



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# THE BELL

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

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 11

DECEMBER 2021

## At Church on Sundays:

- ♦ 8:30 am in Fellowship Hall
- ♦ 9:30 am Sanctuary Service

Also streaming live on Facebook, available on YouTube same afternoon

- ♦ Sunday School  
9:30 am—10:30 am
- ♦ Youth Group see inside

## Visit us on the Web:

[www.fumceg.org](http://www.fumceg.org) and  
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**Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,**  
**Pastor**

**Gail Welkley,**  
**Administrative Assistant**

## Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As this Advent season begins, what have you promised yourself about the holidays this year? Are you vowing to have a simpler Christmas? Planning to be available for some activity you love, or time with beloved people? What promises are ahead for your family? Do you know some kids who are waiting eagerly to see what Santa will bring? Adults who are waiting eagerly to collapse and finally get some rest? People who find this time of year hard, and are just hoping to get through it?



Boys prepare for Christmas

This is the season when we stop and see the wealth of God's promise to us as people of faith. We all have our own plans and promises to make and keep, but we are also swept up into God's plans at this time of year.

Writing to the people of faith in the city of Thessalonica, apostle Paul is reminding them of promises that God has already kept in their lives (I Thessalonians 3: 9-13). The book of Acts (Chapter 17) reminds us about apostle Paul's time with the church in Thessalonica. Paul and Silas come to town and speak in the synagogue there, and tell the story of Jesus, "explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead" saying, "This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you." "Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas as did a great many of the devout Greeks and a few of the leading women." But some of the people in town are not persuaded. In fact, they're mad. They run Paul and Silas out of town. In this letter, apostle Paul writes to those who believe, and he commends those who believed the message of the Good News of Jesus the Christ.

It's a lot like us being a Christian in our world. Our lives are packed with idols and fake gods, too. Just like the people of Thessalonica, we're surrounded by idols. Ours come in disguise, so they're harder to avoid. Our old friend consumerism comes out in full force this time of year, and we think that the best gift will fix a relationship or make up for our neglect all year. All year long, this idol tells us that the right car, the right kitchen

(Continued on page 2)

*A Reconciling Congregation*

(Continued from page 1)

upgrade, the right outfit, or the right man cave in the basement will make our lives complete. When it's never does, there's always something else to buy in the hope it will fill a hole inside us.

There are other idols and false gods, too. There's perfectionism. If we just host the perfect party, keep a perfect house, find the perfect job, we think, then our lives will be perfect, too. Then there's the false god of busy-ness. Our culture believes that being busy is a sign that we're doing something important. There's the idol of making our kids fit our expectations, instead of living up to their own talents. There is the false god of appearances and thinking that how we look matters.

There are plenty of idols and false gods all around us. This time of year, they come calling to us especially hard. The holidays ramp everything up, and we can fall into these temptations so easily. Like the early Christians in Thessalonica, we must turn away from the idols and false gods all around us to turn toward Jesus. We must let go of the voices all around us that are telling us to do more, buy more, go faster, and instead turn toward the voice of Jesus.



Advent invites us into a time when we determine to get ready for Jesus' coming into the world again. To get ready, we must do the same thing - turn away from the idols of perfection, busyness, and consumerism. Advent calls us back to our faith, back to the core of who we are, and back from the false gods and idols that speak to us so alluringly.

Rev. Ron Levine writes "Yeshua died for all, not just some of us, and I am not making a pitch: I am passing on a promise" (The Christians Century, January 4-11, 1995). There is nothing that we can make, buy, order, or bake this Christmas that will make God love us any more or any less. There is a promise that has already been made and kept for us. We can turn away from the shiny false gods of our world and turn toward the Living God who promises us abundant joy, through our faith. As apostle Paul prayed for the church and for us, may God "make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all...and may God so strengthen your hearts in holiness." This is the gift that we are promised-all we must do is claim and keep the promise. Wishing you and yours a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year. In the name of the one who is coming again. Amen.

### PRAYER:

O God of promise, we long for your coming with a desperate desire deeper than anything else in our lives. Turn our hearts from shiny things and our eyes from things that don't satisfy and bring us close to you in this Advent season. We know that you are coming to us again, and we long for the deep peace of your presence. Make us ready, we pray, so we can promise ourselves to you again. In the name of the Christ Child. Amen.

Yours in Christ,  
*Pastor Sundar*

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## SOME NOTES ABOUT WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER

Looking over these notes we still see the serious impact the coronavirus pandemic continues to have on our usually very busy Christmas holiday season. A number of services and events will still be missing or altered in this year's schedule.



For the four Sundays of Advent, **November 28, December 5, 12 and 19**, and the first Sunday of the Christmas Season, **December 26**, we will follow our current practice which says that people are welcome to attend the 9:30 am service in person in the sanctuary or watch it live-streamed on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/FUMCEG](http://www.facebook.com/FUMCEG) and on You Tube later that same afternoon at [Worship Service FUMCEG-YouTube](#). The 8:30 am worship service will continue to gather in the Fellowship Hall during the cold weather months.

The **Blue Christmas tree** will be in the church entryway **December 15**. Ornaments and markers will be available from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and again from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm that day for those who wish to come, sign an ornament and hang it on the tree in memory of loved ones or in recognition of other losses. During daylight hours and weather permitting, you are invited to visit the Chapel in the Woods (our outdoor chapel) if you would like some quiet time after hanging your star. Do dress warmly. The Blue Christmas Tree will be in the entryway only on the one day, **December 15**. After that the tree, ornaments and markers will be moved into and available in the sanctuary.



On Christmas Eve, **December 24** we will celebrate with three services, a 5:00 pm service especially for the children of the church. There will also be 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight services. Holy communion will be celebrated at the 9:00 pm service. The 7:00 pm service 'only' will be live-streamed beginning at 7:00 pm, on the church Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FUMCEG/>. That service will also be available later that evening on You Tube at [Worship Service FUMCEG-YouTube](#).

**See page 12 for more details** on worship services for Advent.



**Cookies and Carols** is back! Our annual program of Christmas music and readings is being recorded again this year and will be added to the church Facebook page at 3:00 pm on **December 19**. The program will be available for you to enjoy throughout the Christmas season.

Everyone coming into the church building is encouraged to wear a face mask for the protection of all.

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

## HERE IS THE LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

<b>December 5</b>	Malachi 3:1-4; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 1:68-79; Luke 3:1-6
<b>December 12</b>	Isaiah 12:2-6; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18
<b>December 19</b>	Micah 5:2-5a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45; Luke 1:46b-55
<b>December 26</b>	1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Hello Families,

It is hard to believe we are into Advent! Sunday School has returned to the regular 9:30 am - 10:30 am time frame. On select Sundays we will be offering a children's message during church, then children will be dismissed to their classrooms. Please take note of the Sunday School bulletin boards outside of the Sanctuary so children know if they are to go right to the classroom or church first.

Below is a list of activities for each Sunday during Advent.

**December 5:** Luke 3: 1-6, Youth grades 6-12, Advent painting. PK-5, Nativity sensory bottles and spoon angels.

**December 12:** Luke 3:7-18, Sunday School's traditional Christmas centerpieces from pine branches and ornaments.

**December 19:** Luke 1: 39-45, Making lanterns and hosting the Christmas store.

**December 24:** 5:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Service. If your teen/child is interested in participating in the service please let me know.

We are in the process of updating our roster. Please fill out an updated registration form (on the Sunday School office door) for your teen or child.

We would like to start a Confirmation Class. So far we only have one interested student. Please contact me if your teen is interested in being confirmed this year. Traditionally students confirm when they are in 8th grade, but we will accept 7th graders and anyone who is older than 8th grade that has not yet been confirmed.

Additionally, we are still in need of volunteers to assist with teaching and would like volunteers to give a children's message during church service. Please let me know if you are interested!

Many Blessings,

Amanda Trainor, [EGChristianEdFUMC@gmail.com](mailto:EGChristianEdFUMC@gmail.com)





## UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Can you believe it is December, the last month in 2021!

**Senior Youth Group Grades 6th—12th: December 5** 10:30 am - 1:00 pm will be our regular youth group meeting. We will be preparing to **Encounter God through Advent**, we will also be planning the winter fundraiser and community dinner. There will always be games and food to eat.

**December 10** 7:00 pm — 9:00 pm will be our Friday Night Game Night! Come for youth fellowship and fun with light snacks and we will be welcoming a new flashlight into our youth group!

**December 19** 10:30 am—1:00 pm is **CHRISTMAS PALOOZA!** We will be playing all our favorite Christmas games! Please bring a wrapped gift for the Christmas Game Steal. The presents/gifts (White Elephant) should be around \$10.00. We will be playing other Christmas games and we will be having lunch together.



**Junior Youth Group Grades 3rd - 5th: December 12** from 10:30 am -12:30 pm. We will be doing our **CHRISTMAS PALOOZA**. Please bring a wrapped gift for our present swap game. (Gifts should be around \$10.00). We will also be discussing God through the Advent season and having lunch.

Be on the look out for January's schedule. We will be bringing back *Friday Night Alive!* All are welcome to our FNA Service!

Friends are always welcome to come to youth group! If you have any questions, please email me at [youthleaderamber@gmail.com](mailto:youthleaderamber@gmail.com)

Blessings,  
Amber Telford

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

On **December 12** the UMW is hosting the coffee hour following our 9:30 am worship service. The UMW usually has a cookie exchange at their December meeting. This year we thought it would be fun to include the congregation. We are asking you to make your favorite cookie recipe, wrap the cookies to be exchanged and don't forget the recipe This has been fun for each of us in the past to enjoy someone else's baking. Just bring your wrapped cookies to the kitchen on the 12th and the UMW will handle the rest. Then come to coffee hour and check out all the cookie recipes. Be sure to stay for coffee hour.



## EXPERIENCES DURING THE PANDEMIC

**Poems and Pandemic** is a book that has been put together to tell our church's story of the covid pandemic. It has personal stories, staff experiences and lots of pictures. I need to know how many books I need to print. Please email me at [pjdc560@gmail.com](mailto:pjdc560@gmail.com) to preorder a copy. It is anticipated the cost will be \$15.00 to purchase a book.

Patty Chartrand

## Made By Hand with Love Outreach Missions



Our *Made by Hand* group has been enjoying our get togethers to create and chat. So we will continue meeting through the winter. If you are feeling a little isolated or need an hour out of the house join us. In November we delivered **75 hats** to [hatsgiving.org](http://hatsgiving.org) for kids with cancer. We will continue to make hats and scarves and afghans for other organizations. If you would like a list of particulars, email me. In **January** we will begin a card making project. We welcome any other ideas you may have, or needs you may know of. Thank you to everyone creating love.

Our get togethers for December are Tuesdays 10:00 am on both December 14 and 28. Hope to see you soon.

*Aleta Schweigert*  
aleta.schweigert@gmail.com

## FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE – DECEMBER 2021

Thank you for your support for our Financial Commitment Campaign for 2022. We hope you enjoyed the video posted on Facebook discussing some of our ministries your gifts support. It was a new way to share the information with our online community. Even though the campaign ended on October 31, it's not too late to return your pledge card. I urge you to consider making a pledge to support our church next year.



As we approach the end of the year, we sometimes have people who want to donate marketable securities (like stocks) to the church. Please contact the Church Treasurer or Assistant Treasurers at [Treasurer@fumceg.org](mailto:Treasurer@fumceg.org) to let them know about the gift. They can help by providing any needed information.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support of our church. I'm grateful that my family worships in a community that supports so many ministries and has continued to answer the call to spread the word of Jesus during such an unprecedented time.

*Colleen Rumsey*  
Chair, Finance Committee

## THREE KINGS CELEBRATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

For several years now, our church has joined forces with The Church of the Covenant in Averill



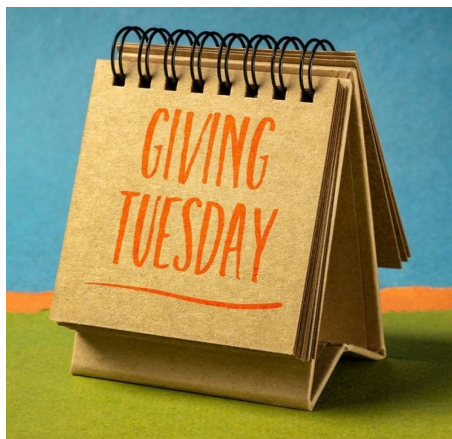
Park, St. Paul's in Castleton, and The Delmar United Methodist Church in support of Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel (Emmanuel Faith Community), a ministry that reaches out to the Hispanic/Latino population of the Capital Area. Pastor Mariana Rodriguez has asked if we would consider once again donating new and gently used toys for children up to 12 years of age for their Three Kings Celebration, in January. If you are willing and able to help make a child's Christmas

season a little brighter this year, there will be a box marked for donations of toys, books, stuffed animals, make-up, and games in the church hallway near the office. Gift cards from Walmart 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.

**iFeliz Navidad!**

*Missions & Social Responsibility Ministry*

## "GIVING TUESDAY" – AN GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY



Giving Tuesday is November 30. Check out the variety of opportunities that United Methodists have to help further God's mission. Stop and think, ask yourself, "What opportunities have I supported in the past?" Be a part of the global generosity movement and celebrate all acts of giving.

"There are so many different ways to express generosity on Giving Tuesday and every day! It's a simple idea: whether it's making someone smile, helping a neighbor or stranger out, showing up for an issue or people we care about, or giving some of what we have to those who need our help, every act of generosity counts and everyone has something to give."

If you need some specific suggestions, check with our Finance Committee. They have a whole list of possibilities

## CORNERSTONE CAMPUS MINISTRY

Three points to make this month for the Protestant ministry on the University of Albany campus.

First, **Bowling-for-Beds** is back. This is the Cornerstone annual fundraiser for the Emergency Homeless Shelter operated by the Capital Area Council of Churches. The date will be Saturday, **February 12** from 12:00 noon to 4:30 pm at Del Lanes in Delmar. More details coming soon. In the meantime, start getting your team together.

Second, the results from the **pre-Thanksgiving Bake Sale** on Sunday, November 21. As of that evening \$2,728 had been raised, an amount that exceeded the amount they raised at the last fall bake sale in 2019. And more money is expected. All these dollars will go to help fund the Cornerstone January Service Trip to Louisiana.



"Hurricane Ida impacts Tangipahoa Parish"  
from The Daily Star, Hammond, LA

Third, the **Winter Break Service-Learning Trip**. On **January 2**, a group of 24 members of UAlbany Cornerstone students and 3 leaders will be traveling to Southeastern Louisiana to work with The Fuller Center Disaster Rebuilders (the "natural disaster" branch of Habitat for Humanity) to address the needs of those impacted by Hurricane Ida. Our Peer Minister Scott Bogart will be one of that group. The group will be returning on Saturday, January 8. The cost per student is approximately \$800. Each student is asked to contribute \$150 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. Members of our church family might be interested in "adopting a student" for the trip. "Adoption" costs \$200 per student (or more if you like). Scott has already been "adopted" but there

are more students needing support. Scott is planning on being back here in East Greenbush later in January to report to us on his trip. For more information on "adoption", contact George Herrick at the church office.



## DECEMBER 1ST - WORLD AIDS DAY

Forty years since the beginning of this [AIDS] epidemic in the U.S., and almost two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, this World AIDS Day 2021 recognizes the challenges of both..." That is the way the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention begins its comments on World AIDS Day.



One way to get a better understanding of what this day is all about is to learn about the AIDS Memorial Quilt. There are interesting videos on the website: <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/quilt-history>. Look especially at the lead video on the website, "Video Essay, the AIDS Memorial Quilt". Here you will meet long-time San Francisco gay rights activist Cleve Jones who conceived the idea for the quilt in November of 1985.

In our capital region we have the Albany Damien Center whose mission is to "enhance the lives of people affected by HIV/AIDS in an affirming environment and to reduce new infections in the communities we serve." You can support their efforts by mailing a check or money order made out to "Albany Damien Center" to: 728 Madison Avenue, Suite 100, Albany, NY 12208. Think *Giving Tuesday*!



♦ **The Commission on the General Conference** aims to decide in the first three months of next year whether The United Methodist Church's top legislative assembly can go ahead and meet as scheduled **August 29 to September 6** in Minneapolis. The main obstacles to General Conference remain the availability of travel visas and vaccines. The coronavirus already has twice forced postponements of the assembly originally set for May 2020.

- ♦ Our **Church Library** has a wealth of material available for your use. **Books**, for both children and adults, **Periodicals**, *Christian Century* magazine for example, **DVD's** past of worship services at our church. Is there something we should add to our collection? Speak to Patty Chartrand with your suggestions.
- ♦ The Red Cross will be back at our church on Saturday, **January 29** for a **January Blood Drive**. You will be able to select hours from 8 am to 1 pm. If you have never participated in a blood drive before, here is a great opportunity to make your first donation of this precious gift.

## COME, JOIN—ADVENT BOOK/VIDEO STUDY

The Book: **The HEART THAT GREW Three Sizes**. All are welcome to join the book study beginning November 30, 2021, at 9:30am. Come even if you miss the first week.

The study is about finding faith in the story of The Grinch. The author is Matt Rawle. Matt is the lead Pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church in Bossier City, Louisiana. He is an international speaker who loves to tell an old story in a new way, especially the intersection of pop culture and the church. He is the author of a series of books called The Pop in Culture Series. The group meets for four weeks beginning November 30 and finishing on December 21, 2021. The following are the topics discussed during our study time:

1. When Everything Is Wrong.
2. When Christmas Isn't Christmas.
3. When Light Shines.
4. When Joy Is Our Song.

The study books are available in the office. Please call 518-477-9693. There is a nominal cost for it. Hope you can join us for this all-important study during this Advent season.

*Pastor Sundar*



## THE LATEST FROM MISSIONS

### How to Make a Big Impact on Climate Change

**PROJECT DRAWDOWN** ranked refrigerant management as the #1 most impactful way to reduce emissions that cause global warming. Why? Because the global warming potential (GWP) of leaked refrigerants is thousands of times greater than carbon dioxide. That is why the **Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition** has undertaken a campaign to encourage supermarkets to transition to the newest refrigerants for their coolers. You can help reduce greenhouse warming emissions at home by taking these three steps:

- ◆ Properly recycle appliances with refrigerants. Find out how those appliances are supposed to be recycled in their community and do the right thing.
- ◆ When you get new appliances, find ones with low-GWP refrigerants, such as R290 and R600.
- ◆ When working with an HVAC technician, make sure they follow the rules. If you have a central air-conditioning system in your home, hire an EPA-certified HVAC tech to do the maintenance and repairs. Leaks should be fixed and, at the end of appliance life, refrigerants should be reclaimed.

For more information, see <https://sustainhv.org>.

### CROP Walk

The tally is in. Our church's thirteen CROP walkers raised \$2,171 and the full Castleton CROP Walk team raised \$3,926 this year. One quarter of the donations raised from the Hunger Crop Walk is directed to the Anchor Food Pantry in Castleton. The rest supports Church World Service programs serving vulnerable populations in the United States and across the world. Thank you for your support.

### RISSE Wheels for Neighbors Program

Our church is supporting the Wheels for Neighbors Program of Refugee and Immigration Support Services of Emmaus (RISSE). This program, funded through a \$2,000 Mustard Seed migration grant from UMCOR, provides bicycles, helmets and accessories to assist ten refugees in traveling to and from their places of employment. Fran Berger, Pat and Becky Frament and Kevin and Cindy Conley teamed up to obtain bicycles that met the unique needs of each of two recipients. One recipient is profiled below.

Pat and Becky delivered a nice bike, lock and bell to Hanifa Payan (She already had a helmet). Her husband, Abbas Payan, had also recently received a bicycle through the program. Both were very grateful and appreciative. The Framents provided them with a fact sheet on bike safety and discussed local bike paths. Abbas consented to a photo with Hanifa's bicycle.



### THE CHURCH LIBRARY GETS A NEW ADDITION



There will soon be a shelf in our Church Library (second door on the left, down the hall from the foyer) dedicated to ecology and the environment. The Eco Team is busy collecting materials for that shelf. There will be books, periodicals and other resources available for all to use. One of the periodicals will be **Yes! Magazine, Journalism for People Building a Better World**. Stop by and take a look.

## **A Series of Special Worship Services for Advent**

**2021**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent:**

Join us for the Wait Upon the Lord special service for the First Week of Advent. In this first Wait Upon the Lord service for Advent, we wait upon the Lord with faith. Abraham and Sarah waited with faith for the birth of their son, Isaac, and we wait with faith for the birth of God's Son, Jesus, trusting that he will come at Christmas to save all people.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent:**

Join us for the Wait Upon the Lord special service for the Second Week of Advent. In this service we wait upon the Lord with hope. The prophet Isaiah declared the coming of the Lord, which gave the people of Israel hope for the future. We wait with hope for the future because we know what the future holds-a Savior.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent:**

Join us for the Wait Upon the Lord special service for the Third Week of Advent. In this service we wait upon the Lord with rejoicing. Elizabeth rejoiced as she waited for the coming of her son, John the Baptist. And Mary rejoiced as she waited for the birth of her son, Jesus. In the same manner, we rejoice as we wait for the coming of the Son of God.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent:**

Join us for the Wait Upon the Lord special service for the fourth Week of Advent. In this service we wait upon the Lord with gratitude. Zechariah's waiting days for John the Baptist's birth were filled with great gratitude for the Lord's promise about to be fulfilled. In these remaining waiting days before our Savior's birth, we are ever more grateful for the arrival of the Promised One.

### **A Service for Christmas Eve About "The Lord Is Come"**

Welcome the Lord with this worship service for Christmas Eve. After our long Advent waiting, the Lord is come-into our lives, into our homes and into our hearts. It's time to celebrate his birth as our Savior, Lord and Friend. Hymns in the service include "O Come, all ye Faithful," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Silent Night" and "Joy to The World."



## A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition



*I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering.*

*Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, Exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing.*

*I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.*

*And now, O Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.*