

The Reporter

December 2025

First United Methodist Church
66 Chestnut Street,
Oneonta, New York
www.firstumc-oneonta.org



Pastor's Article

Earlier this year, the United Methodist Church introduced a new vision statement centered around three callings that invite us to live out our faith in the world: to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. In shaping this vision, the Council of Bishops drew inspiration from *Sankofa* – a West African concept that reminds us to look back and remember where we have come from in order to move forward with wisdom and purpose.

As we close out 2025, I invite FUMC to embrace this vision with courage and joy. But to truly live into it, we must first remember our own story. Throughout the coming year, we will take time to reflect on what it means to be United Methodist in today's world – our heritage, our values, and our calling.

I hope you'll join me in this journey of remembering who we are, so that together we can dream boldly about who God is calling us to become.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Casey

Worship

We've all heard the phrase, "*there was no room at the inn.*" It's a line that has echoed through generations, shaping the way we tell the Christmas story. Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem – tired, expectant, and full of hope – only to find that there is no place for them. The birth of Jesus begins in the shadow of rejection.

We, too, know what it feels like to be told there’s no room: for our questions, our struggles, our differences, our neighbors, or our dreams. Yet the good news of Christmas is that God shows up right there, in the margins, in the overflow, in the spaces the world forgets.

This Advent, we are invited to make room: room for hope, room for peace, room for joy, room for love. Together, we’ll rediscover what it means to open our lives, our homes, and our hearts so that the family who was once turned away might find welcome among us today.

Sunday	Scripture	Sermon
November 30	Isaiah 9:2-7 Luke 1:26-38	Make Room for Hope
December 7	Isaiah 11:1-10 Luke 1:39-45	Make Room for Peace
December 14	Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 1:46-55	Make Room for Joy
December 21	Matthew 1:18-25 John 1:1-5, 14	Make Room for Love
December 24	Luke 2:1-20	Make Room for Christ

Christmas Caroling on December 21

On December 21, we will be going Christmas caroling with a group from other local United Methodist Churches. While we are focusing on inviting youths, all are welcome to join in the singing! We will meet at 12:30 pm at Elm Park UMC for a light lunch before hitting the road to bring the joy of the season to our neighbors. We will end up back at FUMC for some hot chocolate around a fire in the courtyard (weather permitting). If you have questions, reach out to Pastor Casey.

Christmas Eve

Join FUMC on December 24 at 7 pm for our Christmas Eve worship service. The children of the church have been busy learning about the story of Christmas and will be sharing with us a pageant with original music by our own Mary Konstantine. You’re not going to want to miss this time when we come together as a community to experience the inbreaking of God’s kin-dom right here on earth!

Lessons and Carols

Mark Your Calendars! On Sunday, December 28, we will gather for a special Service of Lessons and Carols during our regular worship time. Together, we’ll hear the story of God’s movement throughout history through nine scripture readings and nine beloved carols. Come and celebrate the wonder of God’s love told through word and song!

Alternative Giving for Christmas

This year the 3 cards we will be highlighting for Alternative Giving are Cindy's Bundle of Love Fund (via the Thrift Shop), Otsego Refugee Resettlement Coalition, and the Warming Station. Additional cards will also be available, including Saturday's bread, Habitat for Humanity, UMCOR, etc.

Cards will be available after each service in the Fellowship Hall starting Sunday, November 30. They can also be obtained in the church office.

In addition to the cards, you may also donate money for poinsettias and door wreaths

Note: if you wish your gift in honor or memory of someone to be included in the Christmas Eve bulletin, please make sure this information is submitted to the office by **Friday, December 19**.

Forms to provide this information are available with the cards, in the church office, and on the last page of this newsletter. You can also email secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org.

Giving Tree for Head Start Children

Christmas is coming and the "Giving Tree" fund for Head Start children will once again be receiving contributions towards a \$50 gift certificate for each of the 41 children at the River Street Building. So our goal is to raise at least \$2,050. Any money given above and beyond that will be used for the "Secret Santa Fund", a fund that covers requests that come in from caring parents in our congregation and beyond. It is administered by Pastor Casey.

The Head Start Parents really appreciate the gift certificate. It gives them more options, particularly if they have more than one child in the family. Please donate what you usually spend by sending a check to the church with "Giving Tree" in the memo, or put money in the offering plate designated for "Giving Tree." We'll gratefully accept your donation, no matter the size.

The deadline for donations is December 15. Questions? Call Joyce Miller at 607-434-4963.

Food For Thought

Margaret Parish, Lay Leader

The Lewis Center recently shared 50 Ways to Increase Active Engagement. Let's look at 10 ideas:

1. Lift up lay involvement as Christian ministry, not volunteer work.
2. Help congregants understand the time they give to ministries as an expression of stewardship.
3. Start new ministries, teams, and groups often. Ongoing groups have a tendency to become cliquish. Newcomers are more likely to feel comfortable joining something new.
4. Most people serve because they are asked.
5. Make starting easy. Create easy entry points – short term service opportunities requiring minimal commitment.

6. Provide opportunities for families to be in ministry together.
7. Move away from the “committee” mindset to the more collaborative and interactive “ministry team” mindset.
8. Tell the story of what your church is doing. Document activities with photos and journals. Encourage participants to tell their story.
9. Intentionally include newcomers in leadership.
10. Have a ministry fair or open house to connect people with groups and ministry teams.

Holiday Sustainability

Updates from the Congregational Creation Care Team

Important Update: Card Recycling Program Discontinued

For 35 years, Saint Jude's Ranch for Children sponsored a recycled card program. Unfortunately, the program ended in December 2024 due to declining card sales, lower demand, and high management costs. **UWF is no longer collecting used cards.** We'll notify you if we find an alternative organization that accepts them.

Recycling Christmas Lights

Wondering what to do with old Christmas lights? Here are your local options:

Lowe's accepts old Christmas lights year-round at the customer service desk. While there's no official deadline, we recommend calling ahead to confirm before making the trip.

Otsego Reuse Center accepts working lights only.

Five Tips for a Greener Holiday

Give thoughtfully – Choose long-lasting gifts or experiences that recipients will genuinely use and appreciate.

Wrap sustainably – Select recyclable wrapping paper over shiny, plastic-coated alternatives, and reuse materials whenever possible.

Eat locally – Choose locally produced meals and reduce waste through leftovers or composting.

Choose trees wisely – Artificial trees are sustainable if used for at least 10 years. Real trees are excellent choices when properly composted after the holidays.

Practice gratitude – As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said of Christmas: "What better time for practicing a revolution of gratitude through gift giving and celebrations that are light on the Earth and that respect the many relationships by which we live?"

A little mindfulness goes a long way in making our holidays both greener and more meaningful.

Red Bird Shoe Box Project Update

A great big THANK YOU to the people who filled 7 Shoe Boxes for the Red Bird Project as well as giving pillows, bedding, and towels.

Red Bird is a United Methodist Mission Center in Beverly, Kentucky. Its programs include a Christian K-12 school, a dental clinic, a large thrift store, and other outreach programs to the elderly and underserved families of the area. In the past, First UMC also participated in the “Work Camps” where we helped replace roofs, upgrade porches and other home improvement needs of families who can apply for this kind of help.

A vertical poster with a dark, starry night sky background and silhouettes of evergreen trees at the bottom. The text is white and yellow. The title is at the top, followed by a list of events with dates in purple circles. The address and website are at the bottom.

Advent and Christmas at First UMC Oneonta

- NOV 30** First Sunday in Advent
Worship @ 8:15 and 10:30am
- DEC 4** Faith at the Table
Dinner at 6pm at Bella Michael's
- DEC 7** Second Sunday in Advent
Worship @ 8:15 and 10:30am
- DEC 14** Third Sunday in Advent
Worship @ 8:15 and 10:30am
- DEC 21** Fourth Sunday in Advent
Worship @ 8:15 and 10:30am
- DEC 21** Christmas Caroling
Lunch at 12:30 at Elm Park, caroling until 4pm
- DEC 24** Christmas Eve
Worship at 7pm
- DEC 28** Lessons and Carols
Worship at 8:15 and 10:30am

66 Chestnut St, Oneonta, NY
firstumc-oneonta.org

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

A SHORT CHRISTMAS COMEDY

ADAPTED BY JON JORY
FROM THE STORY BY O. HENRY

A SPECIAL BENEFIT FOR THE 38TH ANNUAL




TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2025 AT 7PM
ONE NIGHT ONLY

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
66 CHESTNUT ST. ONEONTA, NY

DIRECTED BY
PATRICK BREEN
ACTOR & PLAYWRIGHT (MEN IN BLACK, GALAXY QUEST)

WITH
LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS TBA AND THE MAGI CAROLERS

FREE ADMISSION, DONATIONS ACCEPTED
RESERVE TICKETS NOW @ friendsofchristmas.org/magi



JOIN US



VISIT [FRIENDSOFCHRISTMAS.ORG](https://friendsofchristmas.org) OR
CALL 607-431-8025

TO RSVP FOR IN-PERSON, TAKE OUT AND DELIVERY MEALS, REGISTER AS A VOLUNTEER OR DONATE

Saturday, December 20, 2025

12:30 pm - 2:30 pm

First United Methodist Church
66 Chestnut St. Oneonta

Always free. RSVP by 12/17/25

ALL ARE WELCOME



CATSKILL CHORAL SOCIETY
Artistic Director ♦ Dr. Joseph Han
PRESENTS

A Journey of Peace and Joy

CCS Youth Choir under the Direction of Cynthia Donaldson
Pianist: Timothy Horne

Friday, December 5, 2025 7:30 PM
Saturday, December 6, 2025 3:00 PM

First United Methodist Church
66 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY

Ticket Sales available from any CCS member or one of these outlets:
Green Earth, 4 Market Street, Oneonta, NY
Cooperstown Natural Foods, 61 Linden Avenue, Cooperstown, NY
or online at: catskillchoralsociety.org/tickets



ALTERNATIVE GIVING & CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

ALTERNATIVE GIVING FUNDS

- ☐ Cindy's Bundle of Love (via Thrift Shop) Amount: \$ _____
- ☐ Otsego Refugee Resettlement Coalition Amount: \$ _____
- ☐ Warming Station Amount: \$ _____
- ☐ Other _____ Amount: \$ _____

POINSETTIAS, WREATHS & DECORATIONS

- ☐ Donation for Poinsettias & Decorating Amount: \$ _____
(Church will purchase. At least \$15 recommended.)
- ☐ Donation for door wreaths (\$35 each) Amount: \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Given By _____

In Memory Of _____

In Honor Of _____

Please check the appropriate box(es) above to indicate which fund(s) you are donating to, and the total amount for each fund.

Enclose your payment to First United Methodist Church (66 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820) and **note on the memo space** which fund(s) it is for.

**All memorial/honor information for the Christmas Eve
bulletin needs to be given to the church secretary
no later than Friday, December 19.**

First United Methodist Church, Oneonta

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