



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2019

Sundays at FUMC:

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

Also on Sundays:

- ♦ Service at Hawthorne Ridge - 1:00 pm

We are on the Web:

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Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,
Pastor

Gail Welkley,
Administrative Assistant

Dear Members and Friends,

The other day I came across some interesting epitaphs. This one is in Georgia: "I told you I was sick!" What about this one in Maryland: "Here lies an atheist, all dressed up and no place to go." But there is one in England that hits too close to home: "Dead at 30; buried at 60." Epitaphs reveal a truth that we all must face. This truth is that all of us whether we want to or not will leave a legacy. When we die, we will leave some lasting mark which will reflect what we did with our precious gift of time on earth. This comes as a sobering truth to many (perhaps even for you), for if you look around your neighborhood, work-place, and community you will find those who fulfill the English epitaph. They have already died and are just waiting for burial. Their life is without meaning, purpose, or direction. They live paycheck to paycheck, Friday to Friday, or vacation to vacation. They are like the man who wrote:

"I get up each morning, dust off my wits. Pick up the paper, and read the bits. If my name is missing, I know I'm not dead. So I eat a good breakfast-and go back to bed." The Apostle Paul would describe this person as the "living dead." And the legacy he would leave behind would be sad, indeed - the talents wasted, a destiny wasted, a life wasted. Dead at 30, buried at 60.

Let me ask you a pointed question: "What will be said about you when your life is ended? What will be said about you at your funeral?" or perhaps a better question is: "How would you like to be remembered?" Maybe you would like to be remembered as a nice person. That's not bad, or maybe you would like to be remembered as a success - a person who excelled at a particular skill or profession. Or perhaps you want to be remembered as a wonderful father, a good mother, a great sister, or supportive brother. Our culture would certainly have no problems with these legacies. For, in proper perspective, they are noble.

However, our faith calls us to be more than just nice, good, and successful persons. As worthy as these qualities are, we are called to be more. Unfortunately, "more" for many means more pleasure, more position, more power and more prestige. But more of only these things leads to less, and less usually leads to empty. Maybe the "good life" and the evaporating fun of party and play is just not cutting it anymore. Could it be that your life has become meaningless and empty and you desire something

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A Reconciling Congregation

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more? If this is true, maybe you are ready now to make the move from success to significance.

Apostle Peter and the other apostles made this significant move. We find in the Holy Scriptures (Acts 5: 27-32) Jesus's apostles taking a courageous stand for Christ. They were told repeatedly by the enemies of Jesus to stop preaching the Good News of God's love, or they would suffer. But the apostles were not intimidated. They were so compelled and consumed by the power and purpose of the gospel that they considered it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Jesus. They were determined to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ until their dying day. However, they did not always live such significant lives until they met Jesus. When Jesus came along and invited them to follow him, they left their successful fishing business and followed him. When Jesus invited them to help him transform the world, they walked away from their previous vocations and comfortable lifestyles to follow Jesus. They left the ordinary in order to do the extraordinary. They said good-bye to mediocrity and said hello to God's mission. They could not resist the pull of ultimate meaning, purpose, and adventure. Surely, it was scary, but they were willing to take the leap of faith in order to be more than just average people, living an average life, achieving average goals.



Painting by Harry Anderson. Photo by Travis S/Flickr

Sir Frances Drake's sailors used to sit on the coasts of England and share stories of the sea with young men. But the sailors did not talk about the pleasure of the sea. They proudly spoke of the sea's danger. They shared tales of high waves and stout winds and gallant ships riding out the storms. The young men were so compelled by the thought of such adventure that many of them ran away from home to become a part of it!

Jesus walks on the shores of our lives today and tempts us with the experience of his impossible grace. He calls us just as he called the disciples of old: "You want adventure? Follow me. You want challenge? Follow me. You want excitement? Follow me. You want to fulfill your destiny? Follow me. You want to experience transformation in your self and in others? Follow me. Follow me into the high waves of world-changing, hate-breaking, sin-binding, and love-finding ministry!"

We may not have the gifts of a Moses, Peter, Paul or John Wesley, but all of us have been given gifts, talents, and skills to be used to change our world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you don't know what your gifts are, ask God to reveal them to you, and God will, with great delight. It is important that you discover your spiritual gifts. For I believe one day we will all give an account of the gifts we used and the gifts we refused to use for the glory of God. That is what the parable of the talents is all about. Remember what happened to the man who buried his talent in the ground? Well, let's just say that the person who gave him the talent was very disappointed. There is nothing more tragic than a buried talent (Find out what your gifts are: gifts.churchgrowth.org).

What are you doing with the gifts God has given you? Are your mothers, fathers, sisters or brothers, even the cat and dog better and different because you are a Christian? Are your co-workers, neighbors, friends, and even enemies better and different because you are a Christian? Are the people with whom you spend a significant amount of time better and different because of your witness to them? Have you made a difference in people's lives by sharing with them the unbelievable love that has been lavished upon you? You see, the essence of risking and

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sacrificing, the essence of all this adventure and challenge for Christ is to witness change - change in ourselves, change in others, change in institutions, and change in the world through the saving love and power of Jesus Christ! Are you giving your best? If you live up to Christ's words, your legacy will be eternal.

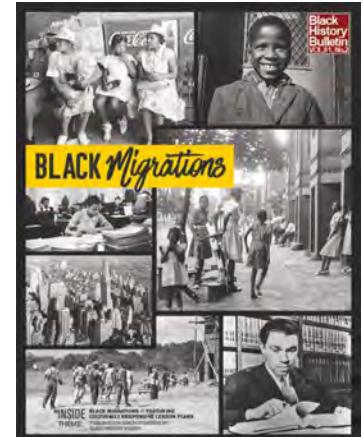
Shalom,
Pastor Sundar

WORSHIP AT FUMC IN FEBRUARY

February is Black History Month on the United Methodist calendar. Our church doesn't have an official theme but we can borrow one from The Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

"...**Black Migrations** emphasizes the movement of people of African descent to new destinations and subsequently to new social realities. . . [such as] relocation from southern farms to southern cities; from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West; from the Caribbean to US cities as well as to migrant labor farms. . .[and] the emergence of both black industrial workers and black entrepreneurs; the growing number and variety of urban churches and new religions; new music forms like ragtime, blues, and jazz . . .the blossoming of visual and literary arts..."

How fitting this theme is, given all the discussion today of the movement of people at our borders and the concern for racial diversity in our country. Perhaps this should be an important focus of our thoughts and prayers this month.



Each of the four Sundays in February we will have three worship services. Our early service is at 8:30 am. The regular service is at 9:30 am. And, at 1:00 pm we have a service at Hawthorne Ridge Senior Living Community. Liturgist slots are available for a number Sundays in the winter months for the 9:30 service. Contact Karen Terwilliger if you would like to serve the church in this way.

Interested in leading an early morning worship service? A message could be based on the lectionary reading(s) or on some other scripture of choice. Questions? Speak with Pastor Sundar.

Sunday, February 17th is Random Acts of Kindness Day. This is not an official date on The United Methodist Church calendar but it is celebrated by many people around the world. Plug in "random acts of kindness" on the YouTube website and a long list of stories rolls out, or go to www.randomactsofkindness.org to find other resources. One of the challenges of being United Methodist is to serve people. Surely we can all find at least one RAK that we can do on this day. Just in case, some suggestions are posted on the bulletin board in the church foyer.

Pastor Sundar will be preaching each Sunday in February. He will be away on **March 3**, Transfiguration Sunday. That will be a Laity Sunday. Holy Communion will be celebrated the following Sunday.

Here is the lectionary for February:

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|-------------|--|---|
| February 3 | Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany | Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6;
1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30 |
| February 10 | Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany | Isaiah 6: 1-8 (9-13); Psalm 138;
1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11 |
| February 17 | Sixth Sunday After the Epiphany | Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1;
1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26 |
| February 24 | Seventh Sunday After the Epiphany | Genesis 45:3-11, 15;
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50; Luke 6:27-38 |

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Yum! Yum!

February 3 is Super Bowl Sub Sunday! Youth in grades 6th - 12th will be busy in the kitchen making subs. Pre-school - 5th grade will participate in a Super fun scavenger hunt centered around Bible verses! There will even be a treasure at the end! Hope to see you there!

Sunday, February 17, the Missions Committee is making a lunch for Joseph's House during Sunday School time. They have asked the Sunday School to help! Kids in 3rd grade and up will be helping to make sandwiches and cookies!

The **SOUP AND BREAD** fundraiser held by the Confirmation Class was postponed because of the snowstorm. It is rescheduled for **February 24**, after service. The confirmands will be serving homemade soup in the Fellowship Hall; it can be taken to go as well.

LOVE KITS The Sunday School will be overseeing the Love Kits again this year. What is a Love Kit? You take one of the colorful bags on the table in the church foyer, under the big TV, take it to the store and fill it with bathroom necessities (there is a list of suggested items by the bags), return the bag to the church and put it in the bin labeled "Love Kits" on or before **Sunday, February 10**. The older Sunday School kids will take the Love Kits to the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless in Albany. When a homeless person comes into the shelter, they are given a Love Kit so they can shower! This is a favorite activity of mine, because the youngest Sunday School kids make Valentine cards to put in the bags - this mission involves the youngest members to the "older" members of our congregation!

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Super Bowl Sub Prep - Saturday, February 2 from 1:00 pm-4:00 pm. Please come ready to prepare for Sunday Super Bowl Sub making. The more hands the better. (Parents can help just as much as the kids).

Super Bowl Sub Making Day- Sunday, February 3. Youth in grades 6th - 12th will be making the subs for the fundraiser. We will start at 9:15 am. Come and Help!

Sunday, February 10 - We will be making brunch at the homeless shelter. We will need to leave at 10:30 am sharp. I will need help driving youth, any parent volunteers would be greatly appreciated.

Friday, February 15 - There will be a **Junior High Game Night** 7:00 pm -9:00 pm. Come learn some new games to play.

Sunday February 17 - There will be a **Senior High** meeting at 11:00 am. We will be making lunch and planning a party for the kids at St. Catherine's Center For Children. (**Sunday, March 31** at 1:00 pm we will be hosting a party for children at St. Catherine's Center For Children).

Friday Night Alive - February 22 at 7:00 pm. Emily and Laura Clark will be singing a duet and Kevin Clark will be speaking about Love (John 3:16). There will be a donation taken for **Youth 2019, Love Well**. After the service there will be youth game night from 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm.

YOUTH 2019

We have three youth and one leader that are very excited to be going to **Youth 2019**. We will be hosting all sorts of fundraisers to earn funds needed to go to **Youth 2019**. There will also be ways to support the youth in their adventure across the USA to Kansas City, Missouri. Stay tuned to see why they want to go to **Youth 2019, Love Well**.

ROMANS 12:9-10

LOVE WELL
YOUTH 2019
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI | JULY 10-14, 2019

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The UMW monthly meeting is **Monday, February 4** at 7:00 pm in room 16. All women of the church are welcome to attend. We may be discussing the cold weather and other upcoming events such as the District UMW meeting in **April** and the Lenten Lunches which will be starting in **March**.

Blanket Sunday is on **February 24** during the worship service. Blankets are distributed by Church World Service during humanitarian and disasters crises throughout the world. Each blanket costs \$10.00. Any amount donated is greatly appreciated. The collection is made through the United Methodist Women of our church as part of our mission projects. Make checks payable to the UMW. If you donate online, please indicate what it is for so the church treasurer and the UMW treasurer can coordinate the funds. We will collect donations through **Sunday, March 24**. Thank you.



ACTIVE SHOOTER AWARENESS TRAINING



Does life seem precarious and less predictably safe? Churches and schools, thought to be safe "sanctuaries", are becoming scenes of shooter violence. To address the issue of active shooters in churches, an Active Shooter Awareness Training will be held on **Wednesday evening, February 27** at 7:00 pm at the First United Methodist Church in East Greenbush. Deputy James Phelps of the Rensselaer County Sheriff's Department will lead a training and active shooter awareness and safety plans. Adults and teens accompanied by their parent(s) are invited to attend this 1½-hour training.

NOTES FROM OUR ANNUAL CHARGE CONFERENCE

We held our Annual Charge Conference on Sunday, November 25 following morning worship. The conference was led by the Rev. Robert "Bob" Long. Pastor Bob shared how he feels "Inspired and Uplifted" whenever he hears Pastor Sundar preach, and the trusts and gifts he shares to all. He shared that Rachel John, who recently presented a Mission Trip at our Supper On Sunday (S.O.S.), grew up in the Emmaus Methodist Church in Albany and she has truly grown into a "Magnificent Person".

One of the highlights at the meeting was the Election by written ballot for open spots on the Board of Trustees. Two of three spots have been filled by the election of Richard Daniels and James Perry for 2019-2021. We all have Gifts we can give and Rev. Long shared we have **one more open spot for the Trustees**, and we are currently looking for a female to fill it. Pastor Sundar shared the Lay Leadership Team has **two open spots for Staff Parish**. If anyone has an interest, please let Pastor Sundar know, or any member of the Lay Leadership Team. These are just a few of the areas where we are needed, so... let us all search for our "Gifts" and Pray on them for God's guidance to lead us where we can be used.

-- Tracey Haines, Recording Secretary

MEAL FOR JOSEPH'S HOUSE

Our church will be providing the noon meal at Joseph's House homeless shelter in Troy on **Sunday, February 17**. This is "Code Blue" season, so we may be feeding 80 people. We are seeking volunteers to help make sandwiches and cut vegetables following the morning service. Children in Sunday School will help by making cookies. Please contact Kevin (518-253-4907 or e.kevin.conley@gmail.com) if you have questions or would like to help.

BOOK STUDY PLANNED FOR LENT

Starting **Monday March 4th and Tuesday March 5th**, we begin a six week study of either John Ortberg's ETERNITY IS NOW IN SESSION or Adam Hamilton's SIMON PETER. Each week, in a small-group setting, we will review what we have read and cover one of the topics. The study sessions are approximately 90 minutes and are held in the youth lounge. Please watch for further information in the Sunday bulletin and register for either session with the church office by **Tuesday, February 26th**. A donation of \$10 is suggested for the book. For information, contact Kevin Conley (e.kevin.conley@gmail.com, 518-253-4907) or Pastor Samuel.

SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE INFORMATION

"The Council of Bishops has called a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to be held **February 23-26**, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri. The purpose will be to receive and act on a report from *The Commission on a Way Forward* based on the recommendations of the Council of Bishops. The 32-member Commission was authorized by General Conference 2016 and appointed by the Council of Bishops to examine paragraphs in The Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and exploring options to strengthen the unity of the church."

The final report of *The Commission on a Way Forward* has been translated into French, Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili and is now available for download at The United Methodist Church website, www.umc.org.

This special session has the potential to make a significant change in structure and direction of our United Methodist Church. To keep up to date, subscribe to the following newsletters:

- **"UM News Daily Digest"** (<https://www.umnews.org/en/tag/daily-digest>)
- **"United Methodist Now"** (<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/united-methodist-now-inspiration-for-daily-living>)
- Upper New York Annual Conference **"Weekly Digest"** (www.unyumc.org/news/weekly-digest)

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church which meets every four years. The next **regular** session of General Conference will take place **May 5-15, 2020**, at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Questions? Contact Pastor Sundar, Rachel Giso or George Herrick.

FEBRUARY FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Finance Committee would like to thank everyone for their continued support for the ministries of our Church. At the January Church Council meeting, a 2019 budget was adopted. That budget totals \$335,000 and estimates that we will spend about as much as we have, including carryover money from 2018. If anyone wants more information about the 2019 budget, please feel free to contact the Finance Committee.

The Committee was happy we were able to present a balanced budget to the Church Council. Even still, please keep our Church's financial health in your prayers. Through the support received from our members and friends throughout the year, we are able to grow our ministries in our community and beyond.



IN NEED OF A KIND WORD?



Are you aware of anyone in our church family who is going through a difficult time? Could they use a meal or a home visit? If so, please contact Pastor Sundar, Gail in the office, Mary McIntosh or Sue Lemka.

GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The Caring Ministries of our church would like to thank you for your continued support of those in need, as well as caring for our environment. Our church-wide Christmas Card raised \$1,047 in December which will go to CoNCERNS-U, water.org., Family Assistance and UMCOR Disaster Relief, as well as other charities that you specified. Gifts plus close to \$200 in gift cards were given to needy children during the *Three Kings Celebration* at Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel in Albany on January 6. Eleven flood buckets were also filled on January 6, and \$705 was donated to UMCOR Disaster Relief over the past year. Our thanks to Susie Calyer and Gary Klee for coordinating our latest flood bucket campaign. A truck-load of Styrofoam was collected last month, headed by Kevin Conley, which was taken to Cohoes where it will be prepared for recycling. This is Styrofoam that will be kept out of rapidly filling landfills. Our Knitting Group led by Aleta Schweigert donated 65 scarves to *Foster Care to Success* last year. This year's project will be **Hatsgiving**, where hats are made and given to children with Cancer. We appreciate the care that our congregation continues to demonstrate as we strive to be the hands, the feet and the compassionate heart of Christ.



BUILDING A MORE LITERATE WORLD



Of the many things that we can count on God for, we can be assured that He will continue to provide opportunities for us to help others. Our church reaches out to those in need locally, nationally and globally thanks to your generosity. One of the many organizations that our church supports is Literacy Volunteers of Rensselaer County. **For over fifty years, LVORC has been providing assistance to children and adults who need help with reading, writing and speaking.** Most people probably do not realize the extent of the need. It is estimated that **36 million American adults need literacy help.**

Only 3 million of them will be lucky enough to get it. In the United States, 14% of adults read at or below a 5th grade level, 29% read at only an 8th grade level. Among those with the lowest levels of literacy, 43% live in poverty. In Rensselaer County, an estimated 30,000 teens and adults can't complete a job application, write a letter to a child's school or read the directions on a medicine bottle. Many adult learners are learning English as a second or third language, while others want to strengthen their English literacy skills.

How can you help? One way is to join me as volunteer tutor. Other than a little time and an interest in helping others, there are very few requirements of tutors and training is available. You will find that it can be a very rewarding use of your time. **For more information, call Literacy Volunteers at 518-244-4650 and talk with Judy Smith or Marie Heller, or visit their website at www.lvorc.org.**

-- John Schmidt, LVORC Tutor

STYROFOAM RECYCLING

Due to your strong response, we recycled a truckload of Styrofoam in early January. Styrofoam is non-biodegradable and adds to already stressed landfills. It is a health hazard because it is based on styrene, a neurotoxin and probable carcinogen. Shelter Enterprises, Inc (SEI) in Cohoes will grind it, compact it, and send it to companies that recycle it. Eventually, the recycled polystyrene is used to make products such as park benches and fence posts. FUMC will have another collection event on **April 28**, the Sunday of Earth Week.



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, (Calibri 7pt.) **or prohibiting the free exercise thereof: (Bodoni MT Black 6pt.) or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; (Lucinda Calligraphy 5pt.) An aside: Thanks for reading the fine print. Now, be first. Contact the church office and ask for the prize. (Ar Blanca 11pt.) or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, (Ercadway 6pt.) and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (Times New Roman 7pt.)**

- ◆ This from the bulletin for "A Service of Celebration For the Life of Rev. Richard L. "Dick" Sears" - it's a quote from Erma Bombeck that I expect Dick himself selected: "*When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say 'I used everything You gave me'.*" Dick was our pastor from 1983-1986. He died December 11, 2018.

- ◆ **The following from a news release** from Upper New York Communication, dated January 29:

"We do not know what to expect at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference taking place **Feb. 23-26** in St. Louis, MO and this uncertainty can be uncomfortable. Whatever the outcome of Special Session is, our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world will continue. There may be a new reality that we will have to acclimate to so that we can continue to fulfill our mission as United Methodists. To that end, Upper New York Area Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb will host an all-clergy gathering and six regional gatherings to process the new reality.

"Bishop Webb said, 'The purpose of these gatherings is for us to gather together after the Special Session of General Conference to worship together, pray together, understand the decisions or actions of the Special Session, and remember our individual and collective call to ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.'"

The gathering for laity and clergy in our area is **Thursday, March 21** from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Shenendehowa UMC.

- ◆ **The Red Cross Bloodmobile** came to FUMC on January 25th. This season with the holidays and unpredictable weather usually see a drop in blood donations which made our day very important. We asked people to give to honor the memory of our Lee Pierce. Twenty eight units were collected this year.
- ◆ **The Reconciling Ministry** "no ticket, no reservation" brunch on Sunday, January 27 was a big success. Somewhere around sixty people participated. There were pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon and sausage, chopped fruit, pastries and beverages. Thanks to all who worked to set up the Fellowship Hall, to the kitchen crew and to those who cleaned up. A comment heard more than once: "We need to do this again".
- ◆ Both clergy and lay members of The United Methodist Church have the power to **submit petitions** to be heard and acted upon at Annual Conference. For more information, contact the church office before the submission deadline of **Friday, March 15**.

CABIN FEVER COFFEE HOUSE UPDATE

A wonderfully successful Cabin Fever Coffee House was held on Friday, January 18 in our Fellowship Hall. Decorated with themes of winter, spring and fall, the Hall came alive with 12 acts...The Trackers blue grass songs, Treskele with a Family Medley, Chris C with an original song, recorders, sing a longs, Bill B with a medley of Elvis songs, and the list of entertaining, sometimes poignant, sometimes funny acts goes on. The UMW provided a "Medley" of delicious treats and the Mistress of Chatter, chatted away. The winter blues were dispelled and on this pre-storm winter night, over \$200 was raised to help families in our church who are experiencing crises meet food, heat and gas bills.

