event & consequences of George Floyd's murder not far north of where we live in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. It is an event experienced with many facets with multiple levels. George Floyd was an individual, a family member, a friend, a child of God who was murdered by an officer with time to both avoid and stop pressing his knee on the neck of a restrained Mr. Floyd. George Floyd was also one in a long list of unarmed persons of color killed by police. The racism manifest is both systemic and personal. The act was that primarily of one police officer who apparently had a prior conflictual relationship with Mr. Floyd in a place they worked together. The act was also one of a long series of Minneapolis police abuses protected from discipline by strong and recalcitrant police union leadership and contracts. The demonstrations were the reaction to both a singular event and a history of racism. The thousands of demonstrators were primarily peaceful, and very insistent. (If there is no curfew on deadly racist acts, why should there be a curfew on protesting them?) There were also opportunists in the midst of the protest who looted and burned, and who represented anarchist interests that added to fear and violence. Persons needed to express emotions of grief, anger, and hope. There were also positive actions (besides the demonstrations): each morning after a protest, hundreds of volunteers showed up to sweep streets of broken glass and bag trash; many groups (including churches) set up food and supply gifting sites; hundreds of clergy gathered in a common protest led by black clergy with white clergy following; prosecution of the four officers involved was shifted to the state attorney general; initial proposals for revising certain acceptable police enforcement acts and oversight of police allowed by union contracts have been put forth. The last facet I mention is that of time. What we have seen is the immediate reaction of pain. The facet of time also needs to be long-lasting with conversations more open than polarized about both social policies and about the personal emotions and assumptions we all live with, including our unawareness of white privilege.



I also add a personal note. Fern and I live close to where Mr. Floyd died and where the main protests took place. However, we also live in a place we presumed to be rather safe. Our son and his family, and other friends who live closer, heard gunshots, saw police helicopters, smelled smoke, and were advised to keep packed bags by their doors ready to flee in an emergency. We worried big time about them, and others who live next to the stores and precinct station that burned. The news has been incessant. As one response (also to the pandemic), we watch worship online at FUMC East Greenbush, along with our own church's. As a Christian, I pray we keep a central focus on the incarnation of Jesus the Christ & not become so emotionally charged with some proposal for justice or political action that we become polarized on its behalf, nor escape into some other-worldly piety that ignores the current dominant sin of our corporate life in favor of some presumed salvific reward. Jesus was God's act of reverence and empathy towards all he met. So may that incarnation be in us. Thank you.

Wayne F. Albertson

WHAT'S MISSING?

Why the calendar of course. Since the church building is still closed for meetings and gatherings are not permitted, we have not included a calendar. Hopefully restrictions will be eased so we can resumed are regular monthly meetings in the Fall. Have a great Summer and stay safe and healthy.

The Editor Team