



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 3

MARCH, 2021

At Church on Sundays:

- ◆ Early Informal Service
8:30 am - Fellowship Hall
- ◆ Regular Service 9:30 am
- ◆ Live stream on Facebook
and Available on YouTube
that same afternoon
- ◆ Sunday School to be
announced

Visit us on the Web:

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www.facebook.com/FUMCEG

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Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,
Pastor

Gail Welkley,
Administrative Assistant

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In about four weeks from when you received and read this newsletter, we will be in the week of Passion in Jesus' life. First, the Palm Sunday, second, it is Holy Thursday and then Good Friday.

Colorful preacher Clarence Jordan was once taken on a tour of one of the greatest churches in America. As the tour guide brought him to the very front of the church where he could look at the altar, the guide said: "do you see that cross? It's a gold cross. It was donated by one of our wealthiest members in memory of his wife. That cross, Mr. Jordan," he continued, "which is covered with gold leaf, cost over \$750,000." Rev. Jordan responded, "Shucks! Time was you could get one for free!" And that's true. Offend enough of the right people and you can always get a cross for free. Jesus didn't pay \$750,000 for his cross. All it cost him was his life.



I want to invite you to join me so that together during the next four weeks we can commemorate Christ's crucifixion. We remind ourselves of the agony our Lord experienced that sacred night in order that we might know how much we mean to God. Prophet Isaiah foretold of his agony hundreds of years before Christ was born. He wrote of Christ: "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Not everybody in these enlightened times wants to be reminded of that dark night long ago when our Savior was crucified on a cross. Barclay described, crucifixion was one of the cruelest means of persecution that has ever been devised. It was a terrible way to die. And, without being ghoulish about it, we need at least once a year to give it the acknowledgement it deserves. Scripture says, "Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering. Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken

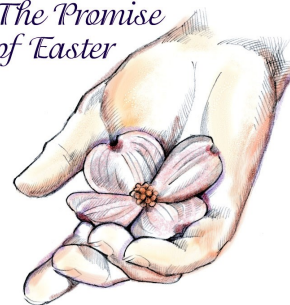
A Reconciling Congregation

by him and afflicted, while we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord who has loved us from everlasting to everlasting laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Author and radio speaker Ron Hutchcraft has his own powerful example of the kind of sacrifice Christ gave in our behalf. He tells about a young man named Tony. "Tony was one of the best-liked teachers in our kids' junior high school," says Hutchcraft. "And one summer day when he was helping me paint our house, I learned a lot about his background, a lot that was very surprising.

Tony told Hutchcraft that he grew up in a very rough neighborhood that was sharply divided into ethnic groups and gangs. Like most of his friends in his neighborhood Tony grew up to be a fighter. Five of his good friends died in gang violence. In just two months' time, two more of his gang friends were sentenced to prison terms. Hutchcraft asked, "Tony, how did you ever get out of all that? How'd you end up doing so well?" This answer blew Ron Hutchcraft away. With tears in his eyes he said, "One of those friends who died was my best friend. See, there was a gang flight one night. One guy was coming behind me with a blade. It was intended for me, but my friend stepped in front of it. My friend took my knife, and that changed the course of my whole life."

*The Promise
of Easter*



Wouldn't it make a difference in your life if someone took a knife intended for you? Of course, someone did. Our friend Jesus Christ took a knife on the cross for each one of us. We should have gotten the knife of God's judgment, but Jesus stepped in and took my knife, and your knife. That death Jesus died on the cross wasn't for his sins. He didn't have any. His death was for my sins and your sins.

As we celebrate Good Friday, we are reminded of an enormous debt that we owe to the one who gave his life for ours. And behind that sacrifice lays a love we can only imagine. It's like the love of a parent for its child, but even purer and everlasting.

Some of you will remember the story of a certain medieval monk who announced he would be preaching the next Sunday evening on "the Love of God." As the shadows fell and light ceased to come through the great cathedral windows, the congregation gathered. In the darkness of the altar, the monk lit a candle and carried it to the crucifix. First of all, he illumined the crown of thorns; next, the two wounded hands; then the marks of the spear wound in the side. In the hush that fell, he blew out the candle and left the chancel. There was nothing else to say. The love of God is Jesus' life given for us.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed..."

During the next four weeks of Lent let us remember that and meditate on the cross of Christ, and after the sixth Sunday of Lent we will come together and celebrate, Easter!

May God bless and keep you and yours safe today and always.

God's peace is with you!
Pastor Sundar

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LECTIONARY FOR MARCH, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter

March 7 – 3rd Sunday in Lent – Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25;
John 2:13-22

March 14 – 4th Sunday in Lent – Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22;
Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

March 21 – 5th Sunday in Lent – Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12;
Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

March 28 – Palm/Passion Sunday – **(Palm Texts)** Mark 11:1-11;
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29;

(Passion Texts) Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15:47 or
Mark 15:1-39 (40-47)

April 1 – Maundy Thursday – Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10), 11-14; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

April 2 – Good Friday – Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22;

April 4 – Easter Day – Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11;
John 20:1-18 (Mark 16:1-8)



SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Lenten season has begun. We are looking forward to spring to come back together. For now we are still virtual but please keep a look out we will email everyone when that changes.

Friday Night Alive will be March 5 and March 19 at 6:30 pm. Watch out for a zoom link



Palm Sunday is March 28 - We will be coming together for this. Please meet at the Church at 9:15 am we will have a Parade of Palms (children safely waving palms around the church). Weather permitting we will be outside but we do have a plan "B" that is COVID safe if weather is not on our side. We will do a resurrection story with the kids, and an Easter egg scavenger hunt. We will then send kids home with a craft. Please dress according to the weather. We are asking for families to stay together.

Please RSVP for the Easter Egg Scavenger hunt to Amber at youthleaderamber@gmail.com.

YOUTH GROUP

Thank you to everyone who has donated items for love kits. All love kit items and decorated bags are due at the church by March 7.

If any youth would like to volunteer to help put love kits together we will be doing this on March 14 from 11:30 am -12:30 pm. Please email Amber to let her know if you can make it.

Senior High Youth Group (7th -12th Grade) Will be having a zoom youth group meeting on March 21 at 1:00 pm.



Blessings,
Amber Telford
youthleaderamber@gmail.com

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The UMW is having its regular monthly meeting on Monday, March 1 at 7:00 pm. We will be discussing the Spring Thrift Sale and the Flea Market. All women of the church are invited to attend. New ideas are always welcome. The meeting will be held in the Choir Room.



FAMILY ASSISTANCE MINISTRIES

A Caring Ministry of Our Church

Before COVID-19 challenged us and changed our lives, members of our church family experienced life changing crises that affected health and the ability to pay bills. The types of crises that impacted families who participated still impact families in addition to the stresses of COVID. Our church has always reached out to neighbors with a "helping hand". When all other community resources were used and couldn't meet immediate needs of our families, our church developed a live saving program...the Family Assistance Ministry.



About 8 years ago, Zarina, Reema (seeking sanctuary) and Roman Khan, from Pakistan, became members of our church. Health and political sanctuary status impacted all aspects of their lives and the Church community started the Zarina Fund to help with the finances of survival. Some of their rent, medicines, transportation, food and education expenses were supported through this Fund.

The Zarina Fund became The Long Term Family Assistance Fund which is now named **The Family Assistance Fund**. Zarina now lives in Philadelphia with relatives of her generation. Roman and his wife, Ursala, and their year old baby, Ethan, recently moved to Georgia to work in the business of a good friend. Reema, in part due to the inability of sanctuary seekers in the US to move through the system to reach citizenship and financial independence, moved back to Pakistan to be with her husband, Soloman. All are financially independent and share that the Church family gave them "life". (Information shared with their permission).

Over the years, 19 people, 6 families, have participated in the Family Assistance Fund, 4 of the 6 families now financially independent and thriving. Two families now participate and there may be more in our church community who need a little help from FAM and don't know about the program. All comment that the Church community literally saved their lives.

It is important to know that each of us could be a family in crisis and don't know where to turn. Once all community services have been accessed and fail to address concerns, FAM can help with funds for food, gas, medicine, etc. FAM participants can meet to brainstorm solutions to ongoing crises, learn of community resources and get support when under so much stress. All is confidential.

Please contact either Carrie Larson or John Schmidt if you or someone you know needs help and please contribute to the Family Assistance Ministry...your contributions bring lifesaving support to our church members.

ASSISTANT CHURCH TREASURER APPOINTED

The Church Council has approved the appointment of Linette Burns as an Assistant Church Treasurer. Linette has been attending our church for a little over three years after moving back to East Greenbush from Manchester, Maine. In Maine she was active in the Green St. United Methodist Church in Augusta, Maine where she served for many years as the Missions Commission treasurer as well as on their Church Council. She has background in finance as a retired Financial Services Officer with Key Bank. Welcome Linette and thank you.



MISSIONS

DOING SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE

Ten years ago, our church entered into an agreement with the New York State Department of Transportation to keep a two-mile section of Routes 9 & 20 free of trash. Every year since then, environmentally-conscious volunteers gathered four times a year with trash bags in hand to pick up litter along the highway from the Church of the Holy Spirit to the Schodack Walgreens. Mother Teresa once said, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love." If you can spare an hour, and are interested in participating in a "small thing," join us at 8 AM at FUMC on Saturday, April 3, to pick up bags, trash-pickers, vests and helmets. The rain date will be the following Saturday. We welcome older children between the ages of 12-18, however they must be accompanied by a guardian.



The Eco-Team

INTERFAITH PRAYER WALK FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Join the Interfaith Prayer Walk for Climate on Thursday, March 11, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm. The walk is focused on passing the Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA) to make polluters pay for a just transition to carbon-free energy and is one of several events around the State as part of Greenfaith's international Sacred People, Sacred Earth Day of Action. Park at First Lutheran Church, 181 Western Avenue where we will begin the walk and proceed to the State Capitol. For more information, please contact eco-team@fumceg.org.



Attention: if you Knit, Crochet, or Quilt - New Guidelines for 2021

1. Albany Med NICU **will no longer accept** knitted or crocheted blankets and hats for preemies.
For now, they are **not accepting** any baby things.
In the future they will accept blankets for full term babies but must be made of **Baby Yarn**.
Blankets/Quilts must be no smaller than 40" x 40" and no larger than 46"x 46". (and not have large holes which little arms and legs could go through)
Quilts can be made for preemies with cotton or cotton flannel (not fleece) no smaller than 24"x 24" and no larger than 36"x36".
2. **A need not being met** for Albany Med is **Comfort Blankets/Afghans** for patients who are dying. They can be knit, crocheted or quilted but must be at least 4 ft x 4 ft. They can be larger but not smaller. These are given to the families after the patient's passing.
3. The **VA Hospital is not accepting** afghans now due to COVID 19 – They hope to be able to use them later this year. Afghans must be 4 ft x 4 ft or 4 ft x 6 ft
4. If you like smaller projects- soft hats for children with cancer will be collected in the fall- any size, any color- hatsgiving.org

These are some purposeful projects we can create during all this time we are spending at home. If you have any ideas or questions or need assistance or materials, please contact me. aleta.schweigert@gmail.com or 518-479-3182

UMCOR SUNDAY - March 14

UMCOR Sunday is March 14, 2021. Disasters like winter storms in Texas and wildfires in California are more common with climate change. UMCOR As the humanitarian relief and development arm of the Church, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) equips churches and individuals for ministry with persons in need. UMCOR responds to U.S. and international disasters, addresses diseases and poverty, assists refugees and immigrants, provides clean water and works to reduce hunger. UMCOR would be unable to do this work without your support. Absolutely 100 percent of your gifts to UMCOR projects support mission and ministry. No overhead costs are allocated from gifts to projects. For more than 80 years, United Methodists have faithfully given to UMCOR Sunday (formerly One Great Hour of Sharing). Thank you! (Source: <https://umcmmission.org/umcor/>)



Please give generously. Write your check to our East Greenbush church with "UMCOR" on the memo line and place it in the offering or mail it to the church.

SPRING IS COMING

The spring brings green grass and flowers. The Trustees are trusting that despite all the changes in our lives in 2020 and the beginning of 2021, the grass will turn green and grow, flowers will bloom, the weeds will make their appearance. Volunteers are needed for mowing, trimming, planting and weeding. Mowing the Church lawn takes about 3 ½ hours. With one or two more volunteers each person will need to mow only once a month. Trimming half of the property takes about 40 minutes, the other half can be done the following week. We have volunteer gardeners working on the major flower beds, they could use additional help.

Interested in lawn related work, please contact Peter Larson at 518-732-2098. Interested in gardening, please contact Patty Chartrand at 518-308-9538 or Susie Calyer at 518-858-1102.

Do you want to fast this Lent?

In the words of Pope Francis

Fast from hurting words and say kind words
Fast from sadness & be filled with gratitude
Fast from anger and be filled with patience
Fast from pessimism & be filled with hope
Fast from worries & have trust in God
Fast from complaints & contemplate simplicity
Fast from pressure and be prayerful
Fast from bitterness & fill your hearts with joy
Fast from selfishness & be compassionate
Fast from grudges and be reconciled
Fast from words & be silent so you can listen



SOME NOTES ABOUT WORSHIP FOR MARCH AND EASTER

Worship services are live streamed on Facebook. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FUMCEG/>. They are usually posted to YouTube later the same day at [Worship Service FUMCEG - YouTube](#).

- We feel it is now safe for a limited number of people to attend services at 8:30 am in the Fellowship Hall and 9:30 am in the Sanctuary. Masks will be required at all services.
- Watch for the Sunday Worship Memo that is emailed each week for the latest information.
- **March 28 is Palm Sunday.** Palm Parade begins about 9:15 am. See "Sunday School" on the page 3 for more information. Small palm crosses usually available at this service are this year included with this Church BELL mailing. They will also be available for pick-up from baskets at both doors of the church, as long as the supply lasts.
- **April 1 is our Maundy Thursday** service. It will be live streamed beginning at 7:00 pm. We expect that a limited number of people will be able to attend in person. Masks will be required.

Our **Maundy Thursday Prayer Vigil** will begin at 8:30 pm following the evening worship service and continue through 5:00 pm Friday. You can sign-up to cover one or more one-half hour blocks of time at link address. You can sign up to participate in the Lenten Prayer Vigil at church, from home, or from home using Zoom to see the Sanctuary. You can sign-up for a time slot at

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13Yli9sbjyx9JbWN1hNe9sp0UfqykD0lxwBsdUVJ56O8/edit?usp=sharing>. . You can call the Church office to sign-up too.

If you want to Zoom into church during the Lenten Prayer Vigil from home, the Zoom link and information is below.

Topic: Lenten Prayer Vigil

Time: Apr 1, 2021 08:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91763187298?pwd=Q3lHclF6cjZoSlhiYXhZa2V3ZGlnQT09>

Meeting ID: 917 6318 7298

Passcode: fumceg.



You can participate in prayer at home or at the church. A Zoom session of the church sanctuary will be available for the entire prayer vigil so you can "be" at the sanctuary from home. When you sign up you will be asked if you will be **coming** into the sanctuary, will participate from home, or will participate via Zoom. If anyone signs up to come into the sanctuary at night, we have volunteers who have agreed to be in the building overnight.

- **April 2.** Our **Good Friday** service will be live streamed beginning at 7:00 pm. We expect that a limited number of people will be able to attend in person. Masks will be required. The choir and readers will offer Joseph Martin's cantata "The Lenten Sketches" during this service.
- On **Easter Sunday** we expect to have a sunrise service at 6:30 am in the outdoor chapel. Masks must be worn, and socially distanced seating will be required. We plan to hold Easter services in the sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. The 9:30 service will be live streamed on Facebook and posted to YouTube shortly after it is finished. **Important information: Attendance in the sanctuary at Easter services will be limited following guidelines in place at that time. We may ask you to sign up and let us know how many people will be coming, and we may assign seating. Masks will be required. Please watch for updates on Easter services via email or call the church**