



April 8, 2021



Growing In Discipleship

Matthew 22: 36-39 *Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

According to **UMC.org** "Theology (the study of the nature of God) is not just about God. It is also about us. We live out of our understanding of who we are in relationship to God, to one another, and to the world. The Christian faith is grounded in the love and grace of God, experienced through Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Christian life is our response to God's love and grace."

"The church calls our response to God Christian discipleship. Discipleship focuses on actively following in the footsteps of Jesus. As Christian disciples, we are not passive spectators but energetic participants in God's activity in the world. Because of what God has done for us, we offer our lives back to God. We order our lives in ways that embody Christ's ministry in our families, workplaces, communities, and the world."

When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was, his response was: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.* (Matt. 22:37-38. See Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 10:25-28)

Discipleship is about loving God. It is the deep desire to know God, to be a faithful follower of his Son Jesus and to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We grow as disciples through a process called **Spiritual Formation**. "Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ, a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world—in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did." From *Invitation to a Journey* by Robert Mulholland

Here is a list of some Spiritual Disciplines:

Ø **Prayer:** Is a conversation with God. Leave some time for silent listening. Philippians 4:6 *Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* If you need some additional guidance for prayer check out John, Chapter 17.

Ø **Fasting:** "More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us" (author Richard Foster). "Technically, fasting is abstinence from food for some period of time. It is an ancient practice that is mentioned frequently in the Bible. John Wesley fasted every Friday as part of his spiritual discipline. The discipline of fasting can relate to abstaining from anything that we habitually depend upon in order to increase our dependence on God." (Peace United Methodist Church, Orlando, FL). But as Richard Foster points out, "We should give up anything that controls us and reduces our dependency on God."

Ø **Stewardship:** *So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?* (Luke 16:11). Stewardship of the earth was the first responsibility God gave Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). "Stewardship of the Garden was Adam's act of worship and gratitude for all that God had given to him. Stewardship is our act of worship and gratitude to God for all that he has given to us. We primarily think of our finances when we hear the word 'stewardship,' but this discipline applies to anything and everything that God has given us to take care of. When we think of everything we have as belonging to God (Deut. 10:14), then we make different decisions with our resources." (Peace United Methodist Church, Orlando, FL)

Within our United Methodist Membership Vows we say: "As members of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts (tithes and offerings), your service and your witness (your faith stories and the way you live your lives)?"

In relationship to our monetary giving, did you know that in the United Methodist tradition, the starting point is the 10% tithe?

Ø **Worship:** Jesus tells us in John 4 that we are to worship "*in spirit and truth.*" Worship is our response to the work of God's love in our lives. Worship is to be corporate. Worship is to be in community, together as the Body of Christ. It is giving glory and praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Ø **Scripture:** Studying the scriptures includes hearing, reading, and meditating on God's Word. *Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.* (Romans 12:2).

"Some of John Wesley's suggestions for the most effective reading of scripture include:

1. Set apart a little time every morning and evening for that purpose;
2. At each time read a chapter out of the Old Testament and one out of the New Testament;
3. Read with a fixed resolution to know and do the whole will of God;
4. Have a constant eye for connection with the grand doctrines of the faith;
5. Pray before and following reading;
6. Pause throughout reading to examine your heart and life." From John Wesley's Message Today by Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

Ø **Solitude:** "The movement from loneliness to solitude is not a movement of growing withdrawal but is instead a movement toward deepening engagement in the burning issues of our time. The movement from loneliness to solitude can make it possible to convert slowly our fearful reactions into a loving response" (Henri Nouwen).

"The greatest threat to spiritual growth is not creating enough white space in our calendars and our heads to spend listening to God. Hurry is the enemy of transformation. In unhurried silence we can see and hear things that are normally drowned out in the rush of our days. If we retreat into the desert of our minds, we allow God to reveal himself to us. He will also reveal those thoughts, feelings, and emotions that are preventing us from growing closer to him. God instituted the observance of the Sabbath as one of the critical parts of the holy life of Israel (Exodus 20:11). As God's people, we also need to observe Sabbaths in our days, weeks, and years when we dedicate time to God and pay attention to what he is doing in our lives." (Peace United Methodist Church, Orlando FL)

Growing in our own discipleship, through Spiritual Disciplines helps us to become more Christ-like and more confident in sharing our faith stories of how God's love through Jesus Christ with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit has changed our lives.

It is my hope and prayer, as we continue our focus on Intentional Discipleship, each one of us will begin to practice one or more of the Spiritual Disciplines listed in this article, on a regular basis. Remember this is a lifelong journey. In doing so we will grow stronger in our own personal discipleship, be able to encourage others in their growth as disciples and as the Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church desires: "To live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places; making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Rejoicing in Our Risen Lord,
Suzanne

**Safe Sanctuaries ZOOM
Training April 17**

The Upper New York Annual
Conference Team will be
hosting our standard Basic Safe
Sanctuaries training





Celebrate
50 Days
of Easter
Hallelujah!

Please keep these pastors, their families and the Church families in your prayers throughout the coming weeks.

April 11

Knapp Creek UMC
Rev. Jerry Piper, his wife Kathy and their family.

April 18

Fredonia First UMC
Pastor Nettie Puleff and her family.

April 25

Olean:Christ UMC
Rev. Chad Sayers, his wife Jessica and their sons Isaiah & Micah
Rev. Carrie Wolfe, her husband Aaron and their son Max

Please be in prayer for all those affected by natural disasters (flooding, storms) and mass shootings.

We give thanks for the availability of COVID-19 vaccine in our area. May we continue to show respect for others by practicing good hygiene, wearing masks & social distancing.

To download the 2020-2021 District Prayer Calendar, [click here](#).

Pay 100% of April Ministry Shares, Direct Bills, Receive a 50% Ministry Shares Credit for May 2021!

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration has created an opportunity for local churches to receive a **Ministry Shares credit of 50%** on your **May 2021** statement. In order to qualify for this credit, **churches must pay 100% of their current month April charges** (both Ministry Shares and Direct Bills).

A church will qualify for this credit even if it has not paid toward ministry shares in prior months. A church also will receive the credit if they have already paid their Ministry Shares in full prior to

via **ZOOM** from **9 am to 12:30 pm Saturday, April 17.**

This training is brought to you and paid for by your Upper New York Ministry Shares. This basic training is required for anyone working with children, youth and vulnerable adults as stated by the Minimum Standards. This training is a must no matter if you are meeting in-person or online.

[UNY SafeSanctuaries Minimum Standards updated 2016.pdf \(unyumc.org\)](https://www.unyumc.org/files/UNY_SafeSanctuaries_Minimum_Standards_updated_2016.pdf)

If you have already taken this training you DO NOT need to take it again.

The training will follow the reformatted ZOOM curriculum developed by the **Upper New York Annual Conference Safe Sanctuaries Team**, educating those involved in ministries who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults on risks and prevention strategies related to abuse.

There will be a link to the handout that **should** be printed and available to you for the training.

You must **REGISTER** for the training. If you register and are no longer able to attend we ask that you let us know as soon as possible so we can fill your spot with someone else who is waiting to take the training.

The training will be facilitated by Safe Sanctuaries Conference Committee Co-Chairs Arlene Schmidt and Pastor Christine Mitchell with the assistance of 8 co-trainers.

Click on the link to register: <https://uny-safesanctuaries-3hrbasic.eventbrite.com>

If there are any questions please contact one of the co-chairs of the committee at safesanctuaries@unyumc.org

For more information on Safe Sanctuaries, and on background checks, [click here](#).



Equalization Members Needed - Apply Today!

Lay people who are not the Lay Delegate for their churches are invited to consider serving as

Equalization Members to Annual Conference. Youth (ages 12-17), Young Adults (ages 18-30) and Adults are welcome to apply (click here for [application](#)). Contact your pastor or the District office for more information. **Deadline for applications is April 12.**

the April statement. The credit will be equal to 50% of May Ministry Shares charges. Credit will be reflected on the May statement as an increase to the YTD paid column)

Payment for April charges must be **received** in the Conference office (not postmarked) **no later than April 30, 2021 to be eligible for the credit.** If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, please contact Bob Flask, UNY Conference Treasurer, at 315-898-2008 or bobflask@unyumc.org.

LOOKING AHEAD

PAST DUE

Please send a completed & signed copy of each to the District office. (Click on the **boldface** titles to download the forms.):

[Report of Trustees](#)

[Report of the Finance Committee](#)

2020 Year-end Financial Report

2021 Church Budget

[2020 Local Church Financial Audit](#)

April 1-June 1

Registration for Annual Conference open

April 12

Equalization Member applications due

April 12

Equitable Compensation application due

April 14

Pastoral Leadership Development (Zoom)

April 14-15, April 19-20

District Assistant out of office

April 15

Denman Award nominations due

April 17

District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM)

April 17

Safe Sanctuaries Basic Training (via Zoom)

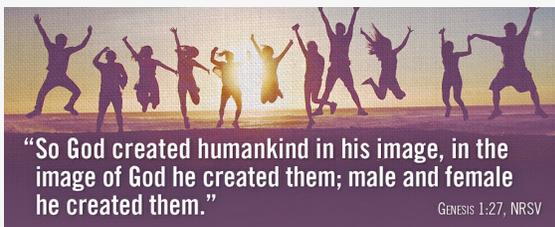
April 18

Native American Ministries Sunday

April 18

Deadline to register for Virtual

NEW - Thanks to our sister in Christ Patti Gridley, who serves as administrative assistant for our neighboring Mountain View District, you will be receiving an **All Annual Conference Information** newsletter, separate from Around the Corner. This is a valuable resource for those representing the Cornerstone District at Annual Conference!



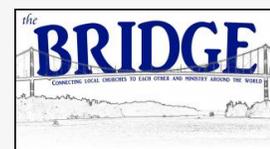
Celebrate **Native American Ministries Sunday** on **April 18, 2021** or a Sunday that is convenient for your local church. The Native American Ministries Sunday offering empowers young leaders as they seek seminary education.

Scholarship recipient Shyloe O'Neal said, "I am a real Native American who is desperately chasing after God with everything I have."

Don't miss this meaningful giving opportunity on April 18, or a date of your choice.

[Click here for the April issue of the Media Resource Center newsletter!](#)

The **April Issue I** of the **Bridge** is now available for download. It is available in both color and black & white



formats. [Click here](#) to select the version you prefer and make copies as necessary. The stories that are featured in the **Bridge** can also be accessed from the news section of the Upper New York (UNY) Conference website for easy copying and pasting for those who wish to electronically distribute news featured in the **Bridge**. [Click here](#) to access the UNY Conference news items.

This issue explains the importance of the Easter season. Additionally, this issue highlights Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Mark J. Webb's prayers for the victims of the recent occurrences of violence that have taken place across the United States. This issue also includes the Upper New York Conference Commission on Religion & Race's statement about the recent acts of violence.

Last December the Upper New York Conference hosted Jason



Moore's Both/And: Maximizing Hybrid Worship for Online & In-person Audiences. This webinar was helpful in equipping so many churches to be engaged in hybrid worship and other settings.

A lot has happened in the online and in-person world of our churches since then. Jason Moore has hosted this webinar with over 35 Annual Conferences and para-church ministries since then. Jason will be back to host just over an hour of follow-up on **Monday, April 19 at 6:30 pm.** The follow-up includes a time of recap. The recap includes hearing what Jason has learned in the last 4 months and sharing with Jason the things you have learned. We will then open up the conversation for discussion and Q&A. This follow-up will take place by Zoom.

- What have we learned about in-person and online Worship since December?
- What questions remain or have surfaced as you have engaged in Hybrid worship?
- What questions have you been dying to ask Jason?

Join your fellow hybrid and on-line planners and presenters in this discussion with Jason Moore, Monday, April 19 at 6:30 p.m. To register for the follow-up zoom conversation please **Email** here to Northern Flow District Office. A Zoom invite will be sent to you closer to the time of the presentation.

Delay in Payment Extended

In 2020, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) had approved delayed enforcement of the direct bill arrearage policy through December 31, 2020. Understanding the continued struggle faced by many congregations, the Board has approved to **extend that delay through December 31, 2021.**



Virtual Launchpad 2021

Launchpad is boot camp for anyone who is in the first year of planting a new faith community, or is

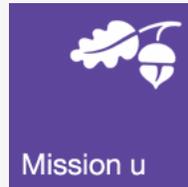
feeling called to plant a new faith community in the next couple of years. It provides the best practical, hands-on training for planters available now in The United Methodist Church.

In these virtual sessions, you will learn an amazing array of best practices that will enable you to build a solid foundation on which to build your faith community.

Please click [here](#) for more information and the Launchpad schedule.

To register by **April 18** or for more information, please send an email to Rev. Abigail Browka, pastorabigail1@gmail.com.

Help the UMW/Mission u! Survey Due April 26



United Methodist Women in the Upper New York Conference are planning this summer's **Mission u 2021 event**, to be held virtually in July. **Mission u** is a transformative education program that offers study on several different curricula, including plenary and worship sessions open to everyone - not just women.

Please help in the preparation for this event by completing a two-minute survey by **April 26**. If you have attended Mission u events in the past or would just like to consider attending in the future, you are encouraged to complete this survey. Thank you in advance for helping guide the development of this important program.

Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DVXK8ZS>

General Information about Mission u: <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/mission-u>

Pre-Conference Training Dates

If you are a clergy or lay delegate or EQ Member to the 2021 Annual Conference, it would be a good idea to pencil in one of the days below to attend a Pre-Conference training—the UNY Cabinet and the executive staff have secured different days and times for this training in hopes of accommodating as many people as possible to attend.

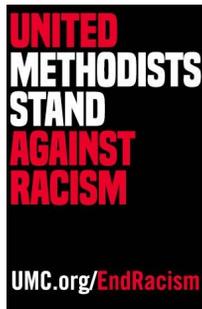
If your church is still able to pay their direct bills, they should. If a church is experiencing financial hardship as a result of reduced giving during this time, the church is asked to notify their [District Superintendent](#) as well as the [Benefits office](#) (Susan Latessa) to discuss their situation. The Upper New York Conference will work with churches on a case-by-case basis.

**UNY Conference
United
Methodist Men**
wish to invite men
from the



Cornerstone District to their annual Spring Retreat, 4 pm Friday, April 30 to 3 pm Saturday, May 1 at the Aldersgate UMC camp (<https://aldersgateny.org>). Click [here](#) for the retreat flyer/registration form. Questions may be directed to UNY UMM President Mark Jones, 315-749-3700.

The UMC is leading a sustained and coordinated effort to **actively engage in the ministry of dismantling racism and promoting racial justice**. The UNY Conference Communications team will regularly share worship, advocacy, and educational resources to help with this important campaign.



This week we highlight Amplify Media's four-video series, *Justice or Just Us?*, a series recommended by The United Methodist Church.

Confronting racism is not just a social or political matter, but a theological one. It is the Bible that calls us to pursue justice, and the Bible that calls us to oppose racism. Justice or Just Us is a four-week video curriculum based on a sermon series and anti-racism commitment at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis. Pastors Rob Fuquay, Nicole Caldwell-Gross, and Jevon Caldwell-Gross help you acknowledge the reality of racism in our world today, as well as our Christian responsibility to oppose it as individuals and together as the Church. The curriculum is based

Choose one of the following dates and times:

- May 8 - 9 - 11 am
- May 13 - 6 - 8 pm
- May 20 - 9 - 11 am

At these trainings, first, Dave Wood from GNTV (this year's technology support) will offer a presentation and tutorial on how the platform will work for this year's virtual conference.

GNTV has offered their services to many Conferences throughout the country and along with accolades and high recommendations, GNTV also received awards at the United Methodist Association of Communicators Awards gala.

This training will then move on to the Rev. Bill Gottschalk-Fielding, UNY Director of Connectional Ministries and Executive Assistant to the Bishop, and other Conference leaders previewing the agenda of the 2021 Annual Conference. There will also be a time for questions and answers.

Zoom links will be posted on the Conference website and sent via email as the training gets closer.

Mission Central HUB Seeking Support

The **Upper New York (UNY) Mission Central HUB** is preparing for the coming spring to support survivors affected by the different disasters (floods and high winds) that may impact our area. In partnering with the **United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)**, UNY's status of kits on hand is low at best. The most requested items are cleaning and hygiene kits. Those who can support our communities by assembling kits in your homes or churches, please share projects so we can support your efforts and possibly share your methods with others. Any number of kits will help.

The HUB at the UNY Conference Center will remain closed until further notice. However, there is a tent outside the Conference Center where kits can be dropped off. You can also make arrangements to drop off kits at the HUB by calling MaryBeth Ingalls at 315-372-0285 or emailing her at marybethingalls@unyumc.org or calling Mike Block at 315-491-0497 or emailing him at mikeblock@unyumc.org.

[Click here](#) for an UMCOR supply list.
[Click here](#) to learn about HUB on the Road.
[Click here](#) for UMCOR Kit Assembly options outside the HUB.
[Click here](#) to make a donation.

around four teaching videos with places to pause and discuss questions with your small group.

Click here to access the video series for free—a Cokesbury study guide is available, at an additional cost, through this link as well.



CLASSES OPEN TO ALL

Basic Lay Servant

May 13 & 27, 6-9 pm;
May 29, 9 am - 1 pm;
and June 7, 6-9 pm

Zoom: Course fee: \$15

Click here for the registration brochure.

Spiritual Gifts

June 14 & 21, 6-9 pm; June 26, 9 am - 1 pm; and July 1, 6-9 pm

Zoom: Course fee: \$15

Click here for the registration brochure.

Leading Worship

July 14, 21 & 28, 6-9 pm and August 7, 9 am - 1 pm

Zoom: Course fee: \$15

Click here for the registration brochure.

Equitable Comp Application Due April 12

The **Commission on Equitable Compensation** has issued guidelines and application forms for salary grants to local churches for the period **July 1 to December 31, 2021**. Salary grants are available only to churches with a pastor under full-time appointment.

Click here for more information, application guidelines, as well as first-time and renewal applications.

Nominations Due April 15 for the Denman Award

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award honors United Methodists who bring people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. Each year, the Upper New York Conference works with the Foundation for Evangelism to recognize and honor one lay and clergy member for their commitment to consistently introducing others to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Nominations are now being accepted through April 15, 2021 for clergy, laity, and youth in Upper New York. **Click here** for a nomination form. Send all completed nomination forms to dcmoffice@unyumc.org.

Add Your Church's Bible Study to the UNY Directory

Since the start of the COVID pandemic, one year ago, the UNY Communications team has been connecting folks across the Conference to digital discipleship resources. As part of that, we have created a directory of **online worship services**.

We are thankful to **Fredonia First UMC** for participating in our denomination's "connection" and adding their two weekly online Bible studies to the UNY directory. We hope other churches in our District who have online studies will consider doing the same.

If your church has Bible studies that are taking place online and you would like it added to the directory, please contact Shelby Winchell at shelbywinchell@unyumc.org and include your church name, Bible study meeting time and day, and a link where it can be found online.