

# The Reporter

## March 2026

First United Methodist Church  
66 Chestnut Street  
Oneonta, New York  
[www.firstumc-oneonta.org](http://www.firstumc-oneonta.org)



### Pastor's Message

We are a church that can do hard things.

That's the message I shared with our staff and volunteers in January when we were asked to open our building as an emergency shelter for our unhoused neighbors during a time of crisis. We can do hard things. We have done hard things before. We will do hard things again. Hard does not mean impossible.

As followers of Christ, we are called to be people who step into what is difficult for the sake of love.

A few days after sharing that message, I was asked to speak about the growing presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in our communities, particularly the role our local law enforcement agreed to play in detaining immigrants. I shared that rounding up immigrants does not make our community safer; it makes our community quieter. Fear may silence people, but it does not build trust, justice, or community.

The marginalization of our unhoused neighbors and the detention of our immigrant neighbors are symptoms of a deeper problem in our nation: we have lost a shared sense of community. Too often, we fail to recognize the inherent sacred worth of whole groups of people because of social class, mental illness, addiction, immigration status, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or any number of other differences. History shows that we have never lacked reasons to push people aside.

The hard work of the church is to resist that marginalization in whatever form it presents itself. This is work we have done before, and it is work we will continue to do. We will do it when we have allies. We will do it when we stand alone. We will do it because it is our calling.

It is in our spiritual DNA to see the humanity in those others overlook, ignore, or condemn. That is central to what it means to be the Church, to be United Methodists, and it is at the heart of our mission.

I am deeply grateful for the people of FUMC who have stepped into this hard work. My prayer is that we will always be the kind of community that says “yes” when faith calls us to do what is difficult, for the sake of love, justice, our neighbors, and our common call to community.

## Worship

Throughout Lent we have been exploring lament with our *Through the Valley* series. Each Sunday we are explore a lament found in scripture and how the lament shapes our faith and our action.

### March Worship Schedule

Sunday	Scripture	Sermon
Lent 2 (March 1)	Job 13:1-13	Lament and Honesty
Lent 3 (March 8)	Matthew 26:36-46	Lament and Surrender
Lent 4 (March 15)	Esther 4:1-5	Lament and Community
Lent 5 (March 22)	Lamentations 3:19-24	Lament and Hope
Lent 6 (March 29) Palm Sunday	Luke 19:41-48	Lament and Action

### Holy Week Schedule

- |                 |                        |  |
|-----------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>March 29</b> | <b>Palm Sunday</b>     | Worship at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.   |
| <b>April 2</b>  | <b>Maundy Thursday</b> | Simple Meal and Worship at 5:30 p.m.   |
| <b>April 3</b>  | <b>Good Friday</b>     | Ecumenical Worship @ FUMC at 12:10 p.m.  |
| <b>April 5</b>  | <b>Easter</b>          | Sunrise Service in the Courtyard at 7 a.m.<br>Egg Hunt in the Courtyard at 9:30 a.m.<br>Worship in the Sanctuary at 10:30 a.m.<br>Brunch in the Fellowship Hall following 10:30 worship. |

### Boomerangs for Sale

Delicious chocolate and peanut butter Boomerang confections will be available for Easter. All Boomerangs are Gluten Free and sell for \$9.00 a dozen. You may pay by cash or check made out to UWF. Clipboards will be available in the Sanctuary for orders.

## March Jingle – Caring Connections

The March Jingle will go to Caring Connections (<https://www.charitiesccd.org/services/caring-connections/>). Caring Connections is a collaboration between Catholic Charities and local churches to connect families and vulnerable members of the community with resources to meet basic needs. Churches provide financial support and refer people to Caring Connections when they do not have the resources to assist.

Services provided include:

- Finding resources to assist with needs such as utilities, food, transportation, gas, and personal needs.
- Assisting in determining eligibility to qualify for services and programs.
- Helping to create a budget to manage and plan for expenses and unforeseen financial challenges.
- Coordinating with senior living communities to find housing.
- Providing a safe and caring environment and listening ear for people to share their experiences and situation as they determine the resources necessary to get them back on their feet.

## UMCOR Special Offering – March 15

UMCOR Sunday seeks to increase awareness and support for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Gifts given on UMCOR Sunday cover UMCOR's administrative costs. This support ensures that 100% of other donations given to UMCOR throughout the year can be directed toward on-the-ground relief and recovery efforts, allowing UMCOR to effectively respond to crises and provide assistance where it's needed most.

## United Women of Faith Book Group

Our book group is continuing to discuss Jane Goodall's book, *The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times*. Jane inspires us to find hope in difficult times.

The next two books we will be reading are *Grace Can Lead us Home: A Christian Call to End Homelessness* by Kevin Nye, and *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom.

In *The Hiding Place*, the author shares how she was the first licensed female watchmaker in the Netherlands and became a heroine of the Resistance, a survivor of Hitler's concentration camps, and one of the most remarkable ministers of hope in the twentieth century.

We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays at 10 a.m. in the Embury Room. Please join us for fellowship and lively discussion.

If you have questions, call Sharry Strait-Carey at 607-434-5234.

## Faith at the Table

This month's Faith at the Table dinner and conversation will be on Thursday, March 5 at 6 p.m. at Jay's Place. The topic is "How do we balance the call to be compassionate with our need for healthy boundaries?"

Please RSVP by Monday, March 2. You can either sign up on our website (it's listed under Events) or through the church office ([secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto:secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org) or 607-432-4102).

## UWF Tea – Now on March 29!

Women of First UMC Oneonta – You are cordially invited to the annual UWF Tea Party on Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. at the church. Please come 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](mailto:secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org) or 607-432-4102 by March 25.

## Creation Care Team

**Celebrate the Olympics:** For the first time, the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Olympics will be completely free of fluorinated ski waxes containing PFAS – toxic "forever chemicals" that don't break down in the environment or human bodies. For decades, elite winter athletes used fluoro wax because it provided significant speed advantages, especially in wet conditions. However, this performance boost came with serious environmental and health consequences.

The International Ski and Snowboard Federation banned fluorinated waxes starting in the 2023-2024 season, and the Olympics are now strictly enforcing this rule. Every pair of skis will be tested for fluorine presence, with athletes facing disqualification if banned compounds are detected. Two South Korean skiers have already been banned after testing positive for PFAS on their equipment.

The ban addresses widespread contamination documented in studies showing alarmingly high PFAS concentrations in snow, soil, aquifers, and surface water near ski competitions. These chemicals persist in alpine ecosystems, leaching into waterways and food chains, affecting both wildlife and human communities downstream for decades.

This Olympic milestone represents a major turning point for athlete safety, environmental protection, and the broader global effort to eliminate forever chemicals from sports and society.

**GOOD NEWS:** Congress removed a controversial pesticide provision (Section 453) from a spending bill after widespread public outcry. The provision would have prevented the EPA from acting against dangerous pesticides until completing 12-year risk assessments, allowing harmful chemicals to contaminate communities unchecked. It also would have created legal barriers preventing individuals from suing manufacturers for pesticide-related harm.

Thousands of people – including parents, farmers, health advocates, and PIRG supporters – opposed the measure, arguing companies shouldn't escape accountability while toxic chemicals accumulate in soil,

water, and food. The provision's removal demonstrates how public advocacy can protect health and environmental regulations from corporate interests.

**MORE GOOD NEWS:** New York Governor Kathy Hochul signed the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act, joining New Jersey and Connecticut in banning horseshoe crab harvesting for biomedical blood extraction and commercial use. The legislation, championed by Humane World for Animals and the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition, includes a three-year phaseout period before full prohibition takes effect in 2029. Once implemented, biomedical companies cannot capture horseshoe crabs from New York waters to extract their blood for medical testing, and using them as bait will also be prohibited, protecting these ancient creatures and species dependent on them.

Phone calls, emails, letters and post cards do work!

## **Church Leadership Trends for 2026**

Jonathan Page. Lewis Center for Church Leadership  
Margaret Parish, Lay Leader

### A. Community-Focused

1. Quality of interactions more important than quantity.
2. Move away from large-group, one-time programs to consistent gatherings of 2-4 people.
3. Accurately and succinctly describe purpose of congregation existence.

### B. Team Based

1. Find ways to empower and equip leaders to share their specific area of interest.
2. Special attention to offer leadership to those who have historically been excluded.
3. Build intentional partnerships with other faith-based organizations.

### C. Transformation-driven.

1. Outcomes more fruitful than theories. Move from ideas to action
2. Simplify systems and decision making

## **UWF Soul Care Retreat**

**The UWF Soul Care Retreat will be on Saturday, March 21** from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Elm Park UMC. The registration deadline is March 17. To register, email Joyce Miller ([millerumw@gmail.com](mailto:millerumw@gmail.com)) or contact the church office ([secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto:secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org) or 607-432-4102). Please provide name, contact info, food allergies & home church. The event poster, which has more information about the activities, is on the last page of this newsletter (after the FUMC contact info). If you have any questions, contact Joyce Miller.

## Flowers for Easter

We will be ordering flowers to decorate the sanctuary for Easter. You are invited to donate money for this purpose. Any gifts given in honor or memory of someone will be listed in the Easter bulletin. Please fill out the form below and submit it with your gift.

Easter Flower Fund  
(At least \$15 recommended.)

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose your payment to First United Methodist Church (66 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820) and note on the memo space that it is for Easter Flowers.

**Please return your form and money to the church office by Monday, March 30.**

---

### 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

YOU ARE INVITED - CALLING WOMEN OF ALL AGES

# SOUL CARE RETREAT

WHAT DID JESUS DO ?

**March 21 8:30-3pm**

ELM PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
401 CHESTNUT ST., ONEONTA, NY 13820

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: REV. JOYCE ALLEN**

*Gentle Stretching*  
**Crafts**  
*Group Singing*  
**Worship**  
*Table Discussion*  
**Food**  
*Tools for Self Care*  
**& More!**

TO REGISTER: CALL THE FIRST UMC AT 432-4102  
OR EMAIL: JOYCE MILLER - MILLERUMW@GMAIL.COM TO  
PROVIDE NAME, CONTACT INFO AND FOOD ALLERGIES.  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: TUESDAY MARCH 17,  
REGISTRATION FEE \$15, PAYABLE AT THE DOOR.  
SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE.