



New Paltz United Methodist Church

March 2025

Words from the Pastor

Rev L. Grace Harmon

We all know Lent is a time of giving something up. I hate to say sacrifice, because most commonly what we give up is something that doesn't really cost us much except willpower – chocolate, meat, doom-scrolling the internet – choosing something that will benefit us personally. It's a great thing to do, healthy and productive. I'm not sure it is getting to the true purpose of Lent, though. So, what does true Lenten sacrifice, done with intention, look like in this particular moment in time?



Every year in this season, I pray we are looking to relinquish ideas, habits, or even relationships that keep us from coming closer to God. I also hope we might live the Easter story as if it is brand new, as if the outcomes are not all predetermined, as if we can make different choices.



These two ideas go together, giving up those things that come between us and God so we are freed to make choices that interrupt the need for Jesus to sacrifice his life so that we might learn. We retell the story every year, but we don't do a great job of being changed by the story. Which means we repeat it the same mistakes it highlights in our own lives, denying the sacred power of transformation in which we are being called to participate.

How – right here and now – are we to engage the sacred call to being transformed in ways that inspire us to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?” What are we sacrificing, what is the Gospel preparing us for, and what is on the other side of the challenges we face? These are the kinds of questions a timely and relevant faith invites us to answer. Asking them boldly and bravely is also what will set us apart from the Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, Imperialists, apologists, racists, xenophobes and their ilk – the ones who have hijacked Good News and turned it, time and again, into a nightmare for so many of us.

The stakes are eerily similar right now. Disagree with the Caesar and find yourself deported or disappeared, your research or career ended, your family torn apart, your healthcare and basic humanity denied. If it feels surreal to find yourself in times that border on biblical, that is only to

be expected. It is surreal. It also highlights that we are not without tools to address the present moment. Knowing what we know about how power reacts to being confronted, knowing how a lone prophetic voice will be targeted and martyred, knowing what the outcome is when we join in the condemnation, or just ‘wait and see’ how the whole thing turns out - knowing what we know, what are we, as Christians who remember our baptismal vows, going to *do*?

I started this piece by challenging us to be more mindful in what we give up. But I don’t want you to get the impression that only grand displays and world altering sacrifices matter. In fact, the more of us who are measured and intentional, the less need there is for such dramatic (and traumatic) displays. And I have a tangible suggestion for you to consider.

You’ve probably seen the new sanctuary seating – six pews have made way for three vintage seating areas. It’s a big change in how our space feels, and for many of us I’m pretty sure it has felt like a disruption, a sacrifice of what we have always known and loved. If we make Lenten sacrifices to pick up more meaningful things, I hope it will help to know what we have picked up, and why these might be offerings of special meaning and magnitude right now.



As the pews were being removed, a new creativity was coming to the surface, particularly in The Grove, but not only there. This change was directly linked to starting our social justice sing-along musicals, and our tech-free community gathering times. And while musicals and game night don’t leap to the top of the lists of how to combat authoritarianism, I think they have tremendous potential to do just that, and to become the bedrock of a new season of faith in action.



Our people are being torn apart at a time when we were already terribly isolated from one another. Protest, which used to be marked by music and the joy of camaraderie has become little more than angry slogan shouting. People are exhausted, alienated, and disillusioned. And yet we are surrounded by young seekers, people who know in their bones there must be more – more meaning, more love, more purpose. Who know what they think of as justice and common good aren’t what they live. Do you begin to see how transformative we might be at this moment?

As we use our sanctuary – God’s house – to draw people together in songs of hope, love, and resistance, we are connecting people’s lived experiences and their worst fears to their God-given spirit of resilience while making space to commune in joy to reimagine the kingdom come. As we invite people to set their phones aside and meet each other face to face, we are creating space for creative thought, meaningful conversation, and tilling the soil in which Good Trouble might take root and grow.

Sing-a-longs and game night aren’t going to save the nation, nor are they going to get us to resurrection. New sanctuary seating is, in the scheme of things, no big sacrifice. Yet how we engage the possibilities of those changes might be, at least in part, ways for us to rejoice in the resurrection life that comes to us when we repent, repair, and remake ourselves for the sake of God’s love.

With prayers of possibility in troubled times,

Pastor Grace

Let's Play Jeopardy

1. **The answer is:** This NPUMC program depends upon your financial contribution to provide food to senior citizens and children and their families in New Paltz every month. See page 4 for the question.
2. **The answer is:** This phrase means "drop our phones" at the door--a "No-Tech" time to connect with each other. See page 5 for the question.
3. **The answer is:** This dynamic bright star served our church, our local community and traveled the world, including Haiti and Mozambique, to help others. See page 7 for the question.
4. **The answer is:** A dinner with NO chicken, NO cooking, and NO clean-up. See page 8 for the question.

Hudson Valley Parish Council

On Ash Wednesday, the Hudson Valley Parish sponsored an **Ashes-to-Go** ministry. Pastor Grace reported that Ashes-to-Go was a small but meaningful outreach opportunity. We had a presence in Uptown Kingston and in front of Elting Library in New Paltz. People responded really well to the idea of being ‘made of star-stuff.’ I think people need to hear a message that connects them to more than themselves but defies death in the face of so much destruction.



Supplemental Food Program – Annual Appeal

Nani Bautochka and Kathy Weiss

Once again, this is our annual fundraising letter.

The **Supplemental Food Program** provides a monthly food supplement to two at-risk populations in New Paltz: 10 senior citizen households at Meadowbrook Federally subsidized housing, and 25 farm worker families whose children attend the Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD) Center.

The Jeopardy Question

What is the Supplemental Food Program?

The answer

This NPUMC program depends upon your financial contribution to provide food to senior citizens and children and their families in New Paltz every month.

There are two unique features in this program. One, we buy food items requested by each group. Two, the food is packed into individual family bags and delivered—to Meadowbrook and to the ABCD Center.



This program depends upon your giving.

All contributions are used to buy food. Dressel's Farms gives fresh fruit and vegetables each month; ShopRite donates sustainable shopping bags each month and facilitates our shopping by pre-ordering many staples. Many of you, including

Rotary of New Paltz, have supported this program since its beginning in 2017.

The grocery bill varies slightly, but is approximately \$1,200.00 each month. Contributions are tax deductible. Please mail checks to New Paltz United Methodist Church, 1 Grove Street, New Paltz NY 12561—You need to indicate **Supplemental Food Program in the memo line**. Every donation helps. Last year, contributions from individuals ranged from \$25.00 to \$1,500.00 annually. One person sends a check every month; another sends a check 3 or 4 times a year. **Each contribution is needed and appreciated.**



Thank you for any help you can give.

Remember to check out...

- Announcements that are sent out weekly with the Sunday worship information to find out about current activities
- Our church website that contains all kinds of information and is frequently updated

The Grove
Jacqui Vedder

Change is often intimidating. Our comfort zones are stretched and challenges are presented, but sometimes new experiences surprise you. When we step outside of the box and think in other ways, possibilities open up that we never imagined.

Upon entering New Paltz UMC you will notice things look different in the sanctuary. Near the front of the Church, where the pews were, there presently resides antique parlor furniture, throw rugs, coffee tables and decorative lamps. This was the brainchild of The Grove, in order to breathe new life into old spaces that will hopefully foster growth.

Now that this warm, inviting environment exists we thought of activities and events that the space would lend itself to. The group was inspired to have musical nights where we will screen movies such as *Wicked*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cabaret*, *Rent* and *Hamilton*. This will take place once a month through July. Popcorn will be provided and you are encouraged to sing along. Afterwards we will unpack the social justice themes running throughout these films.

One idea leads to another, so we also came up with Sans-Cyber Space. On the last Wednesday of each month from 5-9 PM, you can participate in phone-free social hours meant to give people a space outside of work and home, where they can spend time with friends. Activities include board games, doing puzzles or getting lost in conversation.

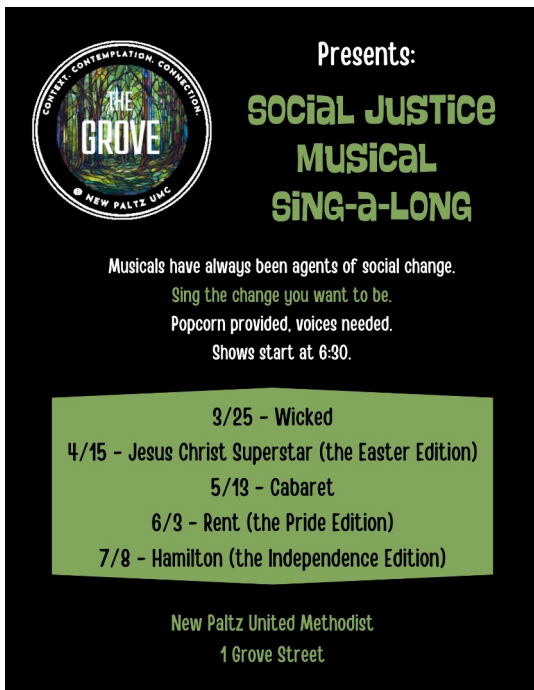
The Jeopardy Question

What is a Sans-Cyber evening?

The answer

This phrase means "drop our phones" at the door--a "No-Tech" time to connect with each other.

During chaotic times it's important to feel one has a place to go, where they can feel safe, be seen and build community. It's invigorating to share ideas, hear someone else's point of view and know you're not alone. Perhaps, this could be something you're interested in, so come check it out. All voices are welcome!

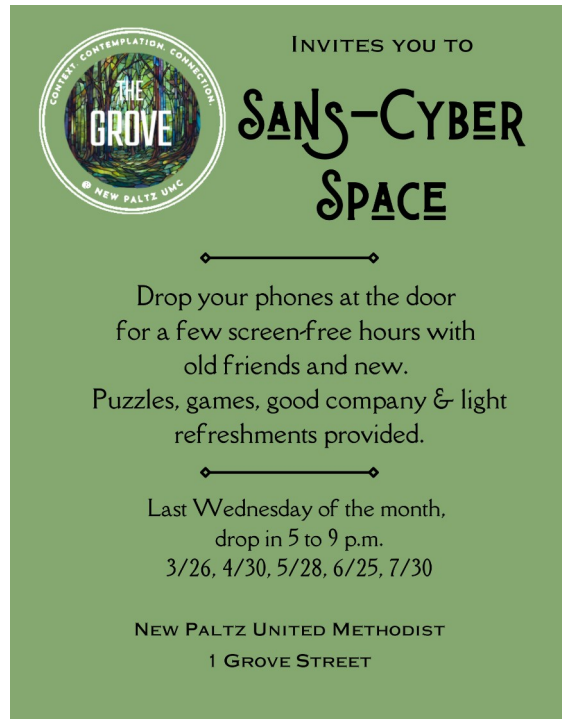


Presents:
**SOCIAL JUSTICE
MUSICAL
SING-a-LONG**

Musicals have always been agents of social change.
Sing the change you want to be.
Popcorn provided, voices needed.
Shows start at 6:30.

3/25 - *Wicked*
4/15 - *Jesus Christ Superstar (the Easter Edition)*
5/13 - *Cabaret*
6/3 - *Rent (the Pride Edition)*
7/8 - *Hamilton (the Independence Edition)*

New Paltz United Methodist
1 Grove Street



INVITES YOU TO
**SANS-CYBER
SPACE**

Drop your phones at the door
for a few screen-free hours with
old friends and new.
Puzzles, games, good company & light
refreshments provided.

Last Wednesday of the month,
drop in 5 to 9 p.m.
3/26, 4/30, 5/28, 6/25, 7/30

NEW PALTZ UNITED METHODIST
1 GROVE STREET

Merger Issue Update

Submitted by Jane Ruback

March 2025: A Positive Step Toward Sustainability

On March 9, 2025, members of the New Paltz Ad Hoc Committee on Merger Issues met with representatives from Modena Memorial to continue their discussions about the potential merger of our churches. The meeting was a positive and productive step toward exploring a shared future that honors the rich history of both congregations while looking ahead to a sustainable and vibrant ministry.

The conversation began by reviewing financial documents from both New Paltz and Modena, allowing for a clearer picture of the income and expenses of each church. Both churches had diligently assembled data on income streams, property maintenance, ministry initiatives, and future projections. It was a comprehensive review, setting the stage for a thoughtful discussion on how to combine resources in a way that benefits both communities.



One of the exciting proposals brought to the table was the possibility of renting the Modena Memorial Hall to a local community group. This idea, introduced by Pastor Grace, could provide a steady income stream for the Modena property while longer-term plans are developed. In addition, a realtor's preliminary evaluation suggested that the sale of the Modena property could yield significant funds that could help support the merged church's ministry and future capital improvements.

While there are still many details to work out, such as the apportionment arrears that Modena may owe and how the Conference might adjust these in the event of a merger, the meeting brought a spirit of cooperation and hope. Both committees are committed to finding solutions that ensure the financial health of the merged church, and both New Paltz and Modena are deeply invested in continuing to serve their communities.



Looking ahead, the merging of our two churches will require careful financial planning, but it also opens up exciting possibilities for shared ministries, combined resources, and expanded outreach. As we work together, we will continue to keep you informed and engaged in this important process.

We remain thankful for the leadership, vision, and dedication of both churches as we move forward in faith and in unity. Please continue to pray for guidance, wisdom, and grace as we discern the future of our churches together.

In Christ's Love,

The New Paltz Ad Hoc Committee on Merger - Daniel Ruback, Jane Ruback, Margaret Howe

Remembering Erica Chase-Salerno

Anna Louise Bates, Church Historian

The New Paltz United Methodist Church has a long history of members who care about our world community and who act to spread love and resources to peoples in need of necessities. This month, I chose to focus on Erica Chase-Salerno, a bright star who served our church and the world community tirelessly during her short lifetime.



The July 30, 2000 *Sunday Freeman* includes a story about Erica's mission trips to Haiti in 1999 and a planned trip to Mozambique in 2000. The trip to Haiti was part of a church-sponsored effort to build a community center. She described her experience in Haiti to Blaise Schweitzer (*Sunday Freeman* staff writer), sharing that, in addition to physical labor, she struggled to learn the creole language spoken by the residents there. Her later trip to Mozambique was aimed to relieve residents impacted by floods. In addition to helping build and rebuild community facilities, both the Haiti and Mozambique trips focused on food and medicine for those they served. Erica had a huge heart, a quick mind and undying desire to serve the world.

The Jeopardy Question

Who was Erica Chase-Salerno?

The answer

This dynamic bright star served our church, our local community and traveled the world, including Haiti and Mozambique, to help others.

Besides her many trips abroad, she worked locally with agencies such as Family of New Paltz and the Salvation Army. Erica was a world traveler. Besides the trips mentioned here, she traveled to Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, the Dominican Republic and other places.



During the 2000s, Erica married and raised two children. She converted every event in her life into an opportunity to serve others. The July 12, 2009 *Poughkeepsie Journal* described Erica's holistic pregnancy workshops. She wrote for multiple children's publications. It would not be possible to parse Erica's active life in one short article.

Know that members of the New Paltz United Methodist Church loved her and admired her seamlessly boundless energy. Erica passed in 2019, leaving a legacy that inspires all of us who aspire to God's command to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.

Still keeping Ukraine in our prayers



If you would like to add a financial donation to your prayers, see [GIVE - New Paltz United Methodist Church \(newpaltzumc.org\)](https://www.newpaltzumc.org) for "Give to Ukraine".

New Paltz Play School News

Nancy Vance, Director

Playschool is doing great, kids are enjoying being on the playground as we have spent many cold days in the Big Room. Bring on the Spring weather.

Our biggest fundraiser is coming up June 9th. Our Golf Tournament at New Paltz Golf Course! Last year was a huge success, we're hoping this year is a repeat. Anyone interested in playing, please let me know. We sold out quickly last year.



Happy Spring!

The Jeopardy Question

What is the NPUMC Trustees NO Dinner Chicken Dinner?

The answer

A dinner with NO chicken, NO cooking, and NO clean-up.

The New Paltz UMC Trustees
invite you to our 8th annual
**NO DINNER
Chicken Dinner**

No Cooking - No Cleanup
No Attendance



So... How does this work?

GIVE MONEY by 4/30/2025
to use to maintain the church property

Mail check to church or give in person...

Payable to NPUMC with "for Trustees" on memo line
1 Grove Street, New Paltz, NY 12561

Give online at...

<https://newpaltzumc.org/give/online-giving/>

Planned Giving

Dan Ruback

The annual letter asking you for your financial commitment to the Church will be coming out soon. Remember if you give appreciated stock you will get a tax deduction for the current value of the stock and not be taxed on any appreciation since you purchased it. Or, if you give a qualified donation from your IRA you will not be taxed on the distribution and it will not be counted as income when determining income for medical expenses. Information can be found on our church website. Click the Give tab and then More Ways to Give. Or, use this link [More Ways to Give... - New Paltz United Methodist Church](#).

Financial News

Margaret Howe

This is the 2025 financial Stewardship Campaign letter that will be coming to your mail box soon... email for most people, snail mail for some people.

Last year I said, *“We have spent the last year at New Paltz UMC working in the new reality of a post Covid environment. What did we learn and how do we continue to live in this new space. Over the last years we have become very successful in functioning in a “both/and” environment. We successfully worship each week - in person, zoom and facebook live. Sanctuary and Zoom folks interact each week in that special part of worship which is “just us”. It is quite true that many folks have not returned to in person worship and statistics show they will not return.”* And, I repeat it in 2025 with the added statement that the “new reality” is ever changing – and we sometimes cannot keep up with it or even identify what it is other than it is different. For worship Zoom is a way of life – a reality. We have taken out pews and created a living room/parlor environment – a new reality. This last year we have been in discussion with our charge partner Modena on a merger or closure – a new reality. We are concerned about sustainability and participated in a Prayer and Discernment process – a reality new and old. And through it all we believe that there is light and life here on the corner of Main and Grove and work to make it brighter.



This letter is the financial Stewardship Campaign for 2025. We hope you will be willing to make a financial commitment to New Paltz United Methodist Church. The good news is that 2024 had successful year end results! That does not mean we should not be concerned about 2025 and our future. Your financial support makes a huge difference. And what we do makes a difference – it spreads the seeds and some are planted and grow and we hope to see the fruit.

We at New Paltz United Methodist Church continue to live our mission of “loving our neighbors, loving ourselves and loving God”. We are working hard to think “out of the box” and that is a difficult task for churches. Yes the removing of pews and the change in furniture – spearheaded by *The Grove* who are members and friends 40 and under who believe in the Christian relationships. Look at what *The Grove* is sponsoring – Social Justice movie Sing – a – Longs and Sans- Cyber Space. That is visioning for the now/future.

Each week our service is posted on the church website (www.newpaltzumc.org). We continue to monitor our technology and continue to find ways to upgrade and enhance what we do in worship and what we can do in other ministry and mission opportunities.

Our small groups continue – Vi Cole Study Group, Bible Studies, Book Studies, Monday Prayer group. Some of these are with our Tri-church neighbors. Administrative Board continues to meet via ZOOM. Our care team reaches people with cards from the church through Marilyn, with rides and meals as needed. Our food ministries continue – monthly food supplement deliveries and monthly fresh food give-a-way. The mitten/hat tree continues – with hand made mittens/hats/scarves. The Angel Tree for 2024 provided ShopRite Gift Cards for the families and staff at the ABCD Childcare Center. In addition to being a Reconciling Congregation, we are an Anti-Racist Congregation. We are discovering our history and roots in this community. We are working to bring back the monthly Taize worship and the organ repair work is rustling. There is so much more we can do with our hearts, minds and doors open! And through it all we believe that there is light and life here on the corner of Main and Grove and work to make it brighter.

Through all of our worship and ministries we work hard to maintain our financial stability. Most of our expenses are funded by our plate giving (Offering) and the monies we receive from a well thought out endowment/planned giving program. We no longer do “big” fun(d) raising events. We do have the opportunity to – in addition to your pledge / commitment – to “adopt” a bill. We also have a yearly gift for part of our apportionments.

Our Online Giving via VANCO Financial Solutions – a company that specializes in church giving continues to grow and we are seeing gifts from folks who have experienced “something” at NPUMC. Some of our givers moved their giving to this format to assure that their gifts were received regularly. We linked the VANCO outlet to our church website to make it easier for folks to make an online contribution. The link is <https://newpaltzumc.org/give/online-giving/>. We have added the VANCO App to provide an easier way to give for those folks who use “apps” – just download the App!

We are successful because – you answered the call to enter into a financial relationship with New Paltz UMC – you are meeting your commitment – for this we are most grateful!

Four reasons why people commit money to a church – we do believe it is why you give and will continue to give.

- People give because they believe in the need for the mission/ministry.
- People give because they believe that ministry/mission makes a difference.
- People give because they have confidence in the church and its leadership.
- People give to people and they give generously where they have established a relationship.

I believe this! I hope you do too! And through it all we believe that there is light and life here on the corner of Main and Grove and we work to make it brighter.

With prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving, we the Finance Committee invite you to consider and prayerfully make a 2025 Commitment to New Paltz United Methodist Church. Please reply as soon as you can.

In your reply to newpaltzumc@gmail.com please provide

| |
|--|
| Name |
| Address |
| Email |
| Commitment Amount - (weekly or monthly or quarterly or yearly) |
| Method of submission |
| Check in mail |
| Check from bank |
| Online Giving |
| All of the above |

We appreciate your commitments. Thank you and may you be filled with God's love as we continue to be in ministry and mission on the corner of Main and Grove. And may it be so.

Finance Committee, New Paltz United Methodist Church



Let's Celebrate



Happy Birthday!

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| April 6 | Susan McNaughton |
| April 7 | Lee Pritchard |
| April 7 | Ryan Wager |
| April 15 | Jacqueline Vedder |
| April 23 | Kim Rosenmeier |
| April 27 | John Carraturo |
| April 27 | Gene Regan |
| April 30 | Alec Rappleyea |
| May 5 | Angie Morhous |
| May 6 | Anthony Buchanan |
| May 11 | Lyla Laffin |
| May 23 | Linda Mellor |
| May 29 | Nani Bautochka |

Happy Birthday!

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| June 2 | Nathan Roper |
| June 6 | Stephanie Parsons |
| June 16 | Mary Edwards Ransom |
| June 17 | Linda Loomis |
| June 18 | Millie Meyer |
| June 19 | Daniel Ruback |
| June 21 | Emily (Bautochka) Czaplicki |
| June 28 | Ann Craig |
| June 30 | Leah Rae Harding |

Happy Anniversary!

| | |
|---------|--------------------------|
| June 3 | Dan and Jane Ruback |
| June 4 | Joan and Vinny Gallagher |
| June 5 | Nancy and Hank Vance |
| June 21 | Carol and Alex Bialy |

We welcome your feedback. Email the church at newpaltzumc@gmail.com. It will be forwarded to Brenda Beane and Kathy Weiss, current newsletter editors.