



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 1 - JANUARY, 2024

At Church on Sundays:

◆ 8:30 am Early Informal Service

◆ 9:30 am Regular Service. This service also available live on

Facebook and YouTube. The Church's website has the links.

◆ Sunday School & Youth Group—see inside for details

Visit us on the Web:

www.fumceg.org
www.facebook.com/FUMCEG

Phone: (518) 477-9693

Fax: (518) 477-4336

Church Office Hours:

9:00 am to 2:30 pm M-F

Email: office@fumceg.org

BELL/Bulletin (only) Email:

editor@fumceg.org

Youth Ministries Email:

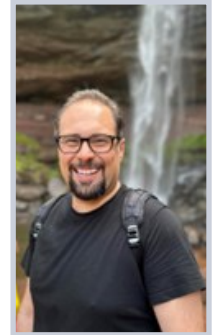
youthleaderamber@gmail.com

Danyal Mohammadzadeh
Pastor

Gail Welkley
Administrative Assistant

THE WISE MEN'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

The image of the wise men on the Christmas cards is different than what we have in the Bible. We call them three kings, but they were not kings. Actually, they were spiritual leaders. The term Magi is a plural form of magoi in Greek language, which means Zoroastrian priests. They were neither kings nor wise men. Maybe they earned the title wise men because of their skills in interpreting dreams and understanding astrology. They were scholars of their day and enjoyed access to the Persian emperor.



Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religions in the world which is still active in Iran today. It was the official religion of Persia or Iran before Islam. The primary prophet for Zoroastrianism is Zoroaster. Zoroastrians believe that he was conceived in the womb of a 15-year-old Persian virgin. Like Jesus, Zoroaster started his ministry at age of 30 after he defeated all Satan's temptations. He predicts that "other virgins would conceive additional divinely appointed prophets as history unfolded."

Zoroastrian priests believe that they could foretell these miraculous births by reading the stars. Like the Jews, Zoroastrian priests were anticipating the birth of the true Savior. Matthew tells us that Zoroastrian priests or wise men followed the star of Bethlehem to Jesus' birthplace to assure his audience that Jesus is a fulfillment not only of Old Testament prophecy of the virgin birth, but also Zoroastrian virgin birth prophecies: Jesus is the light for all nations.

Matthew tells us about a spiritual journey of three Zoroastrian priests. Matthew tells us seeking light is a journey. It can be a long journey but whoever seeks the light will find it. They ride camels for 20 days to find God and to honor him, to adore him, and to worship him. It indicates that there is no end in the spiritual journey on earth. People are always passengers who move from one level of spirituality to another level. Even clergies, priests, spiritual leaders they should seek God in every moment of their lives.

The Persian man, the Arabian man, and the Indian man ride camels for 20 days to find God and honor him, to adore him, and to worship him. It indicates that God does not belong to a specific nation. God belongs to anyone who seeks him. It does not matter where you are from and which language you speak: you are from Israel and speak Hebrew, from Persia

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A Reconciling Congregation

(Continued from page 1)

and speak Farsi, or from Arabia and speak Arabic. The question is what do you offer to God? It does not matter what is your nationality. The question is, what have you done? Are your hands empty, or have you something to offer to God? The three wise men are from different countries different nationality they speak in different languages but all of them can communicate with Jesus. All of them brought something. The language of faith is not Hebrew. The language of faith is not English. The language of faith is not Greek or Persian. Love is the language of faith. When we see God, we don't speak with words, we speak with our heart, so make sure you have enough love in your heart because God does not speak English and words are not helpful. We will speak with our hearts when we meet God. Do we have enough love for God in our hearts?

Pastor Danyal

SOME NOTES ABOUT WORSHIP FOR JANUARY

In the Christian tradition Epiphany is celebrated on **January 6**. But since that is not a Sunday this year of 2024, we will celebrate on the first Sunday of the New Year, **January 7th**. Epiphany is a time when we celebrate the coming of the three wise men, the magi, who brought gifts to the Christ child.

Last year our January worship notes included the line, "In a time of climate extremes, political divisions and unrest, social divisions – all these point to a year of great challenges." A person might ask how this list has changed since last year. A possible answer is that the challenges have increased in severity. Might we have the wisdom of these three wise men to tackle our extremes, divisions and unrest?

One of the special events this month: "Human Relations Day is a denomination wide Special Sunday designed to celebrate and raise awareness to further the development of better human relations by involving congregations in community and youth outreach. A special offering [is] taken the Sunday before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Gifts received for the offering build King's vision of "the beloved community" through programs such as Community Developers and United Methodist Voluntary Services and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs."

Here are more of the details about worship for each Sunday and other days in January:

January 7 – *Baptism of the Lord* - Holy Communion

Pastor Danyal's theme - *We hear God's word in many ways.*

January 14 – *2nd Sunday after the Epiphany* – Human Relations Day

Pastor Danyal's theme - *God calls us when we are young, when we are middle aged, even when the sun is setting in our lives.*

January 18 – **January 25** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

(Continued on page 3)

THE BELL is published monthly (with the exception of August) by the First United Methodist Church, 1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1780. January 2024, Volume 26, Issue 1. **George Herrick**, Editor; **Shawna Lambert, Danyal Mohammadzadeh, Gail Welkley**, Editing Team; **Kathy Van Buren**, Production Leader; **Dave Caneen and Paul Deming**, Photographers; **Marian Smith**, Envelope Labeler; The Church Staff: **Danyal Mohammadzadeh**, Pastor; **Gail Welkley**, Administrative Assistant; **Lauren Lehmann**, Substitute Director of Children's Christian Education; **Amber Telford**, Youth Leader; **Jacqueline Krahforst**, Organist; **Robert Thomsen**, Choir Director; **Cynthia McLaughlin**, Director of Bell Choirs; **Steven Green**, Custodian; **Helen de Leon Camarce**, Missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, Treasurer of the agency's Cambodia and Southeast Asia Missions and part of the Cambodia Women's Livelihood Projects.

(Continued from page 2)

January 21 – 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany – Ecumenical Sunday

Pastor Danyal's theme - *Moving from the darkness of waiting to the expansive light of awareness.*

January 28 – 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Pastor Danyal's theme – *What have you to do with me, Jesus of Nazareth?*

Pastor Danyal will be preaching each Sunday in January. We hope you will be able to join us in the Sanctuary each Sunday, but if not, our Sunday morning 9:30 am service is live streamed. For a link, go to our church website at www.fumceg.org. Previous services are also available on our website.

HERE IS THE LECTIONARY FOR JANUARY

January 7 - Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11

January 14 - 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20), Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51

January 21 - Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62:5-12, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20

January 28 - Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 1:21-28

WE HONOR REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

In Troy. Sunday, **January 14, 2024**, 4:00 pm at **Bethel Baptist Church**, 2165 Fifth Avenue, Troy. Rev. Nicolle Jean-Simone, pastor of Duryee Memorial AME Zion Church will be preaching. There will be a free-will offering for the scholarship fund.

In Albany. Monday, **January 15, 2024**, 7:00pm at **First Church in Albany (Reformed)**, 110 North Pearl Street, Albany. Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, senior minister at First Church will be speaking. Music will be provided by The Festival Celebration Choir, the ecumenical choir of New York State's Capital Region. There will be a free-will offering for the scholarship fund.



Martin Luther King, Jr., delivering "I have a dream" speech, March on Washington, August 28, 1963
Courtesy U.S. Library of Congress (2013645765)

ECUMENICAL WITNESS OF BAPTISM

At 1:00 pm on **January 7**, which is Baptism of the Lord, the Capital Area Council of Churches group of the Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism will meet in the yearly renewal worship service. The service is being hosted this year by First United Methodist Church of Delmar, 428 Kenwood Avenue. Churches that would like to become involved with the EWB program or individuals that would like to become witnesses are invited to this event. Questions? Ask George Herrick.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2024



For 2024, materials for the week of prayer were prepared by an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN). The chosen theme is "You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself" (LK 10:27). Brothers and sisters from the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant Churches, ecumenical bodies and the CCN in Burkina Faso collaborated generously in drafting the prayers and reflections. In choosing this passage of Scripture, the churches of Burkina Faso have invited us to join with them in a process of self-reflection as they consider what it means to love our neighbor.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Greetings!

Happy New Year, Sunday School family! I hope everyone's holiday was filled with love, joy, and peace. Thank you for your time and commitment to our Sunday School program. We have many blessings to be thankful for this year, and I am looking forward to the new year ahead!



We will continue to focus on eco friendly projects moving into the new year. Our time in Sunday school class will be spent learning about how we can have a refresh with the change of the calendar year. We will be making goals to focus on and refer back to, throughout the year. Be on the lookout for announcements in the coming weeks on recycled donations needed for projects!

We are looking forward to starting the new year with some new and fresh beginnings!

Happy New Year!
Blessings,
Lauren Lehmann

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

The year 2023 is filled with memories that we had shared. It is time to see what God will provide for us in 2024 and to make some new memories with one another. Senior youth will continue discussing the sermon when we meet in January. We will be again collecting items for the love kits to pass out to the homeless. This year not only will we collect items for the love kits from the congregation, but we will see how the youth can handle shopping while on a budget in a scenario of some that may receive the donations.

On **January 14** from 11:00 am - 1:00 pm will be our Christmas Palooza Party! Please bring a wrapped gift for a gift exchange. We will bring back some old games and have new fun (at least I hope so) games to play. This is for anyone in grades 5th - 12th. We also invite parents to stay and share the fun. We will have brunch foods. Please RSVP if you will be there.

On **January 21** we will meet from 11:00 am -11:30 am. We will be planning our Mission trip to Mission Central Hub to our Conference Center to help them. The Mission trip will be **April 6**. Parents, please attend the first 30 minutes of this meeting.

On **January 21**, after the meeting for the Mission trip, we will then have a Senior High Meeting until 1:30 pm. Discussing the sermon from today then going out to the Dollar Store to do the Dollar Store challenge for love kits. The Dollar Store will be from 12:00 noon-1:00pm (leaving the church at 12:00 ish) I will need a parent volunteer to help drive. If you would like to volunteer please see me to make sure you are cleared.

On **January 28** there will be a Junior High Meeting from 11:00 am - 12:30 pm. We will be doing the Dollar Store challenge (shopping for love kits for the homeless). I will need a parent volunteer to help drive youth. The parent must be cleared through the church beforehand. Afterwards we will come back to discuss the challenges of buying some items on a low budget.

If your son or daughter is in a special activity; i.e., sports, plays, concerts, etc., I would love to be invited to attend in order to support our youth.

God Bless,
Amber Telford
Youthleaderamber@gmail.com

UMYF LOVE KITS COLLECTION

But, what are love kits? Love kits are toiletry items that we put together in a bag to give to the homeless.

We will be collecting these items all through January and into February.

Items that are needed:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| tooth brush & tooth paste; | deodorant; shampoo & conditioner; | body wash/bar soap |
| hats & scarves | mittens & hand warmers | New Package Underwear & socks |
| hair ties | razors & shaving cream | lotion |
| new towels & wash cloths | reusable water bottles (Please be new or never used) | |



Other needs:

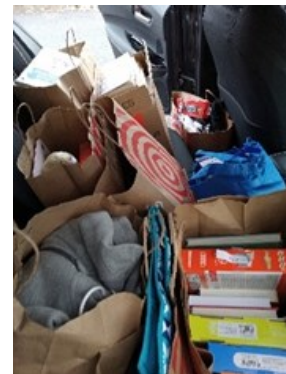
- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| drink packet mix | instant coffee mix | baby diapers & baby wipes |
| pens | post it notes | small journals |
| adult coloring books | coloring pencils | |

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Please note - the United Women In Faith’s January meeting is on **January 8 at 2:00 pm**. We have decided to have our meetings during the day since many of our group do not like to drive at night. We will be discussing the budget, thrift sale, and upcoming events. ALL ARE WELCOME.

THE GIVING TREE

When I came to the church to pick up the gifts, there was a lot more than on the Sunday before. So, the car got loaded - backseat, back hatch and a full envelope of gift cards and off I went to the new location of CoNCERNS-U where I was met by a volunteer and she took the gift cards and handed them to the director and asked if we needed a small cart. I said no a bigger one. She got a flat bed cart, like they have at Home Depot. When she saw my car she said, "you weren't kidding." We filled the cart and hand carried bags in. This wonderful volunteer said that there is a great need this year for gifts and food. Since Aldi's has moved the City of Rensselaer has become a food desert. They have in this area The Dollar Tree and convenient stores, but no grocery store. This area is were a lot of poor, disabled people live. CoNCERNS-U loved



the fact that they are one of our mission projects and graciously thanked us. *Patty Chartrand*

QHOLAQHOE MOUNTAIN CONNECTIONS



We are saddened to report that Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections (QMC), headed by Lynn Minderman, will be phasing out over the next several years. We have been blessed to be able to support Lynn and her organization. Lynn will be making her rescheduled trip to Lesotho in southern Africa in February and is looking forward to giving us an update in person in the spring. Please keep all those affected in your prayers. This will be a very challenging transition.

NEWS FROM MSR-21



The Missions Team (Missions and Social Responsibility) would like to thank you for your generous support last month. The Church-Wide Christmas card donations are still being tabulated as of the Bell deadline but proceeds will benefit our Family Assistance Program, as well as the newly created Pakistani Flood Relief, and the local branch of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). The total amount raised will be included in the February Bell. Your donations for Van Rensselaer Heights to restock their supply closet and add to their library were greatly appreciated. We also express our gratitude to you on behalf of all those benefitting from the Joseph's House lunches on Mondays. Now entering our fourth year, we continue to provide meals to the Homeless on a regular basis.

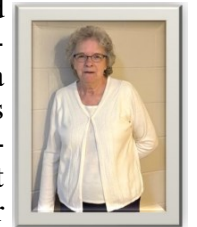
Thank you for continuing to be the hands, feet and compassionate heart of Jesus as you think of others.

150 AND GOING STRONG!

The year 2023 was a year to remember. At a time when many churches were closing their doors, our church was celebrating its 150th anniversary. Thanks to God's amazing grace, all the saints that have gone before us, and today's energetic congregation, we are strong, vibrant and growing. Last year we reflected on our accomplishments and pledged to continue our many years of service to the community.



We extend our thanks to our dedicated anniversary committee under the leadership of Aleta Schweigert for planning a yearlong series of events including monthly "Storytelling" evenings, creating and donating over 150 hats for young Cancer patients, and collecting 150 bottles of laundry detergent for an area food pantry. A new commemorative logo was created as well as a Christmas ornament and calendar. A time line was also developed that captures many of the important events over the past 150 years. A parade float was a featured attraction in the Memorial Day Parade. We enjoyed a summer picnic, art show and food truck festival among other events. We now look forward to our next big celebration, our church bicentennial in 2073! Let's start planning!



JANUARY'S STORYTELLING NIGHT

The third Wednesday of January, **January 17** at 7:00 pm, will be First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush Storytelling Night. Our speaker, Desi Biechman, is coming to speak about how sobriety led him to Jesus Christ. How he once was lost but now he has been found. Desi has been sober for over 30 years. He is currently a licensed Minister through the Melchizedeks MC group, ministering to the motorcycle community. Everyone is welcome to come hear Desi's story. There will be light refreshments.

GREETINGS FROM JAJJA'S KIDS!

From its modest beginnings in 2006 as a community outreach program in the slums of Kampala, Uganda, Jajja's Kids today provides food, shelter, medical care and education for 20 previously homeless children. The



program has grown through a rented home opened in 2013 to a permanent home built in 2019, where the children (who helped with construction) live together as family. Our church has been a proud supporter of Jajja's Kids for about ten years. Getting a good education has been a cornerstone for Jajja's Kids. The children understand that a quality education can be a doorway out of poverty, so they work hard in school. They know that their future success can help their families as well. Jajja's Kids was founded on the desire to help others help themselves and those around them, and the goal was to give a hand up rather than a handout. Toward that end, the children and staff have been encouraged and supported in learning the skills of entrepreneurship, of doing for themselves, of building for their own future. The organization is led by

Diane Reiner of Latham who visits us regularly with updates on the progress being made. For more information, please visit [Jajja's kids.org](http://Jajja'skids.org). The picture shows Diane and board president Connie Frisbee.

NOTES FROM THE ECOTEAM

\$\$ SAVINGS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

On Sunday, **January 21**, the EcoTeam is sponsoring a presentation on “Federal, State and Utility Savings Available for Clean Energy Improvements.” The presentation will be given by Paul Fisk and will be held at 1:30 pm in Room B at the East Greenbush Community Library. Paul Fisk is a trained Climate Reality Project presenter on the causes, effects and solutions for the climate crisis. He is retired from a career in local and state government, having held managerial positions in budgeting and information management. He currently focuses on publicizing the wide array of government and utility financial incentives available to households to save energy and money while reducing fossil fuel pollution. Tax credits and rebates to weatherize and electrify homes and vehicles, upgrade HVAC systems and appliances, installing solar panels, and other options will be discussed. Clean energy improvements not only will save you money, but will add to your comfort and provide you with a healthier home environment.



Courtesy of Global Times

Our next Recycling Day is Sunday, **January 7**. We will be collecting the following items at the parking lot garage for ½ hour before and after the 9:30 am service:

- Clear, green and blue glass bottles and jars. They must be clean. Labels are okay
- Household batteries. Large lithium batteries used for tools are excluded.
- Christmas light strings
- Clean Styrofoam, free of tape and staples. Items that were used for food or drink, no matter how clean, are not accepted.



TIME TO RECYCLE

CARING FOR CREATION SERIES

On **February 4**, EcoTeam starts a new Caring for Creation video and discussion series. Sessions will begin at 1:30 pm and will be held at the East Greenbush Public Library, Room B. In each session, we view a short TED talk video and follow with discussion. This series is intended to encourage us to talk to one another about changes we see in the climate and learn what actions we can take to protect and heal the earth. Participants can attend one or all of the series.



Our **February 4** topic is *Why you should ditch deadly fossil-fuel appliances*. Hear Donnel Baird describe his ambitious plan to protect the environment and human health by ripping the fossil fuel infrastructure out of aging buildings and upgrading it with smarter, cleaner, healthier technology.

BUECHNER NARRATIVE WRITING PROJECT

The **January 2024** issue of **The Christian Century magazine** (available in the church library) has six short essays on the topic, “sleep”. These essays aim to nurture the art of spiritual writing and reflection. The next two topics are “Help” with a deadline of **February 1** and “Seed” with a deadline of **May 1**. You are invited to submit a first-person narrative (under 1,000 words) on one of those topics and maybe win \$100. See the magazine in the church library for more details. (Word has it that one person from our church submitted an essay that was due December 2023. We are waiting to see the results of that competition.)



“Give God what’s right - Not what’s left.”

From a sign outside Fellowship Baptist Church

OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

A note from the outgoing chair, "My thanks to the members of the Church Council (Administrative Council), now and in the past, and to the congregation for putting up with me for so many [at least 9 or 10] years! God Bless! Len



Len Finke & incoming chair, Colleen Rumsey

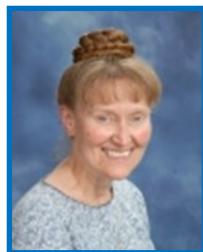
What is the Church Council?

"The Book of Discipline says that the church council is the executive agency of the charge conference (§244.1). This means that between meetings of the charge conference, the church council is the group of leaders that guides and furthers the ministry of the congregation. The church council exists to create and supervise the strategic plan for an effective congregation. The church council as a group should reflect the character and population of the congregation. Decisions made by the council will shape the future and demonstrate for everyone how God's kingdom comes in the immediate community.

The work of the church council is to envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate a congregation's ministry and mission."

From the Discipleship Ministries Guidelines for Church Council, 2016

WHAT WHO IS MISSING



Good leadership is vital for a local church. From John Wesley, Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez, District Superintendent Rev. Deborah (Debbie) Earthrowl, Pastor Danyal Mohammadzadeh and ___?___. Should that be your picture in the empty box?

We have some leadership positions for our local church still open for the new year. Laura Clark, our Lay Leader, has stepped down from that position to concentrate on her Conference and District obligations. That leaves a vacancy in this very important position in our church. Other leadership vacancies include, but are not limited to, Assistant Church Treasurer and Alternate Lay Member of Annual Conference. Speak to our pastor if you are interested in being considered for any of these or other positions in the church. **One more thought:** If you have been thinking about a clergy position in The United Methodist Church, speak to our pastor. He can help you begin the process to become a Local Pastor or an ordained clergy person in the Methodist tradition.

SOME WORDS OF INSPIRATION - Make me an instrument of Your peace; Where there is hatred, let me sow love; (Calibri 7pt.) **Where there is injury, pardon;** **Where there is discord, harmony;** (Bodoni MT Black 6pt.) *Where there is error, truth; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;* (Lucinda Calligraphy 5pt.) **Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy...** (Broadway 6pt.) Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. (Times New Roman 7pt.) For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned." ~ Francis of Assisi (AR Blanca 7pt.)

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

MEMBERS PER THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Pastor | Rev. Danyal Mohammadzadeh |
| Church Council Chairperson | Colleen Rumsey |
| Lay Leader | Vacant |
| Lay Member of Annual Conference | Laura Clark |
| Church Treasurer | Linette Burns |
| Assistant Church Treasurers | Vacant |
| Board of Trustees Chairperson/Rep | John Peterson |
| Finance Committee Chairperson/Rep | Art Sanderson |
| Staff Parish Relations Committee Chairperson/Rep | Deborah Rubenstein/Tom McLaughlin |
| United Women In Faith Representative | Patricia Chartrand |
| United Methodist Youth Fellowship President/Rep | Vacant |
| Young Adult Representative | Vacant |

MEMBERS PER CHARGE CONFERENCE

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Caring Ministry Coordinator/Rep | John Schmidt |
| Education Ministry Coordinator/Rep | Carrie Larson |
| Endowments Committee Chairperson/Rep | Peter Larson |
| Financial Secretary | Kathy Van Buren |
| Assistant Financial Secretary | Nancy Keenholts/Tammy Daniels |
| Membership Secretary | Jean Sheviak |
| Memorials Committee Chairperson/Rep | Jean Sheviak |
| Publicity Coordinator | Lorraine Beals |
| Records & History Committee Chairperson/Rep | Jean Sheviak |
| Alternate Lay Member of Annual Conference | Vacant |
| Recording Secretary | Judy Galvin |
| Worship Ministry Coordinator/Rep | Jean Sheviak |

AT LARGE MEMBERS:

Suzanne Lemka
George Herrick



Here are some notes, short but important, to read and act upon. There is a little box to check off each item as you go down the list.

- Keep the Cornerstone Campus Ministry in your thoughts and prayers. There is no mission trip during Winter break this year, but they are working hard to plan a venture for Spring break. **ALSO**, we (FUMCEG) are looking for two or three cooks to prepare a meal for a Tuesday evening Food and Faith program at a date to be determined in the Spring semester. See George Herrick ASAP if you can fill this need.
- Save the Date!! **March 9** from 2:00 pm -4:00 pm will be our Art Show. We are looking for local artists of all sorts of talents. Please stay tuned on how you can help our Community Art Show Flourish. Please see Amber Telford for any questions.
- Our church Timeline will be moved to the Fellowship Hall for Coffee Hour from time to time. Check it out to see what new information has been added. George Herrick can help get your timeline information added to our big picture.
- We will have a Red Cross Blood Drive here at our church on Friday, **January 19** from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm. To schedule an appointment, please contact the American Red Cross at 1-800-733-2767 or visit redcrossblood.org
- HUMAN RELATIONS DAY, **January 14**, is a denomination-wide Special Sunday designed to celebrate and raise awareness to further the development of better human relations by involving congregations in community and youth outreach. Gifts received in a special offering that day help build Martin Luther King, Jr's vision of "the beloved community" through programs such as Community Developers and United Methodist Voluntary Services and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs.
- Thanks to all who participated in this year's Christmas Eve services. The children who participated in the 5:30 pm service did a fantastic job. The worship leaders, choir, organist, all who attended and our pastor made the 5:30 pm and 8:00 pm services warm, meaningful, and uplifting. It sure was a special way to begin the Twelve Days of Christmas!
- General Conference is scheduled for **April 23-May 3, 2024** at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. Originally scheduled for 2020, it's been postponed three times due to the coronavirus pandemic. Say a prayer that this time all works out OK and that all happens as scheduled.
- To help in planning ahead, here are some key dates: Black History Month starts **February 1, 2024**. Lent will begin with Ash Wednesday on **February 14, 2024** And Easter is celebrated on Sunday, **March 31, 2024**. Also, locally, the **Capital Area Council of Churches Annual Assembl** will be held **February 8**.
- Living Waters Emmaus and Chrysalis (NY/VT) POTLUCK GATHERING, January 6, Saturday, 4:00 to 6:00 pm**, Bacon Hill Reformed Church, 560 Route 32N, Schuylerville, NY. Bring a dish to share, as well as your musical instruments and singing voices. We look forward to some great food, fellowship, music & Communion! www.livingwateremmaus.com.



FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

We are so grateful for your continued support of our church and its ministries. Our budget was presented to the Church Council on December 6. The 2024 budget was approved and a summary of it is shown below, as we want to give you an idea of how your gifts are used.

Overall, the pledge campaign was a success in that we received pledge commitments from a total of 85 parishioners realizing a slight increase in revenue (about 1%). However, as you are aware, our overall expenses are increasing at a higher rate than usual. The church committees and Pastor Danyal are grateful that our faith community has answered the call to share the Good News of God’s love in Jesus Christ during such difficult financial times in our country.

Art Sanderson, Treasurer

| CHURCH INCOME | | CHURCH EXPENSES | |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Pledges | \$211,000 | Staff Salaries | \$149,545 |
| Other Offering | 38,000 | Other Salary Expenses | 5,923 |
| Special Service Offering | 10,500 | Personnel Expenses | 43,149 |
| Endowment Fund Income | 8,250 | Property Maintenance & Ins | 41,140 |
| Building Use | 29,000 | Utilities Church & Parsonage | 19,650 |
| Carryover & Misc | 5,000 | Office Supplies | 13,550 |
| | | Program Expenses | 10,875 |
| | | Benevolences | 15,804 |
| | | Conference Support/Ministry Shares | 41,492 |
| TOTAL INCOME | \$301,750 | TOTAL EXPENSES | \$341,128 |
| | | Over/or Under differences??? | (\$39,378) |



This logo , known as the “Blue Square”, has been making the rounds on social media to show our support for the Jewish people of our community