



Photo from Marti Swords-Horrell

First United Methodist Church
66 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, New York

*“O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”*
—Phillips Brooks, ca. 1868

Dear Members and Friends of FUMC,

The rector of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Phillips Brooks, wrote this beloved Christmas poem after a pilgrimage to Bethlehem as our nation was struggling to recover from a bloody Civil War. How comforting the hymn must have been to a hurting city, set to music by Holy Trinity’s organist, Louis Redner. Even today as we sing this song at Christmastime, a holy peace calms our souls and fills us with a quiet joy.

As a tumultuous 2021 comes to a close, the dark streets of our little city are also illuminated by the everlasting light of Christ. Because of your faithful gifts to our mission and ministries, our congregation has been able to serve our community even during these challenging times. From Sunday’s choir anthems to Saturday’s Bread, we have continued to feed our wider community, soul and body alike. We’ve even started some new ministries during COVID: our Helping Hands Thrift and Gift Shop is offering good quality clothing and housewares at bargain prices to people of all income levels, and our new Mission Youth group is gathering at least monthly for community service. Five Study and Action Groups that formed after our summer consensus-building workshops hold the promise of birthing new ministries in the new year as well.

Fr. Brooks penned another verse to “O Little Town” which is often omitted from hymnals:*

*“Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child,
Where misery cries out to thee, Son of the undefiled;
Where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.”*

This verse succinctly proclaims the mission of FUMC at Christmastime 2021 as well as in all seasons: we offer love and faith to a hurting world. Thank you all for making our mission possible through your support and gifts. Please bring the envelope enclosed with this issue of the Reporter to church on Christmas Eve, or send it by mail. Merry Christmas to all!

Yours in Christ’s love,
Rev. Marti Swords-Horrell

**History of the hymn courtesy of Dr. Michael Hawn,
Perkins School of Theology, umcdiscipleship.org*



Christmas 2021

The Gift of Returning

Guest Artists:

Liza DiSavino and A.J. Bodnar

(an acoustic, traditional, Americana, singer-songwriter, multi-instrumental duo)

featuring:

The Handbell Choirs of First United Methodist Church
Handbell Choir from Pathfinder Village

Saturday December 18 at 2pm

Snow date: Sunday December 19 at 2pm

First UMC

66 Chestnut Street

Oneonta, NY 13820

607-432-4102

A freewill offering will be collected to support the music program of FUMC.



Worship Themes for December

All are invited to worship God in prayer and song, both in person and online
at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m., leaving room in between services
for education for children and adults (see “How to Worship” below)

(Service descriptions below are by Marcia McFee, from her series “The Inn: Housing the Holy” © 2021)

We enter a new year in the Christian calendar with Advent, and a new series about making room in our lives for love, peace, joy and transformation: “The Inn: Housing the Holy.” The series will culminate in two services on Christmas Eve at 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. Come and revel in the joy of the season! Services will continue to be offered both in person and by livestream (see “How to Worship”) All are welcome!

Sunday, December 5th – Second Sunday in Advent: “A Place at the Table (Peace).” Like the childhood game of “musical chairs,” we are convinced that there are not enough places at the table. And so we shrink the guest list just in case there is not enough, and we scramble to occupy the chairs first. And yet our sacred texts invite us to imagine and make real the gathering of all people to the table, robed in the garments of a Peace that comes with justice. This is what really matters – this is the fruit of what is right and good. Scriptures: Baruch 5:1-5 CEB (Baruch is a book of gorgeous poetry in the biblical Apocrypha, written in the time between the Old and New Testaments) and Philippians 1:9-11 CEB. Please welcome our guest preacher today, Treena Halstead, a lay speaker from Elm Park UMC and a supervisor at the Healthy Families program here in town.

Sunday, December 12th – Third Sunday in Advent: “How Much is Enough? (Joy).” As John baptized new converts, he invited them to live with “changed hearts and lives.” When asked how to do that, his answers all point to making sure no one is cheated or left without the basic necessities of life, including the right to not be harassed. A full life of joy, which the prophet Isaiah describes as an ever flowing spring, is the birthright of all children of God. May we act to make it so. Please read Isaiah 12:2-6 CEB and Luke 3:10-14 CEB.

Sunday, December 19th – Fourth Sunday in Advent: “A Room With a View (Love).” This has been an Advent season of prophets: Jeremiah, Baruch, Isaiah, Micah. And now the prophet is Mary – the woman who was the original house for the holy. She was “the inn,” her womb gestating love for the world. With all her heart, she proclaims that the lowly are lifted, the hungry are fed, mercy reigns. Like Mary, we must envision, must see, must prophesy and act on that vision for the world that God continues to call us to co-create. What is the view from the room that God has prepared? Scriptures today are Micah 5:2-5a CEB and Luke 1:46-55 CEB.

Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24th – 5:00 p.m.: A brief, family-friendly service with carols and candlelight. 8:00 p.m.: Candlelight communion with choir and organ; scriptures will be Isaiah 9:2-7 and Luke 2:1-20. The Inn is now open for business. The long-awaited Messiah has been born and on him the light shines. We have only to open the doors of our lives and to say “welcome.” Our Advent journey has led us to this moment when the light shining through a closed door becomes one opened to new possibilities, new relationships. What a poignant moment for us this year as the light – the hope, peace, joy and love – multiplies from one illuminated heart and hand to another. Invite your friends and neighbors! Merry Christmas to all!

Sunday, December 26th – Christmas Sunday: “Dwelling”. One service only, at 9:30 a.m. Both Sunday School for children and “Digging Deeper” class for adults will be on recess, but child care will be offered. Developed in the 14th century, the word “dwell” became known as a “lingering” or “abiding.” It had connections to “inhabit” – another word developed at that time. After an Advent/Christmas season of focusing on housing the holy, how will we linger and abide in this habit of hospitality? What habits did you invite into your heart in this season that you desire to take with you into the new year? How might we sustain the dwelling places that feed, house, clothe those who need it most? Please read: Colossians 3:12-17 and Luke 2:41-52.

Pastors Marti and Dana will be away from the afternoon of December 26th through Monday, January 3rd. Please contact the church office for a pastoral visit from a clergy on call if one is needed. Thank you and Merry Christmas!

How to Worship

1. All are invited to join in worship in person in the sanctuary, at 8:15 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. on Sundays. No reservations are required. Please wear a mask. All the doors will be open. There is child care, no coffee hour, but yes: live music and reading and sharing peace with your neighbors and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ! If you feel the need to sing during worship, please make sure that you are seated at least twelve (12) feet from any other worshippers. Keisha Genzardi, our child care worker, is fully vaccinated and ready to care for children during both services.
2. Both the 8:15 and 10:30 a.m. services will continue to be livestreamed. Look for the 8:15 a.m. service on Facebook Live and/or on Zoom, using the worship link (see #3 below.) The 10:30 am service is livestreamed on Zoom only; a virtual “coffee hour” follows the service, so feel free to stay on to greet your fellow zoom worshippers and Pastor Marti!
3. At 8:15 and/or 10:30 a.m. on Sundays, please connect with Zoom by computer: <https://zoom.us/j/195736049>; or call on your phone: 1- 646-558- 8656 Meeting ID: 195 736 049. You will be admitted from the “waiting room.”
4. In order to provide as safe a space as possible for all worshippers, FUMC will continue to follow the masking and social distancing practices that have been in place until the New York State Department of Health reviews the new CDC guidelines and delivers recommendations to the State’s residents. Thank you for your patience as worship practices evolve with the pandemic.

Adult Education

The *Digging Deeper* Bible Study Group will be starting an Advent series entitled *Magnifying the Light: Birthing God's Movement of Grace*. “Moving towards God means making heart space for everyday holiness. It means being willing to grow, bear, and birth God’s movements of grace and caring into the world.” This class meets Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m. in the Coke Room and on Sundays at 9:25 a.m. in the Art Room for one hour. Please join us.

Bible Studies and Small Groups

The United Methodist Women’s book group is meeting on December 9th at 10:00 a.m. in church and December 16th on zoom. On the 8th we will be doing our annual book swap. We are finishing the discussion of *Have You Seen Luis Velez?* by Catherine Ryan Hyde. Our next book is *One Glorious Ambition: The Compassionate Crusade of Dorothea Dix* by Jane Kirkpatrick. Dorothea Dix was an amazing woman who brought about incredible change in our caring for the mentally ill during the time of the civil war. Please join us for fellowship and lively discussion. Call Sharry Strait-Carey at 434-5234

Lectio Divina is on Thursdays, 12:00 noon. This is a time of praying through the words of the weekly Scripture readings that will be the foundation for worship the next Sunday. If you are interested, call Margaret Parish at 435-4001.

Announcement from the Staff-Parish Relations Committee

On Friday, November 12th Rev. Marti and I were informed by Jeff Gardner, our Facility and Finance Manager, that he has accepted a position with the museum in Cooperstown. I know many of us are saddened by this news and will grieve the loss of this servant of the congregation. We certainly wish him many blessings on his new opportunity. His last day is Friday, December 3rd.

—Margaret Parish, Chair SPR

Message from Jeff Gardner

Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. For me and my Tenure at FUMC the beginning was July 1, 2007. Thank you to Tom Clemow, Nancy Bondurant-Couch and others for believing in me and offering me the opportunity to work for First United Methodist Church. I have witnessed a lot of changes during the past 14 ½ years in the church, our lives, the community and world. I have learned and grown so much. I have made many friendships that I hope to keep for years to come, while unfortunately having to have said goodbye to others who have passed away. As I begin my step forward to a new adventure and career, I reflect on the many accomplishments I have achieved at FUMC and it is with sorrow that I am not able to see my remaining goals and objectives for FUMC through to the end. For those who have not heard, I have given FUMC my resignation notice effective December 3rd. Following some much needed family time, I will be returning to the Fenimore Art and the Farmers' Museums who asked me to rejoin their team as a Sr. Staff General Ledger Accountant and HR Support. I want to thank everyone whom I have worked with and who has been part of not only my life but that of my family's lives as well. We could not have accomplished all that we have at FUMC, without the support of many. Hats off to each of you and if you are ever in Cooperstown and would like to grab lunch, please give me a call, my cell number is 287-8414. I wish everyone many blessings at Christmas and for years to come.

Financial Updates..... Jeff Gardner, Business and Facilities Manager



To Date: 55 Pledges have been received. 32 have increased their pledge as compared to 8 who have decreased their pledge, three of which were to zero. The net increase in pledging is \$11,315.36 so far. There are 5 new pledge units. Thus far, we haven't heard from 23 giving units that pledged in 2021.

FUMC CommunicationsAmy Burnsworth

Calling All Things Good – We want to celebrate our congregation out in the community. Please share with me the good things you or your family are doing in the community and want to share with our church family. Send a link to an article or a picture and a brief detail about the event/game/good deed. I will be sharing on FB, Instagram and the website. You can email information to communications@firstumc-oneonta.org Please also email me any events you want publicized on Social Media and the church website.

Speaking of Social Media: Please like/share/follow us on:

- <https://www.instagram.com/firstumconeonta/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/197839013516>

UMW (United Methodist Women) News

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to all who donated, shopped, or helped with the UMW Bazaar on November 20th. What a great day it was!! The UMW can now make its Financial Commitments to Women, Children, and Youth...locally and around the world. Thank you for supporting us.

THANKS also to the persons who supported the SHOEBOX project for Red Bird Mission in Kentucky. We were able to send 20 boxes plus some sheets and towels. Thanks for making someone's Christmas a little brighter.

Messages from the Green Team

"Often in churches, conversations about energy efficiency circulate around questions of budgets, technology, and lifestyle. When I've been in these conversations, I rarely hear questions of justice, compassion, or love. And, even when they do arise, talk usually turns back to pragmatic considerations of financial stewardship and the everyday minutia of keeping buildings running.

"As a justice-centered movement, it is vitally important that we reforge the connections within our faith communities between energy consumption and injustice. It is not hyperbole to say that when we do something as simple as turning on a light, we are contributing to the literal death of communities that the dominant society has systematically exploited and disenfranchised. The cancers, asthma, diminished brain growth and development, and low wages witnessed in environmental justice (EJ) communities result from the material extraction and energy production that powers our churches, homes, cars, food systems, and just about everything else. Reducing our consumption lowers the harm individuals experience from environmental degradation and helps preserve the possibility of a future where our descendants can thrive." – from The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement newsletter

Tell Congress to Act on Climate Justice! Both Church and Society and United Methodist Women have action alerts available to easily connect with your elected representatives. We urge you to go to "www.unitedmethodistwomen.org" and UMC Church and Society action alerts and find the ones dealing with environment.

Re-Use of Greeting Cards

The Green Team likes to send out a special reminder at Christmas that used all-occasion greeting cards are happily accepted for reuse. UMW foots the bill to mail the cards to the St. Jude's Ranch for Children, where teens from troubled homes can learn business skills. Please review the following tips before depositing your cards in the box outside the Choir Room:

- Only the card front can be used (please check to be sure the backside of the front of the card is clear of any writing, etc.)
- We cannot accept Hallmark, Disney, or American Greeting cards due to copyright law
- 5" x 7" size or smaller is preferred

2021 Giving Tree for Head Start Children

This year we WILL again be having the Giving Tree for Head Start children...in its new form...\$50 Gift Certificates. The parents really enjoyed the shopping and flexibility they had for their children last year. There are 42 children, and our goal is to raise at least \$2,100. Any money given above and beyond will be used for the "Secret Santa Fund," a fund that covers requests that come in from caring parents in our congregation and beyond. SO...Please donate what you usually spend by sending a check to the church with "Giving Tree." in the memo, or use PayPal if that's your thing, or put money in the Offering Plate designated for "Giving Tree." **The deadline is December 14.** If you have never done it before, but want to participate this year, we'll gratefully accept your donation, no matter what the size. Thank you and God Bless. Call Joyce at 607-432-8751 if you have any questions.

Possible Worship in the Embury Room: Thank you to everyone who answered the survey about whether or not to have the 8:15 worship service back in the Embury Room as we used to do. Unfortunately, with COVID cases still rising in Otsego County, it is unlikely that we will be able to worship in a circle in the Embury Room any time soon. We will continue to livestream worship as we have been doing, and having people worship in person in the Sanctuary. You may sit in the Embury Room if you would like to.

The Christmas Covenant is a set of legislation and constitutional amendments submitted to the United Methodist Church's (UMC) General Conference with the goal of establishing regional equity in the structures of the church for missional effectiveness while sustaining connectional unity. There are copies of a flyer about the Christmas Covenant available at the sanctuary entrances.

Helping Hands Thrift Store Hours:

Thursdays: 4-8 Fridays: 9-5 Saturdays: 10-2 Call Angela Eardley if you have items to donate: 607-434-2435

~ Caring and Sharing ~ from November

Please remember that if you or a member of your family is hospitalized, it is necessary for you to contact the church if you wish a visit or listing on our prayer lists as that information is not readily (or legally) shared by health care institutions.

Focus Rehab: Bill Pharr (1445 Kemble Street, Room 207, Utica, NY 13501)

Kathryn Roffe is at Fox Nursing Home for rehab (Room 318, 2 Norton Ave, Oneonta, NY 13820)

We have received thank you letters from Habitat for Humanity and The Family Service Association for our recent donations.

Sympathies

Long-time member Evelyn Schaffer passed away on Thanksgiving Day.

We grieve with her son Jeff and his wife Theresa. Rev. Marti held a graveside service on November 30.

First United Methodist Church – Oneonta, New York

Church Address.....	66 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY 13820
Church Office Phone.....	(607) 432-4102
Church email	secretary@firstumc-oneonta. org
Pastor Marti's email.....	pastor@firstumc-oneonta.org
Pastor Marti's cell phone	(315) 569-9156
Church web page.....	http://www.firstumc-oneonta.org
Ordained Minister	Rev. Marti Swords-Horrell
Co-Lay Leaders.....	Gail Niles & Peter Paluch
Director of Music Ministries.....	John Jurgensen
Business & Facilities Manager	Jeff Gardner
Communications Coordinator	Amy Burnsworth
Sexton	Randall Wilson
Secretary	Leslie Bauer
Volunteer Caretaker	Christopher Brashear
Child Care	Keshia Genzardi
Tech Intern	Willa Ness

Don't know what to do with those broken lights? The solution is easy. Lowe's has a recycling station near the store entrance where you can drop off broken lights, including Christmas and other holiday lights, any time of year!

The deadline for the January-February Reporter is January 4th!

THAT STAR

It happens every year about this time.
Even if you are so depressed that you know for certain
nothing good will ever happen again,
that pesky Christmas star comes sneaking over the horizon
and inches, nightly, higher above the Do Not Go There Mountains
insistent that you notice light resisting darkness
reminding you with its return each year
that though you may not always see it
light is always there.

JBj 2021

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Church Decorating & Alternate Gifts

Wreaths have been ordered for the doors from the Oneonta Schools “Dollars for Scholars” program and will be paid for with donations to the sanctuary decorating fund (below). You may also choose an alternative giving fund in honor or memory of someone. Alternate Giving cards are available on Sunday mornings or in the church office.

The prices for poinsettias are extremely high this year because of the cost of shipping. If you would like to buy a poinsettia from a local merchant to donate, it needs to be to the church by noon, Friday December 17. We request red, white, or pink poinsettias.

Alternate Gifts

Warming Station	\$ _____	
Susquehanna SPCA	\$ _____	(Sparky’s Pet Pantry—for families who can’t afford pet food)
UMCOR	\$ _____	
Habitat for Humanity	\$ _____	
Other: _____	\$ _____	

☐ I am donating \$ _____ to be used as needed to decorate.

All memorial/honor information (below) needs to be given to the church secretary no later than Wednesday, December 15 for publication.

GIVEN BY: _____

IN MEMORY OF: _____

IN HONOR OF: _____

_____ I will pick up my plant after the 10:00 p.m. Dec. 24 Service.

_____ I will arrange to have someone take my plant to _____

_____ I will leave my plant at the church.