

The Reporter

October 2026

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



Pastor's Article

There is a particular kind of exhaustion that comes from living through a season of division. We feel it in our families, where certain topics are now off-limits at the dinner table. We feel it in our neighborhoods, where we increasingly sort ourselves by who agrees with us. We feel it scrolling through our phones, where outrage travels faster than truth and where the people on the other side of an issue start to look less like neighbors and more like enemies.

And now we feel it in a new, heavier way, as violence has again erupted in the Middle East. For many in our congregation, this is not an abstract headline. It touches family, ancestry, faith, and grief. It reopens wounds that never fully healed, and it reminds us that peace is fragile even in the places where prayer for peace has been offered longest and hardest.

It is into this moment that World Communion Sunday arrives.

World Communion Sunday began in 1936, born out of a Presbyterian congregation's desire to remind a fractured, pre-war world that Christians everywhere, in every nation and language, share one table. It has always been less a celebration of unity already achieved than an act of defiant hope — a stubborn refusal to let the divisiveness of the world have the final word.

That is exactly why it matters this year. World Communion Sunday was never meant for easy times. It was built for moments like this one, when the world feels torn and the instinct is to retreat into our own corners, our own tribes, our own certainties. The table does not ask us to pretend the divisions aren't real. It asks us to come to it anyway.

When we take the bread and the cup, we are joined to Christians praying in languages we do not speak, in countries whose politics we may not understand, in pews we will never sit in. Some of them are praying today for the safety of their children. Some are praying for enemies to lay down arms. Some are

praying, as we are, simply for the strength to keep loving their neighbor when love feels like the harder, less satisfying choice.

When you come to the table this World Communion Sunday, I invite you to remember that a space has been made for you — and that a space has also been made for everyone. This is not a small table. This is a table where the immigrant, the unhoused, the refugee, the war-weary, the broken, and the lost have all been invited. So come to the table. Encounter the expansive welcome of Christ. And then go out and expand that welcome in new and creative and wondrous ways.

Update from Stewardship Team



Starting at the end of this month, the Stewardship Team is inviting you to feel unburdened. That's a hard thing to ask. We've become so accustomed to the burdens we carry, the weight that presses down on us all the time, that becoming unburdened sounds impossible, maybe even naively idealistic.

As you think about your commitment to the ministry of First United Methodist Church this year, remember that the ministry we do together binds us to one another and, in the words of Paul, teaches us to "carry one another's burdens." Join us as we come together to share our burdens, and discover that in doing so, we become unburdened.

Worship

'I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me' (Matthew 25:40). This will be our guiding passage for the first three weeks of October. As we join together for worship, we'll be exploring what it means to see Christ in the face of the hungry and thirsting; welcome those who are strangers; and see the living presence of God in the sick and imprisoned. Then, starting on October 25, we'll shift to our Stewardship series, *Unburdened*, as we discover what happens when we carry one another's burdens.

Don't forget to come out and celebrate World Communion Sunday on October 4 and plan ahead for All Saints Day on November 1.

Sunday	Scripture	Sermon
October 4 World Communion Sunday	Isaiah 58:1-8 Matthew 25: 31-36	Seeing the Least
October 11	Isaiah 58:9-10 Matthew 25:34-40	Welcoming the Stranger
October 18	Isaiah 58:11-14 Matthew 25:41-46	Staying Present
October 25	Galatians 6:1-2 Matthew 11:28-30	You Don't Have to Carry This Alone

October Jingle – FSA Thanksgiving Baskets

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 October Jingle will go to the Family Service Association's (FSA) collection for Thanksgiving Baskets The FSA has been part of the area's human service community since 1909. It is a private, non-profit human service agency. Funding is provided by United Way of Delaware and Otsego Counties, as well as area foundations, churches, and contributions from area residents. The mission of the family service association is to support individual and family strengths and to assist area residents in meeting their own needs. The Association provides a variety of services, including a clothing program and emergency assistance (prescriptions, help with transportation, etc.). For more information, go to <https://fsaoneontany.org/>.

World Communion Sunday – October 4

World Communion Sunday is one of six churchwide Special Sundays designated to support ministries and causes important to the entire United Methodist Church. On this Sunday, United Methodists join Christians around the world in celebrating Holy Communion, remembering that we are one in Christ, no matter our background, language, or culture.

The special offering collected supports scholarships and leadership training for students from underrepresented communities – helping the Church become more inclusive and better equipped to serve. Half of the offering benefits World Communion scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students from the U.S. and other countries. The remainder provides grants to support training and leadership development for worldwide inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.

Important Note re: Email Issues

As you may have noticed, we have been having intermittent issues with our domain email addresses (ending in @firstumc-oneonta.org). For example, some people who have attempted to contact us have gotten a message that their email was blocked. We are working on resolving this situation.

In the meantime, if you send an email to Pastor Casey, Kieran (secretary), Rick/Carol (finance), or Amy (communications) and your message is rejected or blocked, please send it to our backup address at oneontafirstumc@gmail.com.

Food for Thought

from “Clues For All Churches From Research On Very Large Churches” by Lovett H. Weems

A. Common characteristics of effective large churches.

1. Strong clarity of mission and vision.
2. Internal outreach beyond existing members.
3. Excellence in welcoming and assimilating newcomers.
4. Leadership that develops staff and volunteers.
5. Willingness to adapt methods while remaining faithful to church’s mission.

B. Lessons for small congregation

1. Focus on unique strengths.
2. Build strong relationships.
3. Be intentional about inviting and discipling new people.
4. Develop leaders at every level.
5. Create systems appropriate to own size and context.

Key takeaways: most transferable lessons are not bigger budget, large buildings or more programs – they are clarity of mission, intentional evangelism, leadership development, and a system that helps people connect and grow.

Boomerangs

Fall greetings, Boomers! Believe it or not, it’s time to think about making Boomerangs for the Holiday Bazaar and Thanksgiving! We would like to add a few more workers to our Boomer Helpers List.

We work on these delicious peanut butter and chocolate confections in the church kitchen on Tuesdays from 9:00 am until approximately 12:00 pm: The dates for 2026 are: 10/6, 10/13, 10/20, & 10/27 for October. November dates are: 11/3 & 11/17. December dates are: 12/1 & 12/15. Thank you in advance for supporting this very worthwhile UWF mission project!

Pledge & Contribution Statements

Third quarter contribution statements (or a more concise update on your remaining pledge amount) are available upon request. If you would like to receive a summary of your 2026 giving to date, please contact Kieran Andrews (secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org or 607-432-4102).

Patrick Ministries

The Patrick Ministries Fund provides financial support, through grants, for activities or projects that enhance all ministries of the First United Methodist Church - Oneonta. The Patrick Committee has funded the following projects since January 2026:

- Faithful Citizen received support to create a documentary detailing the plight of the 10,000 Haitians living in Springfield, Ohio as their temporary protected status is revoked.
- EDD Adaptive Sports is using funds from the Patrick Ministries to offer free, adaptive sports programs for children and adults with disabilities.
- Otsego Refugee Resettlement Coalition welcomed two Afghan families and received support to assist with housing and other expenses.
- Open Doors (a Methodist faith community located in Franklin, NY) was granted funds to build an accessible ramp.
- SUNY Oneonta, together with Hartwick College, Huntington Memorial Library, and CANO, are hosting a Literature Festival to take place in the fall of 2027 with a series of literary events including author visits, readings, and writing workshops for the Oneonta region as a semester long celebration of literature, recognition of local writers, exposure to careers in writing and publishing, and generating interest in reading and writing among community members, particularly students and emerging writers. The funds provided by the Patrick Ministries in support of the Literature Festival have allowed the organizers to leverage matching funds through the NEA.
- Fabulous 4H'ers have been able to expand on a project started last year that included the cleaning and restoration of 12 headstones in the Halcott Cemetery in Halcott Center. The expansion allowed for cleaning and restoration of many more headstones in the Halcott Cemetery and also the Elk Creek Cemetery in Schenevus, which includes Doris Patrick's headstone, her parents' headstone, and her brother's headstone for a total of 50 headstones. Doris Patrick is the benefactor of the Patrick Ministries.
- Oneonta World of Learning (OWL) completed an energy audit with New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) to understand how OWL is currently using energy and to identify ways to reduce energy use and operating expenses. One measure identified as a priority was to replace three exterior doors with insulated doors. NYSERDA estimates that the infiltration rate at all three of the exterior doors will decrease by approximately 75%, eliminate the gaps that provide access to the space for insects, and result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 1,462 lbs CO₂e annually. Funds from the Patrick Ministries are covering the costs of replacing the doors.
- Huntington Memorial Library is receiving funds to purchase a new self-checkout system as the current one will become obsolete in October.
- The Patrick Ministries covered the cost of the recent repairs to the FUMC multi-use van.

Creation Care Team

As stated, in the preamble of the United Methodist, Social Principles, “**God calls us further to be stewards of creation, caring for the skies and waters, soil and plants, and all beings.**” In September, the Congregational Creation Care Team focused our Sunday service on our responsibility to be good stewards of water and will continue with that focus in coming months. We hope that the following will give you ideas of what you can do on a personal level to become water stewards:

Seek education and learning opportunities that will aid in water protection.

Experience water, i.e., swimming, boating, viewing waterfalls, rivers, lakes, and oceans, so it becomes a part of your cherished life that you strive to protect.

Engage in water protection, i.e., volunteering, educating self and others, donating, writing and calling legislators.

Report water pollution that you see or learn about.

Suggestions for simple commitments at Halloween time:

- Skip synthetic face paints
- Avoid plastic decorations
- Repurpose clothing to make costumes
- Compost your pumpkins
- Buy candy brands that commit to sustainable palm oil and cocoa sourcing
- Keep neighborhoods clean so refuse is not carried into storm drains.
- Plan kid-friendly green activities

Thought, creativity and preparation can go a long way in protecting our water.

First United Methodist Church, Oneonta

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