

The Reporter

April 2026

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



Pastor's Message

Each year, the arrival of Easter comes just as the world around us begins to wake up again. After months of cold, gray days, the earth slowly turns toward life. Buds appear on branches that looked lifeless only weeks before. Flowers push their way through the soil. The air grows warmer, and the days grow longer. Spring reminds us that renewal is woven into the very fabric of creation.

Easter carries that same promise of renewal for our hearts and our spirits. In the story of the resurrection, we see that what seemed finished was not truly the end. God brings life where we expected loss, hope where we expected despair, and new beginnings where we thought only endings remained.

This is the gift of Easter: an invitation to begin again. Just as the earth renews itself in the spring, we are invited to experience renewal in our own lives – renewed hope, renewed faith, and renewed love for one another. The resurrection reminds us that God is always at work bringing life out of what seems barren and possibility out of what feels closed off.

As the flowers bloom and the world turns green again, may we open our hearts to the new life Easter offers. The season of resurrection is not only something we celebrate – it is something we are invited to live.

FUMC in Worship

The Easter Season is here! Join us on Easter Sunday for worship as we celebrate the glory of the risen Christ. Our Easter theme is *Something New Grows Here*. Just as new growth enters the world each spring, Easter offers us a reminder to be on the lookout for growth happening in our lives, in our churches, and in our community. Join us as we see what new things are growing in our midst.

Sunday	Scripture	Sermon
April 5 Easter Sunday	John 20:1-18 Acts 10:34-43	New Life Breaks Through
April 12	John 20:19-31 1 Peter 1:3-9	Seeds of Faith
April 19	Luke 24:13-35 Acts 2:36-41	New Growth on the Journey
April 26	Acts 2:42-47 John 10:1-10	A Garden Called Community

New Zoom ID & Link for Sunday Worship

If you join our worship services via Zoom, please note that there is a new Meeting ID and a new link! The Meeting ID is 844 9992 4538 and the link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84499924538>.

The April Jingle – OHS After Prom

Each month, the “jingle” of loose change in the offering plate goes to a different organization or cause that serves the local community. In addition to putting loose coins in the plate, you can also give via check or cash – just write “Jingle” on the memo line or envelope.

The April will go to the Oneonta High School SADD After Prom, which provides students with safe activities after their prom.

Heating Update from the Trustees

The Heating Project at First United Methodist Church is really heating up! As you may have noticed, many of the internal blower units have been installed in the church, either in the ceiling, or along the walls. Piping within the ceilings and walls is moving forward as well.

The outside heat pump units have not been placed yet due to the cold weather. In a slight change of plans, we will now be looking to place the heat pump units in the back of the church in a trench. This plan was developed by both our contractor, Treffeisen, and our masonry contractor, Imhoff. This will allow us to hide the units below grade, providing additional protection from potential vandalism. We believe this will also meet the strict requirements of the City of Oneonta’s Historic Landmark commission.

As the weather improves, you should see some outdoor work being done. We are hoping the total project can be finished by the next heating season.

From the UMC Council of Bishops

We know that our hearts are heavy as we witness the mounting loss of life from the ongoing military strikes carried out by the United States and Israel, and from retaliatory strikes by Iran. Families are grieving the loss of loved ones, and entire communities are shaken by the weight of uncertainty, fear, and profound sorrow. Innocent civilians are caught in the crossfire of a widening conflict they did not choose.

Scripture reminds us that “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). As bishops of The United Methodist Church, we hold fast to this promise as we pray for all who have been killed, all who are injured, and all who now carry trauma and fear in the wake of this violence. We stand resolute in remembering the uncompromising call of Jesus: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). This calling is a summons to act with courage and with a steadfast commitment to honoring the dignity and life of every human being.

We urge leaders on every side to turn from the escalation of violence and seek paths toward justice, reconciliation, and lasting peace. We implore them to place the protection of innocent lives at the center of every decision.

As followers of Christ, let us be steadfast in prayer for those whose lives were taken that they may rest in God’s eternal peace. Let us pray for the wounded that healing and comfort may surround them. Let us pray for families and communities in mourning that they may find strength for the days ahead. And let us pray for leaders and nations that they may choose the path of peace over the path of destruction.

May God’s Spirit move among us and within us, guiding our hearts toward justice, compassion, and the hard, holy work of peacemaking. May we be instruments of Christ’s peace in a world yearning for healing.

In Christ's mercy,
Bishop Tracy S. Malone
President, Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Mary E. Ferguson Student Loan Fund Scholarship

The Mary E. Ferguson Student Loan Fund Scholarship of \$1,500 for the 2026-2027 academic year will be awarded to one student member of the First United Methodist Church of Oneonta who meets the fund’s terms, described below.

Mary E. Ferguson was a member of First United Methodist Church of Oneonta and a business education teacher at Oneonta High School for many years. She is remembered for her keen interest in her students and their careers beyond graduation. A bequest in her will established the Mary E. Ferguson Student Loan Fund at our church. Over many decades, this bequest has supported the education of doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, scientists, engineers, teachers, and social workers. Mary Ferguson would be pleased.

Scholarship applicants must be members of First United Methodist Church of Oneonta. Recipients who

apply for a second scholarship must have maintained a “B” average (or equivalent) to be eligible and are expected to provide the Fund committee an official report of grades at the end of each academic year. Successive scholarships are by application only and are not guaranteed.

The scholarship is administered by a committee of the FUMC Board of Trustees. Applications are available at the church office or on the church website. Applications are due June 1, 2026.

Questions? Please contact: Kelly Hansen, Trustee: rachelhansen@stny.rr.com.

United Women in Faith (UWF) Rummage & Book Sale

Thursday, May 7, 9 am - 6 pm

Friday, May 8, 9 am – 1 pm

(\$2 bag sale on Friday)


Rummage & Books may be brought in starting **April 7**.

You may bring your donations to the front of the stage in the Fellowship Hall.


If you have extenuating circumstances and **NEED** to donate sooner, please speak to Joyce Miller first.

Please only bring in clothing and household goods that are usable and in good condition.

Please put donations in a box that closes or a plastic bag to make them easier to pile.

 **YES!**

- Clean, usable clothing*
- Household goods
- Books (novels, non-fiction & audio books)
- CDs & DVDs
- Games, Puzzles & Toys

 **NO!**

- Broken /damaged appliances or household goods
- TVs
- Textbooks, Reader’s Digest condensed books, worn out books

* If textiles are clean, but ripped, stained, or just worn out, put them in the box in the hallway.

Volunteer Opportunities – Many Hands Make Light Work!

Setup Days	Sale Days
<u>Sunday 5/3</u>	<u>Thursday 5/7</u>
12:00 – 5:00 pm – Come & Go as you can	Shifts: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm
<u>Monday 5/4, Tuesday 5/5</u> <u>& Wednesday 5/6</u>	<u>Friday 5/8</u>
9:00 am until ?? We appreciate any time that fits into your schedules – one hour or all day. Lunch provided on Monday & Tuesday.	Shifts: 9:00 – 11:00 am; 11:00 am – 1:00 pm Cleanup: 1:00 – 3:30 pm
Contact Joyce Miller (607-434-4963 or millerumw@gmail.com) or say YES if she emails or calls you!	

Summer Camperships Available

Looking for summer plans? The Upper New York Conference Committee on Camp & Retreat Ministries (UNYCRM) offers four camps across New York State with around 200 programs for all ages and abilities – including family weekends, sleepover camps, and options for campers with special needs.

The camp closest to FUMC is **Sky Lake in Windsor** <https://skylakecenter.org/summer-camp/2024-summer-programs/>

Other camps include:

- **Skye Farm, Warrensburg:** <https://skyefarmcamp.org/>
- **Asbury, Silver Lake:** <https://asburyuny.org/>
- **Aldersgate, Greig:** <https://aldersgateny.org/summer-camp/summer-programs/>

After more than 75 years, Casowasco Camp and Retreat Center has permanently closed for more information see <https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/permanent-closing-of-casowasco>.

FUMC provides Camperships covering 50% of tuition

Apply online and submit your camp application and deposit receipt to FUMC Secretary Kieran Andrews by **Monday, June 8** (Email secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org or bring a hard copy to the church office).

Applications will be reviewed by the 2026 Committee: Nancy Bondurant-Couch, Kelly Hansen, and Marty Van Lenten Becker.

Questions or need help? Contact Marty at 607-435-8551 or marty.vlb@gmail.com.

7 Disruptive Church Trends for 2026

The Art of Leadership by Rev. Carey Nieuwhof

Christianity in America is still declining overall. At the same time, there are signs of spiritual renewal and resurgence.

1. Gen Z is Leading the Surge in Church Attendance
 - a. Young adults now attend more frequently than older generations
 - b. Many are searching for meaning beyond culture
2. Young Men Are Coming...Women Are Leaving
 - a. The first time the gender gap appeared so clearly.
 - b. Challenge to understand and address why women are disengaging
3. Evangelism is Getting Bolder and More Direct
 - a. Social media outreach
 - b. Street evangelism
 - c. Influencers sharing faith publicly
4. Discipleship Is Now Controlled By Algorithms
 - a. Social Media increasingly shapes beliefs and spiritual formation
 - b. Results in fragmented theology and less pastoral influence
 - c. Challenge for church to rethink how discipleship happens

- 5. The Church Has Yet to Brace for the AI Revolution
 - a. Will reshape communication, discipleship, and church operations

Key Takeaways: Future shaped by younger generations, digital and AI influence, leadership transitions

Biggest Tension: Encouraging signs of revival vs. continued cultural decline of Christianity

A GOOD DEATH: UNBOXED

An
Upper Catskill Natural
Burial Association +
FUMC Green Team
Event,
presented by
Death Doulas
Anne Ohman +
Anna Brown

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A GOOD DEATH?

It means crafting an end-of-life
experience that authentically reflects
Who You Are,
what you believe in
and the life you have lived.
To that end, there are so many choices
in death planning
that most people are not aware of.
Join us as we UNBOX it all with you.

SATURDAY APRIL 25 | 2 - 5 PM
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
66 CHESTNUT ST. ONEONTA

FREE EVENT | RSVP REQUIRED
[HTTPS://DEATHUNBOXED.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://deathunboxed.eventbrite.com)

Earth Festival 2026

This year’s Earth Festival will be **on Saturday, May 9 at SUNY Oneonta’s Chase Auditorium**. See <https://www.occainfo.org/earth-festival/> for more information. As in previous years, there will be workshops, talks, exhibits, and vendors.

There will again be a **Drive Through Drop Off Event from 10 am – 2 pm** at SUNY Oneonta. Every item we choose to divert from the landfill is a small act of stewardship that has a huge impact collectively for our environment. When we pause before tossing something in the trash, and instead choose to recycle, we reduce pollution, conserve resources, and protect the places we care about. Thoughtful disposal is one of the simplest ways our community can participate in conservation.

Items that will be accepted at this year's Drive Through Drop Off include:

- Paper Shredding
- Textiles
- Styrofoam
- Cork
- VHS, CD's Cassette Tapes
- Christmas lights
- Ink and Toner Cartridges
- Oral care waste: toothbrushes, floss containers & toothpaste tubes
- Coffee Pods

Don't see an item you were hoping to recycle? Visit Otsego County's "How Do I Get Rid Of" webpage (https://www.otsegocountyny.gov/departments/solid_waste/how_do_i_get_rid_of_.php) to learn how to recycle or dispose of other materials in our area.

From FUMC's Creation Care Team

At the February Church Council meeting, the Creation Care Team presented a Food & Water Watch petition backing NYS Senate and Assembly bills that would pause permits for new data centers and take steps to limit their impact on electricity and gas rates.

Data centers have been in both the national and local news lately. They consume massive amounts of both electricity and water, which are used to power both IT equipment and cooling systems which keep the hardware from overheating. Evaporative cooling systems in large data centers can consume up to 5 million gallons *per day*. Data centers are increasingly being built in both rural areas and communities of color, a trend driven by the need for vast, inexpensive land and proximity to power, yet resulting in significant environmental justice concerns. While tech companies often promise economic development, these facilities are frequently placed in marginalized communities that already bear the brunt of industrial pollution according to *Tech Policy Press*.

The United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline highlights issues with unsustainable practices harming ecosystems and calls for respect and protection of creation. The Book of Resolutions urges advocacy for clean water as a basic human right and demands policies ensuring community-first access and transparent governance.

Guided by these principles, Pastor Casey signed the petition supporting the NYS bills, which has been sent to Governor Hochul and state legislators. Petition link: <https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/NY-Data-Center-Moratorium-Letter.pdf>

Further reading:

Explained: Generative AI's Environmental Impact, MIT News
<https://news.mit.edu/2025/explained-generative-ai-environmental-impact-0117>

The Urgent Case Against Data Centers, *Food and Water Watch*
https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/RPT2_2602_DataCenterMoratorium.pdf

First United Methodist Church, Oneonta

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