



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2020

At Church on Sundays:

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

Also on Sundays:

- ◆ Worship at Hawthorne Ridge
1:00 pm

Visit us on the Web:

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

Phone: (518) 477-9693

Fax: (518) 477-4336

Church Office Hours:

9:00 am to 2:30 pm M - F

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,

Lent is a season of reflection. It comes from an Old English word meaning "a lengthening." As the days of spring become longer, nature sings a song of renewed life, energy and growth. The emerald tinted leaves, the gentle wafting breezes, the richer blue azure of the sky all harmonize their beauty in spring's eternal symphony of life.

During Lent we Christians are called upon to reflect together on the final weeks of our Lord Christ's ministry. We remember his betrayal, arrest and suffering upon the cross. Lent is a time for us to reflect, as well, on our own discipleship. It examines with the forensic skill of a pathologist our own motivations in serving Jesus. Like a deep sea fisherman plunging to the coral reef below, we, too, plunge below the surface and examine who we are and why we are here in God's world.

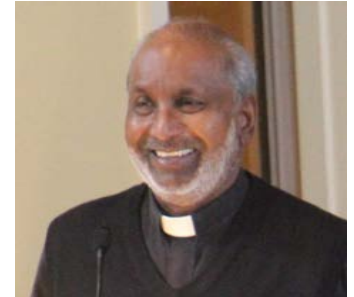
What motivates you in the Christian life? The Louisville Courier-Journal ran a series of advertisements for a motivational conference featuring nationally-known speakers. Good business leaders recognize the importance of motivation in cementing a business deal or enticing a customer to buy a product.

Motivation is essential to healthy living. A good marriage flounders unless both partners are committed to remaining faithful to and interested in one another. A successful championship season is impossible unless coach and players are fortified in the fray of competition by being highly motivated. In the spiritual life our motivation is important if we are to serve Jesus with energy, intelligence, imagination and love.

In the gospel of Matthew 6:1-24, we see Jesus examining with care our motives. He gazes into the hardened heart of the pharisaical gremlin lurking in all our souls. His scalpel cuts to the bone of the skeleton hypocrisy we keep well hidden in our soul's shuttered closet. How often do we catch ourselves doing a good deed with an ulterior motive, thinking such thoughts as, "If I help the boss out by staying late, perhaps he will promote me and not Mr. Smith at the next desk?" "If I tithe, perhaps I can buy my way into heaven." Or, "If I cheat ...I won't be caught." Our self-deception can be a wonder to behold.

Peter Marshall, the famed Scottish preacher of a generation ago, said in his sermon, "Under Sealed Orders,"

(Continued on page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

'...Faith is belief plus what you do with that belief." We can't grow in faith if our motives are as dirty as our old gardener's gloves we put to use in the spring.

Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday (**February 26, 2020**), is a season of hope. Lent is furthermore a time to grow in God's graciously given faith. A time to face facts and our hypocrisy. A time to repent and seek to be more honest in our service to the Savior. A compass can be used to draw circles or a straight line. If on Ash Wednesday, we will look with care at our account, we will conclude:



- a. We have fallen short of our profession of faith by hypocrisy, self-delusion and pride.
- b. We have used people as things and things as people.
- c. The Ash Account of repentance and new life in Christ gives us hope as we examine our motives and renew our commitment to selfless service in Christ's name.

Christ is our compass on the Lenten road which begins on Ash Wednesday. With Jesus as our guide we pick up our crosses and follow him. A friend told me he had read of the death of a beloved pastor. My friend mused, "I cannot recall what he said in his sermons as much as I can the Christ-like way he served his congregation. Because of his guidance I am today a Christian."

Christ is our compass, our guide, our redeemer and our friend. When we look at the Ash Account we see the bottom line in our service to others, our forgiveness by Christ and our love to a hurting world. As we journey through Lent together, we are invited by God to let the invigorating breezes of Lent flood our souls.

With James Russell Lowell, let us examine our motivation in the Christian life and seek to be more honest, loving and servant-like. "Give to the hungry sweet charity's bread, for giving is living," the angel said. "Must I be giving and giving again?" the weary, wondering question came. "No," said the angel, piercing me through, "Just stop, when the Lord stops giving to you."

Have you examined your Ash Account?

*Love and Peace,
Pastor Sundar*

REMINDER

A Red Cross blood drive in memory of Sterling "Lee" Pierce will be held on **Friday, January 31** at our church from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm. There is a signup clipboard on the table in the foyer. You can signup to donate blood, make cookies or be a greeter. You can also schedule an appointment at 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or online at www.redcrossblood.org. Use sponsor code: egumc.



The need is constant.
The gratification is instant.
Give blood."

"True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost." —Arthur Ashe

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 2020, Volume 22, 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**; 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.**

WORSHIP AT FUMC IN FEBRUARY



The church is now in the **Season after Epiphany** and for this season the liturgical color is green. Let's start this month with a question: what is the purpose of the Season after Epiphany, that time in the church year between the end of the Christmas season, Epiphany or the end of the twelve days of Christmas, and the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday?

Taylor Burton-Edwards answers questions about United Methodist Worship and he tackles this question of purpose in a video at: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/blog/liturgy-man-what-is-the-purpose-of-the-season-after-epiphany>. Take a look at the video if you want his complete answer.

Burton-Edwards says that the agenda for the season after epiphany is to help the church get ready for its work during Lent. That work of the church during Lent is to walk with people on a journey to either deepening their commitment to the baptismal covenant or committing to live the way of the baptismal covenant for the first time. There are four Sundays in February that are part of this season. The last of them is Transfiguration Sunday, a very special Sunday in the church year. Three days later is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. We will have much more about the Lenten season in the March issue of The Church BELL.

Pastor Sundar will be leading worship each Sunday in February. Every Sunday we have an early worship service at 8:30am. This service is more informal and lasts about one half hour. Our regular worship service begins at 9:30am each Sunday. Be here for an hour of worship that includes our sanctuary choir and other musical groups. At 1:00 pm we have a worship service at Hawthorne Ridge lasting about 45 minutes. The first Sunday of the month Holy Communion will be a part of all three services. All are invited to any of these services. Come and bring a friend.



Image courtesy of Pixabay/Creative Commons



The month of February is Black History Month. In celebration, try your hand at the ten question quiz at: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/united-methodist-black-history-quiz> about black history. In February, ushers at morning worship services will also have copies of the quiz. Just ask them for one. See how your score stacks up against those of our editorial team. A number of quotations in different locations in this issue of The BELL are in honor of Black History Month.

Here is the lectionary for February:

- February 2 **THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15;
1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12
- February 9 **THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12);
Psalm 112:1-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16); Matthew 5:13-20
- February 16 **THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** Deuteronomy 30:15-20;
Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37
- February 23 **TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY, THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY** Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
- February 26 **ASH WEDNESDAY** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17,
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

SUNDAY SCHOOL

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Hello Families,

It is hard to believe that it is already February! Where has the time gone? I have truly enjoyed spending the first month of the New Year with our children. They spent much of last month learning about the days after Jesus was born, Epiphany and John the Baptist.

Confirmation class has officially started. A huge thank you to George Herrick for kicking on confirmation with our students. If your child is participating in Confirmation this year and you still have not received a parent guide, please reach out to Amanda Trainor.



There are many events coming up:

Sunday, February 2 is the Super Bowl Sub fundraiser. Children will be invited during normal Sunday School time to make subs for the Youth Group fundraiser before joining the congregation for communion. There will also be activities for the younger children if they lose interest in making subs.

Sunday, February 9 we will have a special Valentine's Day Sunday School program for the kids. Younger children will be invited to finish making their prayer boxes that were started in January and the older children will help make valentines and love kits for the homeless shelter.

Sunday, February 16 Children and Youth will continue learning about Corinthians, complete a hands-on activity and enjoy a snack.

Sunday, February 23 is Pretzel Sunday. This year, instead of having the children make the dough, we will be using soft pretzels to make different flavored pretzels. Once church is over, everyone is invited into Fellowship Hall for coffee, juice and the pretzels.

Also on Sunday, February 23, junior youth will be invited in to participate in a special youth group after church (11:00-12:30). More details about this are to follow.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Blessings,
Amanda Trainor
Email: egchristianedfumc@gmail.com
Phone: (518) 368-5724

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN



Our **February meeting is on the 3rd** at 7:00 pm in room 16. This month is our Prayer and Self-Denial program. It is always interesting and fun. Please attend.

On **Wednesday, March 4**, the UMW will be hosting the first Lenten Lunch. Anyone interested in helping prepare the lunch please see Kathy Van Buren or Mary McIntosh.

Blanket Sunday will be **February 16th**. Each blanket is \$10, but any donation is welcome. All money we collect is sent to Church World Services who then provide the blankets to people and families in crisis from earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods or any other disasters. Please make checks payable to the United Methodist Women. Thank you.

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Youth Group is in full swing. We have a lot to look forward to besides looking for warmer weather.

Saturday, February 1 — Super Bowl prep 11:00 am - until finish. After prep is over the youth will get to pie me in the face because they have reached the goal of 30 youth in attendance since the first meeting.

Sunday, February 2 - Super Bowl Sub Day!!! All 5th graders through 12 graders (and beyond) will be making subs in the fellowship hall during the church service.

Sunday, February 9 - We will be delivering valentines and love kits we have assembled to the homeless shelter; we will then be making memories by playing games with the residents. Breakfast will be provided. After church we will be leaving at 11:00 am and will return at 1:00 pm.



Saturday, February 22 - Saturday Night Alive - Emily Clark will be talking about her trip to India with the Mission of Peace. This will start 5:00 pm sharp. After we will have a pot luck to share a meal together.

Sunday, February 23 - 11:00 am—12:30 pm Junior Youth Group, 3rd through 5th grade. We will be having lunch, playing games and doing another mission project.

Friday, February 28 is Columbia High School Musical, **The Secret Garden** - Lets go as a group to support our fellow church members/youth that are part of the musical. Musical starts at 7:00 pm so we should plan to met at 6:30pm to get our seats. Cost will be announced later.

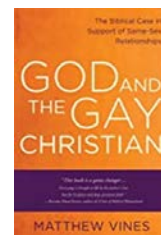
Last but not least! **OUTWORD! 2020** registration is open! OUTWORD! is **March 13-15** in Liverpool. If you would like to go to OUTWORD! please let me know no later than February 23.

If you have any questions please contact Amber. Email Youthleaderamber@gmail.com.

God Bless,
Amber

THE TUESDAY MORNING BOOK STUDY GROUP

The group will be starting a new book in February. We have decided to read a book called "God and the Gay Christian" by Matthew Vines. The subtitle for the book is "The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships". This seemed like a timely book to read in light of the current divisions in The United Methodist Church. Our reading group meets **every Tuesday morning** from 9:30 am to 11:00 am in the Youth Lounge. Come and join us for a cup of coffee and a chance to share your ideas and questions on this timely topic. Contact Carrie Pierce or Errol Fitzgerald if you would like us to order a copy of the book for you.



"LENTEN SKETCHES"



Save the date, **April 10, 2020**, Good Friday. We will mark the occasion with the cantata, "Lenten Sketches" by Joseph Martin. "...a brilliant ... innovative cantata for Holy Week. . . . The work is a series of tableaus illustrating the pivotal final days of Christ's earthly ministry, the triumphal entry, the last supper, the garden of Gethsemane and the crucifixion." If you have enjoyed our last two cantatas, be sure you don't miss this one. Come and bring a friend.

"Never be limited by other people's limited imaginations."

—Dr. Mae Jemison, first African-American female astronaut

MSR-21 UPDATE

MSR-21 (Missions & Social Responsibility for the 21st Century) Ministry would like to thank you for your generous support of two of our recent appeals. Last month, the **Church-Wide Christmas Card raised \$760.** which will be divided equally among three organizations that our church supports: CoNSERNS-U, Family Assistance Ministry and UMCOR-Disaster Relief. You also responded generously to Pastor Mariana Rodriguez of Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel in Albany in support of their **Three Kings Celebration** held on January 5. The toys, games and gift cards were all greatly appreciated. Thank you for being the bright star for those in need, especially during the recent holiday season.



FAMILY ASSISTANCE MINISTRY (FAM)



Our church community is blessed with many outreach and mission programs. The Caring Ministries and Mission and Social Responsibility Team sponsor and participate in local, national and international programs. A program supported by you through our general budget, through donations at the five Coffee Houses and through your individual gifts is the Family Assistance Ministry. Our own church family has members struggling to survive due to unexpected illness and/or medical crises, loss of job, children with chronic health challenges, etc. All families participating in the Family Assistance Ministry have accessed community resources for help and we are the last resort. Your financial contributions to FAM help pay for food, gas, medicine, electricity...your dollars help bring much needed financial and emotional support at times of crises and bring hope and the knowledge that none of us is alone.

Please make a financial donation to the Family Assistance Ministries (make checks payable to "First United Methodist Church," and note "Family Assistance Ministry" in the memo line; or give cash, or gift cards from Hannaford, Market 32, Target, or Walmart) and continue the tradition of offering hope through generosity, love and support. --Carrie Larson

You're Invited!
Planning Meeting for our Seventh Annual



Monday Evening February 24
7:00 Multi-Purpose Room
Please Join Us!

JOSEPH'S HOUSE MEAL



Our church will be providing the evening meal at Joseph's House homeless shelter in Troy on **Sunday, February 16.** We will be feeding 80 people. We are seeking volunteers to help prepare the meal in our church kitchen following the 9:30 am service, to prepare dessert at home and/or serve the meal at the shelter that evening. Please contact Kevin (518-253-4907 or e.kevin.conley@gmail.com) if you have questions or would like to help.

CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PRESENTATION



**The Climate
Reality Project**

On **February 9**, you are invited to Fellowship Hall for a presentation by the Climate Reality Project. Starting at 10:45 am, Paul Fisk, a Climate Reality Leader trained by former Vice President Al Gore, will describe the effects of climate change and what you can do to help create a better future for the planet.

The presentation includes information about climate science, evidence of a changing climate and impacts currently felt both locally and globally. Mr. Fisk will discuss solutions that are already underway, including advancements in renewable energy and smart climate policy. Following time for questions and answers, the session will end at noon.

RECYCLING REPORT

Our recycling portfolio continues to grow! In January we brought a truckload - about 24 black bags worth - of Styrofoam to Shelter Enterprises in Cohoes and 18 pairs of old sneakers to Nike at the Lee Outlets. We also collected a large shoebox of Christmas cards to be reused in the children's Christian Education program and will soon be sending off another box of batteries to be recycled. The next recycling date for Styrofoam and sneakers is **April 19th**, the Sunday before Earth Day, **Wednesday, April 22nd**. Finally, check out [Recycling Places](http://www.fumceg.org/), a web site maintained by the Eco-Team that lists recycling resources for items from athletic shoes to tools. A link to the site can be found on the Eco-Team tab of <http://www.fumceg.org/>.



HERE are two notes, short but important, notes to read and act upon. There is a little box to check off each item as you go down the list.

☐ The Capital Area Council of Churches awards one or more **Martin Luther King Scholarships** to graduating seniors who, in part, show a commitment to the ideals and teachings of Dr. King. Last year three \$4,000 scholarships were awarded to students from Albany Leadership Charter School, Shenendehowa and South Colonie Schools. If you will be graduating this spring and are interested in this scholarship or if you know another member of our church family who might be interested in this scholarship, see Pastor Sundar or check in the church office for more information and/or a copy of the application. Application **deadline is March 31, 2020**.



The poster is for the City of Dallas, Texas MLK scholarship essay contest.

☐ Although we should be kind to people 365 days a year, **February 17th, Random Acts of Kindness Day**, encourages people all over the country to be altruistic to friends, colleagues, and yes, strangers. We should all use this day to bring a smile to someone's face without expecting anything in return. These random acts of kindness can range from a small compliment to an inspiring gesture that could be life changing. Those are the opening words about this special day from a website for women in business. The site then lists twenty suggestions of random acts of kindness anyone can use if they don't have their own ideas(s) in mind. Our Random Acts of Kindness calendar is posted on the bulletin board next to the boiler room door in the church foyer. There are many good suggestions for **February**, some easier than others. I think the suggestion for **February 28** would be a big challenge for many of us. -- G.E.H.



COFFEE HOUSE – THE LAST AND THE NEXT

Dear Friends,

Friday night's Cabin Fever Coffee House was extraordinary, thanks to each of you. I hope you found it as enjoyable, moving and exceptional as I did. Jean's reading of Maya Angelo's 2006 Christmas message poem and George's readings from the writing of Martin Luther King were so powerful...thank you!! Musicians were creative, fun, and as always, so talented. Songs ranged from banjo ballads, to a Christmas hymn, to Telemann violin duets (awesome,) to folk /guitar, to Early Music with violin and recorder, to the WELCOME back song sung with gusto to Bill, to Broadway show tunes and finally to the beloved Peace Carol and seemingly everything in between. It is such a pleasure to share the evening with you and to witness the Coffee House evenings each take on a life of their own.

Thank you Kate, Patty, Mary Mac, Bob R, Chris C, Peter and David C for the delicious food, for help with set up and take down, photography and sound and Kate, for your artistic, lovely posters and programs.

The next Coffee House is **March 20th**...the third Friday... and we hope to see you all there. We are still working out the logistics of the evening and will let you know as soon as we know how the evening will run. The St Patrick's Day Coffee House is one of the best attended and fun evenings and I know it will live up to its reputation.



This will be the First Coffee House in all the 16-17 years it has been running that Peter and I will not be attending. We will be in Florence, Italy singing with our pick up Boston Early Music group. So far we are singing in 6 different venues, mostly at masses in historic churches, possibly the Duomo and possibly a concert with a local chorus.

January seems to have struck again with cold but glorious weather. A Happy and healthy New Year to each.

-- The Mistress of Chatter

"We all have dreams. In order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort."

-- Jesse Owens, world record-setting Olympic athlete

GREEN CHURCH UPDATE



At its January meeting, the Greener Church Team members kicked off the year-long project in earnest. We discussed what brought them to the table: the influence of the youth movement, a growing awareness that Christian principles call us to disavow indifference and take action, concern for destruction of plant and animal species, concern for the pollution of the waters, awareness of the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities (see the articles in this newsletter on *Early Response Teams* and *the Food Crisis in Lesotho*) and the knowledge that solutions exist if we are willing to take the necessary action. The Team endorsed both conducting an energy audit of the church and obtaining bids from community solar providers, both proposals to be reviewed with Church Council. Scheduled activities include a Climate Reality Project presentation on **February 9th** (see related article), an Eco-Fair on **March 22** and possibly a special worship service and community service project on **April 19**, the Sunday before Earth Day. At its **March 9th** meeting, the Team will be considering other suggestions made by the congregation for earth-friendly actions.

Kevin Conley,
Greener Church Team Chair

FOOD CRISIS!

Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections (QMC) was established in 2009 in response to the dire needs of the population of the rural Qholaqhoe (kwuh-**lock**-way) Mountain region of the country of Lesotho (le-**sue**-to), a developing country geographically surrounded by South Africa. Our church has been supporting this caring organization since 2011. We have provided financial aid to many high school students who otherwise would not have access to a high school education. Lynn Minderman, QMC founder, board member and former educator and peace-corps volunteer has spent time with us over the past nine years giving us regular updates on the progress as well as the challenges being faced in Lesotho. Lynn and all those involved with QMC greatly appreciate our continued support.



Lynn has just informed us that **devastating drought in the southern African nation of Lesotho has left more than half a million people facing severe food shortages and tens of thousands "one step away from starvation."**



The Qholaqhoe Mountain area has been hard hit by this crisis. At the high school, QMC currently provides food for 21 students through their Emergency Food Fund (EFF). Recently school staff have identified 50 additional students who are living alone with no food (many parents have gone to South Africa to find work, leaving their children behind). These students do chores after school and are given left over food from the lunch cooking pots. The high school principal says that the kids look tired, some look sick, some don't come to school anymore. Lynn tells

us that \$75. will feed a child for the 10-month school year. Our Missions Team is sending \$300. to help in this current food crisis. If you can further assist, know that your check, which can be made out to FUMC-EG with "QMC-EFF" in the memo section will be put to good use in Lesotho. Checks may be placed in the collection plate or given to Gail in the church office. Donations can also be made online at the QMC website: www.qmconnect.org. Please keep the people of Lesotho in your prayers.



"Make a difference about something other than yourselves." --Toni Morrison

EARLY RESPONSE TEAMS



Disasters both human-made and natural can emotionally, physically and psychologically overwhelm entire communities. Local businesses and homes may be destroyed or severely damaged. Insurance may not cover the cost of recovery. Fear of a repeat of the disaster can be paralyzing. United Methodists have a long history of responding to communities in the midst of disaster through Volunteers-in-Mission (VIM) and Early Response Teams (ERT). In early January, Kevin Conley and Herb Lamb joined five volunteers

from various UMC congregations to remove damaged appliances, furniture, mud and mold from basements of two homes in Wells, New York that were flooded during the October 31 rainstorm. A Basic ERT training will be held on **February 29** at North Chatham United Methodist Church from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm. For more information or to register, please go to <http://bit.ly/20ERTNChatham> or contact Kevin (e.kevin.conley@gmail.com).

IN THE NEWS: PROPOSAL FOR 2020 GENERAL CONFERENCE

A diverse 16-member group of United Methodist bishops and other leaders has offered a proposal that would preserve the United Methodist Church while allowing traditionalist-minded congregations to form a new denomination. The separating group would get \$25 million in United Methodist funds and would keep its local church properties. Details are in a nine-page "*Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation*," released January 3.

"The proposal—reached with the help of famed mediator Kenneth Feinberg, who worked on the federal September 11th Victim Compensation Fund—would have to be approved by the 2020 General Conference, which meets in May in Minneapolis. Drafting of legislation is still under way for that assembly, which is the only body that speaks for the 13-million-member global denomination.



"But given the broad, influential coalition involved—including bishops from around the global church and leaders from advocacy groups often sharply at odds—the protocol may offer a road map for resolving the denomination's decades-long struggle over accepting same-sex marriage and ordaining gay pastors.

"New York Conference bishop Thomas Bickerton, part of the group, said..."This protocol provides a pathway that acknowledges our differences, respects everyone in the process and graciously allows us to continue to live out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, albeit in different expressions."

"The proposal would allow other United Methodist churches to form their own denominations, while foreseeing ecumenical agreements and cooperation on some fronts.

"A clear catalyst for the negotiations was the 2019 General Conference, which saw passage of the so-called Traditional Plan reinforcing restrictions on same-sex weddings and ordination of LGBTQ persons—but also igniting passionate, ongoing resistance in the US by supporters of full inclusion.

"The fact that we were able to come together from across the world, from across theological spectrums, and define an opportunity to collaborate for the sake of the church we all love is a monumental thing," Bickerton said. "My hope would be that the delegates to the General Conference would be able to employ that same spirit as they undertake their work in Minneapolis."

Christian Century 1/29/2020 Extracted from a UMNS article by Sam Hodges and Kathy Gilbert
The full text of this article can be found in the current issue of *The Christian Century* magazine in our church library.

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."

---Shirley Chisholm, 1969-1983 Member of Congress

A NEW STUDY ON SCRIPTURE AND SEXUALITY



Coming soon will be a study by Rob Fuquay "**Faithful and Inclusive: The Bible, Sexuality, and The United Methodist Church**" "*Faithful and Inclusive* allows [us] to gain an understanding of how United Methodists can be both obedient to God's Word and fully welcoming to LGBTQ persons in the church." "Rev. Rob Fuquay, pastor of one of the largest United Methodist congregations in the country, creates a safe space to navigate through this thorny issue, relying on the biblical-interpretation approach of Methodism's founder, John Wesley." Watch for the dates of the six sessions. More at <https://www.institutefordiscipleship.org/dvd/>

DEVOTIONAL PUBLICATIONS ENDING

devozone, a **devotional lifestyle magazine** (devozone for short) designed just for youth and **Pockets**, a 48-page devotional magazine for children ages 6-12, both published by The Upper Room will both cease publication with the current January/February 2020 issues. At a high mark, nearly 98,000 youth and youth workers used each issue of **devozone**. Youth today are using different technology to get their information and inspiration. Let's be sure our church finds new ways to provide devotional material for our children and youth.



“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.”
—Desmond Tutu