

The Reporter

January 2026

First United Methodist Church

66 Chestnut Street,

Oneonta, New York

www.firstumc-oneonta.org



Pastor's Article

On March 31, 1739, John Wesley arrived in Bristol. It was there that he found Reverend George Whitfield preaching outdoors to local coal miners. Wesley, whose training and custom dictated that preaching be done inside church buildings, was scandalized that a colleague would act so vile as to preach outdoors. Something happened in Bristol that changed Wesley's mind. Wesley began to preach as he had seen Whitfield preach, to the regular folk of Bristol, sans church building. In his journal he wrote that he "submitted to be more vile."

At the core of our Wesleyan heritage is an invitation to be vile. For Wesley it was vile to preach outdoors, yet he discovered that there was a gift in being willing to be vile. It was vile for women to be preachers, yet Wesley found that there was a gift in being vile. It was vile to oppose the enslavement of human beings, yet Wesley found that there was a gift in being vile. It was vile to split from the established church, yet Wesley found that there was a gift in being vile. Our Wesleyan heritage has been at its best when it has been at its vilest.

As we embark on a new year, we are going to be spending some time with John Wesley, with our vile heritage, and with an invitation that we too should submit to being more vile. Ashley Boggan, the General Secretary of the Commission on Archives and History, calls this Wesleyan Vile-tality – a reminder that our vitality as a people comes from our willingness to go where others won't, to welcome others reject, and to include those no one else wants to include. I hope that you will join me in committing to being vile this year as we continue to explore what it means to be called to ministry in times such as these.

Human Relations Day – January 18

Human Relations Day is one of six churchwide Special Sundays designated to support ministries and causes important to the entire United Methodist Church. This day invites congregations to strengthen communities, especially those facing poverty, injustice, or lack of opportunity. Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision of the “beloved community,” we are called to build relationships rooted in dignity, equity, and love

What Does My Giving Support?

Special Sundays give us a chance to focus our prayers and support on important ministries all year long, uniting our gifts to multiply our impact. Your generosity strengthens communities working toward the vision of the “beloved community,” making these ministries possible:

- **Community Developers Program (57%)**

Helps churches serve their neighborhoods – especially communities of color – by focusing on local needs like education, employment, and empowerment.

- **United Methodist Voluntary Services (33%)**

Equips volunteers and congregations to tackle injustice through hands-on projects, community organizing, and service-learning opportunities.

- **Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs (10%)**

These church-supported programs help young people rebuild their lives through mentoring, leadership training, and positive, faith-based community experiences.



Announcing a new Small Group Ministry at First United Methodist Church! The mission of GRACE group is to provide a safe welcoming space for adults ages 18+ for Growing Relationships And Christian Exploration. The ongoing foundational theme of this ministry will be the awareness and practice of receiving God’s grace in our lives toward personal transformation. Our first topic will focus on the subject of gratitude using the book “Wake Up Grateful” by Kristi Nelson as a guide. Participants may want to purchase the book but this is not required.

We are asking for a six-week commitment on Mondays from 6:30 - 8 pm beginning January 19 and ending February 23, 2026. The group will meet in the Embury Room at FUMC. You may sign up with Kieran at secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org. If you have any questions, please direct them to Lori DePauw (607-287-7140) or Karen Palmer (607-267-2354) who will be co-facilitating the GRACE group.

United Women in Faith Winter Tea

Women of First UMC Oneonta – You are cordially invited to the annual UWF Winter Tea Party on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at 2:00 PM at the church. Please come and enjoy some snacks and laughs, and connect with friends old and new. Feel free to bring guests – the more the merrier! Please RSVP to the church office at secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org or 607-432-4102 by January 28.

Faith at the Table

Faith at the Table is back on February 5. We're going to meet at Alfresco's at 6 pm. Our topic of conversation will be "Does God play favorites?" Make sure to call or email the church office by February 2 to RSVP.

Update on Church Finances

Thank you for your continued generosity and faithful support as we live out our shared mission in the community. This year's stewardship campaign centered on the conviction that generosity itself is a countercultural act. Your response to our campaign has been a powerful witness to that truth.

To date, pledges for 2026 total \$179,910, bringing us to over 93% of our stewardship goal. We are deeply grateful for the trust and commitment these pledges represent. We would like to extend a special thank you to the 3 individuals and families who pledged for the very first time, and to the 31 individuals and families who increased their level of giving for this year.

The Church Council and Finance Committee are now working thoughtfully to adjust the 2026 budget to address the remaining **\$12,090** shortfall. If you have not yet had an opportunity to submit a pledge, please know that it is not too late. Contact the Kieran in the office (secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org) to share your pledge for the coming year.

Together, your generosity makes ministry possible. We give thanks for each and every one of you.

Rev. Casey Bradley

New Church Website

If you haven't looked recently, our website (www.firstumc-oneonta.org) was updated last fall – check it out! It will continue to be developed further moving forward.

Things you can find on the website:

- Information on how to watch our services online (scroll down to "Streaming Links" on the home page)
- Links to recent Sermons
- Copies of the weekly bulletin and monthly Reporter
- An Events page with featured events and a calendar
- A list of small groups and mission ministries
- And more...

Food for Thought

Synopsis of book “The Right Questions for Church Leaders” by Rev. Lovett H. Weems.

*Leaders do not need all the answers – they need the right questions
to guide people toward faithful discovery.*

Vision & Mission

1. What evidence do we have that our congregation understands and lives out our mission?
2. How is our mission statement shaping real decisions, not just words on paper?
3. What would our community lose if our church no longer existed?
4. What new opportunities is God opening before us right now?

Leadership and Governance

5. How do we currently identify, mentor, and empower emerging leaders?
6. Are leadership roles filled by calling and gifts – or by convenience and tradition?
7. What conversations are we not having as a leadership team that we need to have?
8. How do we handle conflict – and what does that say about our spiritual maturity?

Stewardship and Resources

9. How does our budget reflect our mission and priorities?
10. What portion of our resources goes to sustaining ourselves versus serving others?
11. How transparent are our financial decisions to the congregation?
12. What new forms of generosity might we be overlooking (time, skills, partnerships)?

Outreach and Growth

13. Who in our surrounding community is not being reached by our current ministries?
14. What barriers – physical, cultural, or spiritual – keep newcomers from connecting with us?
15. What partnerships in our community could multiply our impact?
16. How do we measure growth beyond attendance – such as discipleship, service, or transformation?

Change and Innovation

17. What practices or programs have “outlived their purpose” and need to be released?
18. How do we learn from failure without assigning blame?
19. What is one bold experiment we could try this year to serve in a new way?
20. How are we preparing ourselves spiritually and emotionally for change?

Congregation Creation Care Team

Oneonta-area residents are rightfully concerned about a potential AI data center. While these facilities demand enormous energy for cooling and can strain local grids, raising utility costs, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) argues AI expansion doesn't have to mean higher bills or environmental harm.

The Path Forward

The key lies in how tech companies power their operations. Clean energy sources like geothermal and nuclear power offer renewable alternatives to fossil fuels. Communities can leverage this moment by demanding Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) before welcoming data centers. These agreements can secure:

- Lower taxes and utility bills
- Major investments in clean energy infrastructure
- Protection of air quality

According to the NRDC, "If renewable energy generation becomes the fastest option to get their centers up and running, tech companies have the potential to speed up the larger transition to clean energy."

Proven Solutions

Data center flexibility offers another tool. Texas already allows grid operators to pause data center operations during peak demand, preventing community blackouts. This model shows how collaboration between communities and tech companies can balance AI expansion with grid reliability and public health.

What You Can Do

As individuals: Make informed choices. ChatGPT uses 10 times more electricity than a standard Google search. While AI tools boost productivity, consider whether the energy cost justifies each use.

As community members: AI data centers are here to stay, and states are competing for them. We must demand proper community investment to keep emissions and costs low. Make your voice heard – consider it your New Year's resolution.

For detailed information, visit action.nrdc.org

Directory Updates

We will be preparing a new version of the directory for 2026. Please submit updated information if any of your contact information has changed in the last year (e.g. moved, dropped landline, new email).

Note: if your adult children who are now on their own wish to be included in the directory or to receive mailings, please ask them to submit their information as well. (Our usual policy is to move adult children to their own directory entry when they move out or turn 25, whichever happens first.)

Please complete and return the form below on the next page or email your information to secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org by **January 31**. Thank you!

Directory Contact Info

Adults

Name _____

Email _____

Cell _____

Name _____

Email _____

Cell _____

Children's Names

Address _____

Phone _____

I want to receive: Bulletin & Announcements (weekly email) Reporter (monthly)

32nd Annual Citrus Fruit Sale

Yes, the annual fruit sale is on again! As in the past, citrus fruit (oranges and grapefruit) will be available. Sale proceeds support summer camperships for FUMC children and youth.

Orders are due by January 27. The form is on the last page of this newsletter (after the church contact list). Forms are also available in the church office, in the Sanctuary, and by email (secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org). Let your friends and neighbors know!

First United Methodist Church, Oneonta

Church Address.....66 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY 13820
Church Office Phone.....(607) 432-4102
Church Email secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org
Pastor, Casey Bradley pastor@firstumc-oneonta.org
Choir Director, Carolyn McMaster makemusic24@frontiernet.net
Organist, Leslie Bauer lgbauer144@gmail.com
Communications Coordinator, Amy Rockwell.....communications@firstumc-oneonta.org
Secretary, Kieran Andrews secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org
Technology & Facilities Coordinator, Randall Wilson wilson_randall_@hotmail.com
Treasurer, Carol Halter finance@firstumc-oneonta.org
Volunteer Caretaker Christopher Brashear



2026
32st Annual Citrus Fruit Sale
First United Methodist Church, Oneonta
Proceeds to Fund Camperships for Church Youth

Fruit Sale Time! Once again, we have the opportunity to enjoy healthy, delicious fresh fruit and to fund camperships.

Oranges California Navel (72 per case)

Grapefruit Pink Seedless (48 per case)

May be purchased in full case or 1/2 case units. Mixed cases of 1/2 cases of oranges & grapefruit are available.

We are again offering the "Oneonta Express Packs" – 18 oranges or 12 grapefruit.

To order: Submit the order form below or bring it to the church office (66 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820).

Phone orders accepted at (607) 432-4102 or Joyce Miller at (607) 432-8751.

Payment may be made when you order or when you receive your fruit.

Checks should be made payable to: First United Methodist Church with "Fruit Sale" in memo.

******* ORDERS MUST BE PLACED BY TUESDAY, JANUARY 27 *******

You may pick up your fruit at the church on

Thursday, February 12 from 10 - 6 p.m. or Friday, February 13 from 10 - 4 p.m.

The fruit will be ready for you in Fellowship Hall. Help will be available for loading.

If you need home delivery (Oneonta area only) please check the appropriate box below.

Save the top portion of this sheet - please jot down what you ordered for your own information

Tell your friends and neighbors about this sale – anyone can order. THANK YOU!

2026 Fruit Sale Order Form

<u>Express Packs</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Oneonta Express Pack (18 oranges) @ \$13	_____	_____
Oneonta Express Pack (12 grapefruit) @ \$14	_____	_____
<u>Case and 1/2 Case Orders</u> (indicate case or 1/2 case under quantity)		
California Navel Oranges	Case @ \$44; 1/2 case @ \$23	_____
Florida Pink Grapefruit	Case @ \$47; 1/2 case @ \$25	_____
Mixed Oranges & Grapefruit	Case @ \$46; 1/2 case @ \$24	_____
If, instead of ordering fruit or in addition, you would like to contribute \$1.00 (or more) to support camperships, please indicate here		→ _____
TOTAL:		\$ _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Please check here if you need home delivery of your fruit (Oneonta area only).