



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# THE BELL

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

VOLUME 20, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2018

## **At Church on Sundays:**

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

## **We are on the Web:**

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

**Gail Welkley,  
Administrative Assistant**

Dear Members and Friends,

Ash Wednesday, which begins the season of Lent, is a time when we have an opportunity to squarely face our humanness. It begins a season where we have an invitation to be honest with God, with ourselves, and with one another. The season of Lent, which begins this year's Ash Wednesday, offers us a forty-day time period modeled after our Lord's forty days in the wilderness.

Some of us may not feel the need to take on extra disciplines during these forty days. Perhaps our lives already feel full of enough challenges that a day of prayer or fasting may seem trivial. Others of us who are just as challenged may welcome the external disciplines of regular prayer, fasting, and acts of service as opportunities to get out of ourselves and away from the messes that for many comprise significant portions of a life.

I believe Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, provides us with an opening to the possibility of transformation. Saint Francis used to refer to his own body as Brother Ass; he was constantly aware of the stubbornness and limitations that comprised his life. There is something very good in the disciplines and work that reminds us to recognize our humanness, our frailty, and our vulnerability. Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent requests the honor of our presence in such activities. Our Lord Jesus Christ has personally stamped each invitation with the seal and sign of his own blood.

John's two oldest children were around six and four years old, when he purchased his first house. It used to be a barn before it was converted to a house by someone far handier than John will ever be. It was in a wonderful location in northern New Jersey. A dirt road ran in front of the house and across the street there was a pond full of largemouth bass. Behind his home was another pond and to the south was a small stream that connected the two ponds, beyond the pond behind John's home was over 100 acres of wooded land. John never knew who owned that beautiful treed property. John's home was very near the Appalachian Trail in Sussex, New Jersey. The home was quite roomy though it did have a few problems that reminded them that they were living in the country. They saw rats in the kitchen,

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*A Reconciling Congregation*

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on the south end of the home there was an old fruit cellar that was crumbling, and they soon discovered there were significant drainage problems.

The old house had three floors; the top floor consisted of three rooms two of which were joined together. At the far end, they created a chapel, in the middle their four-year-old had his bedroom, and at the other end their six-year-old daughter had a pink bedroom. On the main floor, there was another bedroom, a full bathroom, which they all shared, a living room with a dining area, and the kitchen. The first floor was comprised of another large room that could have been used for a bedroom, but they used it as an office/music room. The only problem was the ceiling was so low John couldn't stand up straight. There was also a second bathroom, a place for a television, a bar, and even a sink. They were very blessed to have such a fine place to live as a young couple.

John wasn't sure what the occasion was that led to the problem, but they soon discovered that the downstairs sink did not drain very well. Not having too many financial resources, this plumbing problem had to be resolved through John's own labors. It soon became clear to John that the previous owners had done the plumbing themselves and had violated every kind of building code that there may have been but, after all, they were out in the New Jersey countryside. The line went from the downstairs sink under the concrete carpeted slab floor and out the backside of the house. From there John had a difficult time tracing the line but eventually found a drainage pit full of stones, which it was supposed to drain into. Unfortunately, there was a clog somewhere in the line.



That image to me is the kind of work that we will want to do during the season of Lent. Perhaps years of accumulated potato peels and other roughage had made its way down the sink and finally the liquid had nowhere to go. It sat still, no longer responding the best plunge one could muster. What past hurts, unresolved griefs, and resentments lurk in our lives and clog the flow of the Spirit in us? The only thing we know to do is to dig up the pipe, remove the dirt and follow the pipe until you noticed a particular place in the garden where the soil was wet and muddy. Soon we learn that this particular pipe was not designed for anything but water or other non-congealing liquids.

The season of Lent provides us with an opportunity to experience a kind of personal roto-rooter. It's foolish to take on spiritual disciplines if we have no expectation or hope for growth, for change, or for transformation in our lives. And it's equally foolish to take on spiritual disciplines that become badges of honor that we display to others. The kind of spiritual disciplines that our Lord invites his disciples to take on themselves aren't a whole lot different than cleaning out clogged lines between house and septic tanks.

Our Lord desires us to have a fully functioning system of connection with him. The difference is that we do the work of cleaning our pipes, our lives, so we can connect more easily to the source of grace, glory, and goodness, so we can connect to God our Father in heaven.

The ashes that get marked on the foreheads of those who come to the Ash Wednesday service may appear startling, strange, and even incongruent with the gospel text that invites us

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not to make a show of our piety. Yet, perhaps the crosses that are sealed upon the foreheads of those who come to traditional liturgical Ash Wednesday services are strangely appropriate. Our children are not our own; in fact we do not even belong to ourselves. All of us belong to God and in the end, unless we let our best gifts and intentions be marked by the cross, we will not experience the joy of growth. Betsy Smith writes "Nowhere do we find this truth more dramatically portrayed than in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Nowhere do we participate more fully in this truth than in the liturgical drama of the Eucharist. Here we celebrate, we touch, and we eat and drink the death and life of our precious Lord. Here we learned the price and the liberation of letting go."

Ash Wednesday and the Lenten season provides us with an opportunity to let go and to allow ourselves, our children, our parents, our friends, one another- everyone to belong to God. Perhaps this year we can go beyond trivialities as we recognize that God's desire for each of us is to come into a deeper relationship with him thereby becoming more capable of engaging ourselves with one another and with the world in which we live. And at the end of the day and at the end of the season let pray that our hearts and lives will be fuller, filled with the treasure of a renewed and empowered relationship with the living God, through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

May you and yours be blessed during the season of Lent.

Peace is with you,  
Pastor Sundar

## LOSSES IN OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our sincere condolences go to those who have had recent deaths in their families:

**Heidi Gran and her family** on the death of Heidi's father, **George Winters**, on **January 15**, 2018. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, **February 17**, 2018 at 11:00 am at First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush, NY. A reception will follow the service. Sympathy cards may be sent to: Heidi Gran, 33 Southgate Road, Loudonville, NY 1211-1157.

**Carrie Pierce and her family** on the death of Carrie's husband, **Lee Pierce**. Carrie would like the congregation to know the following: *"Thank you for your support and love during Lee's recent illness and death on Monday evening, **January 22**. At Lee's request, there will be no calling hours, but we will celebrate Lee's life at a memorial service in the near future."* If you would like to send a sympathy card, the mailing address is: Carrie Pierce, 1002 Royale Court, Troy, NY 12180.

**Sue Lemka and her family** on the death of Sue's husband, **Ray Lemka**. Ray passed away on **January 23**, 2018. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, **February 3**, 2018 at 2:00 PM at First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush, NY. A reception will follow the service. Sympathy cards may be sent to Sue Lemka, 2406 Phillips Road, Castleton, NY 12033-9726.

**JoAnne Gabriels and her family** on the death of JoAnne's father, Rev. Dr. **Walter Taylor** on **January 4**, 2018. "Wally" had been pastor of our church from 1975 to 1978 and then he was appointed to become Director of Albany United Methodist Society. A memorial service to honor the life of Wally will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, **February 10**, 2018, in the Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church. Notes of condolence may be sent to JoAnne Gabriels at 299 Elliot Road, East Greenbush, NY 12061-4480.

**Jane Wheeler and her family** on the death of her mother, **Jeanne D. Wheeler** on **January 27**. Jeanne was a long time communicant of our church. Jeanne's memorial service will be on Friday, **February 2**, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. here at our church. Notes of condolence may be sent to Jane Wheeler, P. O. Box 626, Newark Valley, New York 13811.

## WORSHIP AT FUMC IN FEBRUARY

**February 4** Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany, this is the first Sunday in the new month and this whole month of February is Black History Month. If you were a part of either of the inter-faith Martin Luther King, Jr. services in mid-January in Albany or Troy you heard the very familiar lines, *"We shall overcome. We shall overcome. Deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome"*. This is just one of many songs tied to Black History in our United Methodist Hymnal. We celebrate Holy Communion this Sunday.

**February 11** Transfiguration of the Lord. *"Today I would like to talk with you about Christ, about the Presence of God and Glory of God being all around us...if one has the eyes to see. I would like to talk with you about God being in the mountaintops, down in the valleys, and in the plains of life. That the glory of God, the Presence of Christ, the goodness of the Spirit of Christ is found in the mountaintops, down at the bottom of the valleys, and in the plains of ordinary living."* That is the way a Lutheran pastor introduced part of his Sunday sermon on the Transfiguration, this very special day where we speak of a miracle that happened to Jesus. Included in our morning worship bulletin this Sunday will be a Lenten devotional booklet, "Finding Peace in Lent". Be sure to get copy for you quiet time in the coming forty days.

**February 14** Ash Wednesday. Lent begins with this very special service, one where our confirmands have an important role. It is the first day of reading in the Lenten devotional booklet. All through Lent we will have a focus on the Saint Francis Peace Prayer. You remember the lines that begin, *"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;..."* Read the whole prayer before starting the Ash Wednesday reading.



**February 18** First Sunday in Lent. The devotional booklet reading for this day is titled, "Praying as if Everything Depended on Me". A real challenge if you think about it.

**February 25** Second Sunday in Lent. "The Mighty Orchestra of Divine Peace" is the title of the devotional reading for this day. How does that fit in with the Saint Francis Peace Prayer?

The full schedule of activity for the Lenten season can be found on the handy card included with this issue of The Church BELL. That insert also included the details for the Ecumenical Lenten Worship and Luncheon gatherings. The theme comes from a book by Bishop William H. Willimon, **FEAR OF THE OTHER**. On page 6 of this BELL is information about the Lenten Bible study groups that will meet on Monday and Tuesday. They will be talking about the book, **WHO IS THIS MAN?**

Don't miss Sunday worship just because you need to get on the road on Sunday morning. Come to church early and be a part of Early Worship at 8:30 am. This is our more informal service and is one half hour long, plenty of time to get underway to somewhere else by 9 am.

Pastor Sundar will be preaching all Sundays this month.

Here is the lectionary for February:

February 4 **Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany** Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c;  
1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

February 11 **Transfiguration of the Lord** 2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6;  
Mark 9:2-9

February 14 **Ash Wednesday** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10;  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

February 18 **First Sunday in Lent** Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22;  
Mark 1:9-15

February 25 **Second Sunday in Lent** Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25;  
Mark 8:31-38

### CHANGES IN MUSIC SCHEDULE

There will be **no** CHIMettes Monday, **February 19**. Also there will be **no** EmBELLishments Tuesday, **February 20**. And **no** Cherub or Chancel Choirs Sundays **February 18 and 25**.  
— Thanks Cindy



## EDUCATION MINISTRIES – SUNDAY SCHOOL

**LOVE KITS** We will once again be providing Love Kits for the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless. What are Love Kits? When someone comes to the shelter, they are provided with a Love Kit, bag of toiletry items that they can get cleaned up with....soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, body wash, comb, brush etc. Our church helps to provide some of the kits. There will be bags in the foyer, you can pick one up, take it to the store (I fill mine at the Dollar store) bring it back to church. The youth group will deliver the bags to the shelter. The Sunday School children color encouraging cards to place in the bags. The Love Kits are a church wide effort!

**CONFIRMATION CLASS** continues to be very busy! They had a soup and bread fund raiser on **January 21** to support their trip to New York City on **May 5**. It was a big success! They sold out of soup, and made \$322! Thank you to everyone who donated.



On **Wednesday, February 14**, the confirmation students will attend the **Ash Wednesday** service. Prior to the service, the Membership and Evangelism committee is holding a dinner for the confirmation students, their families and the confirmation teachers. Many thanks to the committee; it is going to be a large group!

## UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Let's talk Super Bowl Subs! Prep is at 10:00 am on Saturday, **February 3**. We will be using the TSL room for most of it, minus cooking the meatballs and storing items in the empty kitchen fridge. I need all hands on deck for this preparation. If you can make it with your pre-teen/teenager please let me know. The more the merrier.



On Super Bowl Sunday, I ask that all Youth 5th grade and up join me in the kitchen at 9:00 am. Parents may come to help as well. I would like to see the youth be able to join the congregation for communion, the more help the faster we can get done. If you are a parent and willing to help with Super Bowl subs please let me know .

### Upcoming dates:

February 3 & 4: Super Bowl Fundraiser  
 February 9: Jr. High Game Night  
 February 16: Sr. High Game Night  
 February 24: Brunch Prep - Humane Society Fundraiser  
 February 25: Brunch during coffee hour— Humane Society Fundraiser

March 2: Sr. High Game Night  
 March 9: Jr. High Game Night  
 March 11: Sr. High Lunch and Youth Group  
 March 23-24: DCYM event weather permitting  
 March 25: Jr. High Lunch and Youth Group  
 March 29- 30: Sr. High Lenten Lock-In (Will need parent volunteers)

Save a spot on your calendar now for the **April 13-15th** Outward! 2018 (formerly Upward) Youth Conference at the Holiday Inn in Liverpool.

There will be more dates coming for April, May and June. If there is inclement weather youth group will be canceled. You will receive an email from my personal account [biechmanalee@gmail.com](mailto:biechmanalee@gmail.com). As always you can email that account if you need a question answered quickly or call me at 518 322-8412. I am always looking for parent volunteers, please let me know if you can volunteer.  
 — Amber Biechman

## STUDENTS – INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS

United Methodist high school seniors and college students are invited to apply for two scholarships offered by the Upper New York Conference: Conference Merit Awards and Lottie Brown Grants. If you meet the guidelines, funds may be available to help pay for school. For more information, go to the Upper New York Conference website, <http://www.unyumc.org/ministries/2018-uny-scholarship> or contact our church office.

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

On Monday, **February 5** the UMW will hold its monthly meeting at 7:00 pm.

The UMW will host Coffee Hour **on February 4**. Please give a helping hand with clean up. Many of the officers are involved with communion clean up also.

**February 21** the start of the Lenten Lunches. Our church's UMW will host lunch on that date. Anyone who would like to donate a dessert please let Kathy Van Buren or Mary McIntosh know.

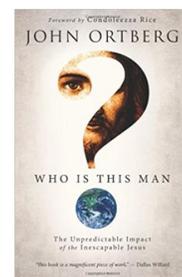
**TO ALL GROUPS** Please label and date all food items in the cabinets and refrigerator.

**Blanket Sunday** is **February 18**. The money collected by the UMW is given to CWS (Church World Service). CWS purchases blankets for \$10:00 that are given throughout the world for refugees, disaster relief and any other emergencies. Please give. Envelopes will be provided for Blanket Sunday. Checks are to be made out to "United Methodist Women" with "Blanket Sunday" on the memo line.

The UMW bulletin board has a new feature. Anyone, men or women, who have something they are grateful for can post it on the bulletin board. It can be a picture or a poem or just a phrase, anything or way you wish to express what you are grateful for. February is the month of hearts and love. "*Grateful for Love.*"

## LENTEN ADULT BIBLE STUDIES.

Starting **February 12 and 13**, we will begin two five-week sessions for a study based on "*Who Is This Man?: The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus*" by John Ortberg. Each week, in a small-group setting, we will take an in-depth look at history's most familiar figure, yet the man no one knows. Jesus' impact on our world is highly unlikely, widely inescapable, largely unknown, and decidedly double-edged. It is unlikely in light of the severe limitations of his earthly life; it is inescapable because of the range of impact; it is unknown because history doesn't connect dots; and it is doubled-edged because his followers have wreaked so much havoc, often in his name. The study sessions are approximately 90 minutes and are held in the youth lounge starting Monday, **February 12** at 6:30 pm, and Tuesday, **February 13** at 9:30 am. Please register for either session with the church office by February 6. A donation of \$10 is suggested for the participant book. Please contact Kevin Conley ([e.kevin.conley@gmail.com](mailto:e.kevin.conley@gmail.com), 518-253-4907) or Pastor Sundar for more information.



## VBS – SUMMER 2018

Vacation Bible School will be held this summer the week of **July 30th – August 3rd** from 8:30 am—12:00 noon. This year we will be presenting.... **SHIPWRECKED**



**Recued by Jesus!** At VBS we will venture onto an uncharted island where kids are rescued by Jesus! We will anchor kids in the truth that Jesus carries them through every storm in life. They'll learn to hold onto God's promises when they are lonely, they worry, they struggle, do wrong, and feel powerless. Mark your calendar and be a part of an amazing children's

ministry filled with faith, fun and friendship. Registration form will be available soon. Talk with, Jessica Kurimsky, Rachel Giso or Jessica Sweeney for more information.

## CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ANNUAL MEETING

The Capital Area Council of Churches will hold its Annual Meeting on Monday, **February 12** at 6:00 pm at St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church, 440 Whitehall Road Albany, New York. You can get a good look at the work of the Council by attending this meeting. The ecumenical witnesses to baptism that we have seen her at our church are part of this organization. The budget for the new year will be presented. Come enjoy a welcome dinner, meet new friends in the ecumenical community and be a part of this important church organization. For more information and reservations, see George Herrick or contact our church office.

## NOTES FROM THE MISSIONS MINISTRY

On behalf of the **Missions Ministry**, I would like to thank everyone for their generosity, especially over the past several months. A large box of toys, games, books and clothing was donated for a Three Kings Celebration held in Albany on January 7. The event was part of a worship service conducted by Pastor Mariana Rodriguez of Iglesias Cristiana Emmanuel held at the Third Reformed Church. The children were thrilled to receive the gifts. Pastor Mariana extends her thanks to all.



In December, close to \$950. was received as part of the church-wide Christmas Card. This exceeds last year's total. Donations were sent to CoNserns-U, UMCOR Hurricane Relief, Long-Term Family Assistance and water.org as well as any other designated charities.

One of the students that our church supports with a high school scholarship through Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections has graduated! Thapelo Malakoane, of Lesotho, Africa, graduated last December! Our church has supported Thapelo for about five years and we are so pleased to see that he has completed this part of his education. Thapelo is interested in continuing his studies and hopes to become a doctor someday. Please continue to keep him in your prayers.

John Schmidt, Missions Ministry co-chair

### MEAL FOR JOSEPH'S HOUSE



Our church will be providing the evening meal at Joseph's House homeless shelter in Troy on Sunday, **February 18**. This is "Code Blue" season, so we may be feeding up to 80 people. We are seeking volunteers to help prepare the meal in our church kitchen following the morning service, make cookies or help serve the meal in the evening. Please contact Kevin (518-253-4907, [e.kevin.conley@gmail.com](mailto:e.kevin.conley@gmail.com)) if you have questions or would like to help.

### STYROFOAM RECYCLING

Thank you for saving and bringing in your Styrofoam for recycling. In mid-January, the Eco-team delivered 8-10 large bags of clean Styrofoam - a very full pickup truck load - to Shelter Enterprises, Inc. in Cohoes. What do they do with it? SEI grinds Styrofoam, generically known as polystyrene, to fluffy foam material, places it into a chamber, compacts it into long stakes, knots the stakes into a ball of compacted polystyrene and sends it to companies that recycle it on a large scale. Be sure to start your collection now, because the Eco-Team will conduct another Styrofoam recycling campaign on April 22nd in recognition of Earth Week. Remember, it must be clean and free of tape and staples. Thank you!



### A UNITED METHODIST ASSIGNMENT FOR THE MARCH BELL

**First**, for everyone in our church family, read the article at the link below. If you can't make the internet connection, copies of the article are available on the table in the church foyer or by contacting the church office for a copy.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/18-ways-to-be-more-united-methodist-in-18>

**Second**, pick one of the 18 suggestions in the article to follow right now or in the near future.

**Third**, email a message to [editor@fumceg.org](mailto:editor@fumceg.org) by Tuesday, **February 20** telling how you fulfilled or plan on fulfilling the suggestion. Please put "18 Suggestions" on the subject line of your email. We will try to publish responses in the March issue of The Church BELL.



## Who Cares?

### MINISTRY TEAMS

Our Church Council (formerly known as the Administrative Council) recently approved a change in our organizational structure to address some concerns. The change is being referred to as a "New Vision" for our church. It was pointed out that it is becoming more and more difficult to recruit members for committee work. Making a three-year commitment is a lot to ask. Another concern is a lack of communication between and among committees.

As a solution, a new "Ministry Model" was proposed to replace the present "Committee Model". We are now in the process of adding a "Caring Ministries" umbrella which would include these current groups or teams: Eco-Team, Missions and Social Responsibilities, Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns, Knitting Group, Lay Shepherding, Family Support Ministry, Coffee House and Reconciling Ministries. Other groups may be added in the future. John Schmidt will serve as our Caring Ministry coordinator.

A second ministry team referred now as the "Education Ministries" has also been added. This includes Sunday School, the Youth Group, VBS, Adult Programs for Bible Study and Discussion Groups, the Moms' Group, and Special Topics Group. The new Education Ministry coordinator will be Carrie Larson.

Ministry coordinators will be meeting with team leaders to share ideas, projects, progress and needs. Leaders will be encouraged to invite others from the congregation to participate in projects or activities. Our Caring Ministry and Education Ministry Coordinators will also be meeting periodically throughout the year with the minister and Lay Leader to improve communication. Communication about current and future program activities supportive of the mission and vision of an "alive Christian community" should help people find more places to join in and share their passion for helping and learning. A review of the impact of the new Ministry Model will take place next spring.

It is our hope that we can increase our effectiveness with a new approach, and in the future, more groups will consider moving to the new Ministry Model as we strive to be the hands, feet and compassionate heart of Jesus. Who cares? We do!

### A PRAYER FOR PEACE

*Creator, open our heart  
To peace and healing between all people.  
Creator, open our hearts to provide  
and protect for all children of the earth.  
Creator, open our hearts to respect for the  
earth,  
and all the gifts of the earth.  
Creator, open our hearts  
to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all.  
Thank-you for the gifts of this day and every  
day.  
(Native American-Micmac- Alycia Longriver-*