



The Bell Tower

Ringing out the news from Valley Falls United Methodist Church

March/April 2025

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The Pastor's Peal



So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-18a).

Lent is a time to work toward renewal as we look forward to Easter. Thus, we enter a season of dedicating ourselves to spiritual practices that can lead us in the direction of rebirth and reconciliation. In this Lenten season, we offer several opportunities to connect with other Christians—through worship, reflection, fellowship, and study.

Ash Wednesday reminds us of our common human condition and our mortality. Join our ecumenical **Lenten luncheons** to experience the diversity that has been part of the Jesus Movement since the earliest fellowships, “for in Christ Jesus we are all children of God through faith” (*See Galatians 3:26*).

A **Lenten study** provides another opportunity for renewing our connection to Christ and each other. Beginning Tuesday, March 11 at 10 a.m., we will gather at the church to discuss selected topics from *Awakened: a 52-week Progressive Christian Devotional* by Caleb J. Lines. Themes address diversity, eco-spirituality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, mental health, science, and more. Each lesson includes scripture, a reflection on the theme, questions for discussion, and a spiritual practice. Videos on YouTube kickstart each new theme. If you like, we can head over to the Lenten lunches at Transfiguration Parish following our meeting.

I hope you will want to join me in these opportunities to hone such spiritual practices as demonstrating kindness and compassion, fighting for peace with justice, loving God, and loving our many diverse neighbors.

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Our Church Alive: Opportunities to Know and Serve God



LENT begins on **Wednesday, March 5.**

* Enjoy fellowship, soup, and a Lenten reflection at the ecumenical luncheons to be offered **Tuesdays at noon** at Transfiguration Parish in Schaghticoke, beginning March 11th and continuing through April 8th. **Scheduled speakers** and a selection of soups will be provided by the following churches:

March 11 - Transfiguration Parish

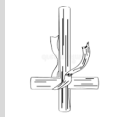
March 18 - Johnsonville and Mechanicville UMCs

March 25 - Melrose UMC

April 1 - Pittstown UMC

April 8 -Presbyterian United, Schaghticoke

Holy Week Events



April 13 @ 9 a.m.-Palm Sunday worship with distribution of palms and special music.

April 19 @ 4 p.m. - Holy Saturday - Easter cantata hosted by Calvary UMC, Latham. Singers from area churches are invited to participate. Rehearsals are scheduled for Saturday, April 12th, at 4 p.m. and Tuesday, April 15th, at 6:30 p.m.

April 20 @ 9 a.m.-Easter Sunday worship with Holy Communion and special music.

In Sympathy

With sad hearts, we announce the recent death of **Rev. Russell Smith**, who served as pastor of VFUMC from 1969-1972. Funeral arrangements are uncertain at this time. Notes of sympathy may go to his wife Joyce at 1786 Union Street, Apt. 213, Niskayuna, NY 12309.

United Women in Faith - Now Meeting in Daytime!

Thursday, March 6, 10:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall - **Christina Kelly**, historian for the Town of Schaghticoke and former Spanish teacher at HVHS, will share her knowledge of **"Our Area During the American Revolution."**

Chris has "a strong belief that all history is basically local. Learning about the lives and actions of earlier residents of the town helps us realize that there really is 'nothing new under the sun.'... It is fascinating to see how earlier folks dealt with the same life issues that we have today."

A soup luncheon and business meeting will follow Chris's presentation.

Thursday, April 3rd, @ 10:30 a.m. - Phyllis Chapman, a popular interpreter of women in history, will portray the story of "Lucy Larcom, A New England Mill Girl." Soup, business meeting, and fellowship will follow the program.

Celebrating Our Church Family

March Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 5-Janet Weber
- 8-Allie Acton Gorman
- 10- Mike Church
- 12-Ralph Marino
- 15-Sharon Speanburg
- 17-Gail Madigan
- 25-Jaycob Overocker, Gabrielle Pruso
- 26-Steve and Judy Morris (A)
- 27-Bill Bobear
- 29-Mark Patenaude
- 31-Anthony Dale

April Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 3-Mackenzie Serritella
- 18-Lauren Paul
- 19-Laura Hill
- 20-Lilith Bonser
- 20-Jack and Sue Hill (A)
- 22-Maryam Evvari
- 23-Colin Helie

More News and Notes

I Hear Music, Music, Music!



Do you play a musical instrument and are looking for a chance to play with others? If so, you are invited to join the brand-new **Music Gathering** at VFUMC on **Sunday mornings during coffee hour**. Says organizer Carol Eddy, "We play violin, flute, ukulele, guitar, and percussion. We are young and old, interested in learning new music and forming new friendships. So far, we are playing traditional fiddle tunes and Celtic music." You do not have to be a member of the church to join the group, so feel free to invite your musical friends. Just show up at 10 a.m., grab a cup of coffee and a sweet, and get ready to make music!

A Big Thank You

As long-time contributors to the important mission work of the **United Methodist Economic Ministry**, you will be pleased to know that our financing of **Art's Guest House** has already borne fruit. This email from Director Helen Pinkham is evidence that our faith in their work has again become a blessing.



Thank you for your church's donation recently. I wanted to update you on Art's Guest House.... A family of eight were here for 3 weeks. The gram of the family and her handicapped son have found a rental and [the rest of the family] will be moving into their new rental very soon. During this time, we had another homeless family that was being forced to sleep in their car but was only needing placement for her 16-year-old daughter... The family of eight opened their arms and welcomed her in. The young girl has moved on and is back with her family. Today we got a call from the high school nurse about a 17-year-old girl who has been couch surfing due to problems at home. So as of today, we have helped ten people by providing a roof over their heads. A big thank you to you and your folks. Blessings, Helen

Upper New York Conference Action

United Methodists have joined over two dozen Christian and Jewish organizations in a **federal lawsuit** against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The suit challenges a Trump administration policy permitting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to conduct raids in "sensitive locations," including houses of worship. The plaintiffs argue that this policy infringes upon their religious freedom and hinders their mission to care for migrants.

The lawsuit, filed Feb. 11 in federal court in Washington, D.C., argues that the new policy interferes with core Christian and Jewish beliefs. The policy also violates both the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the suit contends.

United Methodists of Upper New York are represented in the lawsuit as members of the New York State Council of Churches (NYSCOC), a named plaintiff in the lawsuit. **For the complete statement, see umnews.org.**

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We Gather Together

Sunday, Mar. 9 - Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. Don't forget to turn your clocks forward one hour the night before, or you will miss the worship service!

Sunday, Mar. 30 - Special offering for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). UMCOR Sunday donations cover operation costs, so that 100% of donations received in response to emergency appeals go directly to communities in need. To learn about UMCOR's most recent U. S. and international ministries, check out umcmission.org.

"Living With Cancer," a cancer support group led by Rev. Ted Wright, will meet **Mondays, March 17 and April 21**, at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Email Ted at wrightsafrica@gmail.com to request the link.

Remember, you can always find the latest issue of The Bell Tower on the church web site at valleyfallsunitedmethodist.com. Please send news items or suggestions for future issues to Jackie Marino, editor, at jjmarino@icloud.com or call 518-753-0442.

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A special note of gratitude goes to:

- **Jack McMahon**, who tolls the church bell on Sunday mornings, summoning worshipers to the 9 o'clock service.
- **Scriven Press**, whose generosity keeps the cost of this newsletter to a minimum.