

THE

Spire

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

603 State Street, Schenectady, NY 12305 (518) 374-4403 / (Fax) 374-6060

Website: www.fumcschenectady.org E-Mail: fumcschenectady@yahoo.com



Vol. 83 No. 9

The Reverend Sara E. Baron

January 2020

FUTURE SUNDAYS

- 8:30** Community Breakfast Fellowship
9:00 Books available for Children & Adults
9:00 Sunday School for Children
10:00 Sunday Morning Worship
—*Infant & Toddler Care available*
—*Children's Music Time (monthly)*
11:00 Coffee Fellowship
11:30 Second Hour Programs/Events
—Forums
—Luncheons
—Intergenerational Activities
—Ministry Team Meetings
7:00 Sunday Night Study

Worship Text:

- Jan. 5 **Epiphany Sunday**
Youth Led Worship
Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
- Jan. 12 **Baptism of the Lord**
Isaiah 42:1-9; Matthew 3:13-17
"The Call of Baptism"
- Jan. 19 **Human Relations Day**
Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11
"Meant to be a Light"
- Jan. 26 Isaiah 9:1-4; Matthew 4:12-23
"Dawn Light"



Epiphany Sunday January 5, 2020

Mark your calendar! On January 5th, we will celebrate Epiphany during the 10:00 AM Worship Service, which will be led by our youth!

Sunday Night ... New Study

After years of consecutive Bible Studies, Sunday Night Study has decided to try something else for a bit. We will be starting "Living the Questions 2.0" on January 5th.

LtQ2 is an open-minded alternative to studies that attempt to give participants all the answers and instead strives to create an environment where participants can interact with one another in exploring what's next for Christianity. Featuring thirty acclaimed scholars, theologians and other experts, LtQ2 consists of 21 sessions in three sections:

- "Invitation to Journey"
- "Honoring Creation"
- "Call to Covenant"

The course is truly full of great questions, and multiple potential answers.

We will be meeting in the Conference Room, as the series includes a DVD with those acclaimed scholars, at 7PM on Sunday nights. Participants are encouraged to come through the Administrative Building door - and if you don't know where that is, please ask ahead of time!!





From our Pastor

Through Advent (which it still is when the Spire deadline comes) we've been singing "Emmanuel, Emmanuel" after lighting the Advent Wreath. Emmanuel gets sort of associated with Advent, as it is part of the promise of who Jesus will be. Emmanuel literally means "God with us." That's the Christmas story, right? God is with us.

As we start January, we are still in the season of Christmas. It lasts until Epiphany, on January 6th (although we are going to celebrate on the 5th.) So as we start the "New Year" in our secular calendar, we remain in the season of Christmas, and the celebration of the fact that God is with us.

Marjorie Suchocki, one of my favorite theologians, actually translates it as God is FOR us, which is a very nice nuance to add in, isn't it? The more I think about it though, I think that limiting the ideas of Emmanuel to Advent and Christmas is really wrong! God with us and God for us are the ideas of the whole year.

Indeed, after Epiphany we start one of the seasons of "Ordinary Time" for "regular Christian Growth" and I really think that's about the process of learning to trust in God who is with us and for us. Then, also working with God who is with us and for us so that those in the world can move more fully into God's vision of goodness.

This fall I had a chance meeting with some friends of a friend, that turned into some real conversations about life, and its stresses, and how to be a decent person in the midst of all that comes at us. One woman in particular seemed to have deep wisdom, and she shared that for decades she had read multiple newspapers cover to cover to become aware of what was going on around her. She said that eventually she didn't have to anymore. She could pick out the themes and see the patterns without knowing all the details, and these days she doesn't intentionally access any news at all. This was shocking, because she was incredibly well informed about what's going on in the world.

She talked about the process of taking the things that really matter, and pulling them out of the core of ourselves, so that they're a bit in front of our hearts, held up with two hands like anything precious, to be examined and considered with neutrality. This woman was centered, even in the midst of the hurricanes of life around her, and as I thought about others I knew who also have that gift, I realized they all do the same work. (Although they use different metaphors to describe it.) One saint I knew walked in the woods every day with a beloved dog, and I eventually realized that time was when they were listening to God.

Perhaps you feel like I harp on this too much, but I don't think we grow into who we can be without time set aside for growth. Whether it looks like walks in the woods or walks in the city, journaling or staring out the window, yoga or meditation, coloring or some traditional prayer form, we need time away from input to integrate the knowledge that God is with us and for us, into the realities of our lives. I think most of us are a little bit afraid of time with ourselves, and maybe with of time with God. It isn't rational, time with God is LOVELY, but it is normal.

I don't want to get swept into the winds of current events and lose my grounding. I want to be a centered, loving person, and I know that requires time that is set apart. The simple word Emmanuel is one that calls me to remember who I am, whose I am, and who I work with. May you give yourself the gift of time to savor, to grow, to learn, to integrate, to simply be in this time of Christmas and Epiphany. Because, God is with us and we get to choose to be with God. All it takes is some time and some intentionality.

— Sara

Programs Resume



- Chancel Choir—Jan. 2
- Youth Group—Jan. 4
- Sunday Study: New Series—Jan. 5
- Handbell Choir Rehearsal—Jan. 8
- Book Discussion—Jan. 11
- Sunday School—Jan. 12
- Church Night—Jan. 14
- Children's Music Time—Jan. 19
- Men's Breakfast —Jan. 22
- Women's Luncheon —Jan. 22
- City Mission Meal —Jan. 22

Membership News

Updates to our church directory:

Friends on the Move—

Warm wishes are extended to members of our church family, who recently moved:

Caroline & Bill Bardwell, Jr.
107 Greenview Dr.
Winter Haven, FL 33881

Allison Clunn
208 Timber Wood Sq.
Kalamazoo, MI 49006

Andrew Clunn & Megan Dowd
504 Basil Rd., Unit C
Lake Bluff, IL 60044

Bill & Donna Price
129 Rainbow Dr., PMB 2963
Livingston, TX 77399

Carolyn Tranter
254 Wood Lake Wynde
Oldsmar, FL 34677

Unknown Addresses—

Please contact the office if you know how we can reach the below members. Thank you.

Class of 2020: Willie Balkum
Cheryl (Bealer) Franklin

Class of 2022: Eileen Boice
Cindy Hill
Ellen Lane
Brian Maxwell

From our Council Chair

As most of the members are aware by now, there is a growing concern over communication in the church. I have made an effort to provide updates in the Spire about what happened at Church Council for those who did not attend. Before I outline the month's topic, allow me to speak briefly to the topic of communication. Proper communication is a two way street. It requires all involved to actively listen to all the ideas expressed and to maintain an open mind regarding the thoughts and ideas of others. If this is not done, there exists merely a group of people who are all waiting for their turn to talk. The disciples of Jesus not only asked questions of the Ranni, but more importantly listened to the response.

In my last article I called on all of us to evaluate how we function as Christians in the "Ecclesia" of Christ. This was the very topic of conversation at Church Council in December. Every answer was documented with as much accuracy as possible. An anonymous compilation of all the responses is available by email at your desire. In lieu of listing all five pages of responses here, I wish to instead speak to what I took away from the discussion.

Firstly, when those present are able to express themselves uninterrupted, the insights they have to share are profound. I also noted that while not every person present had a response to the question around values of the Christian faith, after five or six respondents many people felt that their value had already been given. This tells me that many of us share values and priorities, and that those shared values are more in line with each other than we may originally think. Lastly, I also noted how important this church is to so many. For many, the definition of Christianity started and ended with a response surrounding this church community.

I want to thank all the chairpersons who served for the 2019 church year, and applaud them for the hard work and effort they put in to make First United Methodist Church of Schenectady the definition of Christianity that it is to so many people. To the chairs who are leaving, I offer sincere and heartfelt appreciation for the hours of work and for being leaders and examples in this congregation. To those who join us in the 2020 year, I welcome you with an open heart and an open mind; anticipating the wonderful and thought provoking conversations we will share.

—John Daniel Falotico, Church Council Chair



January 2020

First United Methodist Church, Schenectady

Calendar updates on website: www.fumcschenectady.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Happy New Year! Church Office Closed	2 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	3	4 11:00 AM Youth Group
			Public Schools Closed			
5 Epiphany / Family Sunday 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship 11:30 AM 2nd Hour Program 7:00 PM Sunday Night Study	6 2:00 - 4:00 PM Pastor "Drop-in" Office Hours	7 Council Reports due 1:00 PM Staff Mtg.	8 6:45 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal	9 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	10	11 10:00 AM Book Discussion 11:00 AM Youth Group
12 Baptism of the Lord 8:30 AM Breakfast 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship 11:30 AM 2nd Hour Program —Ministry Team: building use 7:00 PM Sunday Night Study	13 2:00 - 4:00 PM Pastor "Drop-in" Office Hours 4 - 8 PM SUSTAIN Ministry: Sorting 7:00 PM Staff Pastor / Parish Relations Committee	14 1:00 PM Staff Mtg. 6:30 PM Joint Church Gathering @ Alplaus UMC Church Night 6:30 PM Ministry Teams Meet 7:30 PM Council	15 Spire articles due 11:30 AM-1:30 PM SUSTAIN Ministry 6:45 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Small Group Leaders	16 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	17	18 11:00 AM Youth Group
19 Human Relations Day 8:30 AM Breakfast 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship 10:40 AM Children's Music 11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship 11:30 AM 2nd Hour Program 7:00 PM Sunday Night Study	20 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Church Office Closed Public Schools Closed	21 1:00 PM Staff Mtg. 7:00 PM Children & Youth Ministries Team	22 8:30 AM Men's Fellowship Breakfast 12:00 Women's Luncheon 5:00 pm Serve Meal at City Mission 6:45 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal	23 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	24	25 9:15 AM Youth Service: Serve free Community Brunch 10:00 AM UMW Meeting 11:00 AM Youth Group
26 8:30 AM Breakfast 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Fellowship 11:30 AM 2nd Hour Programs 11:45 AM Intersectional Justice Committee 7:00 PM Sunday Night Study	27 Public Schools Closed: Staff Develop. Day 2:00 - 4:00 PM Pastor "Drop-in" Office Hours 4 - 8 PM SUSTAIN Ministry: Sorting	28 1:00 PM Staff Mtg. 7:00 PM Trustees	29 6:45 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Small Group Leaders	30 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	31 	

**We are in the season of EPIPHANY (green) -
During Epiphany, we celebrate the ways God is revealed through Jesus.**



Note of Thanks

Regarding support to Belinda Forbes, our covenant missionary in Nicaragua, we received the following notes:

Dear Friends in Mission,

Thank you! Your financial support is enabling Global Ministries missionaries to fulfill the mission of the church.

Through your financial support you are serving within a vital network of interactive relationships in more than 60 countries around the world.

Nearly four hundred United Methodist missionaries come from many places and backgrounds, witnessing and serving in dramatically different locales and cultures, engaging in a range of activities and professions as pastors, educators, congregational and leadership developers, regional coordinators for UMCOR, agriculturalists, health coordinators, and doctors.

On behalf of the people who are recipients of the love of God through the direct ministry of a Global Missions missionary—Thank You!

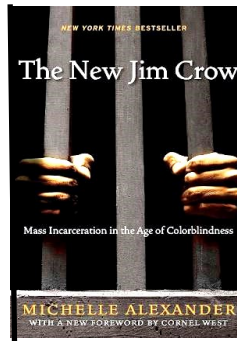
Grace and Peace,

Thomas G. Kemper, General Secretary

*Roland Fernandes, COO & General Treasurer
of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church*

Many thanks to everyone at FUMC Schenectady for making my itineration visit so special. Janet was a wonderful host and spending time with UNYAC VIM team members was also a treat!

Grace and peace, Belinda



Book Discussion

Saturday, Jan. 11

Our next book discussion will be held on Saturday, January 11th, at 10:00 am on "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness," authored 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.

Everyone is welcome to pick up a copy of the book, and join us for the book discussion about it on Saturday, January 11th.

Altar Flowers



We are grateful for the Sunday Altar Flowers given in December:

12/8 in memory of Ken Rockwell

12/22 in celebration of Christmas

12/29 in celebration of Christmas

To give altar flowers for Sunday Worship, please see the signup poster on the hallway bulletin board, or contact the office.

Church Night

resumes

Tuesday, January 14



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

6:30 pm Ministry Teams meetings

7:30 pm Church Council meets

Notices will go out to teams scheduled to meet.

From the Finance Committee

♦ **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 contact the office and a Contribution Statement will be mailed to you.

♦ **2020 Stewardship Campaign**

If you haven't yet participated in our Stewardship Campaign: "Gratitude Through Giving" by filling out a form to pledge prayers, presence, witness, service and/or monetary donations for 2020 and would like to, forms are available in the narthex and from the office. Together we can continue to bring God's words and actions into our community and our world.

At this time we are happy to report that to date the pledge giving for this year exceeds last years by over \$50,000. Look for further updates in the next edition of *The Spire*. Thank you to all who pledged for your faithfulness.

♦ **2020 Offering Envelopes**

Boxed Offering Envelopes for 2020 are available in the Narthex. If you do not find a box with your name on it and want envelopes, please use the signup sheet on a Sunday or contact the office.

♦ **Electronic Giving Available**

If you are interested in using the electronic donation system to make pledge payments, to make donations to church benevolences, to repay on a student loan or for other purposes, go to our church website (www.fumcschenectady.org) or read the QR code below. The website contains a button that will take you to the electronic donations signup page. The signup page will walk you through the process of signing up. If you prefer to sign-up on a paper form, you may pick up an authorization form from Linda in the office.



Serve Meal at City Mission

Wednesday, January 22

It's our church's turn to serve a meal at the City Mission. Each individual volunteering to serve at City Mission is asked to create an account at the mission and sign-up in advance for each meal date they will serve.

To signup 5 days or more ahead, go to: <http://firstumc.citymissionofscheneectady.volunteerhub.com>.

To signup within 5 days prior of serving, go to: <http://www.schenectadycitymission.com> then click "volunteer" and find FUMC's dates to serve, e.g., Wednesday, Jan. 22.

If you don't have a computer or have a problem signing up, please call Lori at 518-346-2275 ext. 301.

Upcoming Wednesday dates in 2020 that have been assigned to our church to serve are: January 22, March 25, May 27.

Arrival time is no later than 5 p.m. A hair net is required to wear if you are not wearing a hat. Please let Mary Ann Marshall (518-355-1733) know if you have signed up for an upcoming meal. Thank you.

Ministry Moments

**"He who can no longer
pause to wonder and stand
rapt in awe, is as good as
dead; his eyes are closed."**

~ Albert Einstein ~

**"That I exist is a perpetual
surprise, which is life."**

~ Rabindranath Tagore ~

The Sunday School Scoop

January 2020



January 5	Epiphany <i>No Sunday School</i> 10:00 am —Our youth will lead Worship as we celebrate Epiphany together
January 12	Baptism of the Lord 9:00 am —Sunday School
January 19	Human Relations Day 9:00 am — Sunday School 10:40 am — Children's Music Time
January 26	9:00 am — Sunday School



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 11:00 am.

● **Youth Lead Worship Service**—

On Epiphany Sunday, January 5th, we'll be leading the 10 am Worship Service in the sanctuary.

● **Youth Service Project**—

On Saturday, January 25th, plan to gather at 9:15 am to help serve a free community brunch meal at our neighbors at Emmanuel Friedens Church on Nott Terrace.

♪ Children Making Music ♪

Our next music group meets on Sunday, January 19th. Come have fun and make music with us! We meet at 10:40 am in the Gathering Room, right after the Children's Time in Worship.

Joint Church Meeting

On Tuesday, January 14th, everyone is welcome to gather with other United Methodist Churches at 6:30 pm for a joint meeting at Alplaus UMC, 1 Brookside Place, as churches in welcoming all of God's people into the United Methodist Church.

Like to do Needlework?



The Needlework Ministry program (knitting, crocheting, sewing) creates hats and scarves for various causes as well as prayer shawls/blankets. If you wish to participate and want to learn more, including how to knit or crotchet, please contact Eileen Deming or Alice Nash.

Trustee and Investment Committee Report on Endowments

Subject: Whether or not to change Policy and begin spending from Principal.

Given the fact that the church is no longer being supported financially in a sustainable way, the Trustees and the Investment Committee have been studying relevant law and soliciting expert opinions on changing current church policy to begin taking a percentage of principal from endowments. To date, the policy has been to only spend funds earned in interest, dividends and Capital Gains in excess of the Consumer Price Index. The exception to this has been the Slater/Haines Fund, which allows spending each year from principal, for current expenses. **Slater/Haines Fund will be depleted entirely by the winter of 2020-21.**

If we are to decide to change policy, the following will need to happen:

- Trustees and Investment Committee need to vote to change our current investment policies. (Trustee Manual pages 9-11)
- Church Council will have to agree to the changes
- The entire congregation should ratify the changes by vote at a Church Conference
- Minutes of all meetings which discuss this issue must be kept
- **Each endowment** will need to be evaluated according to 8 factors in NYPMIFA* - initially and yearly thereafter
- The decision to invade principal can be made for each endowment as long as we meet all the decision requirements (factors) and do not take in excess of a prudent percentage of the current value of the endowment.
- We can make this decision internally, without contacting the Charities Bureau or the Attorney General.
- Endowment Principal for designated funds can still only be spent for things related to the designation of the donor.
- Most of our endowments are designated

What we have learned:

- While it is legal to take up to 7% of principal in each year, there are few who do. Taking 4% or less is the norm, and allows the principal to last for many years.
- Income derived under the % ruling, from a Designated Fund, can cover all appropriate expenses related to that designation – such as salary, benefits, equipment, space use, insurance, depreciation.
- The intent of the donor is sacrosanct
- It is no longer necessary to consider or maintain the Historic Dollar Value (HDV, original amount of the bequest) when deciding how much to appropriate from an endowment. A prudence standard now governs appropriation.

Additional rules and restrictions that need to be met if the church votes to consider this management model.

(From the New York Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (NYPMIFA, “the Act”))

For endowed funds received over 20 years ago and worth \$100,000 or less, that are no longer “practicable,” it is possible to ask the donor to remove any restrictions or for permission to invade principal. It is also possible to get the funds released from any restricted use placed by the donor, if deceased, by action of the Attorney General, State of NY. This requires an application to the Charities Bureau and approval by the Attorney General. The action would require legal services and months of preparation.

Continued on next page....

The Act requires that the following factors, if relevant, be considered in managing and investing an institutional fund:

- (1) the duration and preservation of the endowment fund;
- (2) the purposes of the institution and the endowment fund;
- (3) general economic conditions;
- (4) the possible effect of inflation or deflation;
- (5) the expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments;
- (6) other resources of the institution;
- (7) where appropriate and circumstances would otherwise warrant, alternatives to expenditure of the endowment fund, giving due consideration to the effect that such alternatives may have on the institution; and
- (8) the investment policy of the institution.

In reference to the investment policy of the institution (FUMC), the policy would have to be re-written.

FUMC Funds (Endowments)

Six Funds are currently invested that can support Current Expenses

Four Funds support church maintenance

Four Funds support specific current expense areas (church school, education and music)

Seven Funds support non-current expense areas (concerts, student loans, etc.)

There are also 30 smaller funds, all with specific uses.

It will take time and effort to assess each of these funds in light of the 8 factors, re-write an investment policy for consideration by the church, decide on a prudent percentage of principal to take from principal in each endowed fund, and then compare the amount that can be taken according to the new process to what these funds are currently earning for support of the church. This is the task that the Investment Committee intends to address in 2020.

* New York Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (NYPMIFA)

Women's Fellowship Luncheon

The next Women's Fellowship Luncheon will be on Wednesday, January 22nd, at 12 noon at the Glen Eddy in Niskayuna. **Please note that this time the luncheon will be on the fourth Wednesday in January, not the usual third.** All church women – friends as well as members – are welcomed, so come if you can and let's enjoy time together. Lunch costs \$17 and there is no tax or tip. So that we can let the Glen Eddy staff know how many people to expect, please try to RSVP by January 20th (although even at the last minute is ok) to Carolyn Micklas at cmicklas@twc.com or 518-374-7742. Mark your calendar and plan to come. Hope to see you there!



United Methodist Women

► UMW Meeting on January 25th

The United Methodist Women (UMW) is meeting to decide this year's activities and missions on Saturday, January 25th, at 10:00 am in the Gathering Room. All women of the First United Methodist Church, Schenectady, are invited to attend.

► Note of Thanks

Dear Members of the United Women FUMC:

Thank you for your wonderful gift. You've already made an impact on the lives of many girls. By eliminating a major barrier to education—menstrual management—you have joined our movement to change the world, one girl at a time.

As the founder of the MoonCatcher Project, I offer my heartfelt personal thanks for making possible our vital work.

Your generosity helps to provide MoonCatcher Kits to girls in the poorest communities worldwide. Our simple solution has a profound impact! In 2018, we were able to provide 8,000 girls with menstrual management kits. With your help, we will reach even more girls in 2019.

Your generous support helps make their current and future success possible. Thank you for being a part of our growing team.

*Sincerely,
Ellie von Wellsheim, Executive Director*

Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service & Soup Shabbat



*Proceeds go to
Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM)*

When: Friday, January 24, 2020

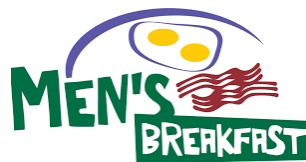
Where: Congregation Gates of Heaven
852 Ashmore Ave., Schenectady

Time: 5 pm Shabbat Service
6 pm Soup Dinner
7 pm Community Conversation

Guest Speaker: Sarah Rogerson
Director of Immigration Law Clinic
at Albany Law School

RSVP: by January 17
Kathy at klaws@cgoh.org or
518-374-8173

Everyone is welcome. Attendees are asked to bring a school supply item to donate, and for the Soup Dinner, which will include hearty soups, crusty bread and dessert, to donate the amount you would pay to go out to eat. This event is sponsored by the Schenectady Clergy Against Hate (SCAH).

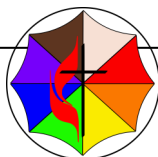


Calling all Men!

The Men's Breakfast Fellowship meets on the fourth Wednesdays of each month at the Blue Ribbon Diner on upper State Street, and all men are welcome. The next gathering will be held on January 22nd, at 8:30 AM. Contact Bob Coppola with any questions.

E-Newsletter available!

If you receive *The Spire* newsletter in hard-copy and would prefer to get it by email, which does save valuable resources, please contact the office with your email address. Thank you.



Mission Moments

Delivered during Worship

► **Alternative Giving: Acción Médica Cristiana**

Delivered on November 17, 2019, by Mary Anderson

Good morning. My name is Mary Anderson.

Jan Huston asked me to speak to you about Alternative Gifts – the idea of giving a gift to someone who could really use the gift. I was lucky to have a VIM experience in Nicaragua (another example of doing as asked by Jan .. and Pete.).. now a number of years ago.

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in this hemisphere. Having traveled over extremely poor, bumpy roads to our worksite in the seemingly middle of nowhere, I can verify how poor living conditions are in Nicaragua. We can be proud to support United Methodist missionary, Belinda Forbes.

Every three years she visits us, and I hope you were present for her recent visit. Belinda and her husband work with AMC / Accion Medica Cristiana. AMC works to empower poor communities to improve their health and development. I experienced that work. I was most impressed with the work of trained health workers. Belinda's presentation was gratifying and showed how much she is accomplishing.

AMC and Belinda need our continued support. I would ask you to consider giving her that support as an alternative Christmas gift. You can write a check to FUMC and put AMC in the notation. Thank you.



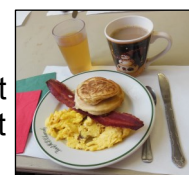
► **Alternative Giving: Community Breakfast & Sustain Ministry**

Delivered on November 24, 2019, by Jean Gustafson and Lisa Lane

When I first learned about First United Methodist, I was most impressed with the amazing mission work which was happening here. One of the missions at that time was called The Toilet Paper Ministry, now called The Sustain Ministry. Imagine not having enough money in your limited budget to purchase staples such as TP and soap. Has anyone checked out the cost of disposable diapers lately? Fortunately, we have The Sustain Ministry to help folks out in our community each month. In the beginning, perhaps 40-50 folks received a few rolls of toilet paper and a bar of soap and some diapers. Through the needs of the Schenectady community and the intense efforts of Beth Long-Velasquez and others, the Sustain Program has grown. We are able to purchase items from the Regional Food Bank on a per pound basis. Orders are placed by the Ministry program to the Food Bank and volunteers pick up items from them. Many hours are spent by Sustain Ministry volunteers sorting and repackaging supplies in preparation for monthly distribution to families. The distribution occurs monthly here at FUMC. Currently, such items as feminine hygiene products, incontinence pads, diapers, baby wipes, soap, toothpaste and toilet paper are distributed. In addition, newborn kits are available to expectant mothers. Thus far, this year, on the average, we have served 160 local households per month. In the January thru October time period, that is a total of roughly 1,440 households. We expect that that number will increase to 1,760 by the end of 2019. We also served 200 individuals at the Grand Giveaway held jointly with Home Furnishings in July and November. This ministry is near and dear to my heart. Won't you please consider this ministry in your Alternate Christmas giving.



Another option for your Alternate Christmas giving is the Community Breakfast Program. A delicious breakfast is provided to 50-85 guests each Sunday of the month (except the first Sunday). Our guests not only receive a good meal, they get to eat until they are full! And just as important as the food- we offer our guests a warm and friendly sanctuary.



How do we know this program is worthwhile? Well..... just stop in for breakfast and you can see for yourself.

There is a sense of community. Guests stay after they are finished eating to chat amongst themselves and with the volunteers. Some guests are offering to help out where they are able. Several guests are also coming to our church services.

So this Christmas - if you want to give a miracle.... If you want to see a miracle in the community.... Give a gift that supports the Sustain Ministry and/or the Community Breakfast Program.

Continued on next page....

► United Methodist Social Principles 2020

Delivered on December 15, 2019, by Elaine Troy

The initial draft of the revised Social Principles was developed by six writing teams, whose members reflected the broad diversity of the church. Following this, an Editorial Revision Team perfected additional drafts, based on feedback received via online surveys, extensive consultations with central and annual conferences, and comments solicited from United Methodist scholars, bishops, church bodies and leaders across the denomination.

This newest version has a Preamble, selected parts of which I want to share today. These words ring true for me at this time in our story.

PREAMBLE

We, the people called United Methodists, affirm our faith in the living God, who created everything that is, and called it good, and created human beings in God's own image. We give thanks for Jesus Christ who redeems and heals our relationship with God. We trust in the movements of the Holy Spirit, transforming human lives and the whole creation. Further, we declare our faith that God's grace is available to all and "nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created." (Rom. 8:38–39)

According to Jesus' commandment, we are to love one another: "Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." (John 13:34–35)

We honor the dignity of all beings and affirm the goodness of life.

We are grateful for God's forgiving and sanctifying love, given to us and to all and drawing us toward perfect love. By God's grace, we are called to be more Christ-like, and thus to be merciful, just and compassionate. Responding to that call, we seek to give boundless love to all—the children, the outcast, the condemned and the confused. Jesus calls every generation to wholehearted discipleship: opening our hearts to the people we encounter daily; practicing compassion with our families and neighbors; honoring the dignity and worth of all people near and far; recognizing the systems that destroy human lives through poverty, war and exclusion; and advocating justice and care in our churches, communities and social structures. God calls us further to be stewards of creation, caring for the skies and waters, soil and plants, and all beings.

We recognize that the Body of Christ has many parts, and all are valuable. Thus, we respect differences - including differences in understanding and expressing faith, in gifts and practices of ministry, and in life experiences, as shaped by ethnicities, cultures, communities, abilities, age, sexual orientation and gender. We affirm our belief in the inestimable worth of each individual to whom God gives unique gifts.

Differences are a precious gift and daunting challenge.

Yet God calls our church to difficult discipleship, with Jesus as our guide and the Spirit as our daily strength. With God's help, we accept the challenge to follow the high calling "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic. 6:8, NRSV)

John Wesley's General Rules continue to inspire United Methodists to faithful practices that will do no harm, do good, and follow the ordinances of God. We recognize the challenges before the church to engage with honesty and compassion through deep listening, hard conversations and shared ministry, even when we do not agree on all matters.



We acknowledge that the church is a living body gathered from the many and diverse parts of the human community. Thus, unanimity of beliefs, opinion, and practice, have never been characteristic of the church. From its earliest times diverse understandings and controversies on many matters have been the reality. The church needs to embrace conflicts with courage and perseverance as we seek together to discern God's will. With that understanding and commitment, we pledge ourselves to acknowledge and to embrace with courage, trust, and hope those controversies that arise among us, accepting them as evidence that God is not yet finished sculpting us to be God's people.

We are confident that nothing can separate us from the grace of God, and that the social witness of the church is a testimony to that grace. With God's help, we pledge to share ministry and honor everyone's dignity, to seek the mind of Christ, and to follow God's will in all things.

<https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/124>

KEEPING OUR COVENANT PROMISES—NOVEMBER 2019

PRAYERS - PRESENCE - GIFTS - SERVICE

OUR PRAYERS

Christian support is extended to:

- The family & friends of Cindy Amell, who passed away recently (Terry & Anne Phillips' friend)

Christian support is also extended to:

Jan Butts	Courtney & Jack McEwan
Shirley Daniels	Mary Neville
Rudy Dehn	Nancy Oldow
Eileen Deming	Shirley Rivest
June Dieffenbach	Rev. Bill Rowe
The DiNola Family	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
Lois Isles & Family	

We celebrate with:

- Pastor Sara & Kevin, who are expecting their first child in June 2020. Congratulations!
- Emily Hart, who celebrated her 85th birthday on December 26th. Happy Birthday!
- Kevin Kempf, who will soon be an uncle. Congratulations!
- Christopher Rambo, Jr., who enlisted and will serve in the U.S. National Guard. Thank you!

OUR PRESENCE

Date	Worship
November 3	76
November 10	77
November 17	66
November 24	80

OUR GIFTS

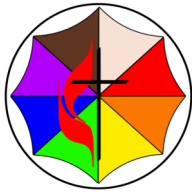
Date	Amount
November 3	\$3,828.43
November 10	5,568.30
November 17	1,499.65
November 24	2,322.00



OUR SERVICE

- 11/13 —Distributed personal care items to those in need through our SUSTAIN Ministry
- 11/15 —Created 35 Christmas cards for shut-ins, sponsored by our UMW
- 11/19 —Gathered for meeting of welcoming/reconciling UM churches @ Alplaus UMC
- 11/20 —Held "Grand Giveaway Day," sponsored by our SUSTAIN Ministry & the Home Furnishings program
- Advent study series began on book by John Shelby Spong
- 11/23 —Youth Service Project: Packed Thanksgiving Baskets for neighbors in need
- Offered hospitality and hot chocolate to the public at the downtown holiday Parade
- 11/24 —New Children's Music program began
- Participated in Thanksgiving Service @ Unitarian Univ. Society, spon. by Sch'dy Clergy Against Hate
- 11/27 —Served meal at the City Mission of Schenectady
- 11/30 —Youth Service Project: Served free community brunch
- Nov. —Continue to prep & serve Sunday Community Breakfast; # served=168; # volunteers each week=11
- Mission Moments held: 2020 Stewardship Campaign videos; and Alternative Giving programs
- Sunday 2nd hour offered: Sermon 'Talk-Back'; annual Church Conference; Ministry Team meeting

~ **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 225 Years

NEXT SPIRE MAILED:

January 29; articles due Jan. 15

*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>
Website: www.FUMCSchenectady.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Coming in early February:

Sunday, February 2

Family Sunday

“Souper” Bowl Sunday

Tuesday, February 11

Church Night

Enjoy Fellowship... before & after Worship

- ▶ **Downtown Community Breakfast** is served 8:30-9:30 AM in Fellowship Hall weekly except on the first Sunday of each month, free of charge.
- ▶ **Books for Children & Adults** available during breakfast from 9-9:30 AM in Fellowship Hall.
- ▶ **Coffee Fellowship** is held in Wesley Lounge following Worship. Come gather among friends!

WEBSITES AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES

First United Methodist Church—

E-Mail: fumcschenectady@yahoo.com

Website: www.fumcschenectady.org

Upper New York Annual Conference—

Website: www.unyumc.org

Albany District of the United Methodist Church—

E-Mail: albanydistrict@unyumc.org

Website: www.unyumc.org/districts/detail/2