

New Connexions United Methodist Church

November 2025

#### **Words from the Pastor**

Rev L. Grace Harmon

#### Thank you from Art and I

A year ago for our wedding, you gave us a fantastic present to look forward to – a hot air balloon ride. We immediately decided it would be

how we celebrated our first anniversary. As so often happens plans got juggled and we missed the weekend we wanted, so we had to wait til the very last weekend the balloon went up. As also so often happens, that turned out to be an incredible blessing.

As the sun rose, we launched out of

As the sun rose, we launched out of Kinderhook for what was supposed to be a one hour flight and became over two hours. We floated in perfect sunny skies cradled between the Catskills and the Hudson to the west and the Berkshires to the east. We watched the fog slowly dissipate, hovering ethereally over the river and lakes longest, as the glow on the mountains and another balloon made the world look lit from within.

Even our somewhat bumpy landing only served to make the experience more memorable. We missed a tree by about 6 feet and stopped traffic as we hovered the balloon inches off the ground to move it to a safe place to deflate.

Thank you so much from both of us for such a perfect and unforgettable adventure.

Love, Limina Grace and Art





#### Back with a Bang!

It is no accident that I came back from renewal leave to hit the ground running. It was by design. We have so much momentum, and I didn't want to risk any of it. And, while Target should not be planning for Christmas yet, I actually should. Still, I could not have imagined how exciting

my first few weeks back were going to be.

In these short couple of weeks, we have: launched Wellness Connexions (all credit goes to Jacqui Vedder with help from The Grove, and Linda Mellor), hosted a community conversation on Industrial Development Agency grants and how to create affordable



housing in the community, offered an epic Halloween to All Saints celebration (great thanks to The Grove, in particular Erin Edib, Jacqui Vedder, Linda Mellor, and Margaret Howe), been featured in a conference article about HEARTS and Playschool working together, offered a Taize vespers service, and

participated in a conference on leadership in challenging times.

A big reason to rejoice in this list is that these successes came together largely without me. It is

a sign of a healthy church that is equipping members and friends to implement their faith in the life of our community. As people come into our church for the first time or perhaps the first time in a long time, I have had countless opportunities to share what it means to be Methodist and how these events are crucial to our calling. We've heard great comments like "my church would never do something this cool!," ... "I forgot how good it feels to be in here," ... "this place is awesome!" and many more

statements of new life, new ways of

being perceived, and new possibilities for what our future together might look like if we embrace it.



If you ever wonder if what we do here matters, it does. The general public has come to the conclusion that there are two kinds of Christians in the world: Christian Nationalist, evangelical, judgmental ones, and the ones who say and do nothing. That is

the perception we are working to overcome, and at a time when people so desperately need a place to consider prayerfully, grow spiritually, think critically, and find the solace of fellow seekers. We are poised to meet this need in ways we have not been before, certainly in my time here.



If you ever wonder what you can or should do as a part of your relationship to our church and to our new life as New Connexions, now is the time and these are some ideas:

- Are you able to participate in our food ministries? With SNAP being cut, the need is about to skyrocket. We cannot meet it all, but with more help we can do more.
- Are you a musician? Would you like to be a part of creating ever evolving and unique worship opportunities?
- Would you like to teach a knitting class? Beginner Spanish? Herb gardening?
- Could you be the person to help us begin a Messy Church each month?
- Do you have people in your life who could benefit from HEARTS? Can you volunteer?
- Can you learn to run Sunday tech so the whole burden doesn't fall on Linda?
- Are you able to find and write grants?
- What amazing ideas do you have?

Perhaps the single best comment I heard about us in recent days is "I didn't know church could be like this!" Can you think of a better gift to offer people as we move into the long nights of winter, the complicated emotions of the Christmas season and whatever the next breaking news story might be? Because I don't think I can, and all we have to do is help with the wrapping and hand out the good stuff.

See you on Grove and Main, Beloved,

Pastor Grace

#### All Saints Sunday 2025

There was an amazing display of our saints on the altar for All Saints Day... remembering those who came before us!

During communion, we saw the here and now... a young person serving with wonder and joy!









#### **Wellness Connexions**

Jacqui Vedder

Wellness Connexions held their first two events this October. We opened with a live performance by **Velvet Moon** made up of Sarah Hoyes and Ella Ray Kondrat. Their soft, ethereal music left many in awe of their talent and lulled the crowd into a relaxed, dreamlike state. Attendees remarked that it was a "lovely, nourishing experience" and they would certainly recommend it to friends.















Next came a **Sound Meditation by Sama Shakti** who wowed the crowd with her range of instruments, the gift of her voice and calm nature making it a truly transcendent evening. Participants lay down on yoga mats, covered themselves with blankets and drifted into another realm. The response was that it was a much-needed respite and people "loved it!" There was a full house for this event and I could see why. How

healing it is for one to be in community and at the same time, at peace.

If you missed out on the above experiences, fear not, there are still more to come and a possible winter series in the works. Therefore, come make connections at New Connexions UMC.





# Presents VELLNESS ONNEXIONS

CONNEXIONS Music, yoga, meditation & more.
Free and open to all.

Wednesdays from 7 to 8 p.m. Oct. 22 - Nov. 19 1 Grove Street, New Paltz, NY

#### 10/22 Live Performance

VELVET MOON

Velvet Moon is a folk-inspired duo from Kingston NY. Sarah Hoyes and Ella Ray Kondrat wield guitar, violin and vocal harmonies, and play originals and intuitively arranged covers in a perennially evolving style.



#### 10/29 Sound Meditation

SAMA SHAKTI



Sama Shakti weaves together crystal bowls, gongs, chimes, earth elements, string instruments, and voice to create immersive soundscapes that transport participants into a state of profound presence. Sound healing can reduce stress, balance brainwave activity, and promote cellular healing making it a powerful tool for overall well-being.

Please bring your own bolster/blanket/yoga mat. We have a limited supply.

#### 11-5 Restorative Yoga

SAMA SHAKTI

Rooted in the art of yogic restoration, thesession is designed to activate the body's natural healing response, calm the nervous system, and support emotional balance. Restorative Yoga allows your body to open at its own pace while receiving the vibrational medicine of sound.

Please bring your own bolster/blanket/yoga mat. We have a limited supply.



#### 11/12 Centering Prayer

ILMINA GRACE HARMON Pastor Grace serves here at New Connexions. Centering Prayer is a gentle and forgiving form of meditation designed to create space for the sacred to come calling.

here Formed from an extended partnership

Formed froman extended partnership between Annie Roland and Carrie Chapman, Barely Lace offers a repertoire of esoteric original music as well as traditional European ballads and contemporary covers. They entwine haunting harmonies against chords and rhythm in a style they call 'acoustic trance'.



BARELY LACE

#### newconnexionsumc@gmail.com

Here, we ask 'howareyou?'
And we stay til the answer is 'well.'

#### Thank You To Our Guest Preachers

Brenda Beane

While Pastor Grace was on her spiritual renewal leave, we had some wonderful people filling in for her. They did a great job! We would like to acknowledge and thank them! If you missed any, you can find recordings of all our Sunday morning scripture readings and sermons on our church website at Worship Service Videos - New Paltz United Methodist Church

08/24: Rev Jody Spiak with message Thirsting Soul

08/31: Rev Jody Spiak with message Thirsting Water

09/07: Erika Panzarino, Certified Lay Servant

09/14: Rev Jody Spiak with message Living Water

09/21: Rev Jody Spiak with message Finding Our Purpose

09/28: Rev Jody Spiak with message Freeing Our Potential

10/05: Rev Richard 'Rick' Edwards, a former pastor of our church

10/12: Rev Jody Spiak with message Conversation On Prayer

As you can see Rev Jody Spiak was a "regular"! He used to be a full time pastor in our District, but now he is a full time hospital chaplain. He loves the opportunity to preach on occasion. We thanked him with a cake and t-shirt! The t-shirt says "In 900 years"

of time and space, I've never met someone who wasn't important."
... a quote from Doctor Who. In his 9/21 sermon, Jody shared another quote from Doctor Who... "Do what I do, hold on tight and pretend it's a plan!" He said it is one of the best definitions of faith that he has heard!







When Rev Rick Edwards led worship, it was a family affair! His daughter Mary Edwards-Ransom, who is a member of our church, and his grandsons Charlie and Matte joined him and participated in the service. It was a delight to see!

Erika Panzarino is a Certified Lay Servant. Her home church is Katonah & Purdys. However, her adopted second home church is New Connexions. She is part of "The Grove" group.



# **HEARTS**Rev Eileen Daunt



HEARTS is a ministry that builds community. Volunteer friends and friends living with dementia walk alongside one another. Everyone



participates in socialization, conversations, singing, movement / exercise, activity time, table games, and large motor games and lunch time. The 4-hour day provides engagement, encouragement and builds connections

as we all work alongside each other. This time provides respite for both the caregiver and the person living with dementia and our volunteer friends. It is time that provides joy, love and acceptance. It is discipleship at its



best for everyone. HEARTS is listed on the "NY Connects" and the "Respite for All" websites as a weekly program serving families that are living with dementia. This ministry has been active weekly for the past 3 years.



On September 19<sup>th</sup> we had our first day here at New Connexions UMC in New Paltz. The HEARTS Ministry has been meeting weekly for the past three years at Modena: Memorial UMC and Ellenville UMC. The merging together of Modena: Memorial and New Paltz UMCs gives this ministry a new home. Our volunteers and HEARTS friends currently reside in Plattekill, Modena, Ardoinia, Highland, Wallkill, Gardiner and New Paltz. HEARTS was first introduced in the "Wider Circle" newsletter this past Spring, at that time we had 4 regular friends, we now

have 7 friends attending regularly. Our volunteer staff consists of 9 persons. One of the many beautiful things about HEARTS volunteers is that they are called friends too! And they each have their own schedule of when to "work" at HEARTS.

On October 17<sup>th</sup> the New York Annual Conference New York City Society visited our "new" HEARTS site. Jessica Ellis from the United Methodist City came and spent the whole day with us. It was a pleasure for all of us. Jessica shared with us that it is so much better to see Older Adult Ministries in person than to read a written report. The HEARTS Ministry was one of 6 awarded a Bethany Home Grant for Older Adults Ministry from the United Methodist City Society for the year of 2025.

HEARTS Days are full of excitement and fun.

On October 31, we had the pleasure to have 11 children and their teachers from the New Paltz Playschool visit. The 3- and 4-year-old children sang us



a couple of songs and had a Halloween parade in our meeting space. We sang a song for them and we all joined together singing "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider" song. HEARTS friends and the children played a short balloon toss game with several big orange balloons tossing them back and forth with the children. Unfortunately, a few of the balloons popped with loud bangs. It was a wonderful time together. We all look forward to interacting with them again. The New York

Annual Conference communications photographer, Shamantha Vargas, spent the day with us snapping the action and smiles.

If you have any questions and desire to learn more how you might participate in this ministry or desire more information please contact: Rev Eileen Daunt, Director at either <a href="hearts@nyac-umc.com">hearts@nyac-umc.com</a> or call 845 287 9459

# New Paltz Play School News

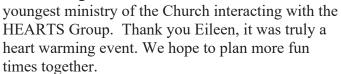
Nancy Vance, Director

Playschool is rolling on everyday with 50 children having so much fun. We had a visit from the New Paltz Fire Dept during fire prevention week. The children got to see one of the firemen dress in all his gear and hear a smoke alarm ring. They learned about 911 and stop drop & roll. The highlight was going outside to sit in the big fire truck.

Last week we got to have a Halloween parade for the HEARTS Group. The children sang some Halloween songs and the HEARTS group also sang Halloween songs to the children. They had a wonderful time playing with orange balloons hitting them back & forth between the children & the HEARTS folks. It was



such a wonderful event, seeing the



Playschool is having our Spaghetti Dinner in the large Social Room on Saturday November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Serving will be from 5pm – 7pm. The cost is \$10 for children ages 2 – 10 and \$20 for ages 11 & up.



#### **Halloween on Grove Street**

Jacqui Vedder

Halloween on Grove Street was the brainchild of Erin Edib of The Grove. Her idea to breathe new life into our sacred space, by making it fun and welcoming, was a wild success.



On All Hallows' Eve 783 people came through our doors for a haunted sanctuary celebration. People entered the building through the Main Street entrance to spiderwebs, tombstones, skeletons, jack-o-lanterns and more.







Attendees then moved down the aisle, from Halloween, into a Day of the Dead celebration with sugar skulls, tissue paper marigolds, streamers, flags and live characters greeting you as you came out of the tunnel into the parlor area.

Ahead was an angel giving out candy at our All-Saints altar. Here we remembered those who came before us as well as the contributions they made to our Church. You were invited to take a card and write down the name of your lost loved one whose life

you wanted to celebrate and remember by lighting a candle and placing it on the stage.



Last, people left through the Grove Street entrance, greeted by a fortune teller, who handed out healthy treats while seeing wellness in one's future through her crystal ball. You were then invited to partake in our Wellness Connexions' free fall series and handed a flyer for our upcoming events.



Joy and enthusiasm were often witnessed on participants faces as they left, along with shouts heard of "I love this church." There were many who came and went several times they relished the experience so much. One is reminded of all that came before, those they inspired and all the life left to be seen on Grove Street, as our faith is set alight and made new.





Behind the scenes... set up can be as much fun as the event!











#### New Paltz Methodist Church Promotes Race Relations Sunday in 1949

Anna Louise Bates, Church Historian

In 1949, race relations in the United States were reaching a fever pitch. The Methodist Church, and the New Paltz Methodist Church in particular, were aware of national tensions.

Race Relations Sunday, started in 1923 in the Methodist Episcopal Church
South, was an annual observance in the Methodist Church dedicated to confronting racism,
promoting interracial understanding, and supporting ministries of racial justice. The MEC South
condoned slavery prior to the reunification of the northern and southern branches of Methodism
in 1939. It is possible that the formation of Race Relations Sunday in the South was a way for
the church to acknowledge its own complicity in racial segregation while encouraging members
to work toward reconciliation. Whatever the case, Race Relations Sunday became part of the
Church's main body after the reunification of its Northern and Southern branches.

The New Paltz Methodist Church enthusiastically supported Race Relations Sunday. The 1949 Church Newsletter proclaimed that the New York Conference "supports 15 Negro colleges and universities ... whose influence for better race relations has been incalculable." The Reverend Lee H. Ball called for generous donations, for "...the operating costs of our Negro institutions has doubled since the end of the war, while the applications for admission have more than doubled. Let us make our 1949 offering really generous..." At that time, the New York Conference supported Clark College in Atlanta, where students were "well housed and equipped on a beautiful campus."

The New York Annual Conference supports efforts to improve race relations through education, advocacy and support for cross-racial ministries. Its' Commission on Religion and Race encourage multicultural congregations and leadership development.

Today, Race Relations Day is called Human Relations Day, and is celebrated on the Sunday preceding Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. This will fall on January 18, 2026. The NYAC churches continue to fund ministries that strengthen multiracial and multicultural congregations, provide scholarships, and support justice initiatives. Given the tense nature of race relations in the United States today, we might start planning now to generously support our National Conferences' efforts come January.

----Notes are from the New Paltz Methodist News, February 11, 1949

#### Still keeping Ukraine in our prayers

If you would like to add a financial donation to your prayers, see <u>GIVE - New Paltz United Methodist</u> Church (newpaltzumc.org) for "Give to Ukraine".



#### Wesley Mission School in Moheto, Kenya

The Wesley Mission School – Moheto celebrated their first Pre-Primary 2 (Kindergarten) graduation on October 17<sup>th</sup>. New Connexions UMC is a valued supporter of Rev Kennedy Mwita and the Wesley Mission School.



# New Paltz Student Christian Center at SUNY

Brenda Beane

Chaplain Michelle Ledesma Baer spoke at the Hudson Valley Parish Council meeting on October 23<sup>rd</sup> to share information about the Student Christian Center. We are interested to see how the churches within our parish could work with and provide support to the SCC.

The New Paltz SCC was established in 1967. For four decades, it offered traditional campus ministries, which is what many of us remember. Times have changed! And, the SCC is changing.

Chaplain Michelle has been leading the SCC for 4 years. The SCC supports the entire campus community... students, faculty, staff, and vendors. It is a progressive organization that focuses on love and acceptance. Michelle works on building one-on-one relationships and intentional communities, addressing existential questions, crisis management, and food justice. Examples of some specific programs are: Good Trouble Coffee House, Fair Trade Buying Program, and Braver Angels – Disagreeing Better.

The New Paltz UMC and the Redeemer Lutheran Church are two of the founding members of the SCC that remain involved today. Jane Ruback and Linda Loomis with Jaqui Vedder as an alternate were elected to the Student Christian Center board in June of 2025.

Jane, Jacqui, and Jason staffed the SCC table at a Mental Wellness Fair at SUNY New Paltz.



The Hudson Valley Parish plans to keep connected with Chaplain Michelle and the SCC to find ways to support their mission.

# Financial News

Margaret Howe

It is November and again I am last.....at least I am quite sure I am!

New Paltz and Modena were officially merged by the New York Annual Conference on July 1, 2025. However, we needed to be recognized with all the legal documents by the State of New York......Some really good news in case you did not hear – the State of New York Supreme Court – County of Ulster approved the legal merging on Modena Memorial United



Methodist Church and New Paltz United Methodist Church to become New Connexions United Methodist Church. Now begins the process of changing our name on all official documents, bank accounts, etc. This will take a bit of time, however you can be sure that effective January 1 you will be writing your checks to New Connexions United Methodist Church. Thank you to everyone for the work to make this happen and the work yet to be done. We are one in the spirit and we are one in our ministries.

With this merger there are some financial concerns to get us over the hump and into next year. As a merged church we are responsible for the upkeep of the Modena campus until it is sold – it is on the market – there is a realtor – and folks have looked at the property. Let's pray that a sale can happen as soon as possible and we will no longer have those expenses.

I would like to talk about Apportionments. Every church in any Methodist Conference is assessed apportioned dollars to support the Methodist Church. The amount is based on a formula and calculated based on the number of churches in a conference and the individual churches expenses. It is fair and equitable. Paying apportionemnts in full is important. Some benefits – the ability to apply for grants and funding for ministries and projects – if apportionments paid in full – a church can apply – we have benefited from some of those grants. However some churches have struggled and were not able to pay apportionments. That happened to Modena this year 2025. Now that we are merged the apportionemnts for 2025 include New Paltz and Modena. New Paltz is current in payments. Modena is not. Together we need to pay this amount. We need an additional \$6000 to become whole for the now New Connexions Apportionments for 2025. The \$6000 is the full Year for Modena. Together let's make that happen. A \$1000 gift has been received – can you make a 13th month commitment to help pay apportionments. 2026 Apportionments will be the merged churches and that number is appropriate for our 2025 budget. If you can assist – send check to church or give through Online Giving – make sure you put Modena Apportionments in the memo space – these need to be paid by December 31.

Currently the Finance Committee is working on the 2026 Operating Budget for New Connexions. As I am sure you would understand, this budget will include the Modena Campus expenses. We will present a preliminary budget to the Ad Board in November and will hope to adopt the budget by January. Your continued financial commitment is essential to helping to keep the finances of New Connexions fluid. The finances of a Methodist church are critical — however the ministries and mission, if they are in full operation, are the foundation and money

becomes the necessary second. In the Methodist denomination we are not subsidized by the greater church – we develop our own financial budget and work to maintain it. And, as Methodists we make a membership vow to serve our congregations through our prayers, presence, service, gifts and witness. I think we sometimes get so busy we forget these important vows/commitments we made – we need to acknowledge what and how we fulfill these – we do many automatically – let's do them all as a matter of recognizing what it means to be a United Methodist. I think we will be surprised that we are committed – let's celebrate and challenge ourselves to full commitment – I am! Let us see what surprises us.

#### Some updates since the last Newsletter

- Pastor Grace has returned from her eight week Spiritual Renewal Leave and we are happy to have her back among us. I want to thank those who filled the pulpit during those eight weeks. The fee paid each Sunday was \$200 totaling \$1600 for these weeks. Of this \$1600 half of the money came from folks who adopted a pastor for the week "Adopt a Pastor" thank you. We were fortunate to have Rev Jody Spiak for 6 of the eight weeks. It was a joy to have Rev. Rick Edwards preach....a former pastor at New Paltz, father of Mary Edwards Ransom and grandfather of Charlie, Matte, and Lia. Mary and Charlie shared the service with Rev. Rick.
- Utility bills continue to be read monthly usage is up and down and I am sure it will continue. Please make sure if you turn the heat up for a meeting or event you turn it down when you leave. Treat the church building like your home thank you.
- NYAC continues to upgrade their billing system for the payment of Pastor's Health Benefits and Pensions. That system is up and running that monthly bill is paid online no check is written. The next upgrade will be for Apportionments to be paid the same way. We currently make a monthly payment for approprionments.
- Organ Repairs Update we continue to be in conversation with organ technician it is a
  very small company and work on a job can exceed the time that was planned and there are
  very few companies who service pipe organs. The technician will come to review the scope
  of work from the earlier proposal. Will keep you informed. This will be exciting to get this
  back on track.

I am repeating - If you know your John Wesley history – you know that May 24, 1738, known as Aldersgate Day – at a prayer meeting on that day – Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed" – he experienced an assurance of God's love and went on to share that love with all. Want some Methodist history read more about John Wesley, I suggest *John Wesley Holiness of Heart and Life* by Charles Yrogoyen, Jr. Why do I share this again – because much has happened to us at New Connexions – and although my heart is still financially a bit heavy – I do feel a warm spirit of potential growth and renewal – not to the past – rather to the future – we have much work to do to embrace our sustainability as a church, a parish, a district and a conference – we have opportunities - let's grab hold – and with enthusiasm move forward with these ministries and missions......doing good, doing no harm and staying in love with God.

The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table of the United Methodist Church recently unveiled a new vision statement – "love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously". I look forward to the growth and love and sharing and fellowship and discipleship sharing that can

emerge from our new *connexion*. I know somewhere in this Newsletter there is the sharing of the Wellness Connexions activities and Halloween on Grove Street – these are new ministries and growth – and signs for the future - Forward we move on the corner of Main and Grove out and about wherever we are called.

May it be so!!!!

With love, Margaret 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

#### Some Upcoming Happenings Around the Parish





# an evening of Bluegrass

NOVEMBER 14,2025, 7PM PLUTARCH CHURCH 10 BLACK CREEK ROAD

Featuring local artists

playing bluegrass music

from the Civil War era to today

Join us for a night of music, community and fun!

Join us NEXT week for a return to our speaker series on natural resources and conservation. Our goal is to bring the Plutarch ommunity together to learn about natural resources in our area share ideas, and enhance conservation and stewardship.



# **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16**

Service at 2:00 PM

Come join us at:

MILTON-MARLBORO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 112 CHURCH STREET, MILTON NY 12547

Come join us for:

# HUDSON VALLEY COOPERATIVE PARISH QUARTERLY COMMUNION & BAPTISM





All are welcome!

Reception following the service



# Let's Celebrate





# **Happy Birthday!**

	,	•
Nov 5	Kriste	en Osterhoudt
Nov 9	Glenr	n Sohm
Nov 15	Suzar	nne Welch
Nov 18	Make	enna Roe
Nov 20	Kate	Hymes
Nov 24	Amy	Mellor
Nov 24	Scott	Lawton
Dec 2	Deb I	Oressel
Dec 4	Alex	Bialy
Dec 4	Noell	e Rappleyea
Dec 7	Darle	ne Montini
Dec 8	Cyntl	nia Rappleyea
Dec 17	Regir	na Lawton
Dec 20	Brian	Harding
Dec 26	Steph	anie Laffin

# Happy Birthday!

### **Happy Anniversary!**

Dec 23	Linnea and Pat Masson
Dec 27	Sue and Jim Ulrich

We welcome your feedback. Email the church at <a href="mailto:newconnexionsumc@gmail.com">newconnexionsumc@gmail.com</a>. It will be forwarded to Brenda Beane and Jacqui Vedder as current newsletter editors.