



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1715

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 3      APRIL 2009

## **BOB LOWENTHAL TO BE APPOINTED PASTOR**

At the morning worship service on Sunday, March 15, 2009, our Lay Leader Kris Johnson announced that, at the meeting of Troy Annual Conference this June, we expect Bishop Susan W. Hassinger to appoint the Reverend Bob Lowenthal as pastor of First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush effective at the end of June. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee met with District Superintendent Jim Fenimore and Reverend Lowenthal and his wife Joy on Sunday afternoon, March 8, and we agreed that this would be a good appointment for our church.

Bob finished his high school education at Mayfield High School (near Gloversville) in 1965. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from SUNY Cortland in 1970. Following a very brief stint in the US Army, Bob entered Drew Theological School in September 1972. He earned his Master of Divinity degree in 1975.

Bob started his pastoral ministry as a supply pastor at Easton UMC from 1971-1972. Following seminary he served Stephentown Federated and Petersburg UMC from 1975-1980. From there he went to Corinth UMC from 1980-1986 and to Saranac Lake UMC 1986-1995 and Bloomingdale UMC 1992-1995. His ministry then took him over to Vermont and Essex Junction UMC 1995-2001 followed by an appointment to be the District Superintendent of Green Mountain District from 2001 to the present time.

In addition to the local churches he has served, Bob has been active in a number of District, Annual Conference and Jurisdictional Conference areas including: Board of Ordained Ministry, Administrative Services Council, District Committee on Ordained Ministry, Conference and District youth council leadership, North East Jurisdictional Korean Mission Council. Bob has been a spiritual leader for the Walk to Emmaus and has been a counselor and camp director at Skye Farm.

Bob married Joy Bass in 1969 and they are the parents of three grown sons, Benjamin, Andrew and Abram. He has three brothers and one sister. Bob's mom makes her home in Fayetteville GA and Joy's mom has her home with Bob and Joy. Joy is a licensed Local Pastor in The United Methodist Church but is not currently serving a local church.

When Bob meet with the SPRC he shared a list of some of his "foundational" lines of scripture including Micah 6:8 and some thoughts he called, "Recent learning's about Church that resonate in me these days". It seems reasonable that we will hear more of these lists in the future.

Outside of his pastoral responsibilities Bob has a list of interests including: fishing, golf, racket ball, working out, music (guitar, singing), boat building, cooking, and family.

The SPRC looks forward to working with all in our church family as we prepare for the transition to a new pastor of our congregation.

## HOLY WEEK

Please join us this year as we journey through Holy Week with some special events that will help us remember the sacrifice and the eventual triumph of Easter.



### Palm Sunday – April 5, 9:30am

Begin this week celebrating the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Within this service we will both rejoice in and remember what it means to be a disciple as we enter in thanksgiving, celebrate communion, and look to the week ahead through scripture and the stripping of the altar.

### Holy Thursday – April 9, 7pm

Come and participate in a Seder Meal with a Christian emphasis.

### Prayer Vigil – April 9-10

Following the Seder Meal, the Sanctuary will be open all night for those who wish to come and pray and keep a silent vigil. The sign-up sheet is in the entry way where you may sign up for a time slot. (You may choose 2 and stay for an hour if you like.)

### Good Friday Meditation – April 10, 3pm

At the conclusion of the Prayer Vigil, we will have a time of prayer and meditation.

## EASTER DAY

### Easter Sunrise Service – April 12, 6am

It begins in the Sanctuary with music and images and then moves to the courtyard to greet the sunrise. A continental breakfast follows.

### Easter Service – April 12, 9:30 and 11am

Come and celebrate the Risen Christ!



# EASTER

### Good Friday at St. Mary's



The youth at St. Mary's Church in East Greenbush, located across from K-Mart on Route 9 & 20 will present, "Stations of the Cross". An enactment of what happened to Jesus on his way to Calvary. There will be a reading of scripture, with commentary following. Dominic Hunt (Floyd Hunt's son) plays the part of Simon who carried the cross when Jesus fell. The church service starts at 12 noon, on April 10th. Everyone is invited.

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

### PALM SUNDAY

The Sunday School is celebrating Holy Week with a special day on Palm Sunday. There will be waving palms, singing, crafts, story telling, and a mock Last Supper. We hope to see all the youth there!

### EASTER EGG HUNT

The Education Committee will be hosting an Easter Egg hunt at the church at 11:00 on Saturday, April 11th. Babies through children in 5th grade are encouraged to join in the fun! Youth 6th grade -Seniors can show up at 9:30 to help stuff and hide the eggs. We hope to see you there!



### BAKE SALE

Our last Sunday School Missions bake sale of the year will be on Sunday April 26th. We are asking the following grades to donate a baked good to the sale; 2nd , 4th, 5th, 6th & 7th grades. The items will be available during coffee hour!

## OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO THE YOUTH

### United Methodist Youth Fellowship News

The youth had a thrilling time at Albany Indoor Rock Gym (A.I.R) on March 8. They worked as a team tunneling through dark caves to find their way to overlooks, rope nets and a zip line. A few of the youth even challenged their courage and strength by rock climbing and belaying. It was a perfect way to get out of the cold and have some fun.

In the beginning of March, Amber Biechman had the chance to take part in Chrysalis, a 3-day program for youth. The "Flight" is designed to help teens discover and build their relationship with God, their peers, and their church. Fellowship, discussion, worship, prayer, self-expression and more are part of this wonderful program. Amber is so grateful she was given this opportunity and would like to thank the congregation for their continued support.

A number of the youth are gearing up for the upcoming 4WORD conference in Syracuse on April 24-26. We are meeting at the McKownville UMC (1565 Western Avenue, Albany) at 4pm on Friday and will return there at 4pm Sunday. Due to this event there will be no meeting on April 26.

The youth is busy planning for many upcoming events including the spring mission program, "Alex's Lemonade Stand." They are raising money for childhood cancer research during the UMW's spring thrift sale on May 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. In addition, they are preparing to help during the spring fair on May 9.

All Jr. and Sr. high youth mark your calendar! **APRIL 5 AT 1:30** we are meeting at the church to go to **ZERO GRAVITY** for some exciting games of **LASER TAG**. Don't miss it! Please contact Laura [laurac104@yahoo.com](mailto:laurac104@yahoo.com) or Rachel [rgiso@fairpoint.net](mailto:rgiso@fairpoint.net) if you are interested in attending. The cost is \$10. This includes a snack after the fun.

There will be no meeting on April 12. Have a wonderful Easter!  
April 19 is an SOS dinner. All are invited to help get ready for Alex's Lemonade Stand.

Finally, the youth would like to ask for prayers for their leader Laura Clark as she will be taking some time away this spring to recover from surgery. We will miss you Laura and pray for God's blessings upon you.

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Church Women United – May Friendship Day – Friday May 1, 2009, will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Castleton. Registration is \$1.00 and it begins at 10am. Worship service begins at 10:30am. It will be led by the women of Church of the Holy Spirit. The Least Coin offering will be received during the worship service. It is hoped all churches will continue collecting the "Least Coin" funds in the future. Lunch, Meeting and Memorial service will follow the service. Women attending from our church are scheduled to bring a salad. Place settings and beverage will be supplied by the host church. The afternoon program will feature Nancy Townley and Marilyn House.

This will be the last May Friendship Day that will be celebrated in our area. It was voted at the November meeting that the Rensselaer Southern Tier Unit will disband at the end of "May friendship Day", May 1, 2009. We urge all women that have attended during the years we have gathered together come and celebrate our last time together.

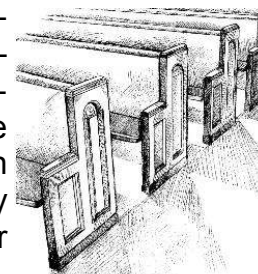
-- Ruth Ostrander, Key Woman

## CHURCH NEWS

### Report from Charge Conference

On March 11, the 2008 annual charge conference took place, with District Superintendent Jim Fenimore presiding. At this meeting, elections are held for the standing commissions and committees of the church and the Board of Trustees. Also presented are membership figures, the annual church budget, and reports from committees and commissions on their work in the previous year. If you are interested in reading these reports, look for the final copy of Annual Reports 2008, soon to appear on the table in the foyer.

Following the business portion of the meeting, Rev. Fenimore led a discussion after presenting facts about church attendance in the US and in the Northeast. Some jarring facts: In 2000, only 15.5% of the population in New York attended a Christian church on any given weekend; for the Capital District the figure was 18 – 20%. Of those, roughly 10% were Methodists. In our church, although the membership on record has increased slightly, average attendance at Sunday service has declined from 212 in 1997 to 160 in 2006. These data mirror other Northeastern states. In the South and Southwest, churches are seeing an increase in membership and attendance. It is not clear why these trends have occurred.



View over the Pews

Rev. Fenimore suggested several ways to tackle our local situation, including the Administrative Council discussing at its monthly meeting possible solutions, creative and innovative methods of service, building on our strengths. One interesting factoid he called the "80% rule", meaning that when the sanctuary and parking lot are 80% filled, there will be no more growth until either the sanctuary/parking lot are enlarged, or a congregation offers 2 services. He reminded us that growing the congregation and creating disciples is our mission, with the church being a real community

He also spoke about the new annual conference to which our church will belong, starting in 2010, which will include all of upstate New York; areas south of Chatham will be part of the Metropolitan New York Conference. Vermont will become part of the New England Conference. He reminded us that our mission as United Methodists is to serve all the people of our communities, and challenged us to not become ingrown, but outreaching.

## MORE CHURCH NEWS

### Thrift Sale Notes

The Spring Thrift Sale will be held Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 5-8pm and Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 10am to 1pm. Saturday is Bag Day. You can bring all the wonderful items in beginning Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup> after noon through Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 8pm. Please remember, NO construction materials. Any questions, call the church office and leave a message. There is a sign-up sheet for working posted in the church foyer.

### From Stewardship & Finance

Over the past few years, the amount of pledges that we receive has been steadily going down - while on the expenditure side, numbers keep going up. Our Administrative Council has frequently passed a deficit budget. The Stewardship & Finance Committee introduced some fund raising ideas this year in an attempt to close the gap in the budget. We had a Krause candy sale in March which earned us \$450 but our deficit is \$10,489. The next event planned for fund raising will be a Spring Fair on May 9th. This is a project that needs the help of our entire congregation. The members of S & F cannot do this without lots of help!! Please look at your busy schedules and find a few hours that you can give to your church to make the Spring Fair a successful event.

As of now, we especially need people to work on the day of the fair - helpers in the various booths and/or the kitchen. You can sign up to help in the morning when we will be setting up or during the afternoon to work in a booth or the snack bar. We also need baked goods to sell in the Snack Bar during the afternoon. Please sign up on the list in the foyer of the church or call the person who is coordinating the area where you would like to volunteer.

Food Coordinator: Aleta Schweigert - 477-9120  
 Silent Auction Coordinator: Matt Ostiguy 477-7181  
 Kids booth Coordinator: Erin Sterantino - 732-4958  
 Plant Sale Coordinator : Linda Gronostaj - 479-5702



### SOS Schedules A Photographer

SOS will have Gerald Lemmo, Photographer give a slide show of birds at 5:00 p.m. on April 19, giving us a beautiful look at nature. Gerry Lemmo is a world traveler who has many subjects of nature, and we at First United Methodist Church will have the opportunity to watch a great hour of slides, from a very professional photographer! Pot Luck supper to follow a 6:00 p.m. We encourage donations to the SOS staff who is presenting this our guest.

### Paper or Plastic? BYOB

That's Bring Your Own BAG. We know that both paper and plastic bags create harmful effects on our environment. Reusable cloth bags seem to be the solution. Round up all those tote bags around the house, and stick them on the front seat of your car so they're handy when you do your shopping. Stores, including Price Chopper in East Greenbush are also beginning to offer discounts for bringing in your own shopping bags.

This monthly "envirotip" is being brought to you by our newly-formed Ecoteam, whose members are embarking on a Low Carbon Diet, seeking to reduce our CO2 emissions. If the bad news is that individual Americans are a major part of the problem, the good news is that we can also be a major part of the solution. By making specific, targeted changes to actions we already take every day, we can significantly reduce our carbon footprint.

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## FROM THE TRUSTEES — PARSONAGE INFORMATION

At this past December's Administrative Council meeting the Trustees requested that the Council consider commencing action to sell the current parsonage and either purchase a different parsonage or offer a housing allowance. In response, the Administrative Council established an Ad Hoc Committee, comprised of ten members, to consider what action should be taken.

The committee met and reviewed the information accumulated by the Trustees concerning the costs involved in rehabilitating the current parsonage and whether or not, based on the current market value of the parsonage plus those costs, if it made sense to invest the funds in the current parsonage. At subsequent meetings it explored the availability of other homes in the East Greenbush market as well as what would be an acceptable housing allowance should that alternative be recommended.

At its March meeting the Administrative Council received the Committee's report and recommendations. They are:

1. The present parsonage should be placed on the market and sold.
2. The church should immediately look to acquiring a new parsonage.

That the Church should review the question of how it provides housing for its pastor within the next ten years.

The Administrative Council thanked the Committee for its efforts and then voted in the affirmative to accept its recommendations. It then agreed to call for a Church Conference to begin the process of undertaking this effort.

It should be understood that this is a multi-step process. The first step will be a Church Conference, scheduled to occur on April 15, 2009. At this meeting the Trustees will request the authorization to execute documents in order to list the current parsonage for sale as well as the authority to enter into conditional sales and purchase contracts to sell and purchase the old and new parsonage. In order to finalize either a sale or purchase, additional Church Conferences will be called to present information to the congregation regarding the proposed transactions and to receive the authorization to proceed.

A committee has been formed to commence looking for a new parsonage, should the approval to do so be received. Its members are Mary Smith, Nancy Keenholts, Sue Lemka and Noreen Haupt. If you are aware of a property which you think we should consider please feel free to mention it to them. Also, should you be interested in exploring acquiring the present parsonage (a handyman's special) please let any of the Trustees know.

Lastly, the Ad Hoc Committee report is available to all; copies can be picked up in the Church Office.

## CHAIR LIFT UPDATE

To date, \$1,300.00 has been raised in support of the purchase of the chair lifts to the Choir loft. Our goal is to raise \$4,800.00. We're on our way! Many thanks to those who have contributed.

*--The Choir and Trustees*

## PRAYER VIGIL — STARTS MAUNDY THURSDAY

Our Holy Week prayer vigil begins following the Seder meal on Thursday evening and continues through Good Friday 3pm. At that time there will be a brief service of meditation for all who wish to attend. The sign-up sheet in the church foyer still has many empty blocks waiting for women, men, youth, families, even a few friends together who will to select a one half-hour block of time to come to church to continue the vigil. There is also a special opportunity for the men of the church to volunteer to be in the church (Youth Lounge) for a two hour block of time from midnight to 6am so that no one need be alone in the church during the night. Let's make the vigil complete. Sign up today or call the church office to have your name added to the chart.

## INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CHURCH?

The Membership and Evangelism Commission is pleased to invite all those who are interested in joining the church, to a membership discussion meeting on **Sunday, April 19th** following the worship service in the youth lounge. Refreshments will be served and childcare will be provided. We will receive those wishing to become members during the service on **Sunday, April 26th**. Please consider becoming a part of this vibrant ministry here in East Greenbush! If you cannot make the discussion group on the 19th, but would like to join, please contact Pastor Mari at 477-9693.

Special Notice to all our church — There will be a special church conference held on April 15, 2009 at 7pm. District Superintendent Jim Fenimore will conduct the meeting. The meeting will consider future plans for housing for our pastor.



### BROOKS' BBQ COMES AGAIN!

April 25th

4:00pm on

Chicken or Ribs

Eat-in or Take-out

Come and support your church by purchasing a chicken or ribs dinner. Proceeds will be used by the United Methodist Women and by the Missions and Social Responsibility Committee for local church expenses and for mission outreach projects.

## Spring Thrift Sale

### Here's Spring Again, And It's Time for a Sale!

You can bring you stuff to the Fellowship Hall following church on Sunday, April 26th. Bring more stuff right up to Thursday evening at 8pm.

Sale starts Friday, May 1st at 5pm and goes to 8pm.

Saturday is Bag Day and the sale runs from 10am to 1pm.

## Thrift Sale



Volunteer during the week to get ready, and Friday and/or Saturday for the sale.

Tell your friends!  
Remember, we got good stuff!

### HISTORY COMMITTEE ASKS FOR HELP

**As research on our Church History proceeds, gaps in our files are evident. Therefore, what do you recall about any or all of the following organizations and activities? Some of them no longer exist but since they once were part of our activities, we seek information. Also, all history is not old. We need recollections of the last 10 to 20 years as well; younger members please come forward and help.**

The Men's club (or group) – this may have been organized at the old church on Columbia Turnpike, and probably continued for several years at the new church. When did it start; end? What was its purpose? Did it use the shed behind the Pockman house on the Columbia Turnpike site? For what?

Paper Collections and sale – For many years men in the church collected paper in the old garage on Gilligan Road and periodically sold it in Castleton and later, Albany. What group started these collections; when; when did they end? When the switch from Castleton? For what were the monies used?

Couples Club – This was an active group in the 1940s and 50s at the old church. Was it primarily a social organization? What else did it do; when did it lapse?

Tri-M Group – Did it succeed the Couples Club? When did it start; end? Same questions as above for Couples Club.

The Mothers' Cooperative Nursery School – This forerunner to the present Pre-School started in the mid-1960s. Who organized it? How many mothers? How many classes? Mothers rotated as the assistant to the paid teacher. Who was the first teacher; the second? What other information exists?

A MOM's group was started a few years ago. What was its purpose? When started? When ended? Who was involved?

Sunday School – double sessions at old church; growth; changes in curriculum; teachers who impacted the children; growth; who recalls Sunday School events?

Communion Breakfasts, Men's and Women's. Who started; when; who involved?

The Khandas Class and the Reliable Circle organizations – What were these? Trustee minutes for January 21, 1931 indicate these two groups offered to furnish a front window for the church on Columbia Turnpike. We can find no other reference to the Khandas Class; to the Reliable Circle went into the 1940s.

In January 1931 the Ladies Aid was authorized to install a new organ. What is the history of this group? Was it a forerunner of the Womens' Society of Christian Service (WSCS)?

Who has been active in the Thrift Sales? When did these start? Purpose? Any significant aspects or events?

Insert to The Church BELL, Volume 11, Issue 3 April 2009

We lack information on recent activities and events – youth, adult, program. What new groups have been formed in the last 20 years? What have been new youth activities? What changes in church program and activities do you recall?

When did the Christmas Bazaars start? In the old church? When did the roast beef dinner become part of it? What changes over the years?

What recollections do you have about roast beef and other dinners – those at the old church; ones served as part of the Christmas Bazaar; how frequently were dinners held; are there stories about serving dinners? How were proceeds used?

Pot Luck dinners – Someone mentioned these were introduced and well-attended perhaps 15 or 20 years ago. Who remembers them; background; other information?

What recollections or anecdotes do you have about youth activities – Stan Moore's hikes; Skye Farm; raking leaves; pretzel Sundays; religious weekends; activities in recent years?

Band of Love – This girl's group was formed by Kathryn Myers. When; how long did it exist; purpose?

Mabel Henninger; Kathryn Myers; Jessie Plume – Recollections of these and other church leaders, early and recent, please. Who else should be mentioned?

Did a bank in Rensselaer go out of business in early 1932? Trustee minutes suggest the church borrowed \$500 for payment on a new organ in March 1931 from the "National Ban of Rensselaer". Minutes of January 19, 1932 say "the Rensselaer Bank closed today." Which bank? Did it close permanently? Any other information?

**Please don't be shy. These groups and activities are part of our history. Since records on them are minimal, we appeal for recollections and information. Please contact Jerry Dunn (477-9132) if you remember anything about them. We'd like your comments in writing, but any tidbit conveyed in any way is essential. Information can be sent to the church office marked for Jerry's attention. Help make our Church History, scheduled for publication later this year, a complete story of First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush.**