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First UMC

*The Reporter*

September 2021

**Message from our Pastor**

**“Are you SAGging?”**

My sister-in-law and her best friend came here to New York State a few years ago to join in a weeklong group adventure by bike from the Finger Lakes to the Adirondacks. They started biking in Bath, New York, near Keuka Lake, and ended up in Lake Placid seven days later. Overnights were spent in tents in state parks along the way. How did they carry all their gear: tents, pots and pans, extra inner tubes for the bikes and tools to fix them, food, and water? Easy: the outfitter provided a SAG wagon, a van equipped with all the group would need for a week, which drove alongside the bikers and met them at all their stops to provide everything they needed for a safe and fulfilling adventure. When Dana and I met Linda and her friend in Lake Placid, they came flying down the hill into town in a light rain, smiles on their faces, because the folks with the SAG wagon had kept them well fed, healthy, and dry.

Some believe the acronym “SAG” with reference to bike trips means “support and gear.” As FUMC goes forward in our consensus-building process, I’m so glad we’ve created five “SAGs”! In our case, the acronym means “Study and Action Groups.” The five groups will work on the five top concerns/dreams that emerged from the second Consensus-Building Workshop led by Rev. Mark Marino, on July 11<sup>th</sup> here at church. Each will be convened by one of our leaders among the laity.

The five top dreams/concerns surfaced on July 11<sup>th</sup> were:

1. Resolve financial problems for future sustainability.
2. Grow membership, esp. younger families/adults, youth 12+, & working people.
3. Better communication; more transparency.
4. Create more covenant and discipleship small groups.
5. Increase pool of volunteers and trained leaders.

Would you like to join a SAG? Maybe you'll bring support (encouragement and ideas), or maybe gear (tangible hands-on help). In any case, it's not too late to get involved. Please contact the church office with your contact info, to sign up.

In any case, please pray for the SAGs. Their success is critical to our ongoing journey as a congregation. Pray for insight; pray for energy; pray for our mission and vision, moving forward together in Christ.

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

**New Worship Time Starts September 12<sup>th</sup>  
Sunday School begins September 19<sup>th</sup>**

Please note that our summer worship schedule (8:15 and 10 a.m. services in the sanctuary) will continue through Labor Day Sunday (September 5<sup>th</sup>). The new Fall schedule begins the following Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>: 8:15 a.m. worship in the sanctuary (although you may sit in the Embury Room if you like); 9:25 a.m. Christian Education (Adult class only on 9/12; children from preK through 6<sup>th</sup> grade on 9/19); 10:30 a.m. worship in the sanctuary.) All worship services will continue to be live streamed: 8:15 on Facebook Live and Zoom; 10 and 10:30 on Zoom; posted on FUMC's YouTube channel by mid-afternoon on Sundays.

**How to Worship**

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, changing to 10:30 on September 19<sup>th</sup>. No reservations are required. Please wear a mask. You may enter through either the Church Street door or the courtyard 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 (or 10:30) a.m. services will continue to be live streamed. 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 (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.

**Worship Themes for September: Season of Creation, the Word series.**

We will enjoy ecumenical resources for worship that supports our care of the earth, from the website [www.letallcreationpraise.org](http://www.letallcreationpraise.org) (descriptions below are from this website.)

September 5<sup>th</sup> (8:15 and 10 a.m.) **Planet Earth Sunday.** We invite all the domains of Earth to worship with us. In the readings, we discover the story of Earth being born, how the Word continues to be the impulse that creates in Earth, and the amazing truth that the Word is born of flesh and blood on Earth. Communion will be celebrated: if you are joining us virtually, please have ready a piece of bread and something to drink in a cup. Scriptures include: Genesis 1:1-25 and John 1:1-14.

September 12<sup>th</sup> (8:15 and 10:30 a.m.) **Humanity Sunday.** We worship with all humanity and all creation. The readings highlight that we have, in the past, chosen the mandate to dominate (in Genesis 1:26-28) over the commission to serve (in Genesis 2:15). The message of Mark 10:42-45 offers a Gospel answer: the risen Christ is the source of our hope.

September 19<sup>th</sup> (8:15 and 10:30 a.m.) **Sky Sunday / Native American Ministries Sunday.** We worship this week with the skies above us, in concert with our Native siblings. In the readings, we become aware that the skies not only announce the presence of God in Earth, but also that the skies mourn and grow dark in empathy when Earth below is wounded. Please read: Jeremiah 4:23-28; Psalm 19:1-6. *Our special offering for Native American Ministries around the nation will be received. An envelope is included with this Reporter.*

September 26<sup>th</sup> (8:15 and 10:30 a.m.) **Mountain Sunday.** We worship with creation in the mountains. A special focus for this service is a “mountain top experience.” We enter into God’s presence in a holy mountain. Like Zion or Sinai, it is the mountain of God. In the readings, we become aware of God’s presence revealed on a mountain—on Horeb, Zion, and Calvary. We also discover that our mission is not only to preach the Gospel to all peoples, but also to all creation! Scriptures include: Exodus 3:1-8a; Isaiah 65:17-25.

### **All God’s Critters Got a Place in the Choir**

Please save the date! On October 3<sup>rd</sup> (World Communion Sunday), we will also offer a “Blessing of the Animals” at 2 pm in the FUMC courtyard. Bring your furry and feathered friends for a blessing!

### **Sunday School for Children**

We are getting ready to begin a hopeful year of Sunday School for our elementary and toddler children. Marty Becker has retired from our Sunday School team and she will be greatly missed. We are so grateful for her dedication to FUMC’s children for so many years. Pastor Marti will be holding the same Toddlers and Waddlers group again this year so that our youngest parishioners can interact and learn about the Love of God with the help of their parents. Lisa Smith, Nancy Bondurant-Couch, Celena Eardley, and other generous volunteers will lead our elementary students with games, crafts, science experiments, music, scavenger hunts, and mini-missions. We will serve kindergarten through sixth grade. We especially hope to recruit sixth graders as Buddies for the youngest grades and, as a thank you, we would like to treat our Buddies to special exclusive events (such as a pizza party, social time, game room time, and other mission opportunities).

The Sunday School format will include a greeting time with songs followed by the main lesson with a corresponding activity, and a closing time with song and prayer. School will begin the week of 9/19/21. Due to COVID, we will utilize our courtyard until the weather turns too cold and then we will try to use the more open space of the Fellowship Hall. The Toddlers and Waddlers will take place in the Embury Room. Sunday School will be held from 9:25 to 10:25 each Sunday. You can fill out an enrollment form on the first day of Sunday School or you can stop in the office to pick up a form in advance. Jesus reminds us, “Whoever welcomes this child in my name, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, also welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the greatest.” (Luke 9:48) Our children are cherished in our church and we thank you for sharing them with us.

Lisa Smith, Sunday School Coordinator

### **Fall Schedule for Adult Education**

Digging Deeper Bible Study, Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m. or Sundays at 9:30 a.m. Both classes will be in person. If necessary, the Tuesday group will go to zoom. We will begin a five-week video and discussion series from *The Work of the People* entitled, *In This Together, Loving Our Way Forward*. This is a discussion on healing in our world at a fractured time. Following this we will start a series entitled, *Drawing All Things to God*. Again, it will be a video and discussion around Jesus’ teachings in a connected way of living in relationship to God. We will start Tuesday, September 7 at 2:00 p.m. and will repeat on Sunday, September 12 at 9:30 a.m. If you need to attend on Tuesdays through Zoom, please contact Margaret Parish: 607-435-4001

## **Bible Studies and Small Groups**

The United Methodist Women's Book Group: The United Methodist Women's book group is meeting twice a month, the second and fourth Thursdays at 10 a.m. We are meeting on September 9, outside at Lucy Ingalls's home, where we will be discussing *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins. This book is a gripping and empathetic story of an immigrant mother and son and their struggle to flee cartel violence and settle in America. *American Dirt* humanizes the immigrants from south of the border who some fail to recognize as fellow human beings. Our September 23 meeting will be over zoom. 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. We are starting back up on September 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Music Ministries 2021-2022 ..... John Jurgensen, Director of Music Ministries**

Sanctuary Choir rehearsals will begin Wednesday, September 8 at 7:15 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Music will be brought up in your folders on a cart. Open to all singers, High School through adults.

Buckingham Bells will begin Wednesday, September 15 at 9:15 a.m. in the Music Room. Open to adults.

Younger choirs (Asbury and Klangers) will be polled and decided upon in the next few weeks. A lot of our youth have grown up and gone off to college. We have quite a few young ones coming up. Stay tuned!

### **Facility Update ..... Jeff Gardner, Business and Facilities Manager**

The replacing of the insulation around the steam pipes removed as part of the asbestos abatement process was completed in July. This will hopefully keep the rooms a little cooler and was the final step before we start to put the nurseries back in order. This will allow us to host DSS visits while preparing for potential childcare and Sunday School in the fall.

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, a 12-ft square piece of carpeting was replaced at the Church Street door entrance. This replacement is possible through an anonymous donor.

Over the next several weeks, there also may be some shifting and adjusting of pews on the courtyard side of the sanctuary to allow space for the organ console and choir when they return. In addition, the Trustees are working on a creative way to maintain the aesthetics of the sanctuary while providing spaces for wheel chairs and those with special accommodations. These changes should be completed by the end of August.

The Imhoff Company performed our semi-annual roof cleaning, inspections, and repair as well as addressed concerns with the balcony window, bride's door stairs, and front stairs, some of which were under warranty. Due to the ground moving and weather shifts, several pointing joints on both the inside and outside of the window had to be repaired.

I would also like to publicly thank Anthony Eardley who came in for a day in July to help me install a new light fixture in the secretary's office and change several light bulbs in the sanctuary as well as the two spotlights for the balcony window facing Chestnut Street (Ascension Window).

### **Financial Update ..... Jeff Gardner, Business and Facilities Manager**

I would, again, like to start off this section with a big thank you to every member, constituent, visitor, friend, guest, and donor. The volunteer time that you give to FUMC and or the monetary gifts you provide help so many people in so many ways that are beyond words. When asked, and in many cases even before asked, you take the initiative to see what is needed and step up to the plate.

With the uncertainty and anxiety that COVID has created, our annual giving through pledging, non-pledging, and loose plate, are still above the budget for seven months into the year. For the year, we budgeted \$17,028.50 monthly or \$51,085.50 quarterly for these three revenue streams. As of the end of July, FUMC has received

\$124,155.41 in giving or 60.76%. About 44% of the revenue we need to cover monthly expenses comes in through these three sources. At this point, 18 of the 76 pledging units have paid their full pledge or more. Another 12 have given more than 60% with 6 of those paying 75% or more of their pledge. Another 24 have given exactly 58-59% of their yearly pledge.

In addition to those pledging units, we have received donations from 35 other people for a total of \$12,949 or 60.23% of what was budgeted for the year. We hope this trend continues.

Both the Main Endowment Asset Portfolio (MEAP) and Patrick Endowment continued to see positive trends. They are up 2.137% and 7.11% respectively YTD, a little above \$333,140 in total.

In July, a letter was sent out from Pastor Marti and Council Chair Peter Paluch advising the congregation that at a special session of Church Council on June 29<sup>th</sup>, it was voted that FUMC staff hours and salary cuts due to take effect July 1 was postponed. In that letter, it stated that funds needed to be raised to cover the potential shortfall in the budget for this change. To date (Aug. 12<sup>th</sup>), of the \$8,000 needed, a total of \$5,660 has been donated to the “Staff Restore Fund.”

On August 5<sup>th</sup> FUMC opened the “Helping Hands Thrift & Gift Shop” in the first floor of the Parish House. In its opening week, a total of \$424 was raised. A donation of 10% of the monthly sales revenue will be donated to a local non-profit in the community.

As of now, FUMC has started to collect donations for our semi-annual rummage sale from our members. It is hoped that, even with the rise in COVID cases, we will still be able to have it with the book and bake sale on Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. For more information, see Joyce Miller’s article on page 6.

### **Message from the Green Team**

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is: I like to consider myself a “green person” and at least try to do many things to help our natural environment and reduce global warming but there is always more, way more I could be doing.

I was fortunate enough to have a good job which allowed me to put savings into an annuity for my retirement. I must confess I was just happy to have it gaining value over the years and not even thinking about where the money was being invested. One day recently I decided to take a look at just where my money was going. I didn’t like what I saw: fossil fuel companies that did not invest in green energy! My financial investor assisted me to find more substantial and environmentally friendly investments that still were financially profitable. If I am lucky I will leave my children more than just a few bucks but a better world. ~Sharry Strait-Carey

Changes to Local Recycling Procedures: First, the hard-cover book recycling bins have been removed from the Oneonta recycling site. Therefore, currently, there is nowhere to recycle them. The only option is to tear off the hard cover and throw it away. Sad.

Second, there is now a blue bin for recycling Styrofoam (polystyrene) at the Oneonta transfer station. This collection is for the Oneonta Reuse Center at 23 Duane Street. The OCCA says that this bin will be permanent. Yay! If you wish to take your polystyrene directly to the Reuse Center, you may.

Third, there is a container for Green Waste to the left as you enter the Oneonta recycling site. It is outside the Green Waste area which is located before accessing the scales. This will be accessible 24/7. Yay!

Fourth, an additional option to help the environment while supporting FUMC and community is by donating to and shopping at The Helping Hands Community Thrift Shop and at the UMW Rummage Sale on September 16 & 17 (see page 6).

Thrift stores and rummage sales reduce environmental impacts, such as water usage, pesticide, and herbicide application and carbon emissions from production and transportation. Plus, looking for those special deals and treasures can be lots of fun while, at the same time, be satisfying by knowing that you are doing a good deed(s).

As always—**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!**

## 2021 Campership Committee Report

FUMC has a long tradition of providing “camperships” to children associated with this congregation to attend one of the six camps administered by the Upper New York Annual Conference Camp and Retreat Ministry. A campership covers up to one-half the cost of a week at camp, depending on the number of campers who apply. This program is funded by the annual citrus fruit sale held each February.

This summer, the Campership Committee (Rachel Hansen, Lisa Smith, and Marty Van Lenten Becker) was happy to approve camperships for Tiffany Gardner and Violet Wilson to each spend a week at Camp Casowasco on the shoreline of Owasco Lake in Moravia, New York. Both campers want to share their experiences with the congregation.

From Tiffany—“This summer I had the opportunity to go to Casowasco, one of the camps of the Upper New York Conference. I had a great time hanging out with old friends, meeting new friends, doing awesome camp activities, and developing my relationship with God! Some of the activities I got the opportunity to try included canoeing, stand up paddle boarding, the high ropes course, swimming, archery, and more. Personally, one of my favorite activities was canoeing across the lake and then swimming part of the way back. In addition, I got to participate in daily Bible Study and chapel. It was really nice to learn about God in fun ways with friends and in a safe community. I would definitely recommend camp to anyone who is interested because it is a really great experience which provides not only an opportunity to feel closer to God and to learn more about your faith but also includes a lot of really fun and unique activities. One morning we even got to have ice cream for breakfast on our waffles! There really is no other experience quite like camp and the time spent there is really meaningful. I hope you all get the chance to go to camp!” (Tiffany’s note can be seen on the church bulletin board.)

From Violet—“At camp I really enjoyed swimming because I like the water. I liked the slingshots with the paint balls in archery. The best thing about eating was sometimes dessert came with the meal. Chapel was fun with the songs and I got to sit next to my friend. I am thankful that the church helped me with this opportunity and I hope to go again next year!” Violet “Liam” Wilson

### **Church Rummage, Bake & Book Sale** **Thursday, September 16, 9 a.m. — 6 p.m.** **Friday, September 17, 9 a.m. — 1 p.m.** **(\$2 bag sale all day Friday)**

Our **Fall Rummage Sale** helps not only the community with clothes and goods at low prices, but YOU benefit by cleaning out your closets and cupboards of unused items and the CHURCH benefits by the profits generated! True recycling! You may bring your donations to the front of the stage in Fellowship Hall. **Please only bring in clothing and household goods that are usable and in working order.** If clothing is ripped or stained, or appliances don’t work, we just have to dispose of the items which fills up the church dumpster. Thank you for your cooperation!

The **Bake Sale is only on Thursday.** Cookies, breads, cookie bars, brownies, pies, muffins, and cupcakes are the best sellers. Bring your goodies to the kitchen either on Wednesday or before 9 a.m. on Thursday morning. This year they need to be individually packaged because of COVID precautions.

Volunteers are needed on set-up days, September 12 (between 3 and 7), 13, 14 & 15 (from 9 a.m. until ?) We appreciate any time that fits into your schedules—one hour or all day. On Thursday, September 16, help is needed in 3 hour 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 (particularly Sunday & Monday) and clean-up on Friday. Many hands make light work!!! Contact the church office to volunteer—or say YES to Joyce if she emails or calls you!

The **Book Sale** will be part of the Rummage Sale. Bring your donations to the front of the stage along with the other goods. **PLEASE, no textbooks, or Reader’s Digest Condensed Books!** Books on CD and DVDs are very welcome.

## TOLNAY & BENSEN

Free reading at William Ogden Library in Walton, New York, on September 8 at 6:30 p.m.

Delhi story writer Tom Tolnay and Oneonta poet Robert Bensen will give a free reading from their latest books at the William Ogden Free Library, 42 Gardiner Place in Walton at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 8, 2021.

Bensen will read from and discuss *Before* (Five Oaks Press), and Tolnay will read from and comment on *Love in the Shadows of Mountains: 19 Adirondack Episodes* (Atmosphere Press). The books will be on sale at the reading, with authors signing copies for attendees.

Tolnay is the former editor of *Back Stage* newspaper and founder of the book publisher, Birch Brook Press. Bensen is a former Professor and Director of Writing at Hartwick College. Both authors are widely published.

For further information, call (607) 865-5929

### **Don't Forget about Our New Mission The Helping Hands Thrift & Gift Shop**

At the April FUMC Council meeting, a new mission was approved: a thrift store! It is located in the first floor of the Parish House. The opening was August 5<sup>th</sup> and what a success!

The store offers a very special shopping experience: Women's, Men's, Infant's, and Children's clothing hanging on racks, sorted according to size; books; household items, collectibles, vintage clothing, shoes, pocket books, and of course a jewelry corner. Everything is very neat and tidy and inviting. It will be totally run by volunteers from FUMC and the community. Ninety percent of the proceeds from the store (except sales tax that goes to New York State) will go into the church budget. We will tithe 10% of our monthly proceeds back into the community, to benefit various non-profits and charities, as determined by the store's volunteers.

We are accepting donations. They can be picked up if necessary. Call or text Angela at 607-434-2435 to discuss the type of donation you have and when it can be picked up. This new mission will require the love and labor of many volunteers. If you like to volunteer, please contact Angela. There will be an orientation soon. The hours are: Thursdays 4-8, Fridays 9-5, Saturdays 10-2

### **United Methodist Women**

UMW answered the call to help restock UMCOR's supply of flood buckets, which has been depleted by multiple natural disasters in the U.S., with no end in sight during hurricane season! After our August meeting, we packed kitchen and work gloves, scrub brushes, sponges, liquid laundry detergent, household cleaner, and dish soap, dust masks, garbage bags and more into ten 5-gallon buckets for delivery to the Upper NY Conference headquarters.

For more information about UMCOR and flood buckets go to [https://umc\\_mission.org/umcor-cleaning-kit/](https://umc_mission.org/umcor-cleaning-kit/)

### **More Masks for Riverside School!**

UMW has received a request for more masks for the students at Oneonta's Riverside Elementary School as they return to school in September and continue to need protection from Covid-19. A few seamstresses have gotten started on the project, but UMW needs your help!

If you, too, would like to make masks for Riverside and need patterns for children, call Sharry Strait-Carey at 607-434-5234 or email [sharrysc9@hotmail.com](mailto:sharrysc9@hotmail.com). If you need fabric or elastic, call Marty Becker at 607-432-4917 or email [marty.vlb@gmail.com](mailto:marty.vlb@gmail.com). Thank you!

**First United Methodist Church – Oneonta, New York**

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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

**POETRY**

Poetry is dance on a page  
making a shape  
moving to a rhythm  
choreographed  
honed  
confined  
or allowed  
to grow and go  
where  
ever  
it  
chooses.  
—JB

**The deadline for the October Reporter is September 20!!**

**Parking Issue on Church Street..... Jeff Gardner, Business and Facilities Manager**

The good news is West Street is getting some work done this month! The not so good news is parking on Church Street is temporarily off limits. Buses and the bus stops are being re-routed onto Church Street. **Please Plan Accordingly.** There are 25 spaces available around the Library as well as some parking in the lot behind the old Baptist church across the street. However, these spots are for Sunday mornings only.

In addition, there is parking around the perimeter of the Dollar General parking lot. Please do not park directly in front of the stores or laundromat out of courtesy for the businesses. Hopefully we'll have our parking spots back before the weather turns too cold! Thank You!