



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061

We Are A Reconciling Congregation



VOLUME 27 ISSUE 11 - DECEMBER 2025

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

This service is also available live on YouTube using the links on the Church's website.

Visit us on the Web:

www.fumceg.org

www.facebook.com/FUMCEG

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Martha Deyo, **Organist**

Robert Thomsen, **Choir Director**

Steve Green and Bob Rumsey

Custodians

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JEN

In 1922 five men climbed up Pike's Peak in Colorado Springs on December 30 and at the stroke of midnight on December 31, they set off fireworks from the summit of the mountain. It became a tradition and the group developed a name, the AdAmAn Club, because each year they would "add a man" to their group. One hundred years later, I sat in my living room, cozied up with my family, and watched those fireworks. Before we moved to New York in 2024, we lived in Colorado Springs for eight years and watching the AdAmAn fireworks from our big living room window became a tradition. I loved knowing that we were watching those fireworks along with everyone else in town and that it was part of such a long-standing tradition, it gave a sense of being connected. As I think back on those days, I remember feeling happy, grateful and also sad.

The truth is, New Year's Eve always leaves me feeling a little sad. Something about the day, the marking of the passage of time, the end of the kid's school break, the taking down of the calendar feels nostalgic. Sometimes nostalgia feels warm and cozy, sometimes it feels like gratitude but sometimes it can also feel sad. I think about all that has changed, everyone I have said goodbye to, everyone I am missing, how quickly time seems to go and I can't help but feel a sadness creep in even as I wear silly hats and shake noisemakers and excitedly count down ... 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1. Part of me wants to say "wait!" let me pause and squeeze my loved ones a little tighter before time keeps rushing. But the clock keeps going and things keep changing.

I have been thinking about this as I think about all of you. 2025 has been a year of change ... a lot of it. Well-established institutions like churches, traditionally don't do well with major changes, and yet ... here we are. You have had a major pastoral transition. I would say you "said goodbye" to a pastor, but it didn't really work out that way, and that is hard. Change is hard, but without any kind of ritual, closure or farewell, it can feel even harder. I know that the District Superintendent, Rev. Matthews, Pastor Mary Beth and myself have lovingly walked with you in this change, but change is still hard and the pain is still there.

But as I reflect on 2025 and my time with you all, I am thinking of your perseverance. Through abrupt change you continued to worship together, knowing that we are better together as the Body of Christ. I am thinking of your open hearts, even though your hearts were hurting, you have embraced me with a genuine warmth and acceptance. Every Sunday people

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thanked me for being part of this church and I feel so grateful to be with you. I am thinking of your faith, even when things at the church may have seemed unsteady, your faith in the Holy Spirit's presence remained steadfast.

The changes aren't done, 2026 will bring more with it. Some we will celebrate, like a new pastor, and some will be difficult, like personal struggles and losses. So, the stroke of midnight might feel a little sad ... a little scary ... a little exciting ... a little exhausting ... but we keep on facing it together as God's beloved children ... connected. Knowing that when the countdown comes, we do not face it alone. 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... deep breath ... God walks with us.

Pastor Jen

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

November 30: 1st Sunday in Advent; Candle of Hope

Preacher: Pastor Mary Beth: "Walking in the Light"

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5 and Romans 13:11-14

Music: Chancel Choir and Embellishments

December 7: 2nd Sunday in Advent; 7; Candle of Peace

Preacher: Pastor Jen: "Waiting"

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12

Music: Chancel Choir

December 14: 3rd Sunday in Advent; Candle of Joy

Preacher: Pastor Mary Beth: "A Blooming Desert"

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10

Music: Chancel Choir, Brass Quartet, Children's Trio

December 17, Wednesday at 6:30 pm

A Blue Christmas Service: "How Does a Weary World Rejoice?"

This service is designed to offer comfort and hope to those who may find the holiday season challenging. It will include a time of reflection, healing and lighting of candles.

December 21: 4th Sunday in Advent; Candle of Love

Preacher: Pastor Jen: "God Is With Us"

Scripture: Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

Music: Chancel Choir; Byrd in the Bush Recorder Ensemble

December 24: Christmas Eve

5:00 pm Family Service

This service will be offered for all ages and include a special children's time with Lauren Lehmann, music by the Chimettes and a combined children's and adult choir. Pastor Mary Beth's sermon will be followed by traditional candle lighting.

7:30 pm Traditional Candlelight Service

Our wonderful Chancel Choir will lead this service with Pastor Jen preaching on "A Great Light." Join us as our youth encircle the sanctuary with candlelight during the singing of Silent Night.

December 28: 1st Sunday after Christmas

A Service of Lessons and Carols. Hear the traditional nine scripture lessons interspersed with carol singing.

Music: James Sweeney, saxophone, and Brayden Russell, trumpet



MADE BY HAND WITH LOVE OUTREACH MISSIONS

This month we meet Tuesdays, December 9 and December 23 at 10:00 to 11:30 in Rooms 5/6. In November we delivered **130 Soft Hats for Kids With Cancer** for hatsgiving.org. We also made **over 2 dozen Pillowcases and 2 fleece blankets** for children and adults, as part of our donations to St Paul's Center for Women and Children in Rensselaer. The pillowcase project was such a hit we are reaching out for other recipients such as Ronald McDonald House. Thanks to everyone who made these donations possible. Over the winter we will concentrate on making hat/mitten sets for the Red Bird Mission for May.



Afghans 8"x48" are needed for Hospice and the VA Hospital, and shawls for ALS patients. If you would like to learn to knit/crochet, please contact us and we will arrange a time to meet. For more info contact: aschweigert@fumceg.org or rwheeler@fumceg.org.

ECO TEAM

"We urge United Methodists to adopt sustainable habits and practices, including refraining from overconsumption, repurposing and recycling materials..." (Book of Discipline ¶160) The Eco Team offers three resources to help us adopt sustainable habits:

- See "Caring for Our Common Home Over the Holidays" on the Eco Team bulletin board near the kitchen for tips on shopping, holiday parties, gift wrap, holiday lights and Christmas cards.
- See the list of places where you can donate items for reuse or recycling, linked to the Eco Team page on www.fumceg.org.
- Rather than tossing them, set aside your broken, damaged or ripped items to be fixed at the Castleton Repair Café to be held on March 14. The Eco Team is collaborating with the Village for this event. Items may include lamps, vacuums, clocks, small appliances, electrical gadgets, clothing, textiles, tools to be sharpened, small wooden furniture, jewelry and children's bikes. We are currently recruiting fixers and sewers. For more information or to volunteer contact CastletonOnHudsonRC@gmail.org.

FINANCE

The Finance Committee offers thankfulness for your continued support of our Giving Campaign for 2026. We received 95 envelopes showing that you believe in the many ongoing ministries of our church. This number is a slight increase over the 2025 campaign.

Kathy and Nancy will be in the front lobby for the next few Sundays to return your personal giving card along with a thank you letter explaining the various methods you can use to make your offering. We also have the packet of dated envelopes that you may want to have for your offerings available at this time.

YOUR GIVING MATTERS!

Great News! The Community Art Show sponsored by the First United Methodist church will be held on **March 7, 2026**. Now is the time to start thinking about how you would like to become a part of this 4th Annual Event.

1. Artists: Prepare or select artwork for display.
2. Bakers: Plan to share your baked goods at the Art Café.
3. Musicians: Consider performing at the Art Café.
4. Parents: Encourage children to create art for the show.



More details will be shared in January 2026. Questions? Contact Beth Buckner at artshow@fumceg.com or 518-477-0161.

CARING MINISTRIES

Blessed to be a Blessing!

Not long after Pastor Danyal joined us back in 2022, coming out of COVID, many of us noticed a change in our church. Unlike many other churches, we did not close our doors during the Pandemic. Instead, we began livestreaming our services in addition to making our regular in-person service available. We encouraged mask-wearing and kept our distance. Many Sundays the attendance was sparse but we moved forward, cautiously. When the Pandemic was over, people returned and more people joined. We noticed an amazing thing: our church not only survived, but it was thriving. Our Sunday School was growing with new, enthusiastic leadership. In case you haven't noticed, our sanctuary is filling up on Sunday mornings. Fellowship Hall is abuzz following our worship services with many new faces. As we join others over a cup of coffee in fellowship, there is excitement in the air. Our two new pastors are bringing their gifts to share with us. We have a new addition to our music program, a children's choir!



We have a small but dedicated environmental awareness group that encourages us to take climate change seriously by promoting recycling and cleaning up our trash with highway clean-up events several times a year. Our Missions Team supports many worthy organizations locally and globally like CoNSERNS-U and Jajja's Kids. The United Women in Faith recently held a Brooks BBQ where teamwork was evident. The proceeds will go to help support those in need through such things as scholarships to summer camp for children. Made by Hand With Love, one of our Caring Ministries groups, continues to grow as they create pillowcases, blankets, hats and other needed items to donate. Our Mental Health Matters team is highlighting the importance of mental health awareness in our challenging world today.



Our church believes that it has a place for everyone. A church that isn't just surviving, it's thriving! A church with an expandable table with unlimited leaves!

Bring your gifts and talents here and let God use them to help others. Encourage others to come and see. Pass it on!

John Schmidt, Caring Ministries Coordinator

MISSIONS



On behalf of the Mission and Social Responsibility team, I'd like to thank everyone who donated cleaning supplies and toiletries for the Van Rensselaer Heights residents supply closet.

I dropped off 45 bottles/cans of cleaning products 36 rolls of paper towels, 30 rolls of toilet paper and other miscellaneous items for the month of October. These items were greatly appreciated by them.

Lorraine Beals

POINSETTIAS

November is here, so it's time to order poinsettias for the holiday season. Your purchase will add beauty to the Sanctuary while you honor or remember loved ones. We are offering 6.5" size plants, available in RED, WHITE, PINK or MARBLE for only for \$12.00 each plant. Be sure to write your order on the sign-up sheet in the lobby and use multiple rows as needed. Please make checks payable to the "United Methodist Women." The order deadline is Monday, **December 8!** If you have any questions, please call church office at 518-477-9693. Thank you.



STORYTELLING NIGHT

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF EAST GREENBUSH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 7 PM

 **BRINLEY'S BAGS**

**ERIN TARBOX, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER
AND FOUNDER OF BRINLEY'S BAGS
WILL SHARE THE STORY OF HER NOT-FOR-PROFIT,
DESIGNED TO ASSIST PARENTS OF NEWBORNS IN THE NICU.**



DOOR PRIZES REFRESHMENTS

ALL ARE WELCOME!

COMMUNITY EVENT

Holiday Choral Concert, Sunday, December 7th at 3:00 pm



Come enjoy an afternoon of holiday music that will lift your spirits, performed by a combined chorus with Capital Community Voices and The Sanctuary Choir from First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush, at **Genet Elementary School**, 29 Englewood Ave, East Greenbush. Tickets are \$20 at the door.

Have you Picked up Yours Yet?

Advent Devotional Booklets are available for each family. They are found in the foyer area of the church. Be inspired in your spiritual life during this holy season of Advent.



My name is Francis Tolliver. I come from Liverpool
 Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school
 To Belgium and to Flanders, to Germany to here
 I fought for King and country I love dear
 It was Christmas in the trenches where the frost so bitter hung
 The frozen field of France were still, no Christmas song was sung
 Our families back in England were toasting us that day
 Their brave and glorious lads so far away
 I was lyin' with my mess-mates on the cold and rocky ground
 When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound
 Says I "Now listen up me boys", each soldier strained to hear
 As one young German voice sang out so clear
 "He's singin' bloody well you know", my partner says to me
 Soon one by one each German voice joined in in harmony
 The cannons rested silent. The gas cloud rolled no more
 As Christmas brought us respite from the war
 As soon as they were finished a reverent pause was spent
 'God rest ye merry, gentlemen' struck up some lads from Kent
 The next they sang was 'Stille Nacht'. 'Tis 'Silent Night'" says I
 And in two tongues one song filled up that sky
 "There's someone commin' towards us" the front-line sentry cried
 All sights were fixed on one lone figure trudging from their side
 His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shone on that plain so bright
 As he bravely strode, unarmed, into the night
 Then one by one on either side walked into no-mans-land
 With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand
 We shared some secret brandy and wished each other well
 And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell
 We traded chocolates, cigarettes and photographs from home
 These sons and fathers far away from families of their own
 Young Sanders played his squeeze box and they had a violin
 This curious and unlikely band of men
 Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more
 With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war
 But the question haunted every heart that lived that wonderous night
 "whose family have I fixed within my sights?"
 It was Christmas in the trenches where the frost so bitter hung
 The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung
 For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war
 Had been crumbled and were gone for ever more
 My name is Francis Tolliver. In Liverpool I dwell
 Each Christmas come since World War One I've learned it's lessons well
 That the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame
 And on each end of the rifle we're the same
 -- John McCutcheon "Christmas in the Trenches"



The **United Methodist Council of Bishops** has announced the results of a vote by all annual conferences. It was approved by 91.62% of voters. This new structuring does not directly affect how our Upper New York Annual Conference is organized. For more information go to: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/new-united-methodist-church-structure-ratified>.

Annual conference voters have ratified a constitutional-amendments package that aims to put The United Methodist Church's different geographical regions on equal footing.

Under the newly ratified restructuring, the U.S. and each central conference — church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines — become regional conferences with the same legislative authority.

The bishops now must name a committee that will be responsible for creating a U.S. regional conference, a whole new structure.

The ratification also opens the way for further study of whether the U.S. should continue to have jurisdictions.



CHURCH-WIDE CHRISTMAS CARD 2025

We can't think of a better way to say *Merry Christmas* than the Church-Wide Christmas Card! MSR-21, *The Missions and Social Responsibility Ministry for the 21st Century*, invites everyone to participate in greeting their church friends with the Church-Wide Christmas card. The money you save by not purchasing and mailing individual cards could be donated to **The Anchor and CoNSERNS-U, our two local food pantries.** During this time of uncertainty, food insecurity is a major concern. The "card" is a list of those who contributed to participate in this fundraiser. We are suggesting a minimum donation of \$5.00 but any amount is welcome. **Please make checks payable to the First United Methodist Church with a notation in the memo section "Church-Wide Christmas Card."** We hope you will join us and fill in the form below. **Please mail it, bring it to the church or use our online giving no later than Monday, December 1.**

Thank you for your support throughout the year and Merry Christmas!

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TO THE MISSIONS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MINISTRY:

*Please include my (our) name(s), as **printed** below,
in the Church-Wide Christmas Card:*

Enclosed is my (our) contribution of \$ _____ (suggested minimum \$5.00). My (our) donation will go to The Anchor and CoNSERNS-U food pantries.