



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

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

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 11 DECEMBER 2008

Christmas Week at First United Methodist

... the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place!"
(Luke 2:15, NRSV)



Christmas

- Sunday, December 21 -- 9:30am **Morning Worship**
This is New Member Sunday
- Sunday, December 21 -- 3:00pm **SOS (Supper on Sunday) Caroling and Dinner.** Everyone is welcome to attend.
Note the earlier starting time.
- Monday, December 22 -- 7:00pm **Blue Christmas Worship Service** -- Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays. This service is especially for those looking toward a "blue" Christmas.
See more details inside.

Wednesday, December 24, **Christmas Eve Worship**

Few moments draw us to God's presence more than "the night before Christmas." Again this year we provide a variety of ways to join the shepherds on their journey to hear – and to see! and to believe! – the "good news of great joy for all the people." Here are brief descriptions of our three worship services on Christmas Eve.

5:00 P.M. Early Service for Young Ones and Their Families.

This brief service is designed to involve young children in the story of the birth of Christ in a way that they can understand. With the help of song, story and their own ideas, children will take their part in welcoming Jesus, the "Light of the World," into their hearts.

7:00 P.M. Identical Festive Christmas Eve Services for All Ages.

and All ages will enjoy this service of favorite carol singing, scripture

9:00 P.M. reading, special music by the Sanctuary Choir, a message by our pastor, and concluding with the traditional lighting of candles by all worshipers. Nursery Care will be available for this service.

(If previous years are a guide, there will be "more room at the inn" during the 9:00 PM service than during the 7:00 PM service.)



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

December 7th is our Sunday School Craft Fair

All of our Sunday school classrooms make and "sell" (by donation) their homemade crafts to support Local food pantries and Heifer International. Please be sure to join us after church that day in Fellowship Hall to see the pride on the children's faces as the "sell" their hard work.

There will not be any Sunday School classes on Sunday, December 28.

Confirmation Class

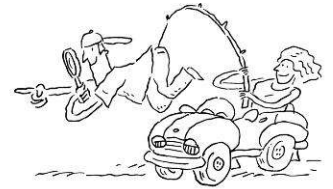
Youth in the 8th grade or above are invited to participate in the Confirmation Class that takes place this January through May. We will meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 7:00 to 8:00pm. Please mark your calendars for the following dates: Jan. 27th, Feb. 10th and 24th, Mar. 10th and 24th, April 7th and 21st, and May 12th. You will be confirmed on Sunday, May 31st. (PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A CHANGE FROM THE OCTOBER BELL ARTICLE!) For more details, please contact Pastor Mari at 477-9693.



OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO THE YOUTH

Upcoming Youth Group Events

December will be filled with exciting Christmas activities. We begin the month on Dec 7th with the Senior High youth to make scented gingerbread ornaments that we plan to give out to nursing homes. We also hope to deliver the blankets from November's SOS to a homeless shelter. The meeting will start early at 4pm and run until 7pm. Please remember \$3.00 for pizza. On Dec. 14th from 4:30 -7pm the Jr. and Sr. high will meet for a thrilling Christmas decoration scavenger hunt. In addition, we will be having our Youth Christmas party so plan on bringing a nonperishable food item to give as a gift to the Concerns-U food pantry. We need to know how many drivers are required and how much food to bring, so please let Laura or Rachel know if you are planning to attend this meeting/party. Dec. 21st is another SOS dinner which includes Christmas Caroling where we will deliver the gingerbread ornaments. Bring your beautiful singing voices and a joyful Christmas spirit. There will be no meeting on December 28th. Enjoy your vacation and have a blessed Christmas.



SCAVENGER HUNT

Announcing our Youth Group Officers

Amber Biechman: President

Paige Johnson: Vice President

Emily Fuller: Secretary

Alyxe Perry & Allison Fuller: Treasurer

Our officers are ready, willing and excited about taking on their important positions. They are helping to plan and organize upcoming events, missions and activities.

THE BELL is published monthly (with the exception of August) by the First United Methodist Church, 1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1715. December 2008, Volume 10, Issue 11. **Editing Team:** G. Herrick, M. Clark, H. Volke, M. Flowers. **The Church Staff:** Rev. Mari J. Clark, **Pastor;** Heidi Gran, **Coordinator of Children's Christian Education;** Laura Clark & Rachel Giso, **Youth Leaders;** Helen L. Gustafson, **Organist/Choir Director;** Hazel Volke, **Administrative Assistant;** Bob Ellis, **Custodian;** Kris Johnson, **Lay Leader;** Barbara White, **Child Care Provider.** Rev. John K. Yambasu is our **Regional Missionary, Youth Leadership Development, Education and Training, to Sub-Saharan Africa.**

CHURCH NEWS

What Happens at YAC is Shared With the Congregation

When the world says "This Way," we say YAHWEH. The youth group had an amazing time at YAC (Youth Autumn Celebration) where we experienced many new things. We enjoyed listening to Wayne Kerr speak and sing. Wayne compared a marathon that his wife ran, to the pathway of life. He said, "I was there waiting for her with a bag full of water, cut orange slices and protein gel." He symbolized himself and the bag for his wife as God standing beside us for when we need something. We also broke off into small groups and discussed what Wayne had to say and why we felt it was important. We not only listened to Wayne, but the girls listened to his wife Kelley Kerr speak about Mark 12:28. They were given rope bracelets to remember that God is always there, even when times get rough. We also played several games with Uncle Stew. We enjoyed delicious food and the many gifts we bought where all the money went to YSF (Youth Service Fund) to help fund youth projects. We also bought bracelets to help support the Chococente Project which aids families in Nicaragua. We had a hard time leaving YAC but we were glad to be home, and are counting down the days for 4word, which is the end of April. –Amber Biechman



Caroling with SOS

December 21st is our Christmas Caroling/SOS dinner.

Please plan to meet at the church dressed to go Caroling first. **The time will be 3pm.** Dinners may be dropped off in the kitchen. After Caroling, we will meet back at the fellowship hall to enjoy our SOS dinner. **Please note, we expect to be back to the church around 5pm and will have dinner then.** Volunteers will be needed to stay behind to help set up and attend to the kitchen.

Let's Jam for SOS

If you forgot your jam order, here's one more chance. This delicious **homemade jam** is made by Michelle Petuske from Waterford and is being sold to support our SOS (Supper on Sunday) programs. Kris Johnson tells us she will have jam to sell at the craft sale during coffee hour on **December 7th.**

Interested in Membership?

Becoming a member of the First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush is an exciting and rewarding experience. If you are considering membership there is an upcoming opportunity for you. New member discussions will be held after worship on Sunday, December 7 and a dinner conversation on Sunday, December 14. New member Sunday will be on December 21. All interested in learning more about membership are encouraged to attend. If you would like to receive more information about the upcoming discussions, please contact Pastor Mari. For planning purposes, please contact the church office (477-9693) if you will be participating in the discussions.

Child Care Provider Needed

Position available: Barbara While has been our Nursery Care Provider for several years. She would like to move on. We are therefore in need of someone who would like to care for our very youngest members during the church service. This is a paid position and a background check will be required. There is also the possibility of this being a rotating position between several adults who choose to share the responsibilities.

If you are interested or know of someone who might be, please speak to Len Finke 477-7365 or email him at NivlacMCF@aol.com



Child Care Opening

MORE CHURCH NEWS

The Giving Tree is Back!



Giving Tree

This year the UMW is working with David Smith, our CONSERNS-U representative, in collecting items for the Christmas Store. The Giving Tree has been reintroduced with individual items to bring in. The same idea, take a slip of paper, purchase the item and bring it back to the church, UNWRAPPED, and place it in the basket by December 14th. David and the UMW will bring the presents to the Christmas Store which will be on December 16th and 17th. Don't be afraid to duplicate presents, CONCERNS-U is serving over 800 children this year ages newborn -17 years. Many people have asked "where is the Giving Tree?" Well, it's back!

Thank you.

UMW and David Smith

Staff/Parish Relations Committee

The Staff/Parish Relations Committee is the administrative unit of our church where staff and congregational interests are integrated to focus on the mission of our church. The committee has some of the same functions of a personnel office or Human Resources department in other organizations. Our responsibilities include conferring with the congregation and the staff/pastor about the ministry direction of our church. To this end, we want to hear from you. Are we headed in the right direction? Are we going too fast – or too slow? What do you think? Your opinion is important to us, so please feel free to contact any member of the committee. Members of the Committee and their phone numbers are: Len Fink, Chair, 477-7365; Matie Flowers, 477-5645; Sue Lemka, 477-9875; Nancy Keenholts, 477-4783; Gary Klee, 477-9193; Mary Smith, 477-4648; Kathy Zorko, 732-1210; Grace Wheeler, 477-5373; and George Herrick, 477-9711.

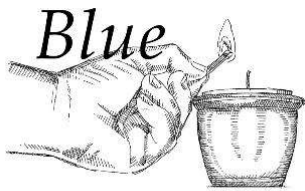
Adopt a Day for December

With the coming of the holiday season, the Adopt-A-Day Calendar, usually easily seen in the foyer, may be a little harder to find. For the month of December there is one day highlighted, the 8th. And the name on that date is Bob Alcorn. When the calendar reappears there will be 365 spots that you can pick from to support the work of our Trustees as you mark an important date in your family or some other special occasion. Watch for the calendar's return.

A Service of Light in the Midst of Darkness

Monday, December 22, 7:00 p.m.

For many of us, Christmas is a bittersweet, blue time of year. Blue? Yes, blue as in the blues. As in



Christmas

"I am feeling blue." It is a time for remembering both persons and events that have been a part of our lives in the past, but that are now changed or gone. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with cancer or some other dis-ease that puts a question mark over the future, and a number of other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our congregations and communities. This is the time of year with the longest nights, so on Monday we offer a quiet, meditative worship service that makes time for remembering, sharing our hurting places with God, and preparing our hearts for the coming

of Christ. Join us on Monday, December 22, at 7:00 pm, for a time of special music, scripture, stories, silent reflection and healing prayer. Please come.

Stewardship & Finance Committee



We have received 124 pledges totaling \$202,499.00 for our 2009 budget. We thank all of those who pledged to continue the ministry of our church. The pledged amount to date is about \$23,000 below the income projected in our proposed budget for next year. If you have not yet pledged, please consider Sharing a Gift with your church and help us bridge the gap between our needs and our pledges.

The Stewardship & Finance has proposed holding a large fund raiser some time in the spring. We will need the help of many people to make this project possible. We will be having a preliminary meeting after church on December 7th. It should be a short meeting to gather some suggestions for how we will proceed after the Christmas holidays. All are welcome to attend and bring your fund raising ideas. Hope to see you there!

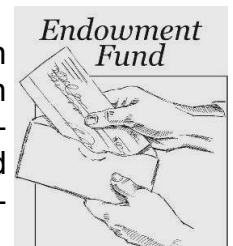
Memorial Fund vs. Endowment Fund Giving

Usually in recognition of departed friends or relatives, congregants of our Church and others make cash contributions for benefits or improvements to the Church or to support specific programs of interest to them. The two vehicles for these purposes usually are as a gift in memoriam (the Memorial Fund) or as an endowment investment (the Endowment Fund).

While both funds offer a way in which to honor a friend or relative, the two funds have different purposes and objectives. These differences frequently are not recognized or known to prospective donors.

The Memorial Fund is a way in which contributions of varying amounts can be given the Church for use for prospective projects that benefit the Church. Frequently these purposes are not planned within normal General Budget allocations. Usually they are of a tangible nature such as improvements to facilities, materials for various programs, new or additional supplies (hymnals, choir robes, etc.) or items which the donor specifically identifies. The Memorial Committee in the Church may also have ideas to suggest for memorial gifts.

The Endowment Fund, on the other hand, receives contributions for investment. In general, the principal (the amounts contributed) remains intact and is invested in stocks, bonds or other income-producing ventures to assure on-going income. Currently our Church has three endowment funds, the General Fund, the Music and Worship Fund and the Education Fund. Income from these funds is distributed annually to supplement these programs.



Questions or interest in memorial or endowment giving can be directed to Pastor Mari, to the Trustees, or to the Memorial or Endowment Committees. During 2008-09. Jean Sheviak and Peter Larson respectively chair those committees.

SOS (Supper on Sunday)

Looking ahead for SOS in the New Year, here is the schedule of "dinner" dates: January 18, February 8, March 15, and April 19.

The second list of dates is the one for planning meetings for SOS. All are invited to attend planning meetings as well as the dinners. Suggestions for topics are needed. Please come to a meeting or write your suggestions down on the SOS bulleting board in the foyer. Meetings will be held following Sunday morning worship and are scheduled for the following dates: January 4 and 25, February 22, and March 29.

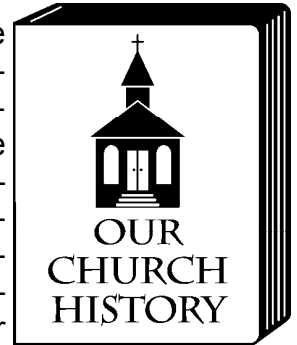
Church History Delayed

I am sorry to have to announce that publication of the forthcoming History of our Church will be delayed into early 2009. This delay is caused by many factors, not the least of which is that as we delve into the files of the church, more information, concerning our early history particularly, comes to light.

On balance, a modest further delay seems the best route to follow. It will enable us to take advantage of this additional information. It also extends the opportunity for individuals to cull their own files for pictures which can enhance the written text. Several photographs of early events in both our present church and the former one on Columbia Turnpike already have been offered. With these pictures of the two churches we also now have good pictures of other events, including the Madrigal dinners, coffee houses, Couples Club, and phases of construction, among numerous others. All these have given us the pleasant problem of choosing which best illustrate our numerous activities and programs over the years.

With the delay in publication, furthermore, we now still can accept pictures for consideration, particularly any from the "old" church or early events at the "new" one.

We now expect publication early spring next year. The Committee thinks the delay is appropriate to assure inclusion of the most complete information at hand. We hope members and constituents of the church concur that, when available, the book will fully meet our expectations.



For the History Committee — *Gerald E. Dunn*



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The UMW Christmas party will be held at the home of Violeta Dulay on December 2nd at 6pm. There will be a cookie exchange and those attending are asked to bring a cap or a pair of mittens for a child. All church women are invited. To assist in arrangements, please call Violeta Dulay at 477-7717 if you are planning to attend.

TAC Prays for FUMCEG

Holly Nye, Conference Minister for Troy Annual Conference (TAC) has informed us that the Conference, on a rotating schedule, prays for each church in the Conference. She tells us that TAC will be praying for our congregation (FUMCEG) during the week of December 8th. She asks that we consider intentionally holding the annual conference and its leaders in prayer, especially during that week. Her letter to us says, in part, that she intends to hold her prayers for us "in the context of the Acts 2 church – a people learning together, praying together, eating and celebrating together, caring for those in need, and living a quality of community that is attractive to all. I pray that your church may BE Good News to the world."

TWO AREA HOLIDAY CONCERTS SEEK YOUR ATTENDANCE

On Saturday, **December 6 at 7:30pm, Capital Community Voices** will present a program of traditional and popular holiday songs at Columbia High School. Ticket prices are \$8 general admission and \$6 for seniors and students.

Then on Sunday, **December 8 at 4pm, The Festival Celebration Choir Annual Christmas Concert**, "Magnificat—Songs of Mary" will be presented at St. Pius X Church in Loudonville. Admission is \$15 general and \$10 seniors/students. Details in the church office.

MISSIONS

Recruiting a Health Team for Sierra Leone

Please consider joining the April 2-12, 2009 UMVIM (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission) Team to Sierra Leone. Nursing, pharmacy and clinic support staff are needed for pediatric clinics led by Dr. Debi Selby. Trip cost is \$3200, which includes airfare, visa, lodging, transportation, most meals and medical insurance. A deposit of \$600 is due upon joining the team. Help with team fundraising activities is appreciated. Other work opportunities in schools and orphanages is also available.



The goal is to fill 10 vacancies by December 15th. We are all a part of the global community and this is an opportunity to witness to your faith in Jesus Christ and serve in areas of need in Africa. Vicki Jo Stevens-Valentine will serve as team leader and Samuel Pieh is the in-country team leader. To contact Vicki use either phone (731-247-3388) or e-mail (vickijo95@aol.com). Deposits may be sent to the church office: 1st United Methodist Church, Attn: Vicki Valentine, P.O. Box 25, Paris, TN 38242.

The Troy Annual Conference Volunteers in Mission is Pleased to Announce the Return to Belfast VIM Trip

We are returning to Belfast to continue our work with Springfield Road Methodist Church and Forth-spring Community Center. These groups have been at the forefront of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. We will be refurbishing a variety of areas used by both the Protestant and the Catholic Communities. There is a need for volunteers who can do painting, carpentry, gardening/landscaping and plastering. We will also be meeting with a variety of community members to develop a better understanding of the Northern Ireland history and culture as well as doing some sightseeing in Northern Ireland. The trip is planned for April 23rd to May 2nd. The leaders are Mike and Pat Thomas, 518-885-5889 or mthomas6@nycap.rr.com. Cost is estimated to be between \$2,000 and \$2,300 including airfare. Passports are required for this VIM trip. Registration deadline is December 15, 2008.

Two Thank You Notes

Thank you so much for the enthusiastic response to the fund raising for indigent and malnourished school children of Davin School in the Philippines. I was able to raise \$228, enough for lunch needs for 2009. The principal of the school sends an annual report with names of the children helped and their signatures. Again, thanks much.
-- Violeta Dulay

Thank you for all the prayers for our grandson, Mighty Max. He's finally off his medications which started two years ago when he was 1 ½ years old. He's 3 ½ now.
-- The Dulays

Tying Up Loose Ends!

- The **Tuesday Study Group** is involved in a study entitled "**Eclipsing Empire**", a program on Paul, Rome, and the Kingdom of God. All are welcome to attend when the group meets at 9:30am Tuesday mornings. If you have an interest in this subject or any of the other "Living the Questions" programs, please contact the church office and we will work hard to arrange a meeting time that will better fit your schedule.
- Please keep the office updated if you have or anticipate having a **change in your mailing address, permanent or temporary**. It helps keep our church records current and helps save on postage.
- ♦ Prepare ahead! **The Cabin Fever Coffee House**, our next CH, is scheduled for Friday, January 23, 2009. If you start now, there is plenty of time to get ready.



CHURCH-WIDE CHRISTMAS CARD

Merry Christmas! What is a better way to say Merry Christmas but in the Church-Wide Christmas Card? The Commission on Missions and Social Responsibility invites everyone to participate in greeting their friends in one Church-Wide card. The money saved on postage and individual cards will be donated to CONSERNS-U. If you so choose, you may indicate another charity of your choice. Let's try to make it a little easier with a suggested minimum donation of \$3 (please make checks payable to the First United Methodist Church with a notation in the memo "Church-Wide Christmas Card." The Commission on Missions and Social Responsibility hopes you will all join us by filling in the form below and mail or bring it to the Church on or before **Sunday, December 7, 2008.**



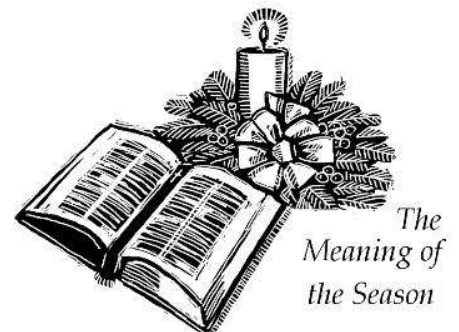
TO THE COMMISSION ON MISSIONS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*Please include my (our) names(s), as **printed** below, in the Church-wide Christmas Card:*

Enclosed is my (our) contribution of \$_____ (suggested minimum \$3) to the benevolent cause which is indicated. Unless specified here, _____, our donation will be donated to CONSERNS-U.

A Bit of Background

Advent is a season of four weeks including four Sundays. *Advent* derives from the Latin *adventus*, which means "coming." The season proclaims the comings of the Christ – whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word and Spirit. Each year Advent calls the community of faith to prepare for these comings; historically, the season was marked by fasts for preparation. Each Sunday of Advent has its distinctive theme: Christ's coming in final victory (First Sunday, this year the last Sunday in November), John the Baptist (Second and Third Sundays), and the events immediately preceding the birth of Jesus Christ (Fourth Sunday). Christmas is a season of praise and thanksgiving for the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, which begins with Christmas Eve or Day and continues through the Day of Epiphany (January 6). The name *Christmas* comes from the season's first service, the *Christ Mass*. *Epiphany* comes from the Greek work *epiphania*, which means "manifestation."



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