The Reporter
November 2026

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

Pastor's Article

By the time you are reading this, the midterm elections may very well have already happened. It is hard to ignore election seasons, with advertisements on our screens, in our ears, and on lawns and roadsides. The presence of this election has been impossible to miss.

There was an article in The New York Times that said this will be the most expensive election season in history, even more expensive than the 2024 Presidential election. Over ten billion dollars is being spent this year on the election.

That is a staggering amount of money, and an even more staggering amount of noise. Every dollar spent is meant to capture something: our attention, our worry, our hope, our anger. For months we have been invited, again and again, to feel urgently about things. Whatever the outcome, many of us arrive at the other side of an election season tired in a way that sleep doesn't quite fix. Some of us are celebrating. Some are grieving. Many are simply depleted, our nervous systems worn thin from being on alert.

If that is where you find yourself, I want to offer an invitation: stillness.

Stillness is not the same as disengagement or indifference. Caring about our communities and our country is part of living faithfully. But caring and constant agitation are not the same thing, and we cannot sustain the first without making room to rest from the second. Even the most committed among us need a place to set the weight down.

Many wisdom traditions speak to this. The psalmist writes, "Be still, and know." Contemplatives across the centuries have found that in quiet, something settles in us that no headline or hashtag can reach. Stillness reminds us that we are more than our opinions, our affiliations, or our reactions. We are beloved, breathing, and held by something larger than any ballot count.

Here are a few simple ways to practice in the days ahead:

Take a media fast. Choose a window of time, an evening, a day, or a full weekend, when you turn off the news, mute the notifications, and step away from social media. The results will still be there when you return. Your peace is worth protecting in the meantime.

Sit for five minutes. Find a chair, set a timer, and simply breathe. When your mind races to results, predictions, or arguments, notice the thought without judgment and gently return to your breath. You are not trying to empty your mind, only to give it somewhere to land.

Go outside. Walk without headphones. Notice the bare branches, the color of the sky, the sound of your own footsteps. The natural world carries on with a steadiness that can steady us in return.

Be present with someone. Share a meal or a cup of tea with a friend or neighbor, and agree together to talk about anything other than politics. Remembering what we share beneath our differences is its own kind of healing.

Pray or reflect in silence. Offer whatever is in your heart, whether hope, fear, gratitude, or exhaustion, and then listen. You do not have to fill the quiet with words.

Elections are a season, and seasons pass. The work of building a more just and compassionate world will continue, and we will need one another, rested and grounded, to do it. But first, let us breathe. Let us be still. Let us remember that beneath the noise, there is a deep peace that no amount of money can buy and no result can take away.

May you find that peace in the days ahead.

Honoring our Staff

November is staff appreciation month. Each of the 5 Sundays of November we will highlight two members of church staff, along with our college interns. The Staff Parish Relations Committee asks that congregation members consider giving to a special collection on November 1 to express our appreciation for the FUMC staff (any checks should be made out to *First United Methodist Church*, with *staff appreciation* on the memo line).

Worshipping Together

We begin November in the middle of our stewardship series, *Unburdened*, as we continue to discover how, within our faith community, we are invited to experience the unburdening of life. On November 15, we will celebrate Dedication Sunday, an opportunity for each of us to pledge our support to the church.

November 22 is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday of our liturgical year. Throughout the year, we have been exploring our faith through our United Methodist roots. Join us as we draw this year to a close and anticipate the wonder yet to come.

How does a weary world rejoice?

An Advent series in Luke's Gospel

This Advent, our worship series is inspired by the stories in Luke 1–3 and by the question, "How does a weary world rejoice?" Each week, we respond to this question with a statement inspired by our scriptures. These texts bring us into a space of possibility, and in them we find rhythms for rejoicing, even in difficult circumstances. Each weekly sub-theme is a "we" statement because joy is deeply relational and rooted in the fact that we belong to God. As we move through the series, we hope to create space to acknowledge the weariness of our world while celebrating God's closeness with great joy.

So this Advent, we will hold space for both our weariness and our joy. We will seek a "thrill of hope" in our hurting world. We will welcome joy, even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice.

The Last Time I Saw God

A Poem by Rev. Sara Speed / A Sanctified Art LLC / sanctifiedart.org

The last time I saw God face to face
I was looking at a bed of tulips.
God was every color of red.
I was merely a mortal,
in awe of it all.

The time before that,
we were tying back the curtains,
looking for stars.
God was the deepest purple
and the brightest light.

The time before that,
the city was soft with snow.
God was the quiet
that tucked us all in.

And in between these small gifts there were
newborn babies,
and sapling trees,
homemade bread,
the sound of a church
singing on Sunday.
…
Why, yes, we are lucky.
We are more than lucky
for the moments when
delight and awe
unzip the weight
we carry around.

Update from the Stewardship Team

The Stewardship Team has set a pledge goal of $186,300 to support the 2027 budget. We know that sounds like a lot, but this number isn't just for heating bills, insurance, staff wages, and keeping the roof from leaking. It represents all the ministry that flows from our church into the community and the world. Your giving supports our striving for justice in an unjust world. It supports our work of healing the hurting and offering hope to the despairing. Your giving changes real lives, right here in Oneonta and beyond.

There are two dates we want you to know about. First, on Sunday, November 8, we will present the 2027 budget after the 10:30 worship service. If you have questions about how the church plans to fund ministry in 2027, please join us. Second, on Sunday, November 15, we will receive pledge cards during worship. We will be mailing 2027 pledge cards shortly. Please take some time to pray about how you might financially support the ministry of our church, and then plan to bring your card to worship on the 15th. If you don't receive a card in the mail, don't worry; we will have extras in the sanctuary. Thank you for your continued dedication to the mission and ministry of First United Methodist Church, today and for many years to come.

Hanging of the Greens

You are invited to stay after worship on Sunday, November 22, to help decorate our sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. We have such a beautiful church, and the closer we get to Christmas, the more beautiful it becomes. Join us for festivities, children's activities, fellowship, and decorating as we come together to make First United Methodist Church reflect the beauty of the season.

An Update About HVAC Work

In case you missed it, contractors have been hard at work updating and modernizing the way we heat (and cool) our church, and the end is in sight! If you've been in church recently, you've probably noticed that the heat is working. There is still some work to be done over the next few months, but the new system is up and running. It reduces the amount of fossil fuels we use to heat the building and gives us more control over the temperature in individual rooms.

Thank you for your patience with the disruptions to our day-to-day activities over the past few months, and for your continued generous support of the work we do to care for our church home.

Digging Deeper

Currently we are hearing that we are in a "Bonhoeffer moment". Digging Deeper will be viewing a video and discussing a 6-part part series entitled *Reading the Bible with Bonhoeffer: A Study in Discipleship and Courage*. We will start the series November 1, break for an Advent series, and then continue in January. We meet in the Art Room at 9:25 am on Sundays.

Creation Care Team

October is known to bring us beautiful fall foliage in the Northeast. Many tourists travel to this area to experience the wondrous sites. Unfortunately, however, fall foliage is another of the numerous ecosystems that climate change is affecting. Recent news broadcasts are questioning the future of our beautiful fall leaves.

Research shows that "climate change is impacting when leaves fall along with the vibrancy of their colors" (Time.com), as well as the length of the peak of those vibrant colors.

Because trees/leaves follow a chemical process to achieve coloration, we will continue to see beautiful hues; however, because onset of the process is largely dependent on temperature and rain, climate change will become a factor. Coloration will still be bright but will be brief. This can be disastrous to economies in places such as upstate New York. Brief coloration will bring brief tourism.

So, what can we do? We must continue to promote renewable energy, support forest conservation, water trees during drought, use mulch to retain soil moisture and keep root systems cool, and plant diverse, native canopy trees, such as sugar maples and oaks. Finally, we must continue to reduce our household carbon footprint, i.e., lower your thermostat, add weatherstripping and caulking to reduce air drafts, insulate your attic and basement, use energy efficient led bulbs, reduce food waste.

If you enjoyed this year's fall foliage, consider what you can do to protect its future.

November Jingle – Warming Station

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 November Jingle will go to the Warming Station. The Oneonta warming station provides shelter for individuals who are unhoused on Code Blue-qualifying nights from November – March when the temperature or wind chill falls below 32 degrees.

Native American Ministries Special Offering – November 8

Native American Ministries Sunday is one of six churchwide Special Sundays designated to support ministries and causes important to the entire United Methodist Church. On this day, we come together to honor and support Indigenous peoples and communities. It's a day to recognize the rich gifts, cultures, and contributions of Native Americans to both society and the Church.

Half of the funds collected remain in our annual conference to support local Native American ministries through the work of the Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM). A quarter of the money funds scholarships for Native American students pursuing ordained or licensed ministry at approved theological schools. The remaining funds support programs that develop new Native ministries, including mentoring, economic empowerment, and leadership development initiatives.

Collection of Shoeboxes for Red Bird Mission in Kentucky

We are once again looking for people to fill a clear plastic shoe box for either an adult or a child which will be sent to the Red Bird Mission in Kentucky. Like last year, the "shoe box" and item lists will be available through the church office or at the Sunday worship service.

Filled boxes need to be returned by **Sunday morning, November 8.** If you return your box during the week, bring it to the church office (Tuesday – Friday 9 am – 12 pm).

Please indicate whether the box is for an adult or child. We have labels to put on them. When you take a box, please sign your name and phone number on the sheet provided.

The Mission also needs NEW pillows, NEW sheet sets and blankets for full and twin sized beds, and NEW bath towels.

Questions? Contact Joyce at 607-432-8751 or millerumw@gmail.com. Thanks for being the hands & feet of Jesus.

RED BIRD MISSION – Adult Shoebox

Note: All items should be FULL size and in their original containers, as purchased. To help items fit in the box, purchase flat bottles of shampoo, hand lotion, etc. & small round cans of shaving cream.

- Comb and/or Hair Brush
- Shampoo
- Hand Lotion
- Deodorant
- Toothbrush and Toothpaste
- Chap Stick
- Full size Bar of Soap
- Washcloth
- Disposable Razors
- Shaving Cream
- Nail Care Items
- Socks
- Work gloves or Mittens
- Winter Stocking Hat or Scarf

Labels for Shoeboxes
Please Check One:

Man __ **Woman** __

Girl Age 2-4 __ 5-9 __ 10-14 __

Boy Age 2-4 __ 5-9 __ 10-14 __

RED BIRD MISSION – Child's Shoebox

Note: All items should be FULL size and in their original containers, as purchased. To help items fit in the box, purchase flat bottles of shampoo, hand lotion, etc.

- Comb and/or Hair Brush
- Shampoo
- Hand Lotion
- Child's Toothbrush and Toothpaste
- Chap Stick
- Full size Bar of Soap
- Washcloth
- Socks
- Mittens
- Winter Hat
- Small Flashlight (provided)
- 2 or 3 small toys
- 2 or 3 school items

Christian bookmarks, wristbands, and other spiritual items are also appreciated.

Labels for Shoeboxes
Please Check One:

Man __ **Woman** __

Girl Age 2-4 __ 5-9 __ 10-14 __

Boy Age 2-4 __ 5-9 __ 10-14 __

2026 BAZAAR
Saturday, November 14, 9 am-3 pm

THIS YEAR'S BOOTHS:

Jewels, Gems & Boutique: Chair, Angela Eardley Please bring your jewelry donations to the church office as soon as possible.

Antiques & Christmas Closet: Chair, Helen Rees Wanted: items good for re-gifting, linens, good used Christmas items and decorations, artwork, like-new puzzles, unusual glassware, and other unique items. Donations may be left on the front of the stage until Wednesday, November 11, marked "Christmas Closet."

Naturally Yours: Co-Chairs, Sharry Strait-Carey & Marty Becker Try UWF's natural personal care products, soaps, and shampoo bars. Also tick spray and homemade dog biscuits.

Crafts: Chair, Sue Whitney We're looking for both usual and unique craft items. Please bring items to the church office by Wednesday, November 11. We'd love to have any house plants that you may be splitting. You'll also find canned goods and quality Rada kitchen knives and utensils in this area.

The Café: Co-Chairs Kelly Hansen & Marty Becker Back by popular demand, there will be both eat-in and takeout options of delicious soups, chili, and sliced homemade pies. Marty will be soliciting pies again this year. Thanks in advance for saying Yes!

Cookies and Other Treats: Co-Chairs Rosalie Higgins & Adelaide Van Buren

Bakers! Please donate one batch (or more!) of your favorite small, decorated holiday cookies, which will be sold by the pound. Sweet breads and other baked goods are also needed.

For health reasons, please bag your cookies in clear snack and/or sandwich-size bags; 4-6 cookies per bag will enable folks to purchase a variety of cookies. Please label the bags with the name of the cookie and include any possible food allergens (e.g. contain nuts).

Bring your bagged and labeled cookies to the booth between 9 am and 5 pm on Friday, November 13. Questions? Contact Rosalie at 607-287-8930 or email her at Rosalie.higgins58@gmail.com.

The booth Chairs will be contacting helpers. If you want to work at a booth or you'd prefer to prepare lunch in the kitchen, tell a booth Chair. Or call or text Marty at 607-435-8551. It's a fun, festive day! We welcome all returning hands and new ones, too!

Don't forget to come shop and have lunch on November 14! Bring a friend!

P.S. Needed: Reusable bags, all sizes (TJ Maxx, Bath & Body Works, etc.; leave on the stage)

Oneonta Interfaith Thanksgiving Service
Tuesday, November 25 at 7:30 pm
St. Mary's Catholic Church

The Oneonta Community Interfaith Thanksgiving Service will be held at the Parish of St. Mary, 39 Walnut St., on Tuesday, November 24, at 7:30 p.m.

Father Christopher Welch of the Parish of St. Mary will host the service. Dan Buttermann, mayor of the City of Oneonta, will deliver remarks. The message will be given by Father Ivan Ruiz-Swartz, rector of St. James' Episcopal Church of Oneonta. Other participants will include organist John Jurgensen, Roger Chauveron, Jishin Liz Robson, Deacon Paul Cerosaletti, and Rev. Randolph Palada.

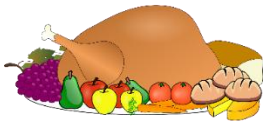
An interfaith choir will sing "Now Thank We All Our God" by Michael Praetorius, led by Carolyn McMaster. All are welcome to sing in the choir, with a rehearsal at 6:30 p.m. To indicate that you wish to sing with the choir, please send your contact information to organist John Jurgensen (johnjmouse@gmail.com) by November 3; the music and a practice recording will be sent to you. Choir robes will not be worn.

Donations of money and non-perishable food are requested. Note that no collection plate will be passed – place monetary donations in the donation box at the entrance to the sanctuary, with checks made out to the *Oneonta Interfaith Committee*. Donated food and money will be distributed to the Oneonta food pantries: Your Safe Haven, St. Mary's, and the Salvation Army.

A reception with refreshments will follow the service.

Thanksgiving Community Dinner
Thursday, November 26, 2026
at the Elks Lodge

Help Us Help Others…



Saint Mary's Catholic Church, which sponsors the annual Thanksgiving Community Dinner, invites you to join with us. We are planning for 1,000 meals to be prepared. (**We are unable** to accept any homemade food donations such as pies and cakes.)

- **Meals** will be dine-in, take-out, and delivery for the **homebound** this year.
- **Dinner Pick-up:** 12 Noon to 1:00 pm at Your Safe Haven, 18 Elm St., Oneonta.
- **Dine-in:** 12:30 to 2:00 pm at the **Elks Lodge**, 84 Chestnut St., Oneonta.

Monetary donations: Checks made payable to *St. Mary's Catholic Church* with *Thanksgiving* on memo line may be sent to St Mary's Catholic Church, 39 Walnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820.

Volunteers:

- Work 2-hour shifts.
- Will be assigned one of three places to help (Your Safe Haven, First United Methodist Church, or the Elks Lodge).

Volunteers for food preparation, delivery, take-out, dine-in service, and cleanup will be needed on November 23, 24 & 25 starting at 9:00 am and going to approximately 3:00 pm. Thanksgiving Day volunteers will be needed from 8:00 am through about 4:00 pm. Volunteers need to sign up in advance, not just show up, which helps us be more organized and efficient on Thanksgiving Day.

Drivers are needed for deliveries on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 26, starting at 10:30 am behind the Elks Lodge. Younger children may accompany drivers of the meals being delivered.

To volunteer: Contact Cindy Korb by Friday, November 20 at thanksgivingvolunteer2026@gmail.com or by phone at 607-267-0539.

To reserve a dinner – delivered or take-out: Contact Deb Bruce by Monday, November 23 at 607-433-0356 or oneontathanksgiving@gmail.com.

For general questions: Contact John Korb at 607-267-0527 or geog13@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support and cooperation in this community event.

Deadline for the December Reporter: November 10

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the deadline to submit articles for the December Reporter is **Tuesday, November 10**. Since we are still having some issues receiving messages (especially from Gmail accounts), please send your content to BOTH communications@firstumc-oneonta.org and oneontafirstumc@gmail.com. Thank you!

How is Online Worship Working?

from Lovett Weems (submitted by Margaret Parish)

Online worship is here to stay. It should be treated as a genuine worship experience, not simply an in-person service transmitted over the internet.

A. Learn to use it well
   1. Clear audio and video quality
   2. Smooth transitions between parts of the service-no unnecessary pauses or inactivity
   3. Hold attention without distraction.

B. Online participants deserve same welcome and attention as those in the sanctuary.
   1. Start on time
   2. Invite participation of viewers-a volunteer to engage online worshipers.
   3. Make materials mentioned available to those online.
   4. Avoid insider language.
   5. Acknowledge on-line worshipers.

Online worship should be approached with the same intentional planning, pastoral care, and commitment as in-person worship.

Alternative giving

This year's alternative giving will highlight 3 opportunities:

- Otsego Refugee Resettlement Coalition
- UMCOR Disaster Relief
- Cindy's Bundle of Love (for Angela's use through the Thrift shop to provide the unhoused with sleeping bags, tents, boots, food)

Several other opportunities for giving with also be offered including Caring Connections, etc. Cards will be available after each service starting Sunday November 29 for a total of 4 weeks. They will also be available in the church office during the week.

Oneonta Concert Association Concert: Richard Fountain, solo pianist

Sunday, November 8 at 3:00 pm (at First UMC)
Adults $30 ($35 at the door) | Students $15

Fountain is one of very few pianists to perform the complete cycle of Franz Liszt's monumental transcriptions of Beethoven's nine symphonies. His solo and concerto repertoire highlights American music from all eras, and he is also devoted to the poetic and religious music of Liszt.

For more information or to purchase tickets online, go to https://oneontaconcertassociation.org/.

First United Methodist Church, Oneonta

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Church Email .....secretary@firstumc-oneonta.org
.....oneontafirstumc@gmail.com

Pastor, Casey Bradley ..... pastor@firstumc-oneonta.org

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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

Nursery Care & Hospitality Assistant..... Danielle DeLuca

Volunteer Caretaker ..... Christopher Brashear