

# The Methodist

Burnt Hills United Methodist Church News

February 2021

Dear friends,

**Last** February, we were just beginning to learn of a global health threat that would change all of our lives. In the months since, we have learned to adapt – to worship, study and serve in ways that protect one another’s health and safety. We continue to pray for an effective and accessible vaccine, and to give thanks for all who have cared for others in so many ways during this crisis.

**Last** February, we were beginning a Lent study of Adam Hamilton’s *The Walk*, reminding us of important spiritual practices: worship and prayer; study; serving; giving; sharing faith. Those five practices remain posted in Knight Hall, continuing to invite us to consider how we will deepen our discipleship. A couple of weeks ago, Church Council approved a Discipleship Plan that will be shared with groups throughout the church in the coming weeks and months. This plan will help keep us focused, as a faith community, on our identity as Disciples of Jesus Christ, seeking to love God and love and serve our neighbor.

**Last** February, we were thinking about how to live into a newly-adopted statement of Welcome: *At Burnt Hills UMC, we aspire to be a community of grace and unconditional love, where all people will find hospitality, compassion and mercy. We seek to welcome all on the journey, to grow together in faith and to go out to serve the world.*

*We welcome people of any age, culture, race, nationality, ability, marital status, economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity, as full participants in the life of our congregation.*

*Guided by the Holy Spirit, we seek to be part of Jesus’ movement of love and justice for all of God’s children. All are welcome to worship, grow and serve with us.*

**Last** February, I said this about our new statement: *ALL are welcome in this church, as we seek to follow Jesus and to grow as disciples... we are called to look for the face of Jesus in every person. Jesus did not promise that following him would be easy! Being in community with other people, sharing our faith with others who may disagree with us or differ from us – these are challenges in the journey of discipleship. AND, Jesus keeps calling us to follow in his Way, together.*

**This** February seems a good time to re-commit ourselves to following in Jesus’ way, together.

**Lent** begins February 17, with Ash Wednesday. We don’t yet know what our shared Ash Wednesday or Lenten observances will look like. But we do know that we are, before all else, disciples of Jesus Christ, seeking to live in his way and offer his peace and healing. May Lent offer us new and deeper ways of living into that commitment.

Shalom,

Pastor Holly



**UWM Circles** are small groups that meet monthly for a variety of programs and projects. All gatherings are open and welcoming. For more information, contact Holly Rogers at 399-8629.

Tuesday Connection Circle will meet on Tuesday, February 9 at 9:30 AM in Knight Hall.

Special K Circle will meet on Monday, February 22 at 7 PM in Knight Hall.

## Caregiver Support Group



**Caregiving is not easy during COVID-19. Caregivers have to deal with isolation, telehealth doctor calls and depression. The monthly Zoom Caregiver Support Group meetings help to relieve some of this stress by talking with others without leaving the safety of your home. This group is open to both church members and non-church members.**

The next Caregiver Support Group meeting will be Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 AM. Like the January meeting, it will be a Zoom meeting. If you are interested in participating, please see below for the Zoom link info.

The caregivers who attend this support group are in all stages of caregiving, from just taking care of a loved one in their own apartment or house to those dealing with hospice in nursing homes. Lynn Christie is the facilitator and can be reached at 399-8838 or [hlchristie@aol.com](mailto:hlchristie@aol.com) for any questions.

*Many thanks to all of my church family for all your help and prayers during my knee surgery and the ketoacidosis stay in the hospital. Thank you for all the meals and the Christmas caroling, and even the shopping. I am finally well enough to be on my own; first time since December 3. It is a slow process. It feels wonderful to be remembered and prayed for.* —Lorna Bemis

*Thank you to all the many, many people who comforted me with cards, notes, a prayer blanket and attention while I've been convalescing from my recent surgery. I am truly overwhelmed by your thoughtfulness and kindness.* —Metta VanValkenburg

## The Burnt Hills United Methodist Church

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**Follow us on Facebook**

**<https://www.facebook.com/BurntHillsUMC>**

### Staff

Rev. Holly Nye: *Lead Pastor*

Rev. Doug Mackey: *Associate Pastor*

Cindy Peterson: *Communications Coordinator*

Kimberly Spath: *Treasurer*

Paula Miller: *Financial Secretary*

Peter Van Keuren & Jill Zygo: *Music Directors*

Charles Hartmann: *Sound and Video*

Joe Tangrady: *Maintenance*

Jodi Facticeau-St. Gelais & Jen Robbins:

*Sunday School Superintendents*

Stacy Herbage & Stephanie Tope:

*Preschool Staff*

## **A Message from Pete Farrell, Finance & Stewardship Chair**

Dear Burnt Hills UMC friends,

I write to share my concern over our church's future. The pandemic has changed how we must do church. We have had to sacrifice the in-person fellowship and communal worship that are the best parts of our church experience for many. An excellent online worship experience enables us to remain engaged and faithful, but there's no denying how much we miss the hugs, the handshakes, the singing and reciting, taking Communion. I am afraid some people might be losing interest and slipping away.

Pondering these changes, I am reminded that the Israelites had the walls of Jerusalem breached, and warriors killed, their Temple torn down and desecrated, their Holy relics destroyed, and then they were enslaved and moved to Babylon, where it was made illegal to worship their God. It sort of makes what we're going through look pale in comparison. We will all need to keep the faith, be looking forward with hope and energy, and do whatever we can to remind ourselves that what we are living through is temporary. We need to remember Daniel, whose faith was tested time and again (lion's den, fiery furnace, etc.)

So what can each of us do? We can call our friends and church members to connect and care for them. We can offer to shop, do chores, record a song to share, watch and be a part of our online church worship and coffee hour. We can think about ways to engage each other, our youth, our friends in conversation and prayer. If you haven't joined the online service yet, it goes live at 10:30 every Sunday morning. Here's where every service is available to watch at any time, and renew yourself: <https://www.nybhmc.com/sermons.html> And we can plan for happier times when we can be together without worry or fear.

Part of planning for happier times is to make sure that our staff and our church remain functional and healthy. So far, our effort to assure ministry funding for 2021 is significantly underfunded. In 2020, we hoped for pledges to cover \$275,000, but pledged income only covered \$252,000. As of mid-January, our pledges for 2021 are just over \$232,000. We do not want to add any burden on those of us whose income has been impacted by the pandemic. But for those of us who can consider an additional pledge, or becoming a pledging member for the first time, now is the time we need you!

Consider a one-time special gift. I ask you to pray over it, and let the Spirit guide you.

We can patiently expect that the virus will lose its power after the vaccine is widespread, and then we will be able to fill the church again with song and prayer and loud rejoicing. James 5:7 says: "Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm." We just need to prepare the ground and plant the seed and then wait patiently for the rain. What I mean is, please pledge so the church will be ready for when the virus is defeated.

And may God bless us all, real good!

Pete Farrell, Finance and Stewardship chair

## A Very Generous Congregation



The people of our church continue to be so kind and generous. Despite being physically separated, we are still connected by our care for each other as well as those beyond our congregation.

In October the Special K Women's Circle put together **57 Hygiene Kits**, which were sent to the Conference Office. These kits are given to people who have been displaced from their homes due to natural disasters or conflicts.

Our Thanksgiving Offering was given to **Concerned For The Hungry**. This group provides Thanksgiving dinner boxes, in addition to working year-round to alleviate hunger in Schenectady County. Our congregation gave \$1,954, as well as non-perishable food items, and also provided workers to help pack boxes.

At the start of Advent, we had our first-ever virtual sale of **Mayan Hands** fair trade goods. We provided the congregation with a link to the Mayan Hands website. It was very easy to choose items to purchase and to pay online. The purchases were delivered to the church where they could be picked up by the buyers or delivered to their homes. We gave Mayan Hands \$1,252, which was our largest sale of Guatemalan woven goods ever (we could not include SERRV this year). It was also the most profitable sale for Mayan Hands this season. Mayan Hands and the women weavers were so grateful for our support.

In December we again donated to **Heifer International**, which works with farmers around the world providing training, gifts of livestock, trees, bees and seeds. Even though we could not set up a table in Knight Hall with information, stuffed animals and gift cards, people used the order forms published in The Methodist newsletter to make donations. Our total gift to Heifer International was \$3,985.

As always, our Christmas offering helps neighbors near and far. Our church keeps none of the gifts received from this offering. This year the offering total was \$3,301. We are again supporting **Schenectady Community Ministries**, a partnership with many faith groups that work together in social service and social justice. A portion of our **Conference Ministries** will be paid. We continue our long-standing tradition of giving money to **Chacocente**, a community in Managua, Nicaragua, established to provide farmland, homes and a school to formerly homeless families. Because of the help these people now receive, they no longer have to try to survive in the city dump. We are also supporting **RISSE**, a family-based center in Albany that helps refugees and immigrants with housing, job training and classes in English. We continue to give money to **CHS/CAPTAIN**, the local agency helping many people in the Burnt Hills area. Our local **food pantries** in Schenectady, Ballston Spa and Rock City Falls will also benefit.

Despite financial hardships for some, isolation for all and the very real fear of illness that has been the result of this pandemic, our congregation has been generous with time and money beyond all expectations. We are still together, still caring, helping and reaching out to others. We are still the church.

**Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.**

—***The Outreach Commission***

## 2020 Giving Tree Summary

This year we were able to provide Christmas to 10 families with a total of 24 children, 9 adults and 100 presents. This is an estimated giving of approximately \$3,345, when the food gift certificates are accounted for. Thank you to all who gave, including the LAF and Scout Troop 56.



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### \$50 for BHUMC from a Community Solar Program

The trustees at BHUMC have been examining community solar programs and have decided to partner with the company Nexamp. This decision supports the importance of conserving and protecting our shared environment. It also, with no obligation, gives the church an opportunity for a savings of approximately 10% on our current electric bills.

Nexamp's solar farms are part of New York's community solar program, which allows electric utility customers to subscribe to a share of a local solar farm and go solar without rooftop panels. Subscribers receive credits on their utility bill for the energy produced by their solar farm share.

**No Rooftop Panels  
No Long-Term Contracts**

Burnt Hills United Methodist Church has partnered with Nexamp to offer the ability for member congregations to easily participate in a local solar farm and support solar energy generation, while saving up to 10% on yearly electricity costs. To support the local interfaith community, Nexamp will be making \$50 donations directly to the Church for each church member who elects to participate. Bert Longbotham, Paula Miller and Pastor Holly have recently joined.

Nexamp's community solar program has no up-front cost, no credit check, no long-term commitment, and is compatible with your existing electrical utility and energy supplier. Unfortunately, this program is not available for people who already have personal solar panels that tie into the grid.

To learn more, visit [www.nexamp.com](http://www.nexamp.com). To subscribe, please visit the link <https://solar.nexamp.com/bhumc> and complete the steps provided. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Greg Adams, trustee, at 518-399-5875, or Chris Mills from Nexamp at 339-933-3784.

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### Another Reminder- Do you shop at Amazon?



If you do, consider registering at Smile.Amazon and name The Burnt Hills United Methodist Church as your designated charity. AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Every item available for purchase on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) is also available on AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)) at the same price. There

are currently 22 people that have named BHUMC as their designated charity, and the church has received \$72.24 from Amazon!

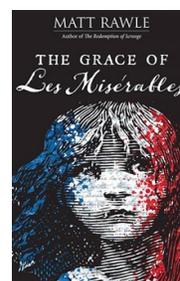
## Lenten Study - *The Grace of Les Misérables*

BHUMC is planning a Lenten study for this year focused around Matte Rawle's newest study, "*The Grace of Les Misérables*," and an associated series of short videos. This study examines the epic story created by Victor Hugo in his powerful book, *Les Misérables*. Whether one has read this novel or seen any of the screen adaptations, you are likely to recognize that Hugo addressed the ideals of grace, justice, poverty, revolution, love and hope in his work. In this study, Rawle focuses on the intersection of the church with "Pop Culture" by examining the parallels between the themes of Hugo's work and our Christian calling as a way to consider our faith and to live it out in the world.

The study will last for six sessions, meeting via Zoom, on Wednesday evenings at 7 PM (Feb. 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31) during Lent. Each session will provide an opportunity to review the reading for that week (for those who choose to), view the short video on each chapter, and engage in discussion and learning about the themes covered. If you are interested in taking part in this study, please contact Pastor Doug or the church office and let us know if you would like to purchase the book (currently \$9 on Cokesbury – a bit more on Amazon) and take part in the Zoom sessions.

### 6 Weekly Sessions:

- 2/24 - Session 1: Grace Well Received: The Story of Jean Valjean
- 3/3 - Session 2: When Grace and Justice Collide: The Story of Javert
- 3/10 - Session 3: The Poor Are Always with You: The Story of Fantine
- 3/17 - Session 4: The Gift of Love: The Story of Marius and Cosette
- 3/24 - Session 5: Building the Barricade: The Story of Les Amis
- 3/31 - Session 6: The Blessed Garden: A Hopeful Vision



We hope everyone had a great start to 2021! Preschool had "snow" much fun in January! Our little friends did an absolutely wonderful job at pivoting back to school in-person! We started off with a review of what we learned in our virtual months and then moved into cold weather, families, Martin Luther King Jr, Olympics and hibernation. Check out more of our fun adventures on our Facebook page.

Preschool is now registering 3 and 4-year old classes for fall 2021/2022, so please contact Stephanie Tope at 518-466-6566 if you are interested or would like more information.