



THE

**Spire**

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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Website: [www.fumcschenectady.org](http://www.fumcschenectady.org) E-Mail: [fumcschenectady@yahoo.com](mailto:fumcschenectady@yahoo.com)



Vol. 83 No. 8

The Reverend Sara E. Baron

December 2019

## SUNDAYS

- 8:30 Community Breakfast Fellowship  
9:00 Books for Children and Adults  
9:00 Sunday School for Children  
10:00 Sunday Morning Worship  
*Infant & Toddler Care available*  
11:00 Coffee Fellowship  
11:30 Second Hour Programs  
7:00 Young Adult Bible Study

### Worship Text:

- Dec. 1 **1st Sunday of Advent:**  
Isaiah 2:1-5; Luke 1:26-38  
"Hope in God"
- Dec. 8 **2nd Sunday of Advent:**  
Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 1:39-56  
"Hope for New Life"
- Dec. 15 **3rd Sunday of Advent**  
Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:57-80  
"Hope for Restoration"
- Dec. 22 **4th Sunday of Advent:**  
*Service of Lessons & Carols*
- Dec. 25 **Christmas Day (Wednesday)**  
6:30 AM Dawn Service @ FUMC  
Luke 2:1-16
- Dec. 29 **1st Sunday after Christmas**  
Isaiah 63:7-9; Matthew 2:13-23  
Karyn McCloskey, *preaching*

### Second Hour Events/Programs:

- Dec. 8 Luncheon & Caroling to Shut-ins  
Dec. 15 Carol Sing around the Fireplace

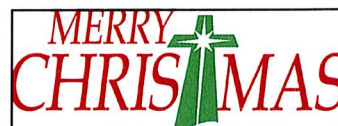


## Let's go Christmas Caroling Sunday, December 8

Young and old alike - come gather to bring some joy and Christmas music to those members of our church family who are not able to get out often.

After church on Sunday, December 8th, we will get together for lunch then go out to visit and sing carols with the homebound. If you have ever had the pleasure of being visited by our church carolers, or if you have been one of the carolers in previous years, you'll know what a wonderful experience this can be. If you have never sung with us before, come try it. You'll be filled with the Christmas spirit!

In order that we may know how many carolers we'll have and to plan for lunch, please sign-up on a Sunday or contact the church office.



*We wish you a blessed and  
joyous holiday season!*

From the Staff

*Sara E. Baron*  
*Rajin Prasad*  
*Linda*  
*Dominick*







# *Glory to the Newborn King!*

## **From our Pastor**

Our Advent Theme this year is “Waiting in Hope.” To some degree, this feels a little bit silly, as “Waiting in Hope” is a pretty basic description of Advent. However, it also feels like a challenge, and that makes it seem worth while.

For all of the years that I've been alive, Christianity in the United States, and United Methodism in the United States have been in decline. With each passing year, the decline has become more precipitous and fears among the faithful have risen. This year has been a spectacularly difficult one to be a United Methodist, and “hope” hasn't been the center of any conversations I've had about the denomination.

In so many ways, First UMC of Schenectady is an exception to the problems of Christianity. While Christianity fought back against evolution and climate change, the scientific method has long been valued here. While much of Christian teaching has centered on guilt, shame, and sin; compassion and gratitude have taken the front seat here. Similarly, open-mindedness, inclusion, solidarity, and joy have been front and center in this community for a very long time, and that's rare in churches. And yet, the decline that has wrecked havoc on Christianity as a whole and United Methodist Churches throughout the connection has had its way here too, and it is heartbreaking.

Hope is also challenging when we consider detention centers on our Southern Border, the escalating impacts of Climate Change, and the terrifying impacts of continued growth in income inequality. (To name but a few.) Of course, there are also challenges in our own lives: health concerns, the declining well-being of those we love, grief and loss, job security, financial hardships, anxiety and depression, loneliness, fear, and even the simple disheartened sense that not all is as it should be.

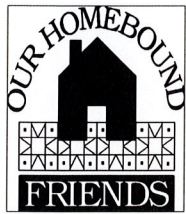
Given the weight of all of these factors, pushing us down, waiting in hope can seem almost ridiculous. Waiting in hope can even feel naive. Maybe it is, and that would be ok. But maybe it isn't. Maybe waiting in hope is a faith stance, and maybe it involves paying attention differently.

The 24 hour news cycle operates on drawing our attention, and that works best when it offers us fodder for anxiety and fear. But that means that it doesn't tell the whole story. Sometimes, when I'm most overwhelmed by the brokenness I see in the world around us, I have to remember that some things work here that don't everywhere. When I lived in Ecuador I learned that gas stations mostly don't deliver the amount of gas they say they do. But, here, we can live with some confidence that a gallon of gas is delivered when we buy one. I also learned in Ecuador that if you fail to give a nice enough Christmas gift to your postal worker, you might not get your mail for a year. Similarly, our mail works without bribes. The things that DO work don't get any attention or any gratitude until we notice them when they fail! I'm still feeling super grateful for the capacity to walk, after my fall at Easter in 2017, but it can be easy to forget what a miracle that is for those of us who can do it. It is also easy to forget what a delight it is to read, and how life-saving it is to be able to do so, until you are with a child struggling to learn it.

This season, I invite you to pay attention to what is working – while it is still working. And then, to what God is up to in making new things work. Waiting in hope is waiting to see what God can do, and that's definitely worthy of our attention.

In God's Peace, Sara





Christmas season provides a great opportunity to remember FUMC members and friends who can not be as actively involved in our church as they once were.

They're listed below and would love to hear from their church family! Addresses are in the directory or listed below:

**Janis Butts**

Capstone Center for Rehab. & Nursing  
302 Swart Hill Road  
Amsterdam, NY 12010

**Emily Hart**

**Stewart Hettig**

**Mary Neville**

**Shirley Rivest**

**Fran Summerville**

**Joan Townsend**

**Marylois Tupper**

Mission Creek, Room 120  
3217 Fiddlers Creek Drive  
Waukesha, WI 53188

## Three Cs of "A New Day in the City: Urban Church Revival"

For the past 6 weeks, the Adult Education Team has been offering a Monday night book discussion examining *A New Day in the City: Urban Church Revival* by Donna Claycomb Sokol and L. Roger Owens. When asked to summarize the top three issues to work on in our journey toward urban church revival, the group suggested it could be stated using three verbs: Clarify, Communicate, and Connect.

As a congregation, we need to **clarify** what are our values. In order to deal with a changing neighborhood and a changing world, we need to focus on our core values and how we share our faith stories. This includes evaluating our current systems, pruning, and being open to new ideas. If we create an environment that is permission-granting, flexible, and experimental, we will be better equipped to face unpredictable changes.

Our church's future depends on the **connections** we make with visitors, church members and all people we meet in our facility and community. When we reach out to other people and treat them with mutual support, sharing our values, we are fulfilling God's work. With meaningful connections we can better understand each other's needs. Connections bring us closer in spirit to one another and to God.

**Communication** helps strengthen those connections. We crave two-way, complete, and open communication; between church committees, congregation, and staff, as well as between the church and our community. We need to develop effective, caring ways to both convey information and improve how we listen and respond to one another.

The class generated many ideas of how we could be welcoming to visitors, show more gratitude to current members, include new opportunities for participation in our worship, and how we could deepen our connections to one another. We want to commit to excellence in all that we do. We encourage everyone to read this book and have a discussion with one or more people at First UMC. The church can better discern a way forward if all voices are heard. We will soon have some extra copies of the book available for borrowing. Please speak to Sue Learner if you're interested.



## 2019 Advent Devotional Booklets



We are again making up our own Advent Devotional booklet and copies will be available in the narthex starting on December 1st—the First Sunday of Advent! Our church members are making them with reflections on select Scripture readings and on the theme "Waiting in Hope." May they be a blessing for you this Advent season.

## Altar Guild



We are grateful for November altar flowers & the Thanksgiving arrangement given:

Nov. 3 in loving memory of William Isles

Nov. 24 cornucopia of food given by Roger & Diane Kingsland with profound gratitude for Dominick Guikinto and FUMC's Music Ministry

If you would like to give the altar flowers for Sunday Worship, please see the sign-up poster on the hallway bulletin board or contact the office.







# December 2019

## First United Methodist Church, Schenectady

Calendar updates on website: [www.fumcschenectady.org](http://www.fumcschenectady.org)

| Sunday  | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday   | Friday                                 | Saturday   |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <b>1 1st Sunday of Advent</b><br><b>Family Sunday</b><br><b>10:00 AM Worship</b><br>11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship<br>11:30 AM 2nd Hour Program<br>7:00 PM Bible Study  | <b>2</b><br>2:00 - 4 PM<br>Pastor "Drop-in"<br>Office Hours  | <b>3</b><br><i>Council Reports due</i><br>1:00 PM Staff Mtg.  | <b>4</b><br>2:00 PM Adult Education: Advent Class<br>6:45 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal<br>7:00 PM Small Group Leaders<br><div>2:00-3 PM Rose Window Reflections, Sanctuary</div>   | <b>5</b><br>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal  | <b>6</b>                               | <b>7</b><br>11:00 AM Youth Group   |
| <b>8 2nd Sunday of Advent</b><br>8:30 AM Breakfast<br>9:00 AM Sunday School<br><b>10:00 AM Worship</b><br>10:40 AM Children's Music<br>11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship<br>12:00 PM Luncheon and Caroling to our Shutins<br>7:00 PM Bible Study | <b>9</b><br>2:00 - 4 PM<br>Pastor "Drop-in"<br>Office Hours<br>4:00- 8 PM SUSTAIN Ministry: Sorting<br>7:00 pm Staff Pastor Parish Relation Com. | <b>10</b><br>1:00 PM Staff Meeting<br><b>Church Night</b><br>6:30 PM Ministry Teams Meet<br>7:30 PM Council | <b>11</b><br>11:30 AM-1:30 PM SUSTAIN Ministry<br>2:00 PM Adult Education: Advent Class<br>6:45 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal   | <b>12</b><br>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal   | <b>13</b><br><i>Spire articles due</i> | <b>14</b><br>11:00 AM Youth Group  |
| <b>15 3rd Sunday of Advent</b><br>8:30 AM Breakfast<br>9:00 AM Sunday School<br><b>10:00 AM Worship</b><br>11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship<br>11:30 AM Annual Carol Sing<br>7:00 PM Bible Study  | <b>16</b><br>2:00 - 4 PM<br>Pastor "Drop-in"<br>Office Hours   | <b>17</b><br>1:00 PM Staff Meeting<br>7:00 PM Trustees  | <b>18</b><br>2:00 PM Adult Education: Advent Class<br><b>7:00 PM Long Night Advent Service</b>  | <b>19</b><br>7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal   | <b>20</b>                              | <b>21</b><br>9:00 AM Choir & Guest Musicians Rehearsal<br>11:00 AM Youth Group |
| <b>22 4th Sunday of Advent</b><br>8:30 AM Breakfast<br>9:00 AM Sunday School<br><b>10:00 AM Service of Lessons &amp; Carols</b><br>11:00 AM Extended Coffee Fellowship<br>7:00 PM Bible Study   | <b>23</b>  | <b>24</b><br><b>Christmas Eve</b><br><div>Church Office Closed</div>  | <b>25</b><br><b>Merry Christmas!</b><br>6:30 AM Dawn Worship Service  | <b>26</b><br> | <b>27</b>                              | <b>28</b><br>9:30 AM Youth Serve free Community Brunch<br>11:00 AM Youth Group |
| <b>29</b><br>8:30 AM Breakfast<br>9:00 AM Sunday School<br><b>10:00 AM Worship</b><br>11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship<br>11:30 AM 2nd Hour Programs  | <b>30</b><br><div>Public Schools Closed</div>  | <b>31</b>   | <div>MERRY CHRISTMAS</div> <div>We are in the season of ADVENT (blue or purple) - During Advent, we prepare our hearts and minds for Jesus' birth.</div> |  |  |  |



## Music Notes

### ~ Concert Series

Over the past several weeks the Music Committee has raised a great deal of money, in fact, over \$12,500 which will be used for the 2019-2020 Concert Series. This total includes a grant that we applied for and were awarded from the Music Performance Trust Fund for \$2,577.79. This grant was used toward the American Brass Quintet concert which had over 350 in attendance. To date this is the most we have taken in one year. Audiences had been asking how they could contribute and we provided a basket at the Welcoming Table. Donations at concerts have been generous. We are grateful for all our patrons and ad contributors.

### ~ Handbell Choir

The Bell Choir has taken possession of a new, first floor bell room. The room was beautifully painted by Patrick Belton. Bell Choir has expressed their profound thanks through cards and gifts. We are grateful to the Trustees for facilitating the move and to Junice Wusterbarth for allowing the use of the Harold Wusterbarth Memorial Funds to be used towards new carpet. Curtains, rods and paint for the room were also donated.

Music Co-chairs:

Diane Kingsland and Shirley Readdean



## Enjoy

## Needlework?



Participate in our Needlework Ministry program (crocheting, knitting, sewing)! Hand-made items are created then donated to those in need in our area. We work on hats and scarves as well as prayer shawls/blankets, and accept such donations. To learn more, including how to do needlework, contact Eileen Deming or Alice Nash.

## The Time is Now

I have gained a dearth of knowledge since walking through the doors of this church on a cold, snowy January morning in 2013. To attempt to enumerate it, or even bring forward the most important in any meaningful way, would be to do a disservice to the experiences that led to my knowledge as it must be taken in its totality.

The Christian faith we proudly espouse here follows the teaching of young Jew who served the most disenfranchised populations by telling them that any gathering in His name evokes his Presence (Matt 18:20). To this end, He made no mention of church being defined by the presence of any one person, instrument, building, or committee. The ancient Greek word commonly used in the New Testament for church is *ecclesia*. While the exact meaning intended by the user requires context, i.e. to differentiate between "assembly" "children of Israel" etc, no scholars have assigned to it a material nature. This further exemplifies the history of our faith as one of communities and commissions, not individuals and items.

It should be apparent by now that decisions of severe importance are coming. The timeline is indisputable, the necessity is immediate, and the consequences inevitable. We must frame the discussion, debate, and decisions not in the context of whimsical wishes or the denial of fact; but by holding true to the articles of faith we all share.

I implore those in this congregation who define this church by a singular facet to amend their definition of "church". This *ecclesia* we are a part of must be first and foremost bound by the pillars of the faith on which it is established. Inevitably I hear that without a specific part of the whole, the whole will cease. To speak a truth to that fiction - that is not the case in the least. For well over 100 years this church has stood as a towering force for good in downtown Schenectady and the world. It attained the heights not because of the height of its Spire, the resonance of its music, or the number of its role. It owes that quality entirely to its *ecclesia*.

The church is faced with a crisis of seemingly insurmountable proportion. How we chose to move forward after decades of deficit spending and the resultant budget crisis will forever shape the future of this church. The temptation to cleave to our emotional attachments is strong. The options are on the table to continue the status quo and hope for a miracle. I pray daily for the survival of this *ecclesia*, but not for this church. I pray that generations to come may know the same warmth I felt when I walked through these doors six winters ago. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said "The time is always right to do the right thing". The time is right. The leadership of the church has agonized over the matter for years, and has made its recommendations. Trust yourself. Trust your *ecclesia*. Trust your God. The time is now.

—John Daniel Falotico, Church Council Chair



## The Sunday School Scoop

### Sunday School (9:00—9:45 am)

Every Sunday, except on the first Sunday of the month (Family Sunday), Sunday School is held upstairs in the classroom from 9-9:45 AM and all elementary grade children are welcome and encouraged to participate.



### Music Time (10:40—11:15 am)

Let's make music together—Calling all kids!!! We are blessed to have the gifts and talents of Frankie DiMezza, who will be working with our children to sing out loud and make joyful noises. They will gather after the childrens' time at church once a month in our Gathering Room. The next gathering will be held on Sunday, December 8th.

### Volunteers needed

An adult is needed to help with Sunday School on Dec. 15. Elaine Troy will be presenting the lesson plan and the helper will be there as a 2nd adult to assist as necessary -- and, probably, to have an enjoyable time! If you are able to assist on this day and/or are willing to be a substitute occasionally, please let Elaine or Jan Huston know. We are required by our Safe Sanctuaries policy to have 2 adults present in Sunday School.



## Youth News

All youth (ages 13-18) are invited to:

#### ☺ Youth Group Fellowship—

Come enjoy fun fellowship together each week in the Roof Lounge on Saturdays starting at 11 am.

#### ☺ Joint Youth Service Project—

On Saturday, December 28, gather at 9:30 am to serve a free community brunch meal at our neighbors at Emmanuel Friedens Church.

## Rose Window Reflections



Come one, come all to the Sanctuary between Wednesday, December 4th, and Friday, December 6th, from 2:00-3 pm to see the sunlight shine through the beautiful Rose Window and encircle the cross on the Altar. Everyone is welcome.

For more information about the Rose Window, located above the balcony, including what each color symbolizes, see page 8.

## Union College Potluck Dinner Monday, December 2

Our neighbors at Union College have again invited us to join them at their annual Community Harvest Potluck Dinner with students. This event is held during the holiday break when there are no food services on campus for students staying there. Many of these students are from other countries, lonely and missing their families. Others are doing research and/or can't afford to travel home. The students enjoy our home-cooked food and we enjoy hearing about their lives. All are invited to meet and gather with them Monday, Dec. 2, at 6:00 pm at the Hale House on the campus. Please bring a large dish to share (label vegetarian dishes), and family Thanksgiving recipes. RSVP's helpful but not required to Tim Coombs: [www.coombst@union.edu](mailto:www.coombst@union.edu).

## Church Night December 10



Ministry work teams are invited to hold their monthly meetings on Church Night, held the 2nd Tuesday of the month. And everyone is welcome to attend council meetings. The schedule is:

6:30 pm Ministry Teams meet

7:30 pm Church Council meets





## Gather for these special ADVENT HOLIDAY SERVICES & EVENTS



### **ROSE WINDOW REFLECTIONS** - Wednesday-Friday, Dec. 4-6, 2:00-3:00 pm

The church Sanctuary will be open for all to have an opportunity to see the sunlight shine through the beautiful Rose Window and encircle the cross on the Altar.

### **CAROLING TO OUR HOMEBOUND & LUNCH** - Sunday, Dec. 8, 12:00 noon

Young and old alike - come caroling to bring some joy and Christmas music to our church family members who are not able to get out often. Lunch will be provided prior to heading out. This event will fill both singers and the listeners with a full dose of Christmas Spirit!

### **CAROL SING AROUND THE FIREPLACE** - Sunday, Dec. 15, 11:30 AM

Following worship and Coffee Fellowship, everyone is invited to gather around the fireplace in Fellowship Hall for our annual carol sing, led by Dominick Giaquinto, our Music Director.

### **LONG NIGHT ADVENT SERVICE** - Wednesday, Dec. 18, 7:00 PM

A Long Night Advent Service, held on or near the longest night of the year, is designed for those who find Christmas a difficult season. We hear constantly about the happiness of the season and about getting together with family and friends. Yet, grief, broken relationships, unemployment, illness, pain and isolation can make us feel very alone in the midst of the celebrating. This special service, which will include music, prayers and readings, is to help us reflect on God as Emmanuel, "God-with-us," who comes to us in times of struggle and reminds us of the true preciousness of the gift of Emmanuel and how we can gain comfort by knowing that we are never truly alone.

### **ADVENT SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS** - Sunday, Dec. 22, 10:00 AM

During Worship, we will present a Service of Lessons and Carols which will tell the story of the birth of Jesus in song and scripture. The Chancel Choir will be directed by Associate Choir Director Mitch Haverly and Dominick Giaquinto will serve as organist. The Emery String Quartet will begin playing the prelude at 9:50. For more details, please see next page.

### **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES** - Tuesday, Dec. 24

Our neighbors at Emmanuel Friedens Church on Nott Terr. and at Eastern Parkway UM Church, 943 Palmer Ave., will both hold a Christmas Eve Service at 7:00 PM, if interested.

### **CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE** - Wednesday, Dec. 25

#### **6:30 AM — Dawn Service**

This unique service will feature a live Nativity! For over 70 years, First United Methodist Church of Schenectady has welcomed Christmas with a Dawn Service. Families and friends gather in the sanctuary by 6:30 am for carols and the Christmas story. The church is lit only by candles as worshipers enter silently into the sanctuary to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Come as you are!







## The Christmas Service of Lessons & Carols

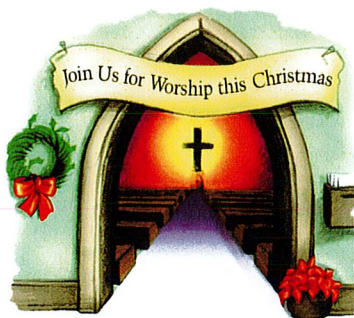
As is our tradition at FUMC, we will have our annual worship service of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 22nd, at 10am. In a Service of Lessons and Carols, the story of the Nativity of Jesus is told through scripture and song.

We will welcome the Emery String Quartet as well as members of our Chancel Choir for this service. Dominick Giaquinto will serve as organist and Mitch Haverly will be the conductor. The congregation will be invited to sing familiar carols and hymns, and the Chancel Choir will sing several anthems.



This service is a wonderful way to experience the true meaning and spirit of the Christmas season. You are encouraged to invite family and friends to join us for this yearly tradition. The prelude will begin at 9:50.

***Everyone is welcome!***

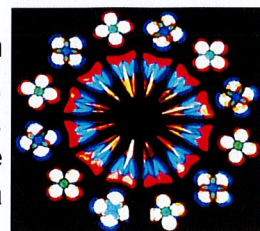


## The Rose Window

The rose window was installed sometime around 1874, during the time the church building was constructed. In 1981, it was removed for cleaning and repairs, then reinstalled and covered with Lexan.

As with all rose windows, its shape is that of a wheel, with a hub and spokes, a reminder that rose windows were originally called wheel windows. A rose window is also referred to as a marigold window, for the rose is a symbol of Mary. In FUMC's rose window, the twelve spokes are a reminder of the twelve Apostles. At the end of each spoke is a quatrefoil, which resembles a four-petaled flower. A quatrefoil indicates any fourfold group of objects or attributes, such as the Four Evangelists or the Four Gospels.

Each of the four colors in the window—red, blue, green, gold—has its own symbolism. From a distance, some of the glass appears to be white, a color which stands for purity, light and joy. Red symbolizes blood, fire, Christian zeal and the Holy Spirit; blue represents heaven, truth and constancy. The red and blue combines to form violet, a symbol of penitence, mourning and royalty. Green symbolizes life, hope, nature and growth, while gold adds the qualities of glory and splendor to the meanings of white. The different colored lights in stained glass have different properties: white is piercing, blue is luminous and expansive, red contracts at a distance and gold remains stable. As daylight fades, red will turn black but blue will remain until all the light is gone.



Many years ago, the Rev. Leon Adkins, Sr., pastor at the time, preached a sermon on the rose window. His concluding remarks still hold today: "It (Rose Window) testifies to the central mystery of life - the union of God and man. It radiates the reality of constancy and truth. It radiates the glory of love and suffering which shall bring the Gospel of our Lord into the fulfillment of humanity's direst need and highest hope!"



## From the Finance Committee

### ♦ 2020 Offering Envelopes

Boxed Offering Envelopes for 2020 will be available in the Narthex beginning Sunday, December 8th. If you do not find a box with your name on it and want envelopes, please use the sign-up sheet on a Sunday or contact the office.

### ♦ 2019 Contributions and Statements

2019 Contributions Statements will be distributed in January. However, if you'd like to know where you currently stand on your 2019 commitment, please call the office (518-374-4403) and a Contribution Statement will be mailed to you. If you are contributing shares of stock to satisfy your 2019 commitment or to make a prepayment for 2020 and you want the contribution to be credited in 2019, please allow sufficient time for FUMC to sell the stock before the end of December.

### ♦ Electronic Giving Available

If you're interested in using the electronic donation system to make pledge payments, to make donations to church benevolences, to repay student loans or for other purposes, go to our church website or read the QR code here. Our website's address is [www.fumcschenectady.org](http://www.fumcschenectady.org). The website contains a button that will take you to the electronic donations sign-up page. The sign-up page will walk you through the process of signing up. If you would prefer to sign-up on a paper form, you may pick up an authorization form from Linda in the church office.

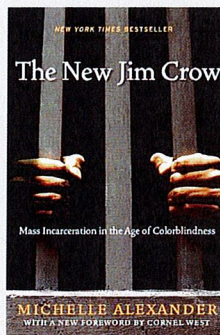


—Chris La Rocca  
FUMC Financial Secretary

### A Ministry Moment

**"The invariable mark  
of wisdom is to see the  
miraculous in the common."**

Ralph Waldo Emerson



## Book Discussion

Mark your calendar!

Our next book discussion will be on Saturday, Jan. 11, at 10 am on "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander.

Online description:...With dazzling candor, legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness. In the words of Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP, this book is a "call to action." Called "stunning" by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David Levering Lewis, "invaluable" by the Daily Kos, "explosive" by Kirkus, and "profoundly necessary" by the Miami Herald, this updated and revised paperback edition of *The New Jim Crow*, now with a foreword by Cornel West, is a must-read for all people of conscience.

We are hoping the extra time over the holidays will allow all interested to pick up this book and read it, and then join us for the book discussion on January 11th.



## Men's Breakfast on January 22

The Men's Breakfast Fellowship will resume after the holidays on Wednesday, January 22. All men are welcome. Watch for details!

## E-Newsletter Available!

If you receive *The Spire* in hard-copy and would prefer to get it by email, which saves resources, please contact the church office. Thank you.



## PrimeTimers

**PrimeTimers** is a program of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, offering educational and mission experiences both in the United States and abroad, with an emphasis on peace and poverty, history, the sustainability of resources, and on increasing cultural understanding. Participants do some hands-on volunteer work. The program is similar to the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (VIM) program, but it is less strenuous. It was originally set up for older adults, but a recent change has expanded it to include younger adults.

Over the years, several of our church members have participated in PrimeTimers programs: Jim and Elaine Troy and Pete and Jan Huston went to St. Simon's Island in Georgia to learn about Methodist history, a place where both John and Charles Wesley had been at one time; Nancy and Pete Oldow and Lee and Bonnie Adkins learned about the Gullah people on an island off the coast of South Carolina; another group spent time near New Orleans, helping in a warehouse; The Hustons went to Italy where they learned what church groups there are doing to help refugees and reduce poverty; Nancy Oldow and Nancy Walden joined a group at a retreat center on the Mississippi coast to learn about life along the Gulf Coast. This retreat was a place where our very own Virgia Phoenix had spent much of her childhood. Sad to say, the center was later destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and never rebuilt. Another time, the two Nancys stayed at a retreat center in Little Rock, Arkansas, where the group toured the Clinton Library and Heifer Headquarters, and visited some of the Civil Rights movement scenes. Each program gave the participants an opportunity to help with a service project.

### Three new trips are planned for 2020:

**One called "Immigration Immersion,"** will be held in Tucson, Arizona, February 9 – 15. Participants will visit several agencies working with immigrants and will learn about detention centers and Justice for Our Neighbors. They will visit water stations and perhaps help put water in the desert for the refugees. There will be a one day tour of Nogales, Mexico (passport required) to learn about conditions, shelters and services there. There may also be a visit to the San Xavier Mission. The cost is \$900 per person and does not include travel to and from Tucson. Closing date for registration is January 10, 2020.

**The second trip is to the Czech Republic,** May 19 – 28. The focus will be on the early Bohemian Protestant Reformer, Jan Hus (1369-1415). The Bohemian Reformation had an influence on Martin Luther and later reformers, including the Wesleys. In Prague, the group will visit several sites which were significant in the Reformation. They will also tour Prague Castle, St. Vitus Cathedral, Charles Bridge, among other places. The cost is \$1,700 per person, not including air fare. Closing date for registration is January 1, 2020.



**The third trip will be to the Holy Land,** including Nazareth, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, September 8 – 19. Service projects will be combined with visits to holy sites, educational information, and meetings with indigenous Christians. Participants will learn about culture and history and will experience Middle Eastern hospitality. There will be an opportunity to meet representatives from the three Abrahamic faith communities as well as from United Methodist Advance projects and partner organizations. Cost is \$3,850 per person and includes airfare from Dulles Airport. The registration closing date is June 1.

There is another opportunity, not organized by the General Board of Global Ministries but geared toward PrimeTimers, which is a **Missions Cruise to the Caribbean** in January. Stops will be in Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas. The participants will visit mission sites and enjoy some tourist attractions.

Scholarships are being offered to new and returning PrimeTimers. If you'd like more information, go to [www.umcmmission.org/primetimers](http://www.umcmmission.org/primetimers) or send an email to [mv@umcmmission.org](mailto:mv@umcmmission.org). You can also find information on the Intersectional Justice bulletin board in the hall, or talk to Jan Huston.

—submitted by Nancy Walden

*(Nancy will present a Mission Moment on PrimeTimers during Worship on December 1, 2019.)*



## Alternative Gifts—2019

Many of us have too much stuff. Many others don't have what they need. So the idea of giving alternative gifts was conceived. Instead of giving a material gift to someone who really doesn't need it (and might not even want or like it), we can give an alternative gift. We can give a monetary gift in honor of the person who doesn't need more stuff! There are many worthwhile causes needing financial help. The Intersectional Justice Committee has chosen 5 which we hope you will consider using to honor someone on your gift lists.

**Heifer International** gives animals and training to people all over the world. The recipient of an animal is expected to give the first offspring to someone else. So it is "the gift that multiplies." Gifts are available in any size—from bees or baby chicks to water buffalo.

**Church World Service** is another organization that works in many ways in many countries. One of their programs is to give blankets to people who are suffering from disasters. Only \$10 will provide a good warm blanket to someone who needs it.

**Acción Médica Cristiana (AMC)** is the organization with which Belinda Forbes, our missionary, works in Nicaragua. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in this hemisphere. AMC works to empower poor communities to improve their health and development. They begin with basics such as good water and latrines. To give to AMC, write a check to the church with "AMC – Advance #14846A" in the notation.

**FUMC's Community Breakfast Program** offers a free breakfast to anyone in the community every Sunday except the 1st Sunday of each month. The number of people served ranges from about 50 to over 100 on any given Sunday. The program is supported by grants, a small amount in our church budget, donations & many volunteers.

**FUMC's Sustain Ministry** grew out of our former Soap & Toilet Paper ministry. Soap, diapers, toilet paper, and basic hygiene items are not covered by food stamps. These basic supplies are given to about 120 families each month, and also receives a small amount in our church budget and benefits from donations and many volunteers.

More details about the international agencies is available on their websites and is on a display in church. You can also ask members of the intersectional Justice Committee about all of the programs.

You can give to any of these by making out a check to the church and putting the name of the program in the notation. Or you can give directly to an organization if that would enable GE matching. Cards that you can give to someone to let them know of a donation you have given in their honor are in the narthex.

***We hope you will celebrate this season of giving by considering one or more of these worthwhile programs.***



### Christmas Poinsettias

Each year at Christmas time we brighten our worship spaces with live poinsettia plants. You're invited to participate by ordering one or more poinsettias for our Christmas season worship services.

**Please fill out the form below and return it with payment by Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.**

Completed forms with payment may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church at 603 State St., Schenectady, NY 12305, Attn: Altar Guild (please make check payable to First UMC.)



**\* Please indicate your choices:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Name of Donor _____  | Phone No. _____                           |
| In Memory of _____   |   |
| and/or In Celebration of Christmas _____   |   |
| * Number of Plants _____   | Red _____ White _____ Donation Only _____ |
| * Donation \$ _____ (Church cost is \$12 per plant)  |   |
| * _____ Will pick up plant(s) after 10 a.m. service on December 22                                     |   |
| * _____ Will not pick up plant(s); please take to a shut-in or leave on altar for the following Sunday |   |
| * _____ Would be willing to deliver a plant to shut-in after a service                                 |   |



# KEEPING OUR COVENANT PROMISES - OCTOBER 2019

PRAYERS - PRESENCE - GIFTS - SERVICE

## Our Prayers

### Christian support is extended to:

|                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Jan Butts            | Courtney & Jack McEwan   |
| Shirley Daniels      | Mary Neville             |
| Rudolph Dehn         | Shirley Rivest           |
| Eileen Deming        | Rev. Bill Rowe           |
| June Dieffenbach     | Heather Phillips Sands   |
| Liz Fogle            | Dick Smith               |
| Roark Frisoni        | Marylois Tupper & family |
| Jen & Merrick Fuller | José Velasquez           |
| The Greenwood Family | Joe & Barbara Waring     |
| Jan Guzior           | Doug Wood                |

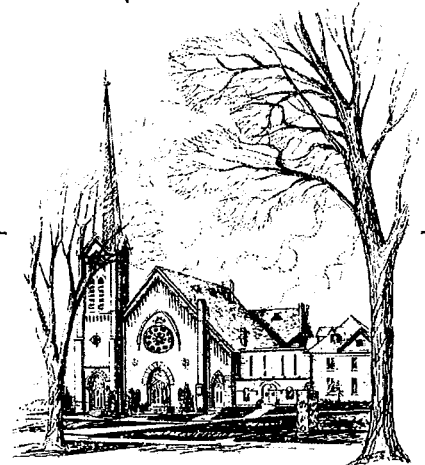
And to: Belinda Forbes, our Nicaragua missionary; Volunteers in Mission teams; victims of natural disasters

## Our Presence

| Date       | Worship |
|------------|---------|
| October 6  | 70      |
| October 13 | 83      |
| October 20 | 61      |
| October 27 | 69      |

## Our Gifts

| Date       | Amount     |
|------------|------------|
| October 6  | \$3,127.86 |
| October 13 | 3,333.25   |
| October 20 | 2,011.00   |
| October 27 | 5,196.42   |



## Our Service

| Date  |   |
|-------|---|
| 10/5  | —Worked on new Bell Room with Union College students/volunteers   |
| 10/6  | —Celebrated World Communion Sunday with special collection (\$180)  |
| 10/9  | —Distributed personal care items to those in need through our SUSTAIN Ministry  |
| 10/13 | —Celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism during Worship   |
| 10/19 | —Book discussion on "White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America" by Nancy Isenberg  |
| 10/20 | —Participated in the SiCM Concert @ First Reformed Church with proceeds to support SiCM   |
| 10/22 | —Gathered for meeting of welcoming/reconciling United Methodist churches @ Burnt Hills UMC  |
| 10/26 | —Annual FUMC's United Methodist Women meeting held with all women welcome   |
|       | —Youth Service: Served free Community Brunch  |
| 10/27 | —Held concert featuring the American Brass Quintet; free and open to all  |
| Oct.  | —Mission Moments offered: Social Principles; 2020 Stewardship Campaign—"Gratitude Through Giving"   |
|       | —Community Breakfast prep & served Sundays, free & open to all: #served=156; #wkly volunteers=11  |
|       | —2nd hour events/programs offered after Worship: Forum - "My Work with Refugees"; Sacrificial Meal; Baptism Reception; Intersectional Justice Committee; and Documentary - "Segregated by Design" |

***Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors — Be Invitational!***





*The Spire*

First United Methodist Church  
603 State Street  
Schenectady, New York 12305

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***Serving Schenectady for over 200 Years***

**NEXT SPIRE MAILED:**

Dec. 27; articles due Dec. 15

**Sunday  
Bible Study**



Our Bible Study is held on Sunday nights 7-8:30 and is led by Pastor Sara. Topic of focus is "Through the Eyes of the Stranger." All are welcome to join our young adults for this study.

Note: No class Dec. 22 & 29.

**Epiphany  
Sunday**

Mark your calendar! On Sunday, January 5th, we'll celebrate Epiphany during the 10:00 am Worship Service, led by our youth. Watch for details!



**Coming in early  
January...**

***Watch for details!***

**Sunday, Jan. 5  
Epiphany Celebration**

**Saturday, Jan. 11  
Book Discussion**

**Tuesday, Jan. 14  
Church Night**

**We are a church that loves to learn and yearns  
to be a gift of God to our communities.**



**'Like' us on Facebook !**

<http://www.facebook.com/FUMCSchenectady>

**WEBSITES AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES**

First United Methodist Church—

E-Mail: [fumcschenectady@yahoo.com](mailto:fumcschenectady@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.fumcschenectady.org](http://www.fumcschenectady.org)

Upper New York Annual Conference—

Website: [www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)

Albany District Office—

E-Mail: [albanydistrict@unyumc.org](mailto:albanydistrict@unyumc.org)

Website: [www.unyumc.org/districts/2](http://www.unyumc.org/districts/2)