



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061

We Are A Reconciling Congregation



VOLUME 26 ISSUE 11 - DECEMBER 2024

◆ **8:30 am** Early Informal

Service suspended until May, 2025

◆ **9:30 am** Regular Service and Sunday School

This service also available live on Facebook and YouTube. The Church's website has the links.

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 (only) Email:

editor@fumceg.org

Announcements Email:

office@fumceg.org

Rev. Danyal Mohammadzadeh
Pastor

Pastordanyal@fumceg.org

Gail Welkley,
Administrative Assistant

Lauren Lehmann,
Sunday School Coordinator
LLehmann@fumceg.org

Jacqueline Krahforst, Organist

Robert Thomsen, Choir Director

Cynthia McLaughlin, Director of
Bell Choirs

Steve Green, Custodian



As we approach the joyous season of Christmas, I am reminded of the beautiful traditions that connect us across cultures and time. One such tradition is Yalda Night, celebrated in Persian culture and rooted in the ancient practices of Mithraism.

Yalda Night, observed on December 21st, marks the winter solstice, the longest night of the year.

It symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and the renewal of the sun. In ancient Persia, this night was associated with the birth of Mithra, the god of light and truth. Families and friends gather to share food, read poetry, and light candles, celebrating the victory of light and the promise of a new dawn.

Similarly, Christmas, celebrated on December 25th, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. This season is a time of joy, hope, and renewal. We gather with loved ones, exchange gifts, and light candles, celebrating the arrival of Christ and the light He brings into our lives.



Both Yalda Night and Christmas share the themes of light overcoming darkness, renewal, and hope. They remind us of the universal human desire to find light and hope during the darkest times of the year. These celebrations emphasize the importance of family, community, and the shared joy of coming together.

In Zoroastrianism, another ancient Persian tradition, the humble rooster stands as a vigilant sentinel of light, an unwavering champion in the eternal clash between order and chaos. When its crow pierces the silence of dawn, it's far more than a simple heralding of morning—it's an ancient rallying cry, a call for the forces of Asha (righteousness) to rise and reclaim the world from Druj (deceit and disorder). With each sunrise, the rooster's voice echoes like a battle horn, marking yet another victory of light over shadow. The Gathas, Zarathustra's sacred verses, capture this spiritual harmony: "By the dawn's fire, the world sheds falsehood." In its crow, the rooster channels the voice of Sraosha, the divine guardian of truth, rousing all life to the promise that no darkness, however pervasive, can outlast the relentless march of the sun.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, let us also reflect on the ancient traditions of Yalda Night. Let us give thanks for the light and hope in our lives, for the fellowship we share, and for the ongoing journey towards reconciliation, peace, and restorative justice.

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This year, we have some special services planned to celebrate this season:

□ **Blue Christmas/Yalda Night Service:** We will gather on Wednesday, December 18th, from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm for a special Blue Christmas or Yalda Night service. This service is designed to offer comfort and hope to those who may find the holiday season challenging. It will be a time of reflection, healing, and the celebration of light in the midst of darkness.



□ **Family Service:** Join us on Christmas Eve, December 24th, from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm for our Family Service. Our Sunday School will offer a delightful pageant, and we will have Advent candle lighting. We encourage you to bring your children to this service, as it will be a wonderful opportunity for them to participate and experience the joy of the season.



□ **Christmas Eve Service:** From 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm on December 24th, we will hold our Christmas Eve Service, which will include candle lighting and the singing of traditional hymns and carols. This service promises to be a beautiful and uplifting celebration of the birth of Christ.

May this season of gratitude and joy inspire us to continue our work in creating a more inclusive and compassionate world. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful congregation and for all the ways you contribute to our shared mission.

Blessings, Pastor Danyal

HERE IS THE LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

December 1: 1st Sunday of Advent: Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalms 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

December 8: 2nd Sunday of Advent: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

December 15: 3rd Sunday of Advent: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

December 22: 4th Sunday of Advent: Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

December 24 & 25: Christmas Eve and Christmas Day: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

December 29 : 1st Sunday After Christmas Day: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

December 31/January 1: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46



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. December, 2024, Volume 26, Issue 11. **George Herrick**, Editor Emeritus; **Kathy Van Buren & Shawna Lambert**, Editing and Production Team; **Dave Caneen and Paul Deming**, Photographers; **Marian Smith**, Envelope Labeler.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Advent signals the coming of Jesus - and we just cannot wait to celebrate his birth! The children will be partaking in a lot of hands-on activities that include the four weeks of Advent; Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. We will be focusing on each one of the four meanings, each Sunday in December.

A few upcoming dates to put on your calendar:

November 30, our holiday craft fair at church

December 22, Holiday Gift Shop

December 24, Children's Christmas Eve Service at 5:30 pm

In addition to these dates, be on the lookout for an email in regard to practice times for our Christmas Eve Service!

And, don't forget to log into the Google Classroom to keep up on all the things we are doing in Sunday School!



YOUTH GROUP

Our youth have been such a big part of our program, and I truly thank them for being such mature, kind, and respectful young people within our church.

We will be meeting on Saturday November 30, to participate in the craft fair at church. Don't forget to make your bracelets, and other items to sell at our booth! Come support the kids in our Youth Group!

December is a time to reflect on Jesus' birth. We will be meeting two times in December for curriculum based learning and a community event: Dates are TBD, please watch on Google Classroom or Email for confirmed dates!

The youth group will be participating in the Christmas Eve Service, be sure to mark you calendars!

Many blessings, Lauren Lehmann

WOMEN UNITED IN FAITH



The Women United In Faith are having their Christmas Party on December 2 at the Town Tavern in Averill Park. If you would like to attend there is a signup sheet on the table in the church foyer or contact Patty or Kathy.

Our roast beef dinner is December 7. If you would like to donate a pie, there is a signup sheet on the table in the church foyer. Serving times are 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. Come and enjoy a delicious meal.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Financial Secretary, Kathy Van Buren, has pledge/giving envelopes for those who would like them. She will be in the church lobby before and after church each Sunday until mid-December. If you cannot make it to the church please contact her at financialsecretary@fumceg.org to arrange to have the booklets mailed to you or set another convenient time to meet her.



FROM THE ECO TEAM

Styrofoam and Glass Collection: Don't toss that Styrofoam packaging from your gifts from Santa. The next Styrofoam and glass collection will be held on Sunday, January 12th before and after the service.



Green Energy Resource Directory: The EcoTeam is creating a Resource Directory of individuals church members can contact if they are considering a green energy option. The Resource is not an expert, but someone who is willing to answer your questions and can describe his or her experience, good or bad. We have lined up Resources for solar, air source heat pump, hybrid cars, replacement windows and blown-in insulation. If you can serve as a Resource for a fully electric car, electric bicycle, heat pump, hot water heater or induction cooktop, **please contact Kevin Conley (e.kevin.conley@gmail.com)**. The Resource Directory will be posted on the EcoTeam bulletin board.

FLOOD BUCKETS



Your Stewardship Dollars Hard at Work! Our thanks to Gary Klee and the girls from Girl Scout Troop 5538 for recently filling fifteen Flood Buckets to assist those affected by recent disasters. Our church is once again responding to the call for help. We greatly appreciate the generous donations from our congregation as well as the assistance from Kevin and Cindy Conley. As you are aware, the need is increasing as disasters continue to strike. What a blessing to be able to reach out to



others in need. Thank you! MSR-21 (Missions Team) Prayer List for the December 2024 Bell.

MADE BY HAND WITH LOVE

Our Made By Hand With Love group will meet 10:00 am Tuesdays December 10, 24; January 14, 28; February 11, 25.



We have been very busy this fall. On Tuesday December 10 at 10:00 am we will be sewing "animal" hats for the Children's Christmas Play. We need help with cutting the fabrics as well as hand and machine stitching. Try something new! We may be asking for purchase of the special fabric if you are interested in helping that way. Also do not miss supporting their performance.

Aleta Schweigert & Regina Wheeler

PLANNING FOR 2025 FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL

The Food Truck Festival was a huge success in 2024. We had over 700 people come to enjoy food and vendors.

The 2025 Food Truck Festival will be on May 17. We would like your help with planning this well received event. Our first meeting will be Saturday, December 14 at 11:00 am. If you're not able to make the meeting but would like to help, please reach out to Amber at atelford0926@gmail.com



The next ART SHOW meeting is December 1, 2024. Anyone who is interested in joining the committee would be welcome.

A CHANGE AT CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

November 1 was a significant date for our Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC). Director Bruce France retired after serving five years in that position. Selected to replace him was the current Council President Peter Crasto-Donnelly. Peter has been a member of the CACC Board for five years, the last two serving as its President. Peter has been employed, for six years, at the Food Pantries for the Capital District. His latest role there has been as the Program Director.

Longtime Executive



Bruce France, George Herrick and Peter Crasto-Donnelly

November brought a second very important change at the Council. A "move". First Lutheran Church in Albany has been "home" to the Council for a number of years. The Council has now moved to First Church in Albany. First Church is located at 110 North Pearl Street, just down the street from the Palace Theater. The shift also includes moving the Emergency Overflow Shelter to First Church.

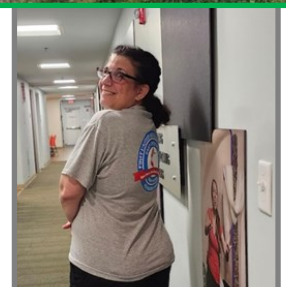
A big *Thank You* to First Lutheran. They have provided the Council space for a number of years for the Council Office, the Shelter, and when needed, space for larger Council events, including ecumenical/interfaith worship programs.

Looking ahead at the Council, two major events are on the January calendar. January 12 the Council will have the Ecumenical Witness of Baptism Renewal Service. And on January 15, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Interfaith Celebration. Watch for more details for both programs.

WHERE IN THE WORLD???

OUR CHURCH T-SHIRTS HAVE BEEN SHOWING UP ALL OVER!

Rhode Island, Liverpool, Alaska, Romania, Ireland, Lesotho, Virginia, North Carolina



STORYTELLING NIGHT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4 AT 7 PM

Can We Talk About It?

Brian Belt, founder of “Mental Health Awareness and Creative Arts Gallery” in Hudson, NY and recovering addict, shares his journey from addiction to recovery. By working together, we can end the stigma that continues to surround mental illness. Please join us!



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1 GILLIGAN ROAD, EAST GREENBUSH, NY
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

A group of us are reviewing our membership lists and mailing lists to try to bring them up to date. Have you eliminated your landline phone number? Have you moved recently? Please let us know! Email membership@fumceg.org, fill out one of the forms you'll find in the back of the church, or speak to one of the committee members to get your record updated.

Getting too much paper? You can get *The Bell* as well as the weekly church announcements by email. Email membership@fumceg.org or fill out one of the forms in the lobby and we'll set you up to get church emails.

The Membership committee thanks you!

Aleta Schweigert, Nancy Keenholts, Mary McIntosh, Karen Peterson, Jean Sheviak, Kathy VanBuren



Help Wanted for Tech Team – The Tech Team is looking for a few people to help out with some of the technology we use at Church. You could help with the slides during Sunday service or with our livestream. We want to grow our team so we can help support our Church's ministries! Contact Dave Caneen at live@fumceg.org for more information.

Tech Requests – Do you have tech needs for your church event? It could be using the sound system in the Fellowship Hall or Sanctuary or setup of the TV for a presentation.

Send your requests to fumceadmin@fumceg.org one to two weeks in advance. The Tech Team will check our availability, as we are a volunteer team, and get back to you.

BUECHNER PROJECT - NEW CHALLENGE

The Buechner Narrative Writing Project has given us a new topic for our creative juices -- **Gravity**. Check out the November issue of *The Christian Century* magazine, page 62; it's in our church library. Details of the project are in that issue. If you have a story to tell about gravity, write it up in 1,000 words or less and send it in no later than February 1, 2025. While you are looking at the November issue, look over the essays by readers about the most recent topic, **Help**. Let them *help* get your creative juices churning.



"THANKS A MILLION"

When adverse conditions sometimes overtake us, a number of the wonderful people that are our church family step in to offer words of comfort, support and good wishes. I know how true that is because I have been one of those who has received that support.

Adjusting to a new lifestyle 'taint easy, so thanks to all who have sent greetings and more to help me on this new road. God Bless!

--- George Herrick



ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY

On Sunday, November 3 we celebrated the saints from our church who are now in heaven. To the left is a picture of our beautiful altar with pictures of our saints.

