



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 3

MARCH 2022

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

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Rev. Sundar R. Samuel,
Pastor

Gail Welkley,
Administrative Assistant

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I read a funny story about a potato farmer who was fuming because his son was arrested on a minor offense, and he would be spending the first few weeks of planting season in the local jail. The father wrote him a letter saying, "Son, what were you thinking? You made a stupid mistake, and now I have no one to help me dig up the garden for planting potatoes." The son wrote back, "for heaven's sake! Don't dig in the garden this year. That's where I hid my gun." The next morning, the father awoke to find the local police force digging up the ground around his house. After hours of work, the officers left empty-handed. Confused, the father wrote back and told his son what had happened. The son wrote back one line: "Now plant the potatoes." I don't have a green thumb. I have no idea when the best time is to plant potatoes. I can relate to author Richard Diran who said, "I have a rock garden. Last week three of them died." But I admire the gardeners' skill. More than that, I admire their passion and their patience because it takes both those qualities to plant and tend a garden, never knowing if it will yield a harvest or not. In St. Luke 13 :1-9, Jesus tells a story about a landowner who was checking on the progress of a fig tree. The landowner tells his gardener, "For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" "Sir," the gardener replied, "leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down." Just a little more patience, the gardener is advising, before you give up on that tree.

This brings us to the first insight: **Life is short. Any good we would do in this world needs to begin now!** These verses from Luke's Gospel may sound like a clip from HGTV, but they're a glimpse into God's will for our lives. We are the fig tree. And like an expert gardener, God is both enthusiastic to see us live out God's purposes, and God is patiently waiting to see evidence of our growth. But just as the fig tree is living on borrowed time, so are we. Life is short. Any good we would do in this world needs to begin now!

Here is the second insight for the day: **Fruitfulness is the measure of how much our life reflects God's character and love.** Here's a question we all confront at some point: do you

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A Reconciling Congregation

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measure your life by the length of your years, or by the positive impact you've made? I think we would all agree that it's the second condition, the positive impact, which is the true measure of a life. Throughout his short ministry, Jesus made it clear that any positive impact he had in life came from his relationship with God. Jesus' power and purpose and courage came from aligning his heart and mind and will with God's purposes for him. He gives us some insight into what a fruitless life looks like. In verse 7, the landowner accuses the fig tree of "using up" the soil. In the original Greek, the word used here refers to something that is deprived of "force, influence or power." It also refers to something that has been "Severed from" or "separated from" its source of power. Back in the 12th century, Japanese gardeners created dwarf trees, or "bonsai" tree, by cutting the tree's tap root. The tap root anchors the tree deep into the ground so that it can grow taller and wider. With the tap root severed, the tree relies on smaller, surface roots for growth. The result is a tiny tree that can be grown in a pot on your kitchen counter. Pastor Eric Ritz writes, "What our Japanese friends have learned to do intentionally with trees many of us have done by neglect with our spiritual lives. How many of us have cut the tap root of faith in Jesus Christ...and have tried to live and grow on occasional trips to church, occasionally open the Bible to read, only pray in moments of great distress, and give to the church only the leftovers of our financial resources?"



And here is the final insight for the day: **A fruitful life will leave a powerful, positive legacy.** Few of us think of our lives in terms of leaving a legacy. We try to be good people. We try to do good and positive things in our work and our relationships and our volunteering. But legacy building is an intentional commitment to acting in ways that will leave a powerful, positive impact on the people we encounter each day. I like what professional speaker Jim Rohn said about legacy building. He said considering our legacy helps us to focus on the long term and it "gives us values that we can judge our actions by." Don't you want to have a powerful, positive impact on others? God placed that yearning in us, to live with a sense of mission and purpose. To live lovingly and boldly and joyfully for the sake of others. To live lives that reflect God's character and love. We were made for this. Anything less leads to a fruitless, ineffective life, severed from the power and purposes of God. Once a young man named Ben was struggling with a major decision. He had been struggling with the desire to be a missionary. He was concerned about how hard the missionary life is. What if he failed. He asked his dad, "What if God calls me to do something I can't do?" Ben's dad was quiet for a moment. Then he spotted his son's baseball glove on the floor and picked it up. "What's this?" he asked. Ben laughed, "Don't be silly, Dad! It's my glove." Dad propped the glove up against the opposing wall and

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Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 13. Don't forget to set your clocks one hour ahead before you go to bed Saturday Night.

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tossed a baseball into it. The ball rolled out of the glove and across the floor. Ben's dad picked up the glove and remarked, "your glove is a total failure." Ben smiled. "It can't catch buy itself," he said. "The glove doesn't work too well unless my hand is in it." Dad nodded, "You're just like this glove. God has a purpose for your life, Ben. You put your hand inside the glove to give it guidance and strength-you give it the power to catch the ball. In the same way, God will give you the power to do whatever God calls you to do. It's God's mighty hand that does the work when you are willing to be used." A fruitful life begins when we place it in God's hands. It's our desire to reflect God's character and love, a desire to live intentionally and leave behind a powerful, positive impact that results in bearing much fruit. That is what God made us for. Let's not waste our lives on anything less.

Jesus had only a brief time on this earth to pour his love and his strength and his purpose into others. He had only a brief time to heal and teach and empower those around him. And he used every moment he had to share the reality of God and God's love for us. And two thousand years later, his life and legacy are still speaking to people all over the world. That's the conclusive proof of a fruitful life. Life is short. Your fruitfulness will be determined by how much your life reflects the character and love of God. Choose today to put your life into God's hands and to leave behind a legacy that will live on after you. May this Lenten season motivate you to be fruitful in God's vineyard.

Blessings,
Pastor Sundar

THERE'S A CHANGE COMING

At the 9:30 am Sunday morning service on February 13 Pastor Sundar announced that he would be leaving East Greenbush at the end of June for a new, two year appointment as interim Pastor of Vestal United Methodist Church (picture left). Vestal is a town of about 28,000 people located west southwest of Binghamton. Rev. Michael Willis, the current Pastor of that church will be retiring at the end of June. Our Pastor Sundar officially retired last June but he continues to serve as an itinerant minister in our Upper New York Conference of The United Methodist Church, and as one he will be moving on to this new



appointment. For more information on itinerant ministry watch the episode on "Chuck Knows Church" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkoLfKtaK0Q&list=RDCMUCprx4fko863_ru5X5rAZ9Ow&index=1.

It is the intention of Bishop Mark Webb of the Upper New York Annual Conference to appoint Rev. Danyal Mohammadzadeh as our pastor effective July 1, 2022.

Reverend Danyal was born in Iran and came to the United States in 2011. He studied at SUNY Albany receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism in 2014. In 2018, he graduated from Boston University with a degree in Divinity/Ministry. For the last 4 years, Danyal has been the pastor at Valley Falls Methodist Church and Living Hope United Methodist Church in Waterford. More information is available in the Staff Parish Relations Committee report on page 13.

We look forward to welcoming Danyal to our congregation and church community in July.



SOME NOTES ABOUT WORSHIP FOR MARCH

In our Christian faith, Lent is, "an annual season of fasting and penitence in preparation for Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday and lasting 40 weekdays to Easter". We start off the month of March and the season of Lent with a special worship service the evening of **March 2** for Ash Wednesday. The service begins at 7:00 pm and will include the distribution of ashes. This service will be livestreamed on Facebook and posted later to YouTube. Ashes will also be distributed from 11:00 am to 1:30 pm that day **in the church parking lot**.

There are four Sundays in the month and Pastor Sundar will be preaching at all four. The first Sunday in the month, **March 6**, will include Holy Communion. Halfway through the month, Sunday, **March 13**, daylight saving time returns. Be sure to change you clock Saturday night so that you don't miss worship that next morning.

The continuing effects of COVID-19 have caused us to **not plan** any ecumenical Lenten mid-week worship services and luncheons this year.

An annual celebration makes this month special. "Women's History Month is a celebration of the role women play in our history, culture and society. Typically in March, GCSRW [The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women] celebrates the important role that women have played in the development of The Methodist Church."

The National Women's History Alliance designates a yearly theme for Women's History Month. The 2022 theme is "Women Providing Healing, Promoting Hope." The Alliance tells us the theme is "both a tribute to the ceaseless work of caregivers and frontline workers during this ongoing pandemic and also a recognition of the thousands of ways that women of all cultures have provided both healing and hope throughout history."



And March brings us to one of the six special offerings General Conference has established for our United Methodist Church. For more than 50 years, United Methodist congregations have been taking part in a special offering, laying the foundation for the **United Methodist Committee on Relief's** ministry of relief and hope. UMCOR's work of alleviating human suffering around the world includes disaster relief and supplies, disaster risk reduction, health, and humanitarian development. UMCOR Sunday is **March 27**.

HERE IS THE LECTIONARY FOR MARCH

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

March 6 First Sunday in Lent Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Romans 10:8b-13 Luke 4:1-13

March 13 Second Sunday in Lent Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 Psalm 27
Philippians 3:17-4:1 Luke 13:31-35

March 20 Third Sunday in Lent Isaiah 55:1-9 Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13 Luke 13:1-9

March 27 Fourth Sunday in Lent Joshua 5:9-12 Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21 Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32



"Let today be the day you give up who you've been for who you can become."

-Hal Erod

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Hello Sunday School Families!

It is hard to believe March is already here. As the Spring starts to approach we will start planning on going outside when the weather is nice. Sunday School continues to run during the usual 9:30 am Sunday Service. Last month students focused on spiritual gifts, giving thanks and mapping our spiritual journeys with Jesus. We will be shifting our focus to Lent and the Resurrection starting on Sunday, March 6. Students should go to church first on **March 13** and **March 27** for Young Discipleship. Sunday School will also continue participating in Communion the first Sunday of the month.

Additionally, Communion classes will start on Sunday, **March 6** and end Sunday, **May 8**. Communion classes are open to any student in 5th grade and up and will take place during Sunday School. No classes will take place on the days listed below. However, regular Sunday School will still occur every Sunday with the exception of Easter Sunday.

No Communion class on the following Sundays:

March 20

April 10 (Palm Sunday)

April 17 (Easter Sunday) - No Sunday School either

April 24 (School vacation)

Confirmation students will be making 45 lunches for the homeless shelter and delivering them on Sunday, **March 6** with Youth Group.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, or would like to join the Sunday School email list, please don't hesitate to reach out to me, egchristianedfmc@gmail.com.

God Bless,
Amanda Trainor

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Youth Group would like to thank everyone for their generosity in donating Love Kit items. On **March 27** during coffee hour we will be having a few prayer stations for the congregation to participate in.

Grades 6-12

March 6 we will be bringing the Love Kits to the Homeless Shelter and having lunch together at the church (Wendy's will be our lunch). We will be leaving promptly at 11:00 am and returning by 12:00 noon. Lunch will be 12:00 noon - 12:30 pm. Unfortunately due to COVID we are not allowed in the facility.

Sunday, March 27 Youth Group will be hosting Coffee Hour after church. Please be ready to help around 10:15 am to start serving at 10:30 am. We will also be having prayer stations set up during fellowship hour for the congregation to participate in. After coffee hour we will have a youth meeting until 1:00 pm. Please bring a treat to share with the congregation at coffee hour. This can be homemade or store bought.



Grades 3 -5

We will be meeting **March 13** after Sunday School and coffee hour, at 11:00 am - 12:45 pm, we will be participating in some prayer stations and play games.

Can't wait to see you at Youth Group .

Amber Telford
youthleaderamber@gmail.com

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The UMW is sponsoring a chicken barbecue on **April 2**. We are asking members of our congregation to bake brownies for us. They should be cut 3" x 3" and individually wrapped. Please contact Kathy Van Buren at jvanbur1@nycap.rr.com if you can bake for us.



SENIOR LUNCH



Start the new Spring season with the Senior Lunch **March 9**, at noon. We look forward to connecting with friends we have not seen in a while. Everyone is invited. If you can be there, please contact the church office by **March 5** if you do not receive a call. Celebrate a green St. Patrick's Day. Yes, our famous fruit salad is on the menu! See you then.

Membership Committee

A FINANCE UPDATE

The Finance Committee is grateful and very appreciative of the generosity of our church's congregation.

However, when donations are given through the church to mission programs that are not routinely supported by the First United Methodist Church as listed below, it creates additional work for the church's finance team to track and forward funds to these missions. We are respectfully requesting that donations to any other mission be sent directly to that mission unless donations have been specifically being requested by our church's Mission Team. If addresses are needed for a mission not on this list, the Financial Secretary or Church Treasurer are willing to help you find the address.

Six church-wide Special Offerings of The United Methodist Church

Human Relations Day (January)
 UMCOR Sunday – [Formerly One Great Hour of Sharing] (March)
 Native American Ministries Sunday (April)
 Peace with Justice Sunday (May)
 World Communion Sunday (October)
 United Methodist Student Day (November)



First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush Supported Missions that donations are solicited year round

UMCOR U.S. Disaster Response Advance # 901670
 UMCOR International Disaster Response Advance # 982450
 UMCOR COVID-19 Response Fund
 Long Term Family Assistance Fund (Family Support Ministry)
 CoNSERNS-U

Thank you,
 Finance Committee

THANK YOU

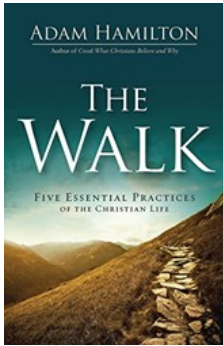


Ice and I have become best friends. So when I get a card, email or phone call it really takes the mundane out of icing all day. I really not only appreciate the get well's but love hearing from everyone. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. I will be back.

Patty Chartrand

LENTEN STUDIES

"Not Just One, But TWO Lenten Studies to Begin **March 1!** Please sign up as soon as possible for us to procure books for our studies. Please let us know which study you would like to attend. The cost for either book is \$10.00 each.



MORNING STUDY On **March 1**, at 9:30 am in the lounge, we will begin a six-part study entitled **The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life** by Rev. Adam Hamilton. We will view a DVD segment and follow that with a discussion. In **The Walk**, Adam Hamilton focuses on five essential spiritual practices that are rooted in Jesus' own walk with God and taught throughout the New Testament. Each of these practices is intended as part of our daily walk with Christ while also being an essential part of growing together in the church. In each chapter, Hamilton explores one of these practices, its New Testament foundation, and what it looks like to pursue this practice daily in our personal life and together in the life of the church. Deepen your walk with Christ as we explore the five essential practices of worship, study, serving, giving, and bearing witness to our faith.

EVENING STUDY For those who want to join us on Zoom at 7:00 PM on the Tuesday nights beginning **March 1**, we will use a study entitled **People of the Passion** by Cathy Randall. Note that this study is on **Zoom only**, no one is meeting at the church. There is no DVD for this study. This study unpacks this tenet in a powerful examination of some of the main characters of Jesus' final days: Mary, Mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene; Pilate, Nicodemus, Peter; and Judas. Dr. Randall explores our perceptions and our knowledge of these individuals, pointing out how each played significant roles in exposing themes of faithfulness, gratitude, conflict, power, and betrayal."

WE HAVE A NEW PEER MINISTER

Peer Minister, Scott Bogart has graduated and now we have a other student from UAlbany as our new Peer Minister, **Rhoda Demanya**. We asked her to, in 75 words or less, "introduce yourself to our congregation". She responded, "my name is Rhoda Demanya and I'm a freshman here at the University of Albany, expecting to graduate in 2025. I'm majoring in business administration and minoring in Law & Philosophy, with the goal of becoming a corporate lawyer in the future. I'm from Westchester County, New York but I always say I'm from Accra, Ghana because I was raised there for 7 years."

We then asked these questions and got these answers:

- Why are you looking at corporate law? *I'm interested in pursuing both business and law, so I thought it would be a great way to combine both interests.*
- Were you born in and raised for your early years in Ghana? *I was from here in the U.S. But I went to Ghana when I was 3 years old and lived there for 7 years.*
- How are you involved with Cornerstone? *I'm the public relations chair for Cornerstone, as well as a Peer Minister for Bible studies.*
- Is your background United Methodist, or do you come from another faith community or from no strong faith background? *I have a catholic background but I'm nondenominational.*
- What do you like to do in your free time - when you have it and when covid doesn't get in the way? *During my free time I like to watch Netflix, hangout with friends and paint.*
- What class(s) that you are now taking do you find "exciting"? Why? *I'm taking acting right now which I find really exciting because the class is just filled with activities, and I feel like it can help me in the future when I'm a lawyer.*

We hope to get to meet Rhoda in person in the near future.



OUR CHURCH COMMITTEES AND WHAT THEY DO – PART 3

(Part 4 to follow in the April BELL)

In this issue and the next of The BELL we continue a detailed description of ways you can help our church by volunteering to serve on various committees, teams, or ministries. *"The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people."*

This month the focus is on the three Ministry teams in our church: The Caring Ministry Team, The Christian Education Ministry Team, and The Worship Ministry Team.

The Christian Education Ministry Team

As one of the three Ministry Teams in our church, this group has the responsibility of providing opportunities for learning what the Christian experience is all about especially as it is viewed from a United Methodist perspective. We are not limited to our own local church family, but remember the line from a famous Methodist, 'I look upon all the world as my parish'. We have to provide educational opportunities for the youngest in our church family to our senior citizens. Some of these opportunities are foundational to the Christian experience – for example, confirmation class.

We have ministry teams for adult education, Bible studies, Hawthorne Ridge Study Group, Tuesday Morning study group, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and our Youth groups along with our Christian Education Team.

Those interested in becoming involved our Educational ministry may contact the Educational Ministry coordinator, Carrie Larson as well as the leaders of the various teams listed above.

The Worship Ministry Team

The results of the work of this team are what many of the general public think about when they mention a visit to their local Methodist Church. When someone suggests, 'Let's go to church today', it's the efforts of the Worship Ministry team that is most visible for most people. The sanctuary worship teams are responsible for acolytes, altar flowers, ushers, communion stewards, liturgists and sanctuary stewards, among other responsibilities. There are also service teams for early worship, Hawthorne Ridge, Riverside, Rosewood and Friday Night Alive. We have a Music team.

If you have an interest in the worship programs of our church and are willing to help provide leadership in this area, please contact the Worship Ministry coordinator David Haase to talk about serving.

Interested in serving?

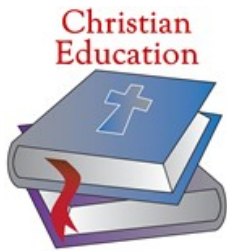
The Caring Ministry Team

In 2018, our church decided to move from a committee model to a ministries model in order to create a more effective way to increase communications among the various church groups. The hope of this change is to increase participation by clarifying a well-known and understandable vision for the Church and involving people who are passionate about advancing our vision. We also saw a need to involve people who have a passion and interests in different aspects of the church.

The number of teams within the Caring Ministries has grown and now includes: **Ecumenical & Interreligious Concerns, MSR-21 (Missions and Social Responsibility for the 21st Century), The Eco-Team, UMW (United Methodist Women), Kairos Prison Ministry, Coffee House, Family Assistance, Made By Hand With Love, Reconciling Ministry, Membership, Evangelism and Cares.** Caring Ministries meets several times a year. Please see a separate article in this month's Bell containing updates from the Caring Ministries teams. If you are interested in becoming involved or for more information, please contact Caring Ministries coordinator John Schmidt.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRIES

We currently have three Ministries in our church...Worship, Caring and Education...each with a varying number of committees. The Education Ministry struggled through COVID, but survived and is beginning to blossom with educational opportunities for children and adults.



The Tuesday Morning Study Group (9:30-11:00 held in the Lounge) continues reading books and having challenging discussions on the content and insights of books read. There will be a two pronged **Lenten Study** starting March 1. At the Tuesday morning meeting, Pastor Sundar will lead a DVD/Book Study entitled "The Way" and a 7:00 pm ZOOM study entitled "People of Passion"...both studies meaningful, challenging and fulfilling.

The Hawthorne Ridge Bible Study is now a reality as we head towards spring. The Bible Study is held at Hawthorne Ridge Tuesday afternoons from 2:00 pm—3:00 pm and is developed and led by Deb Samuels.

Children's Christian Education Opportunities

Sunday school is now held from 9:30 am—10:30 am every Sunday led by Amanda Trainor. Sunday school includes a snack, Bible lesson matching the week's liturgy and always has a hands on, fun activity. This month, students are focusing on mapping out their spiritual journey and actively working on how the love of God has guided us through the good and bad. Thank you Sunday school people for the lovely Valentine's cards and candy you shared with the congregation!

Vacation Bible School will occur this year on Wednesday evenings, 5:00 pm—7:00 pm from July 6 through August 3. VBS is always a creative, fun, learning and Christian community building time!

Confirmation classes are held every Sunday morning from 8:30 am—9:15 am. Students meet and learn about The Methodist Church, explore their faith and participate in mission activities. This month students will be making 45 lunches for the homeless and delivering Love Kits to the homeless shelter in March.

First Communion classes are taking place during the normal Sunday School time and will start on Sunday, March 6, ending May 8 with first Communion occurring on June 5.

Youth Programs are now "in person" with a Senior Youth Group (Grades 6-12) and a Junior Youth Group (Grades 3-5). **The Senior Youth Group** meets twice monthly from 10:45 am—12:45 pm enjoying a meal together and sharing in mission, learning and fun activities. Each month there is a Game night from 7:00 pm -9:00 pm. The **Junior Youth Group** meets monthly from 10:45 am—12:30 pm and focuses on activities that build Christian social interaction, learning, missions and fun.

Digital Discipleship and Educational Outreach Programs

In the future, we hope that there will be a number of educational opportunities that have both an "in person" and digital component. The **ECO team, focusing on "Creation Cares"** is sponsoring a 6 week video and discussion series held in the choir room at 11:00 am on Sunday February 27, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 19. People can attend "in person" and on Zoom.

Please contact Carrie Larson with your ideas for other learning opportunities.





On January 20, the Caring Ministries Teams met to share the progress that they have been making. We are always looking for new members. Please contact Caring Ministries coordinator John Schmidt at jschmidt13050@gmail.com or 518-477-6736.

Made by Hand with Love Aleta Schweigert reported that there are between 10-12 involved now in the group that meets every other week. Twenty-eight afghans and 6 pillows were recently sent to the Sheriff's Homeless Improvement Program (SHIP). Additionally, 75 hats were given to the Hatsgiving Program, providing hats to young cancer patients. Greeting cards are being made for Rensselaer County Hospice patients. The group is open to other ideas. A suggestion was made to reach out to parents of younger children, as well as to older adults.

Family Assistance Ministry Two families (9 people) continue to receive assistance for a variety of reasons. Assistance is in the form of bringing people to doctors, visiting while in the hospital/rehab centers, bringing people shopping, helping solve financial challenges, money from the FAM Fund, etc. Carrie Larson mentioned that there are many families in our congregation dealing with stress. She expressed a desire for SPRC to be aware of this need as it deals with the selection of our next minister.

Coffee House Carrie reported that due to the continuing Pandemic, scheduling the next Coffee Houses is a concern. We may need to rethink how the Coffee Houses are held. The possibility of using the courtyard was mentioned.

Membership Aleta reported that the recently scheduled Senior Lunch was cancelled due to the COVID surge. March 9 is being considered as a possible date for the next luncheon.

Missions & Social Responsibility for the 21st Century (MSR-21) John Schmidt reported that MSR-21 continues its search for a missionary. Our high school scholarship student in Lesotho continues to be supported. Students have recently returned to Qholahoe High School. COVID continues to be a concern, however, students and teachers are receiving vaccinations. Founder and Board President Lynn Minderman keeps us informed about QMC and is appreciative of our assistance and support.



The congregation continues to provide lunches to Joseph's House in Troy for the Homeless. Seventeen lunches are prepared and delivered on Mondays. USCRI expressed its gratitude to our congregation for providing blankets during the recent appeal to help Afghan refugees. Several bicycles were provided to adults in the area through a grant obtained by RISSE Bicycles will provide transportation to and from work. JaJa's Kids continues to grow and prosper in Uganda and founder, Diane Reiner is grateful for our continued support. Our ninth annual Change the World event in May is now in the planning stage.

Kairos Prison Ministry George Herrick reported that the Prison Ministry group is still not allowed to visit inside due to the pandemic. The group discussed the possibility of sending greeting cards. George will look into this.

Reconciling Ministry George expressed an interest in improving the presence of Reconciling Ministry on the church website. A suggestion was made to include a short informative description in upcoming newsletter editions to educate the congregation.

Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns George reported that the Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC) continues to meet regularly. There is a reorganization in process. The recent

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MLK presentation was well-received. Hopefully the goal for their scholarship program will be reached. Protestant Campus Minister, Sandy Damhof is recovering from a fall while in Louisiana. George mentioned that Sandy may be retiring next year. Our new peer minister is Rhoda Demanya.

Cares Jean Sheviak reported that we still are not receiving any response from Riverside. No change at Rosewood or Hawthorne Ridge. Lorraine Beals is heading up a project of collecting used Christmas cards to use next Christmas.

Eco-Team Kevin Conley announced a new Climate Series of short Ted Talk videos which will be followed by a brief discussion. The presentations will be held on the fourth Sunday for the next several months. Recycling of batteries, pill bottles, Styrofoam and glass continues. Adopt-a-Highway will resume in April. Kevin mentioned his work co-chairing the CRICC environmental group.

Evangelism Laura Clark reminded the group of the goal of the Evangelism Team; to go out into the community to spread the **Good News**. She expressed some frustration as her Team faces some limitations due to the pandemic. She is planning a bus trip in April to Lancaster, PA to "Sight and Sound", a live immersive theater production, open to the congregation. More details will be forthcoming. "Trunk or Treat", held in October was a success. Laura will continue to explore ideas including Food Trucks.

Our next Caring Ministries meeting is scheduled for Thursday, **April 28** at 9:30 am. Please consider joining us!



COMING SOON:



NINTH ANNUAL

THE LATEST FROM MISSIONS

Joseph's House Homeless Outreach Van



We are filling Mondays for April. If you can sign up to prepare and deliver 17 sandwiches to the shelter for distribution, along with vegetables or potato chips and a dessert, please contact Kevin Conley (email: e.kevin.conley@gmail.com; phone: 518-253-4907). Assistance with delivering lunches to the Joseph's House administrative offices is available, if needed, and you can be reimbursed for purchased food.

THE ECO-TEAM REPORTS

Creation Care Series

The Eco-Team will continue with their video and discussion series on March 27. We will view a 13 minute TED Talk video, The economic injustice of plastic by Van Jones, and follow with discussion. The session will be held in the choir room and will run from 11:00 am-11:45 am. If you would like to participate via ZOOM, please send a request to e.kevin.conley@gmail.com and he will send you a link. This series is intended to inform, but just as importantly, encourage us to talk to one another about the climate emergency that we are in and learn what actions we can take to protect and heal the earth. This series will continue on the 4th Sunday of each month through June. See future issues of The Bell for monthly topics. Participants can attend one or all of the series.

Eating a Plant-Rich Diet

During the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had time to reflect on the issues of growing older, including an examination of what I eat and how that was impacting the climate and also my own health. At that time, I was eating a balanced diet that included animal protein (specifically, beef, chicken, and pork) once or twice daily. At around the same time, the Church's Eco-Team suggested eating a plant-based meal at least once a week. Why? According to Project Drawdown, meat-centric diets come with a steep climate price tag, while plant-rich diets reduce emissions and tend to be healthier, leading to lower rates of chronic disease. This last piece of information was the encouragement that I needed to completely switch to a plant-rich diet; I will share the benefits I have seen for myself.

Since I have always had gastrointestinal issues and I know that meat contains growth hormones and other additives that are not good for an ageing body, I was curious to see if I eliminated most meat from my diet (I eat mostly vegetables, fruits, and nuts but also eggs, dairy, and occasionally fish) would I see any benefits. Well, after about three months of eating my plant-rich diet, I saw improvement with my gastrointestinal issues. After approximately one year, those improvements continued but I was also able to "trim" fat from my waist area. Overall, I honestly feel much better and I attribute this to my diet.

Such a drastic diet change may not work for everyone, but I guarantee you will see positive results (and there are so many plant-based options that you can easily find meal ideas). But I suggest trying once or twice a week to see what you think. Also, I will always eat meat when served by family/friends as the plant-rich diet works for me and I am not trying to actively convert or shame others to not eat meat.

Gary Klee, Eco-Team

MADE BY HAND WITH LOVE OUTREACH MISSIONS

Our Made by Hand group has been busy. We are making dish cloths, scrubbies, pot holders and pillowcases for St Paul's Center for Women. We are also creating red, white and blue afghans for Community Hospice. These two projects will be delivered during May Change the World month. March is a great time to take an hour out of the house and join us for fellowship!!! Catch up with friends you have been missing. We will continue to make hats and scarves and afghans for other organizations to be delivered in the fall. Contact me for the sizes etc. or to get materials. We welcome any other ideas you may have, or needs you may know of. Thank you to everyone creating love Tuesdays 10:00 am March 1, 15, 29. aleta.schweigert@gmail.com

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The SPRC had the pleasure of meeting with and joining in fellowship with our new pastor and our District Superintendent Debbie Earthrowl on February 19.



It is the intention of Bishop Mark Webb of the Upper New York Annual Conference to appoint Rev. Danyal Mohammadzadeh as our pastor effective **July 1, 2022**.

Rev. Danyal was originally born in Iran and came to the United States in 2011. He studied at SUNY Albany receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism in 2014. In 2018, he graduated from Boston University with a degree in Divinity/Ministry. For the last 4 years, Danyal has been the pastor at Valley Falls Methodist Church and Living Hope United Methodist Church in Waterford.

Prior to coming to the United States, Danyal was a journalist and editor for a newspaper in Iran. He has had a fascinating life journey prior to his time in America. I think you will enjoy hearing his story and what brought him to The United Methodist Church.

Danyal has a sister and two brothers who live in Iran along with his mother. He has aunts and uncles in Canada, but does not have family here in the United States. He enjoys writing, traveling, painting, cooking (especially Italian cuisine) and is currently in the process of writing his first fiction novel. He is also fluent in 4 languages!

We look forward to introducing Rev. Danyal to the congregation in the near future. In the meantime please keep Sundar, Deb and Danyal in your prayers as they transition to their new appointments.

If you would like to send an email or a card of welcome to Danyal, he can be reached at: pastordanyal@livinghopeumc.org or his mailing address at: Danyal Mohammadzadeh, P.O. Box 236, Valley Falls, NY 12185-0236.

New Hospitality Ministry *Should We Or Shouldn't We, Will You Help?*

Our church is considering beginning a Hospitality Ministry. Are you interested in helping to provide meals for church members who are recovering from an illness or dealing with the loss of a loved one? Would you like to assist the minister in planning weddings or funerals in our church? Would you like to help coordinate Sunday morning coffee hours? If you think that you might be interested, please contact Pastor Sundar, Len Finke or John Schmidt.



◆ Cheers and thanks to all who made the Red Cross blood drive on 1/29/22 a success. 24 pints of blood were donated.

◆ The Thirteenth Session of the Upper New York Annual Conference will be held in-person June 2 - 4, 2022 at the SRC Arena at Onondaga Community College.

◆ The Commission on the General Conference of The United Methodist Church is considering whether the international lawmaking assembly — already twice postponed by the COVID-19 pandemic — needs to be delayed again. The commission plans to decide by the end of March whether General Conference can go forward as scheduled on August 29-September 6 this year in Minneapolis. By the time this issue of The Church BELL reaches everyone the commission will have held their latest meeting on February 24.

SAVE THE DATE! -A Big Theatre Experience

April 20 we are taking a bus trip to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to see "**David**" at the **Sight and Sound Theater!** (which is during the school break).

Cost is currently at \$140/person. This includes round-trip transportation on Yankee Trails, tickets to see the show at Sight and Sound Theater, and dinner at Hershey Farm!

If you have never heard of Sight and Sound, we urge you to look it up. Here is a link: [Sight & Sound Theatres | Bible Stories Live on Stage](#).

The Evangelism committee is planning fund-raisers to help reduce the cost. We don't want anyone to not go because of cost.

Times and detailed information will be available within the next week.

We need to fill 50 seats on the bus. We will accept reservations from our congregation only, up to **March 1**. After that, the information will go out to other churches in the area.

Registration forms will be available on the table in the Narthex. You can also email me, Laura Clark, for a form and I will be glad to ensure you get it. My contact information is as follows: Email: LLC1129@yahoo.com, Phone: 518-396-7778

This is an adventure for all ages... Don't miss it!

Laura Clark, Lay Leader



Spring UMW meeting March 26 The **Albany District United Methodist Women** will meet for their Spring meeting from 8:45 am to 1:30 pm on Saturday, **March 26** at the Jonesville UMC, 963 Main St., Clifton Park. Keynote speakers will be Rev. Bob Long and Alice Trost. More information see Patty Chartrand or Kathy Van Buren.

All Laity and Clergy Are Invited! Please save the date of **April 30** from 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM at the Jonesville UMC, 963 Main St., Clifton Park (Jonesville) 12065 for the **Albany District Day of**

Celebration of Lay Servant Ministries Luncheon with Guest Speaker Rev. Ray Stees. Invite those in your church who are not involved with Lay Servant Ministries to come and see what it is all about! More information coming soon.

Everyone is invited to attend the celebration of Pastor Sundar's ministry here in East Greenbush. The celebration will be held on Sunday, **June 12**, following our 9:30 am worship service. Come and help us say "thank you" to Sundar and Deb as they prepare for their new assignment.

Order Easter Flowers

Spring is on the way, regardless of the current weather, and it is time to order flowers for Easter! The flowering plants look so beautiful in the church sanctuary. You may choose from 6" Easter Lilies for \$10.00 each; 6" Floral Mums for \$11.00 each; or 6" Tulips for \$7.00 each. Please make checks payable to the "United Methodist Women." **Orders must be received in the church office no later than April 3, 2022.** Please call the church office at 518-477-9693 with any questions.

BARBECUE *Delights*

Saturday, April 2 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Chicken Dinner—1/2 chicken, potato, cole slaw, roll and brownie \$14.00

1/2 chicken only—\$7.00

A new and delicious barbecue sponsored by the

United Methodist Women

Reservations required contact to church office by Friday, April 1