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First UMC

The Reporter

June 2021

Message from our Pastor

“Hope”

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -
Emily Dickinson

Thank you all, for reading my Pastor’s Message last month. I know it was long! I don’t know if it helped you at all, but it helped me to go back and take stock of our journey as a congregation in the past two years, as we began to seek to refocus our mission and ministries. What we know now is that the consultation process we’ve gone through has led us to an inflection point. The consultation has revealed a disagreement within the leadership of the congregation that has probably been there for some time, but in a hidden way. In my judgment, it is time to uncover what’s been hidden, and deal with it in an open, honest, and loving way.

When I agree to officiate at a wedding, I always require the couple to meet with me three times for premarital pastoral care. At least one of these meetings is devoted to discussing a premarital inventory that I send out to them ahead of time to fill out, a set of statements each partner has to mark “true” or “false,” covering the big topics: finances, intimacy, and conflict. “It’s not a test: you can’t flunk it,” I always reassure them. It’s a conversation starter.

One of the most enlightening conversations I’ve had over the years with couples who are preparing for marriage ensues when they talk about their responses to the statement, “Conflict is not a good thing in marriage.” Our conversation often begins with the two partners’ associations with the word “conflict.” What do you think of when you hear the word “conflict”? A simple disagreement? World War III? Or something in between?

We learn about conflict from our families when we are very small. Some families handle conflict in healthy ways, and some quite dysfunctionally. Some of us come from yelling families. Some of us have experienced abuse in our families, which sadly became more prevalent during the isolation of the pandemic. Some of us grew up in families which seemed not to have conflict at all, it was so quiet, so hidden. It’s helpful as we enter adulthood to acknowledge at least to ourselves how our families handled their disagreements. Every one of us

can always learn more about how to do conflict in a healthier way. As my late brother Peter was fond of saying: “true community is conflict done well.”

The FUMC Council discussed at our May meeting how we will handle the disagreement that’s now out in the open. It’s a disagreement about how we want to manage our invested funds, going forward. Some of us are happy with how we’ve been using these funds for many years, dipping into the principle in a strictly limited way to pay some of our operating costs. Others of us would like to change how we manage these funds, saving more of our endowment for the future. We learned not only about conflict, but also about money from our families, growing up.

Our consultant, Rev. Paul Nixon, hearing about the disagreement that the consultation has laid bare, recommended that we engage the services of a consensus-builder to deal with it before going on. At our May Council meeting, I presented three alternatives of trained conflict facilitators who came highly recommended to me by colleagues. Out of the three, the Council chose the Rev. Mark Marino.

Rev. Marino is a retired elder from the former Wyoming Conference. Some of you may know him from that connection. From his LinkedIn profile: “Mark was Director of Connectional Ministries for the Wyoming Annual (Regional) Conference of the United Methodist Church. Before that, he was Superintendent of the Binghamton District for seven years. In previous appointments he served as pastor of the Chenango Street United Methodist Church (Binghamton NY), Sarah Jane Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church (Johnson City NY), Associate Pastor of the Endwell United Methodist Church (Endwell NY), and Chaplain of the Children’s Home of Wyoming Conference (Binghamton NY). He is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts and Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. Specialties: Mark has had training in Conflict Management & Resolution of Congregational Corporate Pain and Interpersonal Listening Skills, as well as the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center’s Mediation Skills Training. His focus is development of listening skills, goal setting, and strategic planning for local churches and resolution of congregational conflict. He has led numerous workshops on these skills and consulted with a variety of congregations experiencing significant conflict.”

Well, I don’t think we’re “experiencing significant conflict” at this time, but I’m very grateful that Rev. Marino is willing and able to come alongside us. He will start by meeting with the leadership of our congregation (members of Council, SPRC, Trustees, Finance, Stewardship, Patrick Committee, and the Vision-Holders — formerly called the Retreat Team), on Tuesday, June 22nd from 6 – 8:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. (Those from these committees who don’t feel comfortable gathering in person will be invited to join by Zoom.) Following this initial meeting, Rev. Marino will make a proposal as to how we will proceed. Please keep the congregation in prayer as we move forward together.

“‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers,” Emily Dickinson wrote, and in this Pentecost season we experience hope as the Holy Spirit descends on disciples not with feathers this time but with flames of fire! May this continuing journey out of pandemic into our next faithful step be filled with faith, hope, and love for all.

Peace and blessings,
Rev. Marti Swords-Horrell, Pastor

Worship Themes for June

Sunday, June 6th Second Sunday after Pentecost: For both the 8:15 am and 10 am services, online and in person, we’ll be viewing a service from the Reconciling Ministries Network, “Streams of Justice.” Enjoy!

Sunday, June 13th Third Sunday after Pentecost: 8:15 and 10 am in person and by Zoom. It’s gardening season! Who among us doesn’t love to get our hands into the dirt this time of year? Jesus used the things of ordinary life in his parables, to give us some concrete experience of the mysteries of God’s kingdom. Today’s parables are

all about seeds: Mark 4:26-34. Sermon: “Now, Seeds, Start Growing!” Epistle reading is from 2 Corinthians 5:6-17. We will celebrate a Pentecost communion.

Sunday, June 20th Fourth Sunday after Pentecost/ Dads and Grads / Celebration Sunday: 8:15 and 10 am, in person and by Zoom. Today is a day to recognize and celebrate all those marking significant transitions in their lives: our college and high school grads, our 8th graders going to high school, our 5th graders going to middle school, and our 3rd graders receiving their Bibles. In preparation, please read Psalm 107 and Mark 4:35-41.

Sunday, June 27th Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: As a preacher and pastor, I like to turn all my critics into teachers. One suggestion that came to me a few months ago was to talk about stewardship more often, not just during the fall campaign. It so happens that today’s lectionary texts lead in a stewardship direction! Please read: 2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27, and 2 Corinthians 8:7-15.

And as a heads up: the next Sunday, July 4th, we’ll be taking one of the six special Sunday offerings: “Peace with Justice Sunday.” If you are not yet worshipping in person, please send your Peace with Justice gift in by mail, or through our website by PayPal or tithe-ly. Part of the proceeds of the PwJ offering stay here in our Upper New York Conference and are given out as grants to local ministry projects that support justice ministries here and around the state.

How to Worship (NEW!)

1. All are invited to join in worship in person in the sanctuary, at 8:15 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. on Sundays. No reservations are required. Please wear a mask and enter through the Church Street door. There will be no 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.
2. Both the 8:15 and 10:00 a.m. services will continue to be livestreamed. Occasionally there are problems with broadcasting on Facebook Live, so sometimes it is not reliable. So, at least for now, both Sunday services will be broadcast via zoom, using the same link as was used previously for the 10:00 a.m. service. We will attempt to broadcast on Facebook live and see how it goes.
3. At 8:15 and/or 10:00 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.

Bible Studies and Small Groups

Tuesday Spiritual Study: Tuesdays, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m. Gun violence is a public health issue, although many seem not to be able to grasp it as such. The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church contains our official positions on many issues, including gun violence. “Acts of senseless violence should not be an acceptable occurrence in any community.” Beginning June 8 and for the following three weeks, the Tuesday afternoon spirituality group will be discussing a resource titled: *Kingdom Dreams, Violent Realities*. It is reflections on gun violence from Micah 4:1-4, put out by the United Methodist Board of Church & Society. The link to the study guide is <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/37> Please read the first chapter before the class. If you would like a downloadable copy, contact Margaret Parish and she see that you receive it. Or, you could read and refer to on a second device while the class is in session. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/864787949> You will be admitted from the waiting room.

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.

The United Methodist Women's Book Group: Starting in June, the group will be going back to meeting twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 10:00 am. On the 2nd Thursday will be in person, for now outside at Lucy Ingalls' home, and on the 4th Thursday we will meet on Zoom. On June 10th we are going to the Origins Restaurant near Cooperstown for lunch instead of meeting at Lucy's. We are discussing *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi. It is a compelling novel in its portrait of one women's struggle for fulfillment in a society pivoting between the traditional and the modern. Our next read is *Gum Moon* by Jeffrey L Staley. This is a remarkable coming-of-age story of a Chinese-American girl growing up in the early 1900s in California. Please join us for fellowship and lively discussion. Call Sharry Strait-Carey at 434-5234

A Note from The Staff-Parish Relations CommitteeMargaret Parish, Chair

As a result of Council's February decisions, there will be some adjustments in the staff's job descriptions. Effective July 1, accounts receivable and membership records will be moved from Jeff, Business and Facility Manager, to Leslie, Secretary. Amy, Communications Coordinator, will be responsible for the church website and the church Facebook page, formerly handled by John, Music Director. She will also be responsible for the weekly update previously done by Leslie.

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

I am very happy to report that the asbestos abatement project is completed. As mentioned earlier, Sunstream Corporation from Binghamton performed the abatement work. Delta Engineers from Endwell did all the air monitoring and reporting to NYS. Both final bills came in under budget and the total cost of the abatement was \$66,474.76, significantly less than projected. At this point, a draw for \$36,499.76 will be used from the endowment to supplement the donations received and the portion taken from the Trustee's budget. Originally Council approved that up to \$70,000 could be used. Some forward steam pipes will still need to be insulated but that cost has not been determined yet.

With the exception of insulating the pipes mentioned above, the two nursery renovations were also completed in May. The small nursery now has a nice vinyl tile floor at a cost of \$2,050, again coming in under budget. The large nursery has a drop ceiling with efficient LED lighting at a total cost of \$9,063. Both projects were made possible through generous anonymous donations.

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

Fortunately, even with COVID and the uncertainty economy, our annual giving through pledging, non-pledging, and loose plate were still slightly above the budget for four months into the year. For the year, we budgeted \$17,028.5 monthly or \$51,085.50 quarterly for these three revenue streams. As of the end of April, FUMC has received \$73,220.14 in giving or 34.16%. About 44% of the revenue we need to cover monthly expenses comes in through these three sources. At this point, ten of the 76 pledging units have paid their full pledge or more. Another 18 have more that 33% with seven of those paying 50% or more. Another 25 have given exactly 33% of their yearly pledge.

In addition to those pledging units, we have received donations from 27 other people for a total of \$8,299 or 38.6% of what was budgeted for the year. I hope this trend continues.

The FUMC monthly expense budget average is \$38,928 per month. Some months are higher than this, especially in the winter with higher gas and electric bills as well as our yearly insurance billing. We do continue to see savings in our electric and gas bills for the same period a year ago.

Both the Main Endowment Asset Portfolio and Patrick Endowment continued to see growth during April. They are up 2.51% and 5.6% respectively, about \$295,000 in total.

Each year the United Methodist Church designates six Special Sundays that they suggest the local churches to take collections for. Just a reminder, the third of these Special Sundays was scheduled for May 30th, Peace with Justice Sunday, Memorial Day weekend. However, Pastor Marti will be out of town so we will be taking a special collection on July 4th instead. Please make a note of this on your calendars.

Columbarium Update..... Jeff Gardner, Business and Facilities Manager

Several years ago, it was decided that FUMC should install a Columbarium. A Columbarium is a place where the ashes of loved ones maybe inurned. At that time of the initial installation, two banks or columns of 20 niches each for a total of 40 were purchased for the interment of cremains of eligible persons.

The Columbarium at FUMC is internally located at the front of the church, on the right side, near the entrance to the Embury Room by the folding doors.

The principal purchaser must be a baptized or confirmed, past, or present member, or active participant (as determined by the pastor and the Columbarium Committee), of the FUMC, Oneonta, purchasing for his or her immediate family (parents, spouse, children.)

Since the original installation, two additional banks or columns of 20 each have been added increasing the total number of niches to 80. As of now, 61 have been reserved and the remains of 24 people are inurned in the Columbarium.

The cost is \$500 of which a \$100 deposit is required to reserve a niche in the Columbarium. Only one person per niche is allowed. If you are interested in obtaining more information about the Columbarium or reserving a spot for you or a family member's remains, please contact Jeff Gardner at jeff@firstumc-oneonta.org.

Trustees' Message Lorrie Wolverson, Chair

If you have been into church or driven by, you will have seen how beautiful the gardens around the church look. For that beauty we must thank Chris Brashear, our own master gardener. He has pruned, weeded, and spread over 50 bags of mulch! A few weeks ago, when the myrtle first started to bloom people passing by would stop to admire the beauty. One person even took pictures of it. I'm sure the gardens are worth being on the tour list!

Thank you, Chris!



We ARE once again collecting for-deposit cans and bottles—the money that comes in is used for the Jamaica Mission. There are two collection locations: one beside the Saturday's Bread refrigerator in the Fellowship Hall and one downstairs at the end of the elevator hallway.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY!
WAS OBSERVED MAY 21st
Free Milkweed Seeds**

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES NEED OUR HELP NOW! The decline in numbers of Monarch butterflies is becoming a serious matter. We have had “back-to-back 50% declines in their overwintering numbers” due to harsh weather, pesticides, and genetically modified crops. “Researchers are right to be worried that we may lose a larger migration this year if immediate action is not taken to protect their dwindling food supplies and safe migratory corridors...” (livemonarch.com). We need to plant milkweed to help replenish the Monarch's food supply.

The good news is that each one of us can help by planting milkweed! The milkweed plant provides all the nourishment needed to transform the Monarch caterpillar into the adult butterfly.

The Green Team has purchased 500 seeds in packets of 20 to distribute to anyone who wishes to plant milkweed and save the Monarch butterflies. Contact Marty Becker for your packet: [Ma\(marty.vib@gmail.com\)](mailto:Ma(marty.vib@gmail.com)). Or, if you wish to order on your own, go to <https://www.livemonarch.com/free-milkweed-seed/>

As always, we are asking that you contact policy makers to express your concerns. In particular, this year Creation Justice Ministries is asking that we contact our congressional leaders ask them “to commit to reaching net-zero climate pollution in the electricity sector by 2035 and economy-wide by 2050.”

~ Caring and Sharing ~

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.

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

Kathryn Roffe, Fox Nursing Home, Room 318, 2 Norton Ave, Oneonta, NY 13820

Sympathies

*Please keep Scott (Dorothy), Todd, Nina, and Rose in your prayers
as they grieve the passing of Doug Fielder on April 28th.*

*Our sympathies to Rosemary Thomas, Chris, Eli, Jesse & Ava Brashear
on the death of Rose's brother, Jim Thomas.*

Please pray for the family of Betty Fischer, friend of Ramona Leavey, who died on April 28th.

Phil Young will have a solo exhibition, "Onsite Insight," in the Community Gallery at the Fennimore Art Museum July 2 - July 25. More information will be forthcoming.



We are collecting information on all of our graduating seniors. Please send all names of family members who are graduating and from what schools so we can celebrate them!
secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org

COVID Information

1. The FUMC Covid Team believes that the Covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective at reducing one's chance of serious disease and hospitalization by up to 96%. Getting vaccinated may also protect people around you, particularly people who are at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The more people who get vaccinated, the more the number of cases of COVID-19 will drop. If you have questions about getting vaccinated, talk to your health care provider.
2. Once you're vaccinated, what should you do with your CDC vaccination card? Most authorities agree that you should not carry the original with you, but instead store it in a safe place at home, as you may need it again to record booster shots if ever required.
3. Take a picture of your card and store it on your cell phone and/or scan your card to your PC. Make at least one copy and take the copy, not the original, to OfficeMax for free lamination on or before July 25, 2021. This is what you will want to carry in your wallet or purse.
4. Additionally, you may want to download the New York State Excelsior Pass app, available in the App Store or on Google Play. Go to <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/excelsior-pass> for further information on this volunteer program.

If you have any questions, if you still need the vaccine, or if you need to get tested, please contact us.
Sharry Strait-Carey 434-5234 or sharrysc9@hotmail.com Marty Van Lenten Becker 432-4917

The First UMC Reconciling Task Force is planning to make a donation from our annual book sale monies to our national RMNetwork for work with the transgendered youth ministry. At a time when health services are being denied to transgendered folks all over America, it compels us to help where we can.

If you would care to make an individual donation please send your contribution with "RMN transgendered youth" in the memo. We haven't had an membership drive for becoming an individual Reconciling Member for some time, so if you are new to the church or feel now is the time to let your voice be heard, please go to rmnetwork.org and select "join us."

—Thank you, The RMN Task Force