

# The Reporter

## May 2026

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



### Pastor's Article

In recent days, many of us have seen headlines and images of a certain world leader portraying himself in overtly Christ-like ways. Whether meant as symbolism, satire, or self-promotion, it offers a striking opportunity for reflection, especially for those of us seeking to follow Jesus faithfully.

Because there is a profound difference between *seeing Christ in one another* and *placing ourselves in the role of Christ*.

At the heart of the Christian life is the call to recognize Christ in others. Jesus tells us that when we do things like feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, visit the sick, and care for the imprisoned, we are encountering Jesus. This kind of seeing requires humility. It asks us to look beyond the self, to honor the dignity of others, and to recognize that God is already at work in the people around us. When we see Christ in one another, we become more compassionate, more patient, more willing to listen. It draws us into a deeper relationship with God and with one another.

But there is a temptation that runs alongside this calling. It is the temptation to move from seeing Christ in others to *seeing ourselves as Christ for others*. That may sound subtle, but it changes everything.

When we begin to place ourselves in a messianic role, our posture shifts. Instead of humility, we take on a sense of superiority. Instead of serving, we seek to be seen. Instead of pointing towards God’s grace, we center ourselves as *the* source of wisdom, salvation, and truth.

This is nothing new. Throughout history, individuals and leaders have been tempted to elevate themselves in this way; casting themselves as saviors, redeemers, or uniquely chosen people. It can be compelling, even charismatic. But it is not the way of Christ.

Jesus never grasped for power or status. In fact, he consistently resisted it. He knelt to wash feet. He withdrew from crowds that wanted to make him king. He walked the path of self-giving love, not self-exalting glory. And perhaps most importantly, he always pointed beyond himself to the will and work of God.

The invitation before us is not to become Christ, but to follow Christ. Not to replace Christ, but to reflect Christ. And we do that best not by elevating ourselves, but by lowering ourselves in love.

So, when we encounter images of leaders casting themselves in Christ-like roles, we don’t need to respond with outrage as much as with clarity. We remember who Christ is, and who we are not. And then we return to the quiet, faithful work of recognizing Christ in the faces around us. Because the kingdom of God doesn’t grow through self-appointed messiahs. It grows wherever love, humility, and grace take root in ordinary lives.

## Worship

Eastertide continues through the first half of May as we journey together in our series, *Something New Grows Here*.

Looking ahead, don’t miss **Pentecost on May 24** and **Trinity Sunday on May 31**. On these two Sundays, we will begin a short worship series titled *God Poured Out*. Together, we will celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and remember our shared calling to participate in the unfolding of God’s kin-dom in the world.

Date	Scriptures	Sermon
May 3	John 14:1-14 1 Peter 2:2-10	Living Stones, Growing Faith
May 10	John 14:15-21 1 Peter 3:13-22	Growing Amid Adversity
May 17	Acts 1:6-14 John 17:1-11	Waiting for What Will Grow
May 24	Numbers 11:24-30 Acts 2:1-21	Spirit Unbound
May 31	Genesis 1:1-2:4a Matthew 28:16-20	Spirit in Partnership

## Faith, Doubt, and Good Questions

Summer will be here before we know it! Every summer I invite the congregation at FUMC to submit requests for sermon topics. Do you have something you've always wanted to know more about? Do you have that one nagging doubt that you've always wanted to hear a sermon on? [Submit your questions to Pastor Casey by May 31.](#)

You can email them to [pastor@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto:pastor@firstumc-oneonta.org), leave them in the box outside of the Pastor's office, or submit them on our website at <https://firstumc-oneonta.org/news/faith-doubt-and-good-questions>. Get your questions in, and then show up this summer for Faith, Doubt, and Good Questions.

## Celebration Sunday

Celebration Sunday is on June 21. We will be recognizing our graduates that day. If you know of any students who are members or constituents of FUMC who are moving from Elementary to Middle School; Middle School to High School; or graduating from High School, Trade School, or College, we want to know so we can recognize and celebrate their achievement.

Please contact the church office by June 13 ([secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto:secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org) or 607-432-4102) with their names, the school they graduated from, and the degree they are receiving if applicable. You can also share names of graduates with us online at <https://firstumc-oneonta.org/news/celebration-sunday-2026>. Pictures of graduating High School Seniors will be much appreciated so we may celebrate them during worship.

## The Great FUMC Clean Up

Church Council is looking for people interested in helping clean out unused and unneeded items from the church. This ad hoc committee will help clear out underutilized spaces of the church so that we can begin to imagine new ministries in old spaces. If you want to be part of the team, talk to Pastor Casey. Also, if there is something in this church that you want to make sure that we save, make sure to let the Pastor know. We want to honor our history while also making space for a bright and bold future.

## Upcoming Reporter Schedule & Deadlines

Our newsletter publication schedule will change for the summer – here's what you need to know!

- **June Reporter**   Deadline: Friday, May 15.
- **Summer Issue (July/August)**   Start thinking about this now! Deadline: Monday, June 15.
- **“Back to School” Issue (mid-August/September)**   Deadline: Friday, July 31.

Reporter submissions should be sent to Amy at [communications@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto:communications@firstumc-oneonta.org).

## Faith at the Table

This month's Faith at the Table dinner and conversation will be on **Thursday, May 7** at 6 p.m. at Bella Michael's. Our conversation will center around how we can be good stewards of creation.

Please RSVP to the church office ([secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto:secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org) or 607-432-4102) by Friday, May 1.

## Patrick Fund Helps Bring Children's Library to Oneonta

Marty Van Lenten Becker

In 2025, the Patrick Fund Committee granted the Huntington Memorial Library's request for \$15,000 for its new Children's Library branch. On the evening of April 10, I had the honor of representing FUMC at the grand opening at 14 Dietz Street.

The vibrant colors of the outdoors theme are striking. There's a very real-looking tree towards the back; on one of its branches sits a lovely Mama bird feeding a fun giant worm to her adorable chicks! There's plenty of kid-friendly seating beneath the tree's branches, as well as in the activity nook near the front door.

The well-stocked bookshelves are movable for varied activities. Atop the shelves along one wall is a row of birch trees whose trunks were created with pages from old books. The high tin ceiling typical of many downtown Oneonta buildings is painted sky blue, and the walls are covered with soundproofing "bricks" that eliminate the echoing that high ceilings can create.

The Patrick Fund gift is greatly appreciated by the library staff and is acknowledged in the front window. I enthusiastically recommend a visit to this wonderful space when you're downtown!



## **May Jingle – Helping Hands Needy Fund**

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 May Jingle will go to the Helping Hands Needy Fund, which is associated with FUMC’s Helping Hands Thrift Shop (<https://firstumc-oneonta.org/ministries/helping-hands-thrift-shop>). This fund is used to help those who need immediate assistance with a variety of situations. Examples of needs addressed include food, gas, bus passes, electric shutoff, fire recovery, etc. Funds are also used to purchase tents and sleeping bags for the unhoused. If you have any questions, you can contact Angela Eardley.

## **Miracle Sunday Special Offering – May 17**

Established by the 2012 General Conference, the Central Conference Theological Education Fund supports theological education outside the United States by investing in schools, courses of study, libraries and contextual resources, scholarships, faculty development, and innovative approaches to training, though its limited funding does not cover buildings or faculty salaries and has fluctuated with church budgets, including a significant reduction beginning in 2025.

To create long-term stability, the Council of Bishops launched an Endowment Fund in 2014 for theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, aiming to raise \$25 million to generate \$1 million annually in perpetuity, removing uncertainty tied to budget cycles.

Throughout Eastertide this year we have taken a moment in worship each week to hear a testimonial from our Central Conferences. On May 17, FUMC will be collecting an offering to support the Central Conference Theological Education Fund. Along with 30,000 other churches across the connection, we will have the opportunity to support the education of church leaders around the world.

## **Catskill Choral Society Concerts**

Friday, May 1 at 7:30 pm (reception to follow)

Saturday, May 2 at 3:00 pm

Catskill Choral Society is proud to present “A Night of Glory and Grace: Antonio Vivaldi’s “Gloria” and Maurice Durufle’s “Requiem” at 7:30 pm on May 1 and at 3:00 pm on May 2 at First United Methodist Church (66 Chestnut St., Oneonta). The Youth Choir will also perform.

Tickets may be purchased at Green Earth (4 Market St., Oneonta); Cooperstown Natural Food (61 Linden Ave.); or online at [www.catskillchoralsociety.org/tickets](http://www.catskillchoralsociety.org/tickets), as well as from any CCS member. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door. For more info go to [www.catskillchoralsociety.org](http://www.catskillchoralsociety.org) or telephone 607-386-5151.

## 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>.

In addition to the usual summer camp programs, there are also two opportunities for high school students to develop leadership skills at camp. Sky Lake is offering SNAP training for those interested in assisting with the Special Needs program. Skye Farm has the Voyagers leadership experience, which involves helping with younger campers and serving the local community.

### **FUMC provides Camperships covering 50% of tuition**

To apply for an FUMC campership, please submit a copy of your camp registration form and deposit receipt to secretary Kieran Andrews by **Monday, June 8** (Email [secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org](mailto: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. (Additional support may also be available through the FUMC United Women in Faith).

Have questions or need help? Contact Marty at 607-435-8551 or [marty.vlb@gmail.com](mailto:marty.vlb@gmail.com).

## Food for Thought

From Lewis Center, “The Outside-Inside Parallel of Church Leadership” by Johnathan Page.

Effective Church leadership must mirror itself in two directions at once:

- Outside: how the church engages the world (mission, outreach, influence)
- Inside: how the church cultivates its own people (discipleship, culture, health)

What a church tries to do externally must be intentionally formed internally – or it will eventually fail or become hollow. The central tension is that many churches push hard on mission and expansion, but neglect deep formation and discipleship. This results in shallow faith, burnout among leaders, fragile community structures and growth that isn’t sustainable.

## Leadership implications

1. Leaders must think in pairs.
2. Culture drives mission
3. Depth before scale (or alongside it)
4. Leadership reorientation

Bottom Line: You cannot build externally what you are not cultivating internally.

## Earth Festival

This year's Earth Festival will be **on Saturday, May 9 from 10 am – 3 pm at SUNY Oneonta's Chase Gymnasium**. As in previous years, there will be workshops, talks, exhibits, and vendors. The Drive Through Drop Off Event will run from 10 am – 2 pm. See <https://www.occainfo.org/earth-festival/> for more information.

## Creation Care Team

### SOME GOOD NEWS

**Breaking Down Forever Chemicals:** Rice University researchers developed an eco-friendly method to break down PFAS “forever chemicals” which persist for up to 1,000 years. Testing across river, tap, and wastewater yielded positive results, suggesting potential for municipal water treatment – critical given that over 200 million people are exposed to PFAS in their drinking water.

**Record-Breaking Species Discovery:** Scientists are identifying over 16,000 new species every year, the highest rate ever recorded. Researchers at the University of Arizona suggest there could be billions of undiscovered species. However, this progress is overshadowed by a human-driven mass extinction event – the sixth in 500 million years – making conservation more critical than ever.

**AI Fights Amazon Deforestation:** Brazilian nonprofit Imazon has deployed an AI prediction model to combat deforestation in the Amazon, home to over 10% of global biodiversity. Since its 2021 launch, the system has helped save 71% of high-risk forest areas, informed 4,400 legal cases, and uncovered 99% of illegal deforestation activity.

**Solar Energy's Rapid Rise:** Solar power met 61% of U.S. electricity demand growth in 2025, cementing its place as America's fastest-growing energy source. With costs dropping 96% over the past 40 years, solar continues to become more accessible and is projected to keep improving through technological advancements.

**Nitrogen Accelerates Reforestation:** University of Leeds researchers found that nitrogen-rich soils can double the regrowth speed of tropical forests. This discovery offers valuable guidance for global reforestation efforts, complementing initiatives like Brazil's Tropical Forest Forever Facility in the fight against climate change.

## Absentee Voting in New York State Explained

FUMC's Grey Matters

Did you know that if you have a *permanent* illness or physical disability you are eligible for a permanent absentee ballot in New York State? **No health care provider note is needed** to prove a disability.

To request an absentee ballot in Otsego County, call the Board of Elections (BOE) at 607-547-4247 or go to <https://elections.ny.gov/request-ballot>. In Delaware County, call the BOE at 607-832-5321 or go to [https://www.delcony.gov/departments/elec/absentee\\_voting.htm](https://www.delcony.gov/departments/elec/absentee_voting.htm).

If you have difficulty reading or seeing the ballot you can request a special accessibility ballot. For questions regarding accessible ballots, please contact Helen Hellmuth or Jennifer Mainello in the Accessibility Services & Training unit at (518) 207-4050 or [accessibility@elections.ny.gov](mailto:accessibility@elections.ny.gov). Or employees of your County BOE can help.

You can request a *temporary* absentee ballot if you are

- going to be traveling for election day
- temporarily disabled
- the primary caregiver of someone who is disabled
- a resident of a Veteran's Hospital
- incarcerated for a crime other than a felony

Applications for an absentee ballot by mail must be received by your county BOE no later than ten (10) days before the election. This year's New York State primary election is June 23 and the general election is November 3.

When mailing your completed ballot, the USPS recommends that voters allow enough time for ballots to be returned to the BOE, which is generally seven days ahead of the election. Voters who mail in their ballots on Election Day must be aware of posted collection times and that ballots deposited after the last collection time will not be postmarked until the following business day.

## UWF Rummage, Bake & Book Sale

Thursday, May 7 & Friday, May 8

Please see the flyer on the next page for details about the sale! A couple of extra notes:

Thanks to a surplus of donations, we are NOT accepting any more items for the Rummage Sale.

We WILL have a bake sale again on Thursday only. If you would like to contribute baked goods, we need cookies, brownies/bar cookies, cupcakes, pies, etc. Baked goods should be delivered by the afternoon of Wednesday, May 6 or by 8:30 am on Thursday, May 7.

# RUMMAGE, BAKE & BOOK SALE



THURSDAY, MAY 7,  
9 AM - 6 PM  
FRIDAY, MAY 8,  
9 AM - 1 PM

(\$3 BAG SALE ALL DAY FRIDAY)



**First United Methodist Church**  
**66 Chestnut St.**  
**Oneonta, N.Y.**

## First United Methodist Church, Oneonta

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Church Email .....secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org  
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Organist, Leslie Bauer ..... lgbauer144@gmail.com  
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