



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 21 ISSUE 11

DECEMBER 2019

At Church on Sundays:

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

Also on Sundays:

- ◆ Hawthorne Ridge Service 1:00 pm

Visit us on the Web:

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

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

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youthleaderamber@gmail.com

Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,
Pastor

Gail Welkley,
Administrative Assistant

Dear Members and Friends,

My favorite carol among most of the carols is "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell." In another the musicians are instructed to "play the oboe and bagpipes merrily." The songs of Christmas are filled with "Hark!" and "Gloria!" and "Hallelujah!"



The Advent/Christmas season is one filled to overflowing with joy. No wonder the secular world embraces our religious holiday so enthusiastically. It isn't just about money as we often so cynically claim; it's about joy. So why are so many people so angry? Why have so many of us who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ chosen anger, bitterness, and resentment as our go-to posture for this season of joy? Is it all the bad news we hear on the T.V.? Let's be honest, it has seemed unrelentingly dismal this year, hasn't it? Wars and rumors of wars never end. Tension's wax and wane but they never go away entirely. The stock market is on a roller coaster that makes it impossible to plan for a future, whether we're talking about our children's education or our own retirement. Even when the market goes up, no one actually believes that the good news will last, that it will stay up for more than a few days. People no longer celebrate when the price of oil comes down, just that it isn't going up as fast as it was. Europe's a mess, the Middle East continues to roil, the super powers are, if not exactly at each other's throats, still picking and scraping at each other like jealous siblings. Here at home, we look in vain for someone we can trust. From the right we hear that we can't trust big government and, from the left, we told that we can't trust big business and, if we are honest, we realize that they are often both right. If all that wasn't bad enough, it seems like we are always in or about to enter an election year where we will inevitably be told, over and over, that fear should be the deciding factor in how we vote. Be afraid. Be very afraid. It sometimes seems that if it weren't for bad news, we'd have no news at all. Is that why so many Christians are so angry, bitter, and resentful? Because, sad as that would be, it would, at least be understandable.

It's a little hard to see how all of that righteous indignation, that anger, bitterness, and resentment jives with the hope, peace, joy, and love that are represented in the candles of the advent wreath. It's hard to reconcile that sense of

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A Reconciling Congregation

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victimization that we insist on adopting when someone wishes us a happy holiday with the "good news of great joy" that was announced to the shepherds on that first Christmas Eve. Look at the scripture passages that are attached to this season. There's no escaping it: It's about joy. To the prophet Isaiah, Christmas, for him, isn't so much a baby shower as it is for us, as it is a wedding reception. Everyone puts on their finest duds and dances, sings, eats, drinks, and celebrates. This is a time of laughter. The lost have been found. The ruined have been restored. The devastation of the past has been repaired. The brokenhearted are being healed even as we speak. Prisoners of war and conscience are being set free and restored to their families. Think of the happiest moments in our lives, says the prophet Isaiah, and that is what the "Day of the Lord" will be like...only more so. John the Baptist likens the coming Messiah to a light breaking into our darkness. There is no more running into walls and no more falling down. Suddenly we can see. We aren't lost any more. The safe path is present and clear.



This is an occasion of joy. Such a simple word. Just three letters. One syllable. Why is it so difficult for us? Do you remember the old Geico Insurance commercial with the guinea pigs rowing the boat? It began with a man telling us how his electric bills were getting too high so he figured out a way to save some money. He trained three guinea pigs to row a tiny boat that would generate electricity for his computer. Actually, he said, only two do the rowing. The chubby one coached them, saying "row" every few seconds. He told us in a completely serious deadpan deliver that it took him six months to train each guinea pig and eight months to train the one to say "row." Then he shook his head in disbelief and said, "And it's such a simple

word." That sometimes defines what joy is like for us. It's a simple word that's hard to define. We know it isn't happiness, exactly. It's more than happiness. It is deeper, heavier, more substantial and important. Happiness is a commodity that is sold in television commercials.

Joy is another thing altogether. Joy is a thing of the spirit and the soul. It reaches deep into the very core of our being, the very center of who we are, but it doesn't stay there. It cooks and simmers there and occasionally, it bubbles up and it overflows into the world. We can't make it overflow. We can't make it bubble out. It happens or it doesn't happen. But when it happens, when you are near it or see it, when you received it from another person, it is as though an angel were handing it to you directly from the altar of heaven. And it's always a surprise!

Sisters and brothers, let us just for this one special day, put away our anger and our fear. Let us set aside our bitterness, our resentment, and our indignation. Let us take a vacation from our doubt, our annoyance, our exasperation, and let us open ourselves to the possibility of joy. Let us look upon this holy child and remember the message he will bring to us - that we are loved and accepted, that our sins are forgiven, that the kingdom of God is at hand, that our past has been stamped "Approved" and that our future is free and open. Let us lift our spirits and our voices in praise of God. Let the joy that God has planted as a seed in each of us, grow, bloom, and overflow out of us and into those around us. And, finally, sisters, and brothers, let us laugh, loudly and unselfconsciously, freely and openly, as though the whole world were laughing with us. "For behold, I bring you good news of great joy. Unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, A savior who is Christ, the Lord."

Wishing you and yours a blessed Advent/Christmas season.

Pastor Sundar

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WORSHIP AT FUMC FOR DECEMBER



By the time you read this we should be in the midst of the Thanksgiving holiday. A day, for some, of overeating and, the next day, of over-shopping. Then we move quickly into the season of Advent, the start of the new Christian year. Four Sundays of preparation leading up to the big day, the birth of the baby – Jesus. Advent, the time when, in our worship services we light one candle each week, symbolizing the four virtues Jesus brings us, Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. All the worship activities for this season are listed on the pull-out center sheet. One of the special services this season is our Blue Christmas service scheduled for **Wednesday, December 18**. See below for the invitation to that service.

As we move into this new season, with all the turmoil nationally and internationally, it is good to remind ourselves of the true meaning of Christmas. Here is a repeat from 2018, "If you are looking for a different way to start thinking about the Christmas holiday, try the YouTube presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjqRZSTYKxY>. It's a video clip, dated in approach and quality, from the Amos 'n' Andy Christmas Show of December 1952."

For our Jewish neighbors, Hanukkah is celebrated this month from **Dec 22 to Dec 30**. And for those of African heritage, Kwanzaa will be celebrated from **Dec 26 to Jan 1, 2020**.

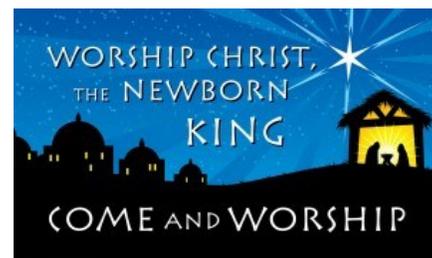
Pastor Sundar will be in the pulpit for each of the five Sundays in December.

Here is the Lectionary, starting Year A, for December:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| December 1 | First Sunday of Advent | Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44 |
| December 8 | Second Sunday of Advent | Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12 |
| December 15 | Third Sunday of Advent | Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:47-55; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11 |
| December 22 | Fourth Sunday of Advent | Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25 |
| December 24/25 | Christmas Eve/Christmas Day | Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20 |
| December 29 | First Sunday After Christmas | Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23 |
| December 31/January 1 | New Year's Eve/Watch Night | Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46 |

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

At 7:00 pm on **Wednesday, December 18** we will hold our Blue Christmas Worship Service here at our church. **Who is the service for?** All who are dealing with a loss this holiday season – the loss of a loved one, friend, job, home, health, faith, or any other loss. **In other words**, everyone who is "feeling blue" and their supporters, friends and family are invited to attend. **Note to all in our church family**, please invite your friends and neighbors who might find this service helpful in their life. No need to be a member of our church or any particular faith community to attend. **All are welcome.**



SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

Sunday, December 1 starts the Advent Season. Children should report to Fellowship Hall first on **December 1** to participate in our usual tradition of making Advent centerpieces. We have a special Sunday School activity planned for each Sunday of the Advent Season.

Children are invited to come make Christmas ornaments on **Saturday, December 14** from 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm. In addition to ornament making, we will have pizza and beverages for the children as well. Parents are welcome to drop off their children and pick them back up. To let us know who's coming, please email egchristianedfumc@gmail.com or sign up on the office door.



We need volunteers for the following:

- * **Sunday, December 24:** We have many children's roles to fill for the 5:00 pm **Christmas Eve** service. If you think your child would like to be an usher, assist in lighting the candles during the candle light portion of the service, read a passage, sing, pass out ornaments, or play an instrument, please contact Amanda Trainor during Sunday coffee hour or at egchristianedfumc@gmail.com.
- * If you would like to teach a Sunday School class, or know of any teens who have gone through confirmation and would like to be a classroom helper, we really need volunteers!
- * **Confirmation class** will begin this **January**, kicking off with a lock-in sleepover at the church on **January 4-5**. Deb Samuel will be sending out a letter with more information soon. Please contact Amanda if your child is interested in being confirmed this year. You can contact her by emailing egchristianedfumc@gmail.com or in coffee hour after Sunday service.
- * Starting **December** of this year, Sunday School will be piloting a new program until the end of January. Children and youth will be reporting to their classes first, and will end the program with a special children- and youth-centric worship from 10:15 am - 10:30 am in the Fellowship Hall. We will still continue with Super Sundays the first Sunday of the month and children will be directed to take communion with their family.

Blessings,
Amanda Trainor

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

As we prepare for Christmas and all the Christmas events let's not forget why we are here. Jesus is the reason for the season.



December 15 – We will be having a scavenger hunt to buy items for the homeless shelter. The youth will be split into teams, be given a budget and a list of items. Youth that bring gently used clothing to give to the homeless shelter will receive extra points. Lunch will be provided. We will be meeting from 11:00 am -1:30 pm.

December 22 – Will be our Christmas Palooza Christmas party. Please bring a wrapped gift to play a game. We will also be having lunch provided, as well as other games. We will be meeting after church from 11:00 am - 1:00pm.

December 30 – A Monday Night Youth GROUP !!! What!! Lets Ring in the Pre-New Year from 6:00 pm-8:00 pm. We will celebrate another year! Toast (eat toast) the New Year and play grog, and other games.

As we are celebrating the Christmas Season and the New Year to come let's also pray for Emily Clark who will be leaving **Wednesday, December 27** for her *Missions of Peace* trip to India. I pray for safe travels, and a wonderful experience.

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

God Bless,
Amber Biechman, Youth Leader

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Monday, December 2 is our annual Christmas Party and cookie exchange. This year we will be partying at Zarina Khan's home. Due to limited parking space we will need to car pool. We will meet at the church at 6:15 pm. If you plan to attend please let Patty Chartrand (518-732-2940) or Kathy Van Buren (518-477-6292) know so we can arrange transportation. After a very busy Fall we are looking forward to a quieter winter. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



On another note... don't forget to stop by the Giving Tree in the foyer, grab a tag, buy the item and place it in the labelled bin, **unwrapped**, by **Sunday, December 8!** The gifts will be taken to the CoNSERNS-U Christmas store. Thank you for supporting this important ministry.

THREE KINGS CELEBRATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT



For several years now, our church has joined forces with The Church of the Covenant in Averill Park and The Delmar United Methodist Church in support of Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel (Emmanuel Faith Community), a ministry that reaches out to the Hispanic/Latino population of the Capital Area. Pastor Mariana Rodriguez has asked if we would consider once again donating new and gently used toys for children up to 12 years of age for their Three Kings Celebration, on **Sunday, January 5**. If you are willing

and able to help make a child's Christmas season a little brighter this year, there is a bin labeled "Three Kings Celebration" for donations of toys, books, stuffed animals, make-up, and games in our church foyer. Gift cards from Wal-Mart in ten or twenty dollar denominations would also be appreciated for the older children. (Please turn in gift cards directly to the office, or to John Schmidt for safekeeping). **Please do not wrap or tag the toys.** Thank you for your assistance. All are welcome to attend the service beginning at 3:00 pm which will be held at the Third Reformed Church at 20 Ten Eyck Avenue in Albany.

iFeliz Navidad!

Missions & Social Responsibility Ministry

MEAL FOR JOSEPH'S HOUSE

Our church will be providing the evening meal at Joseph's House homeless shelter in Troy on **Sunday, December 15**. We will be feeding 75 people. We are seeking volunteers to help prepare the meal in our church kitchen following the 8:30 am service and preceding the 9:30 am service, to prepare dessert at home and/or to serve the meal at the shelter that evening.

Please contact Susie (susiecalyer@yahoo.com, 518-858-1102) if you have questions or would like to help.



IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT POINSETTIAS!

You can help to fill the sanctuary with beautiful, flowering poinsettias for Christmas and also honor or remember special people in your life. We are offering nursery-quality, 6.5" size plants, available in RED, WHITE, PINK OR MARBLE for **\$12.00** each plant. The sign-up sheet will be on the long table for you to write your order on. Please make checks payable to the "United Methodist Women." **Orders must be received** in the church office **no later than Friday, December 6**. If you have any questions, please call the church office at 518-477-9693.

CHRISTMAS SEASON

Worship Services and Activities

Advent Theme Verse – Isaiah 60:1a

"Arise, Shine, For Your Light Has Come"

Sunday, December 1 – 1st Sunday of Advent – *"Rising Light"*

8:30 am – Early Worship with Holy Communion

9:30 am – Morning Worship with Holy Communion

1:00 pm – Hawthorne Ridge Worship Service with Holy Communion

2:30 pm – Worship at Riverside Nursing Home, Castleton

Friday, December 6 – 7:00 pm – Madrigal Dinner and Performance – doors open 6:30 pm

Saturday, December 7 – 6:00 pm – Madrigal Dinner and Performance – doors open 5:30 pm

Sunday, December 8 – 2nd Sunday of Advent – *"Reflected Light"*

8:30 am – Early Worship

9:15 am – "Byrd in the Bush" will play in the sanctuary for a sing-along

9:30 am – Morning Worship

Madrigal Dinner Singers will provide music during service

1:00 pm – Hawthorne Ridge Worship Service

Sunday, December 15 – 3rd Sunday of Advent – *"Healing Light"*

8:30 am – Early Worship

9:30am – Morning Worship

with music by The EmBELLishments (adult bell choir)

1:00 pm – Hawthorne Ridge Worship Service

Tuesday, December 17

2:00 pm – Worship at Rosewood Rehabilitation Center

Wednesday, December 18

7:00 pm – Blue Christmas Worship Service



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Sunday, December 22 – 4th Sunday of Advent – "Eternal Light"

8:30 am – Early Worship

9:10 am – "Byrd in the Bush" will perform in concert, "Carols of Christmas"

9:30 am – Morning Worship

1:00 pm – Hawthorne Ridge Worship Service – A Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

5:00 pm – Family Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with The CHIMETtes (children's bell choir)
(The CHIMETtes will perform for the 5:00 pm service only)

7:00 pm – Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service
"What Do You Do When The Lights Go Out"

9:00 pm – Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service followed by Holy Communion
"What About The Baby?"

Sunday, December 29 – 1st Sunday after Christmas Day

8:30 am – Early Worship

9:30 am – Morning Worship

1:00 pm – Hawthorne Ridge Worship Service

3:00 pm – Carols and Cookies Concert – Sanctuary Choir, "Byrd in the Bush"
and others will perform

Sunday, January 5 – Epiphany Sunday

8:30 am – Early Worship with Holy Communion

9:30 am – Morning Worship with Holy Communion

1:00 pm – Hawthorne Ridge Worship Service with Holy Communion



Foster Samuel R. Samuel
Kathy VanBuren Box Reine
Jane VanDoren *Beth VanDoren*
Sail Welkley
George E. Adams
Lois Meyer



WHAT ABOUT THOSE DECEMBER HOLIDAYS?

Christmas at the beach? Yes, if you are on Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. Remember Australian seasons are upside down from us. Here are some more December holiday questions. Who gets mince pies for what holiday and where? Where will you meet thirteen Santas all in one month? The Festival of Lights celebrates what event? How long can a one day supply of untainted oil burn? The Watts riots were one impetus for what holiday? What's a kinara? Who celebrates St. Stephen's Day? What December holiday do Canadians celebrate that is not a public holiday in the USA? For all the answers and more, take a look at the short article by Sarah Wyland at: <https://worldstrides.com/blog/2015/12/december-holidays-around-the-world/>.



Bondi Beach

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE – DECEMBER 2019

The Financial Commitment Campaign (also known as the Stewardship Campaign) concluded on Sunday, October 27. The Committee would like to thank everyone that helped with the campaign. We would especially like to thank everyone who returned a pledge card. As of November 15, we received 69 pledges totaling \$173,016. We also welcome five new pledgers this year.



Even though the campaign has ended, we urge anyone that wishes to pledge and has not done so yet to complete a card and return it to church. In prior years, our total pledges were approximately \$200,000, meaning we are currently about \$26,000 behind. We ask that you continue to pray for the financial well-being of our church.

The Finance Committee also continues to work on the **2020** church budget. We appreciate the assistance from Ministry/Team Leaders for submitting their budget requests. The Finance Committee will finalize the budget at our next meeting and present it at the December Church Council meeting.

As a reminder, the Finance Committee is pleased to offer online giving, available at www.fumceg.org or through the GivePlus App. If you have any questions about online or app giving, please see the church website or ask anyone on the Finance Committee.

It takes all of us working together to support the ministries of our church. Again, we thank you for your gifts and continued support. -- Colleen Rumsey, *Finance Committee Chair*

HELLO FROM "SUNNY COLORADO"

Thank you for all your cards and healing prayers. I am slowly healing and hope to see you sometime in **January 2020**. In the meantime, please go to storycircle@proctors.org and there you will find links to our YouTube stories with more than 50 Tellers, including mine, and more than 200 stories. Also, check out the Story by Story Section, which is our cable TV show in Schenectady. I am on it at least 4 times and it is a way we can be together. The schedule of activities for IFSC, which is the Interfaith Storytelling Circle, can be found there. The IFSC 27th year event was held at our church in September where I hosted the program "Endings and Beginnings", all about our transitions in life. Members from our Church, two synagogues and 3 other Methodist churches attended in addition to an Interfaith Pastor from Hospice. Hope you enjoy a moment with stories during this Holiday Season...sending you my love, *Fran Berger*



HAT AND MITTEN DRIVE

Working within the community there seems to be a shortage of hats and mittens. I would like to collect Hats and Mittens of all sizes to help the community out. Please place your donation in a bin in the lobby. The Hats and Mittens will go to families around the community. If you have any questions please see Amber.

EDUCATION MINISTRY



Three years ago, the Church Council began organizing church programs into Ministries...the Caring Ministry, The Education Ministry and the Worship Ministry. Each Ministry is composed of teams, each with a team leader, that carry out the responsibilities of their program.

The Education Ministry, with Carrie Larson as Ministry Coordinator, is comprised of 7 teams:

- Sunday School:** Amanda Trainor
- Youth Program:** Amber Beichman
- Adult Bible Studies:** Deb Samuels at Hawthorne Ridge;
Kevin Conley and Pastor Sundar leading Advent and Lenten Bible Studies
- Tuesday Morning Study Group:** Matie Flowers
- Adult Programs:** Carrie Larson
- Vacation Bible School:** Rachel Giso
- District Youth Council:** Laura Clark

The past year was eventful with the retirement of Heidi Gran as director of our Sunday School program and the hiring of Amanda Trainor as our new leader. Amanda started her work in October and brings energy, passion and new program ideas to working with our church families and children. Christian education opportunities will be available now to children and their families on a 12 month basis. Confirmation classes start in January. Amber Beichman continues to bring creative and meaningful programs to our youth as does Laura Clark in her work with youth at the District Youth level. The model for Vacation Bible School changed this year from a week long program to a novel and successful weekend program in the summer. The Bible studies at Hawthorne Ridge are unique in our area and both entertaining and content rich. Eight to 15 members living at Hawthorn Ridge meet with Deb every Monday at 3:30 pm. Kevin and Pastor Sundar diligently seek Bible Study materials that challenge, inform and inspire us to grow in our faith. Our recent successful SOS (Supper on Sunday) focused on the daunting problems of refugees worldwide and in America, and solutions available to help refugee families in our community.

We on the Education Ministry meet 3 times a year to review programs activities and seek new ways to help all on their faith journey. Thank you to all who have participated on teams and of course, each team continues to need your help and support as does the Ministry. If you'd like to help out on any of the education programs, please contact Carrie Larson or a Team Leader.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE MINISTRY - CONTINUED SUPPORT NEEDED

We are heading into our 6th year in this unique and innovative program, to our knowledge, the only one in our Conference. Our work to help church families in crises began in 2004. When people are ill or in the hospital, members are there offering rides, casseroles and support. And although these actions meet the needs of many, some families still struggle from pay check to pay check. Sometimes the loss of a job, an accident, illness or hospitalization is catastrophic and families need financial help to survive as well as casseroles and rides and support. We have the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, a fund for one time, short term financial help. And we have the Family Assistance Fund to help with a plan until life stabilizes. Over the past 5 years, your contributions to the FAM have helped 20 individuals...7 families. For some, funds help buy food at the end of the month...medication co-pays...gas for the car for hospital visits, etc.... emergency car repairs. Meetings with families in crisis may lead to referrals to appropriate help in the community. In fact, FAM is seen as the last efforts to survive because all families have exhausted community resources. Please contact Pastor Sundar, John Schmidt or Carrie Larson if you, or you know of, a family in crisis. All work is confidential.



WE THANK YOU for your support and hope you continue the tradition of giving to our neighbors in need...make a check out to FUMC and put Family Support Ministry in the memo section of your check.

MISSIONS-SUPPORTED ORGANIZATIONS

The Missions and Social Responsibility Ministry would like you to know that **we now have liaisons connected to all of the organizations** which we support. If you are interested in finding out more about any of these fine groups, please see the people listed to the right. Catalogs with information about these organizations are also available at both church entrances.



| Organization | Liaison |
|--|----------------|
| CoNSERNS-U | Mary Smith |
| Anchor Food Pantry | Fran Berger |
| Regional Food Bank of NENY | Gary Klee |
| Qholaghoe Mt. Connections | John Schmidt |
| Capital Area Council of Churches | George Herrick |
| Joseph's House | Kevin Conley |
| Water.org | Susie Calyer |
| Habitat for Humanity Cap. District | Gary Klee |
| Literacy Volunteers of Renn. Co. | John Schmidt |
| Hispanic Ministries | John Schmidt |
| Emmaus UMC /RISSE | Kevin Conley |
| Four Corners Native American Ministries | Carrie Larson |
| Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless | Amanda Trainor |
| St. Paul's Center | Janet Schmidt |
| Community Hospice | Susie Calyer |
| Red Bird Mission | Carrie Larson |
| UMCOR World Hunger | Kevin Conley |
| Jaja's Kids | Carrie Larson |
| Troy Area United Ministries (TAUM) | Fred Henson |
| UMCOR Missionary | Kevin Conley |
| UMCOR US Disaster Relief (flood buckets) | Gary Klee |

WHAT IS A MADRIGAL DINNER?

Madrigal music was sung and played on lute, recorders and harpsichords on great feast days in the manor castles and homes of Lords and Ladies of nobility in the 16th & 17th Centuries. Most popular was the English Madrigal Christmas Feast complete with the yule log, holly, wassail, boars head and figgy-pudding.

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Preparations are being made for our 5th Madrigal Christmas Dinner in our Great Hall! If ye have not attended before, our Fellowship Hall is transformed into a Medieval Castle. The Lord and Lady of Greenbush Manor invite ye and yours to be guests and partake in this magical evening of feasting (roast beef), merriment (jesters and our Abyss of Unreason), Music and dance. The first Show will be **Friday, December 6*** at 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30) and **Saturday, December 7*** at 6:00 pm (doors open at 5:30). There will be appetizers on the tables as well. Tickets are \$35 which brings you an evening sure to fill your bellies and your souls with Christmas spirit as well as assist our congregation in raising funds. Paid Reservations are required (checks made payable to UMW with "Madrigal Dinner" on the memo line). Cash and credit cards also accepted. Tickets will be available after services in Fellowship hall or call the Church office 518-477-9693 or Sharon Wheeler 407-718-7707. Please indicate if you need dairy free or Gluten free options. Spread the news!



*** In case of a weather emergency, the dinner will be postponed to Sunday, Dec 8th at 5:00 pm.**

NOTES FROM THE TRUSTEES

This past year the Trustees began a process of gradually replacing windows in the Education wing of the church. The windows, in rooms 15 and 16, were not functioning and could only be repaired by replacement. The new window systems look nice and are more energy efficient. We also continued the gradual process of adding air conditioning to additional areas in the church. This year air conditioning was added to the multi-purpose room and to the pastor's and Gail's (Administrative Assistant) offices. The new systems are not only quieter but can independently heat those areas. Here-to-for heating those areas required the church boiler to be on and every room in the education wing would need to be heated. Both the window replacement and the air conditioning were achieved using money from bequests as well as funds from the Trustees allocation of the general budget. In addition the deck at the Parsonage was replaced and a number of hallways in the church were painted. Most recently, holes in the parking lot have been filled.

Members of the Trustees spend considerable time mowing, weeding, trimming bushes and trees, etc.. Our efforts fall short of what is required to maintain the several acres surrounding our church. We were rescued by the hard working efforts of additional volunteers. The Trustees wish to thank Linda Marschner, Kate Henson, Patty Chartrand, Becky and Pat Frament, Paul Deming, Kevin and Cindy Conley, Mary McIntosh, Carrie Larson, Chris Calyer and Joe McManus for adding to the beauty of our grounds. When you say hello to these friends please add your "thanks" to ours.



COFFEE HOUSE TRADITION CONTINUES



George Herrick

This year's September "Back to School" Coffee House and the November "Thanksgiving Coffee House" were wonderfully successful events...entertaining, fun, and continuing the tradition of welcoming performers with all types of talent, to share a Friday evening with us. Singers, instrumentalists, dancers, poets, story tellers, each perform to an appreciative, and to quote Garrison Keeler, "above average" audience. We offer three more Coffee Houses in the upcoming program year, the "Cabin Fever" Coffee House on **January 17**, the "St. Patrick's Day" Coffee House on **March 20** and the "Mother's Day" Coffee House on **May 8**, so save those dates.

In this season of Hope and Light, our Coffee House tradition honors the long held belief that music, dance, poetry and storytelling free the soul to soar and to heal...that the universality of shared harmonies in all its forms unites us and challenges us to be better and thus to better humanity. We have built a Friday night community that supports the artist in each of us and brings hope and help to those in need through our evening of entertainment and UMW provided "tasty treats". Money contributions in the "Basket" go to families in our community struggling to pay the heat bills, have food at the end of the month and have gas to get to church and doctor's appointments. Thank you.

So Merry Christmas and hope to see you at the next 3 Coffee Houses!

GREENER CHURCH

Several members have joined the Greener-Church Committee, a group that will be identifying ways that we can stand out as a faith community that acts with love and respect in caring for the earth. To help the group get started, in November, you contributed to a list of eco-friendly steps our church has already taken. **In December**, we will ask you to propose other actions that we can take. If you are interested in joining the committee, please contact Kevin (518.253.4907 or e.kevin.conley@gmail.com).





December 3, 2019 is GIVING TUESDAY, “a global generosity movement unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world.” This very special day that “was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good” is a great time to support non-profits that have gained our attention. Check those organizations and see what incentives, if any, they have for donations made on GIVING TUESDAY.

- The Random Act of Kindness Calendar is posted next to the boiler room door in the front hall of the church. Which “act” will you do in December? You can’t go wrong with the suggestions for Christmas, “Give sincere, handwritten thank you notes to all that made your holiday special” and New Year’s Eve, “Reflect on everything you accomplished this year & take time to be grateful”. If you want to see what the calendar will look like for **2020**, go to <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/printables> GEH
- Carl Eno and David Caneen were elected as Trustees at a special Charge Conference on August 25. Neal Calvin was elected, and Susie Calyer and Peter Larson were re-elected as Trustees at our recent Annual Church Conference held November 10. A more complete report of our Church Conference will be printed in the January issue of The Church BELL.
- Mark your calendar now and save all the Styrofoam packing used at Christmas time for our next recycle collection. Bring your “clean” Styrofoam to church on **Sunday, January 5** for our next recycle date. Remember to remove tape and staples and we cannot recycle items used for food or drink, no matter how clean.
- “World of Inspiration” is the title of the **2020 calendar** being made available to our church family by the Rockefeller Funeral Home. Copies are available on the small table in the church foyer.
- Crop Hunger Walk update - the Castleton Crop Hunger walk did better than previously reported. Our 22 participants raised \$2607! In total, 49 joined the Walk, raising \$4987, the greatest number of walkers and total donations in years.

CORNERSTONE – PACK YOUR BAGS!

The picture to the right is from the Cornerstone January 2019 Mission Trip to Puerto Rico.

Now for the New Year! You Can Help Make a Difference! On **January 5**, a large group of 20 members of UAlbany Cornerstone students will be traveling to Panama City, FL to work with The Fuller Center Disaster Rebuilders to address the needs of those impacted by Hurricane Michael. The cost per student is approximately \$800. Each student is asked to contribute \$175 toward the cost and the balance is covered by fund-raisers and donations from congregations and individual members and this year a generous grant from SUNY. If you would like to “adopt a student” for the trip, please make your check payable to “Protestant Campus Ministry” and mail to Rev. Sandy Damhof, UAlbany Interfaith Center ~ CC346, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222. Suggested “adoption fee” is \$250 but any amount is welcome!



Late News From Cornerstone — The bake sale done by the students from Cornerstone that was here at our church and five other churches on Sunday, November 24th collected \$2,617! These dollars will be used to help pay for the trip to Florida.

LIVING NATIVITY AT CALVARY UMC



Calvary United Methodist Church presents a Living Nativity, featuring King's Kids drama group, carols, and live animals, with 20 minute continuous dramatic performances, on **Saturday, December 21**, starting at 5:00 pm with the last performance at 7:30 pm. Come be escorted by shepherds and angels to the manger to witness the birth of Jesus! Enjoy crafts, and refreshments. The nativity will be held outside at the stable unless weather conditions warrant it being moved to our indoor stable. Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whom shepherds and angels greet! Calvary UMC is at 15 Ridge Place, Latham. For further information, please call 518-785-5142.
