

Message from our Pastor

*'Tis the spring of souls today! Christ has burst his prison,
And from three days' sleep in death as a sun hath risen."*

--"Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain" UM Hymnal #315

Words by John of Damascus, c. 646-749; tr. John Mason Neale, 1859

I don't know about you, but I'm ready for spring! After a long, cold winter, it's wonderful to see the daffodils and crocuses peeking out from under the mud. As a small child, I remember my mother taking me by the hand to walk out into the yard to look and listen for signs of spring: buds on the trees, baby birds chirping from nests high above our heads, the grass greening up, the earth shedding its winter pall. What a blessing that for us in the northern hemisphere of our globe, spring and Easter coincide!

This year as I watch for signs of Resurrection as well as signs of spring, I am taking heart from the amazing energy, creativity, and commitment of some of our younger UM activists and organizers, especially our young women of the Upper New York Conference. Rev. Rachel Morse led us in a very moving communion service on March 31st when the new conference coalition of Reconciling Congregations and friends, Upper New York for Full Inclusion (UNYFI), came together for its second organizing meeting. Margaret Parish drove a vanful of us up to Syracuse and we were fed! Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

During the entire month of May, we will celebrate our thirtieth anniversary of being a Reconciling Congregation! Stay tuned for more news as this exciting time of recommitment to justice and love unfolds in our midst.

One of the leaders of UNYFI is a young woman some of you may know: Marthalyn Sweet. People in the Otsego and Delaware County areas may be familiar with her family from the days of the former Wyoming conference. Her Grandpa Burt served as the Oneonta District Superintendent from 1974-1980, and during that time her mom (Beckie) and her uncle Burt both graduated from Oneonta High School! Her grandma was very involved with the UMW at that time too, and I'm sure you know how lasting many of those relationships can be. Marthalyn is currently in physician assistant school at RIT and will be graduating in 2020. For the last few summers, Marthalyn has worked as the SNAP coordinator at Sky Lake, which, she says "has truly filled my soul. I am so grateful that I've been able to be a part of camping ministry as Sky Lake has really become my spiritual home." She served as a delegate at both the 2016 and 2019 general conferences and the 2016 northeastern jurisdictional conference. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, reading, and board games. Marthalyn gave me permission to reprint the following, which she posted originally on facebook.

Peace and blessings,
Rev. Marti

"Here I Am Reflecting" by Marthalyn Sweet

A few weeks ago Upper New York Bishop Mark Webb held a livestream gathering to discuss General Conference 2019. Like many of us that Sunday, I sat in my pew and felt shame—shame as every piece of legislation passed by the special session of general conference was read, shame with each concession of what had been deemed constitutional or not, shame knowing the potential progress that could have come out of that time of holy conferencing, and shame knowing that we have caused harm onto the LGBTQ community for decades and there is not yet an end in sight. As I continued to sit in my pew I listened to Bishop Webb's appeal

that we are at a point of doctrinal difference. That was when I stopped feeling ashamed and remembered the message of the church that raised me.

Our institution is far from perfect: this recent reckoning of our current “doctrine” confirmed that. However, we are not now nor have we ever been a people who are content with leaving things as they are. The insinuation was made that gathering together in community to come to terms with our reality and vision for the future of our church is causing further division. This is false. People coming together to support one another in a time of grief and sorrow aren’t a threat; it reflects the strength we have in our connection. People organizing to find ways to make our church and our connection more just aren’t aggression; it’s living out and leaning into our heritage. Seeking justice for the oppressed and marginalized doesn’t hurt the oppressor; it brings us closer to God.

A church that celebrates the marriage of people wanting to extend their discipleship into the context of their relationship is not radical; it’s an extension of our baptism. A church that can uplift those with a call to ministry who wish to devote their life to building Christian community is not radical; it’s a church that wants to spread the good news. It’s exhausting to advocate for something that should be so logical. We, people seeking a fully inclusive church, are not radical just because our message has fallen on closed hearts and minds for decades. We are speaking to people who need to hear the message we are bringing. Our Church needs to be fully inclusive of LGBTQ persons if we are to be truly Christ-centered and justice-seeking. The “traditional” interpretation of Scripture that some tout as doctrine doesn’t make that less true.

People can put words on a screen and try to bring back old ideas for as long as they want. This sounds like a nice way to muddle a message. Regardless, the Church I know and the church I am here for is with all of the people here, in spite of our denomination’s shortcomings. It is within us that I see the hope and feel the conviction to have a fully inclusive church. The shame I felt was deep, but the call to continue to speak truth and work for inclusion is far stronger. Some have said that we need a resurrection for Methodism. If you ask me though, we’re already in Pentecost.

Worship Themes for May

The Great Fifty Days is an ancient designation for the heady days between Easter and Pentecost (meaning “Fifty”). During these days we hear the thrilling stories in the Book of Acts of the appearances of the Risen Christ to the nascent Christian community. It will give us heart once again to hear these stories of the newborn church, growing by leaps and bounds in response to Resurrection power!

Happy 30th Reconciling Anniversary, FUMC!

Sunday, May 5th – Third Sunday of Easter. One Service only, at 10 a.m. No Gathering today. Our Reconciling Anniversary Month kicks off with message by our dynamic young guest, J.J. Warren. JJ is graduating this spring from Sarah Lawrence College, and will attend Boston University School of Theology this fall, one of our United Methodist seminaries. He grew up in the Penn Yan United Methodist Church. When he stood at the microphone at the Special General Conference in February in St Louis to give his testimony of how a fully inclusive church can bring people to Jesus, many of the bishops stood up and applauded (against GC rules). You won’t want to miss him! Holy Communion will be celebrated by Rev. Dick Breuninger.

Sunday, May 12th – Fourth Sunday of Easter: Women of Faith Sunday / Mother’s Day. Our scriptures are all about crossing boundaries to bring new life: appropriately enough, the story in Acts 9:36-43 is all about a community of faithful women. We’ll give a donation to the Reconciling Parents Network in honor of all our faithful women. Theme of the day: “We Are All God’s Children.”

Sunday, May 19th – Fifth Sunday of Easter: Remembering the Music Ministry of Ray Paradis – on this tenth anniversary of Ray’s death. We’ll give thanks for Ray’s life and ministry, especially his commitment to reconciling all of God’s people. Our scriptures show that God shows no partiality: Psalm 148 and Acts 11:1-18. Last Gathering service of the school year: come and enjoy the music of Crossfire, our amazing band, at 5 p.m.!

Sunday, May 26th 6th Sunday of Easter: Summer Schedule starts: two services, 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. We’ll revel in a Shower of Stoles to round out our month-long celebration of our 30th Anniversary as a Reconciling Congregation. Scriptures include: Psalm 67 and Acts 16:9-15, the latter being a great celebration of how the Holy Spirit can take us outside the city gates to find people who are eager for love and acceptance.

Sunday, June 2nd 7th Sunday in Easter. 8:30 and 10 a.m. A great celebration of how God can break the chains of fear and oppression!! To prepare, please read Acts 16:16-34. Paul and Silas, bound in jail, ain’t nobody goin’ to pay their bail: keep your eyes on the prize, hold on! Can we talk about mass incarceration? Psalm 97 rounds out our scriptures; Holy Communion will be celebrated. Sunday School ends today for the season.

Sunday, June 9th Pentecost! Celebration Sunday! One service at 10:00 a.m. We’ll celebrate confirmation, graduations, moving up to new grades, new Bibles, and the dedication of our leaders in worship and Christian education. Please send all names of family members who are graduating and from what schools so we can celebrate them too!

Pastor’s Vacation: Revs. Marti and Dana will be on vacation through May 7th. For pastoral care during this time, please call the church office, and one of our retired pastors will follow up.

Family Ministry Reboot Dinner: How does First Church minister to families, youth, and children? Join us to dream, plan, pray, and fellowship at one of the following dinners:

Friday, May 17th at 6:30 p.m. at Sarah & Aaron Miller’s home. (6 Roosevelt Avenue, Oneonta)

Thursday, May 30th at 6:30 p.m. at Pastor Marti’s home (41 Ford Avenue, Oneonta).

R.S.V.P. to Sarah by phone or text: 765-918-0955

SPECIAL CHURCH CONFERENCE SET: During these turbulent times in our denomination, it’s important for our congregation to make good decisions after hearing a wide diversity of views across our lay leadership and membership, as we respond to the decisions made at the Special General Conference that was held in St Louis in February. Therefore, the Council has decided to hold a Special Church Conference just prior to its next meeting: on Thursday, May 9th, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. Rev. Marti will preside, as designated by our Superintendent, Rev. Everett Bassett. A Church Conference is an official meeting of the congregation where any member may vote. At this Special Charge Conference, we will discuss the resolution “**We Refuse**” and decide whether we want to support it as a congregation. The resolution was written by Rev. Mark Ledbetter, pastor at Eastern Parkway UMC in Schenectady and was publicized on the UNIFY facebook page (Upper New York for Full Inclusion), a new group in which Rev. Marti and several lay leaders of our congregation have been active. See below to read the resolution. All are urged to attend the Special Church Conference; members of FUMC may vote. Please see Rev. Marti or any member of the Council if you have any questions or concerns.

We Refuse

We, the undersigned clergy, laity, and churches of the Upper New York United Methodist Conference, reject in its totality the Traditional Plan passed at the 2019 Special Session of the United Methodist General Conference held in St. Louis, MO, February 23—26. In particular, we cannot abide with the injurious harm and emotional pain that this plan has caused our LGBTQIA+ siblings. We find the United Methodist Discipline’s phrase, “Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching,” to be incompatible with God’s all-inclusive love of and for everyone in God’s creation and incompatible

with the Jesus teachings which call each of us, as his disciples, to love everyone, unconditionally. We cannot find the faintest echo of the Jesus teachings in the exclusive, punitive, and unwelcoming words and actions of the Traditional Plan. The plan is inhumane to all God's Children and in particular to the LGBTQIA+ community. It is, in a word, unchristian. The undersigned clergy, laity, and churches stand with the German Executive Committee, the Michigan Board of Ordained Ministry, the Western Jurisdiction of the U.S., and countless other churches, districts, and jurisdictions around the world that see nothing but emotional abuse in the adoption of the Traditional Plan.

As followers of the Jesus teachings, in which we are called to make Christian Disciples of EVERYONE for the transformation of the world, we the undersigned Clergy, Laity, and Churches of the Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, refuse to deny our LGBTQIA+ siblings access to the welcoming safety of space, sacraments, and rituals of the United Methodist Church. As laity and clergy we welcome, with open arms, all members of the LGBTQIA+ community into our church families. Furthermore, as clergy, we will officiate at LGBTQIA+ weddings, and as clergy and laity, we will stand at the sides of our LGBTQIA+ ordinands. As churches, we will host LGBTQIA+ weddings and support LGBTQIA+ people who seek ordination, and those who seek leadership in lay roles. We call upon our district superintendents and bishop to officiate at LGBTQIA+ weddings. And we call upon our bishop to consecrate, commission, and ordain all qualified candidates regardless of sexuality.

We the undersigned clergy and laity of the Upper New York Annual Conference see clearly the image of God brightly reflected from the faces of ALL of God's Children.

Financial Update

Jeff Gardner, Business Manager

As mentioned last month, we will be having many fun events and fundraisers happening throughout the year. On April 13th, an a capella group, Eight is Eneuf performed a goodwill concert beginning at 7:00 p.m. in our sanctuary. About 100-125 people attended the event. Proceeds from the event were shared with FUMC getting \$260.

Each month a different group or organization benefits from our loose change "Jingle". In March, \$71.90 was donated to Caring Connections at Catholic Charities. In April, the money collected from the jingle will benefit the Oneonta High School after prom party. To date, only \$30.80 has been collected, not much to have a fun and safe party with. We can do better than that. Please donate your loose change, or write a check made out to FUMC and put OHS After Prom Party in memo line. In May, the jingle will be for Jamaica trip fund to assist with travel for the 2020 mission trip.

Six times a year, the United Methodist Church does church-wide special Sunday offerings. The most recent one was on March 31st, which was UMCOR Sunday, formerly known as One Great Hour of Sharing. We collected \$631 which will be forwarded on to assist with the administrative costs so that all the designated gifts given throughout the year will go to the program of the giver's choice. Your contribution ensures UMCOR's response in times of crisis.

The next special Sunday is Native American Sunday which is normally May 5th. Your generous gifts will support the Native American Ministries within the annual conference, provide scholarships for Native Americans attending seminary, and strengthen, develop, and equip Native American ministries (related to the General Board of Global Ministries). FUMC will be recognizing this special Sunday later in the year; stay tuned to your Reporter for when.

We will celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday on June 16th. When you give on this Sunday, you help encourage people to live – not just preach – the gospel of peace in the U.S. and around the world.

As we celebrate Easter and the resurrection of Christ, it is also a time that we remember lost family and friends as well as honor those who are still with us and special to us through alternate gifts. Thus far, FUMC has received alternate giving donations in the amount of \$1,262. Donations were given to the Jamaica Building Fund-\$250, Grey Matters-\$10, Caring Connections-\$353, UMCOR US Disaster Relief-\$10, UMCOR Foreign Disaster Relief-\$100, UMCOR General Funds-\$100, and for a variety of flowers-\$419.

We really appreciate all of the financial and volunteer support that everyone gives the FUMC.

Sunday School plans

Marty Van Lenten Becker

End of Year Pre-K/Elementary Sunday School plans

Our morning Pre-K/Elementary Sunday School class will continue through June 2, taking a break for Memorial Day weekend, May 26. We'll continue learning about the Bible with some New Testament stories. June 2 will be our last class for the 2018-1019 school year. June 9 is Pentecost and Celebration Sunday. We'll have one service and, after honoring confirmands and graduates, we'll have games (hopefully outside!) for our children before we all enjoy lunch together. It's a fun way to end our Sunday School year! If you're a parent, expect to hear from me with a request to help set up and/or chaperone our game time. Thanks!

Rainbow Stole Project:

RMN Task Force

Once again the RMN task force is making rainbow stoles for Annual Conference and General Conference. Because we have so many willing hands, FUMC will again provide rainbow stoles to be worn by UMC members seeking an inclusive Reconciling church. After cutting and packaging 150 stoles, a few talented individuals of FUMC will sew them and have them ready to dedicate on our Shower of Stoles Sunday, May 26th. We will sell some of our new stoles for a donation on that day. Thanks to all who shopped, cut, packaged, sewed, and those who gave donations. Well over 1000 stoles have been produced for this wonderful witness over the years!

Name Tags: If anyone would like a name tag, please sign the sheet in the transept or call the office. The cost is \$7 and payment upon ordering would be appreciated. This is a good way for everyone to learn each other's name and for new people to connect.

The United Methodist Women's Book Group meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday at 10:00 a.m. We are now discussing the book *The Same Sky* by Amanda Eyre Ward, a compelling novel that follows an immigrant's journey. This is a very timely book. Our next book is *Educated: a Memoir* by Tara Westover, an unforgettable memoir about a young girl who, kept out of school, leaves and goes to college. Please join us for fellowship and lively discussion. If you have any questions, call or email Sharry Strait-Carey at 434-5234 or sharrysc9@hotmail.com.

Rummage Sale: May 2-3

Spring cleaning time! Donations must be on the stage by April 28th. Please do not bring torn or dirty clothing or appliances that don't work. For the book sale, please do not bring encyclopedias, Reader's Digest books, or text books. We also need plastic grocery bags for the Friday bag sale. Bring them to the stage anytime. The Bake Sale is on Thursday only. Volunteers are needed on set-up days and we appreciate any time that fits into your schedule—one hour or all day. On Thursday, help is needed in 3 hours shifts: 9-12, 12-3 or 3-6. On Friday, clean-up help is needed from 1-2 or 2:30, depending on the size of the crew. Men are warmly welcome to help with set-up and clean-up. Many hands make light work. It's also a great way to meet new people. Call Joyce Miller to volunteer: 432-8751—or say YES when she contacts you.

Check First Before You Donate Items to the Church

Many of us are old enough to remember the TV commercial for Life Cereal, “Let’s get Mikey to eat it. He won’t like it. He hates everything!” Someone gave the cereal to Mikey, he ate it, and it was proclaimed, “He liked it! Hey Mikey!” Nobody asked Mikey.

Most of us are in a giving frame of mind and that is great, but we need to make sure the gift is welcomed. Often, well-meaning people will drop off items at church thinking, So much happens here and they have so many connections that someone will find a home or use for this “item”. Sometimes it’s because we just don’t know what to do with these items, or we don’t want to throw them in the garbage. Plastic eating utensils, straws, and plastic-lined paper cups are just a few examples.

Too often our church staff or volunteers are tasked with finding a home for donations that are not needed by the church, and that may include tossing in the garbage. As FUMC has renewed its determination to be a green congregation, it’s up to all of us to do our part to recycle or reduce before bringing items to church. If you aren’t sure what to do with something, go to Otsego County’s How Do I Get Rid Of...? site at <http://www.otsegocounty.com/depts/sw/HowdoIgetridof.htm>, or call (607) 547-4225 to ask.

Finally, please call Jeff Gardner, Business Manager and ask if your donation is needed before bringing it to church (you can leave a message at extension 103 if the church office isn’t open). In the church’s case “Mikey doesn’t always like it.”

Seminar- What My Family Needs To Know- In memory of Virginia Wilson, who helped so many church folks organize the services for their loved ones, UMW is sponsoring a short workshop on planning ahead: organizing important papers, writing an obituary, and planning a memorial service. Along with a booklet created by our UMW, Catskill Area Hospice has generously provided us the 5 Wishes document, a health care proxy / living will instrument, which will be given to each seminar participant to discuss with their loved ones in the privacy of their home. This seminar will be offered at 11:30 a.m. Sunday June 2nd at the church in the Art Room. The facilitator will be Allison Bookhout. Bring your coffee and snack from Fellowship Hall – we will keep this under an hour. If you plan to attend please RSVP to bookhoutajay@gmail.com

Let’s go to Camp!

We have received brochures for each of our six Conference Camps. Online information is available for the many camping and retreat opportunities our Conference has to offer around the state. The website for Conference camps is www.campsandretreats.org if you want to take a peek at what’s available. There are lots of opportunities to choose from. Each camp has different programs scheduled throughout the summer. Camperships are available thanks to our annual fruit sale. If you wish to be considered for a share of the campership funds, registrations need to be into the church office by May 1st. Please speak to Jeff in the church office for details.

Calling All Graduates

If you have a family member graduating from elementary, middle, or high school or from college or a training program, please let us know so that we can celebrate with you this happy event. We will be recognizing our graduates and also presenting Bibles to our children moving from 3rd to 4th grade, on Celebration Sunday, June 9th. If your child does not have a Bible, no matter what grade they are in, let us know and we will be sure to have one for them.

Workers Needed: First UMC will be the participating group for the Anniversary Celebration of Saturday's Bread on May 18th. May is a busy month, so if you can help from 9:30 – 1:30-ish, it will be greatly appreciated. See Joyce Miller or call her at 607-432-8751 or email her at millerumw@verizon.net. Newcomers welcome!! You get "on the job" training for sandwich making, serving, bussing, cutting desserts, dishwasher helper, pots & pans scrubber, etc. We do it all.

Spring Art Classes (Wednesday mornings, 10-12, the Art Room)

May 1, 8, 15, 22 "**Innovative Book Structures**" with Nancy Callahan Class size limit: 12
Using playful exploration of simple book forms, Nancy will guide you through the construction of a variety of unique folding patterns & binding techniques to produce numerous innovative book structures. An ideal class for artists, scrap bookers & teachers. No previous book making experiences required. Book designs will differ from those taught in previous courses.

~ Caring and Sharing ~ from April

*Our prayers for comfort and healing to those that have been hospitalized or ill at home or are recovering or continuing in treatment. **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.***

Recovering, continuing in treatment, or in a rehabilitation facility: Andrea Schleicher, Bev LeBeau, Ralph More, Travis Walsh, Ginny Pence, Betty Lynch, and Bill Pharr.

IN SYMPATHY:

- *Our sympathies to Angela Eardley and all her family upon the death of her father.*
- *Our sympathies to Phil & Honey Young on the death of their friend, Joellen Brown, after an accident.*

THANK YOU NOTES:

From the Oneonta Middle School Principal, Coleen M. Moore: *I would like to thank you for accommodating the middle school and allowing us to utilize space at the church to tutor a student. It was very generous of you to block out time and space for our use each week. Everyone was very welcoming and helpful and I greatly appreciate it. Thank you for your support of the middle school and its students.*

From Becky Thomas, President, Board of Directors of The Family Service Association: *We at FSA wish to thank you for your generous contribution [through the Patrick Committee] to the Family Service Association. We depend on donations like yours to continue providing basis assistance to lower income individuals and families, and people who are dealing with crisis.*

Music in Memoriam: Ray Paradis

There will be an organ recital at St. Mary's Catholic Church marking the occasion of Ray Paradis' death. A plaque will be placed in honor of his service to that church. Ray was a well-known organist and music director in our area for more than 30 years. He served here at First UMC from 1972 to 2004. Featured organists are: Don Embling, John Jurgensen, Flora Beth Cunningham, Leslie Bauer, and Christopher Cerosaletti.

Sunday, May 19, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. – St. Mary's Catholic Church at the corner of Walnut & Elm Streets. People will be sharing their memories of Ray—please join us there.

Film Plastic Recycling to Bring to Stores

Plastic Recycling Please recycle only clean, dry plastic bags and film. Remove receipts or any other items from bags.

Do NOT include:

- Degradable/compostable bags or film packaging
- Pre-washed salad mix bags or frozen vegetable bags
- Frozen food bags
- Candy bar wrappers
- Chip bags
- Six-pack rings

Please **DO** recycle: (the plastic can be stretched)

- Grocery & retail bags
- Newspaper bags
- The outer wrapping from napkins, paper towels, bathroom tissue & diapers, etc
- Dry cleaning bags
- The outer wrapping from bulk beverages
- Produce bags
- Bread bags
- Flatted bubble wrap
- Shipping bags – remove paper labels

*Locally bring to Price Chopper, Hannaford, WalMart, Lowes or Home Depot or any place where plastic bags are given out.

Web sites for more information are earth911.com and plasticfilmrecycling.org

To make your own cloth grocery bag go to <https://www.onlinefabricstore.net/makersmill/how-to-make-reusable-shopping-bags/>.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPSPoAzVv78>

NEXT REPORTER DEADLINE: MAY 15!

St. Mary's Catholic Church is hosting
A Healthy Saturday: Two Free Presentations
Presentation by Grace Fay: Mental Health, Faith and Self-Care
Presentation by Don Embling: The Disease of Addiction
Saturday, May 18, 9:00 a.m. – noon