

Vestal United Methodist Church

328 Main St.

Vestal, NY 13850

607 – 785 – 3367

<https://vestalumc.org/>



Dear Members and Friends,

I never noticed it before because the tomb was there...the women followers of Jesus were there, ready to anoint his lifeless body to give him a proper burial because he was brutally crucified on Friday and then the Sabbath, they must keep. They waited anxiously, until the Sabbath was over, and then hurried to honor Jesus in death, and grieve for him. We heard them fret about how huge the stone in front of the grave was and wondered if they could find someone to help them roll it away. The mysterious figure was there to give the news.

In Mark's version of the story-there's no Jesus. In fact, the messenger says: "he is not here." Um, this is Easter-if he's not here, where is he? The women didn't wait around to ask too many questions. They rushed off, as the story says, seized by "trauma, and ecstasy." The story ends in silence.

This ending is so unsettling that at least three different attempts have been made to fix it. It doesn't seem quite right to leave the story there, and later writers have added to the end.

Mark wrote this gospel down about forty years after the death of Jesus, in a time of upheaval for the Jewish people. The great temple was reduced to rubble. The people of Israel sustained terrible losses due to their rebellion against the mighty Roman empire. The small band of followers were separated from other Jews who didn't believe he was the Messiah. There's more and more distance between those who followed Jesus and those who were still waiting for the Messiah to come, sometimes even members of the same family were divided.

Mark's gospel was birthed into a world full of terror. The bleakness of the ending matched the harshness of the times.

We take the resurrection for granted because we know the story, but it's a huge surprise on that first day. I don't know if I would have been any different. In fact, I admire their courage. If you were expecting a body and you got a message that Jesus who was missing, being afraid makes perfect sense. Still, we want more. Like the women at the tomb, we want to know where Jesus is, and what he's up to.

Glennon Doyle wrote on her blog about teaching Sunday School at her church. The kids came into the sanctuary and sat down, listening to the teacher. After a bit, one little boy got restless and whispered to her: *"Excuse me. Is God coming?"*

That's the question, isn't it-when we investigate the tomb and find it empty, but we don't know what's coming next. When the job ends. When the divorce papers come in the mail. When you're about to lose your house. When the doctor comes in, she isn't smiling. When your child is lost to drugs. When violence comes into your life and shakes your sense of safety. Is God coming?

Apostle Mark wrote his gospel for people who were already believers. They already knew the rest of the story. They knew that God was coming, that God has come and is still coming. The story is not so much about the empty tomb and the missing Jesus, but the reality that he's already at work again. He's already in Galilee, where they're all from, where it all began. He's not in any place that can contain him, seal him up, or keep him in place. He's in Galilee, where there's work to be done. The very first thing Mark ever says about Jesus is, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9).

Jesus went back to where the work was. He went to Galilee, and Syria, and New York. He has gone to refugee camps in Gaza where parents are burying children today. He has gone to the seat on the bus where someone is being bullied, and to the dark walkway where a woman is being harassed. He's gone to the park bench where someone will try to sleep tonight, and to the empty dining room where a family is sitting without food. He's gone ahead to the person standing on the edge of a bridge, planning to end their own life. He's gone because he's busy, coming to us.

We can stand, peering into the tomb, wanting more. We can get lost in our fear, or our surprise at something new, or we can get up and go to Galilee, wherever we find it in our world, right now, and try to find the Jesus who can't be limited, can't be contained, and can't be held down by death.

We can go and find him, for he carries the good news with him. God is coming-to you and me and every place of terror and need, every place of pain and suffering, and every place of joy too.

He has good news for us and work for us to do alongside him. He is not here-he has been raised. Let's hurry and catch up with him.

In the risen name of Christ,
Pastor Sundar

Church Calendar 2024

March 10:	Daylight Saving Time Starts UMC Scout Sunday Skate Estate – Back to 80's Party 7 p.m.
March 11:	Finance Meeting - 7 p.m.
March 13:	Choir Rehearsal - 7 p.m.
March 20:	Church Council - 7 p.m.
March 21:	Choir Rehearsal - 7 p.m.
March 24:	Palm/ Passion Sunday Youth program 4:30 p.m. All-church dinner 5:30 p.m.
March 25:	SPRC Meeting - 7 p.m.
March 28:	Holy Thursday Service - 7 p.m.
March 29:	Good Friday Service - 7 p.m.
March 31:	Easter Day Service - 9:30 a.m.
April 1:	Trustees Meeting - 7 p.m.
April 8:	Finance Meeting - 7 p.m.
April 22:	SPRC Meeting - 7 p.m.
April 27:	Blood Drive - 9 a.m.

Notes of Encouragement to Broome County Jail Inmates

The Missions Team needs your help to write notes of encouragement to some of the inmates at the Broome County Correctional Facility. Our goal is to collect 350 notes, they will mean a great deal to those who receive them.

There are some bundles (5 notecards each) available on the Connection Center under the balcony.

Please follow these instructions carefully for your note to be delivered:

- Please use only WHITE envelopes
- On the outside of the envelope, write only "Vestal UMC" in the upper left corner.
- Do NOT add stickers or color to the outside, and NO candy, stickers, or trinkets to the inside. NO staples. Only writing is acceptable on the card.
- Children or others may add color to the inside or back of the card with markers or ink stamps only, no crayon — nothing to the envelope.
- Children and youth are encouraged to write these notes of encouragement.
- Sign only your first name to the note.

- Seal the note in the envelope.
- **Please return all notes to the church by Sunday, March 24, 2024.**
- Leave the notes in the box under the balcony labeled 'Jail Ministry - Notes of Encouragement'.

Suggestions and rules for content:

- Please add no greeting - for example, do NOT add "Dear _____", etc. Just begin your note right away.
- Your note should be a simple, positive, uplifting message.
- Suggested wording (you may reword or use your ideas);
 - As Spring approaches, I write this note to let you know that you are not forgotten.
 - We are thinking of you / praying for you - Spring is a time for new beginnings.
 - We understand this is a difficult time for you and want to let you know that we are thinking of you.
- Avoid a lot of religious/Christian jargon to respect the many religious backgrounds or faiths of the inmates.
- Again - Please sign with only your first name.

If you have any questions, contact Sue Clancey at (607) 658-6256

Lenten Offering 2024

The Missions Team offers the following suggestions for the Lenten giving opportunities this year. You can make your offering online at the Vestal UMC website or using an envelope that will be available in the pews or at the Connections Center (under the balcony). Thank you for your generous giving!

UMCOR - Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees - Middle East Council of Churches (Advance #14908A)

The goal of the project is the improvement of health among Palestinian women and children (reduction in neonatal and maternal mortality, improvement of mental health). Poverty reduction among Palestinian refugees and Palestinians.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization that helps provide families with affordable housing by building or improving places to call home.

The Rescue Mission

The Rescue Mission has served the homeless and poor in the love of Christ since 1887. For many years, it was one mission and one city. The RM fed and housed alcoholic men living on the edge of the Erie Canal in Syracuse. Today, they serve the homeless and poor in the love of Christ in Syracuse, Cayuga County, and Broome County. While it's now three communities, it's still one mission. Your donations will help feed these men.

VINES Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments

VINES is an organization committed to developing community gardens, urban agriculture, and community green spaces. They strive to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods by redeveloping urban sites into productive green spaces.

General Funds

Our church continues our quest to balance our budget and your donations will help, not only to balance our year but to grow our mission and minis.



Easter plant sale

It is time to place your order for Easter flowers. They will make our sanctuary look beautiful on Easter Sunday and may take them home after worship that day. You may order them in memory or in honor of a loved one.

Deadline to order: Sunday, March 7th

Easter Lillies - \$15

Hyacinth Daffodils and Tulips – 10

Mum Plants – \$12

You may pick up an order form in the communication center or online. You may pay by cash, or check payments to Vestal VUMC with Easter flowers written in the memo. **The deadline to order is March 17th.**

<https://form.jotform.com/210760432812144>

Flowering Cross

On Easter Sunday morning during the Worship service, we will be flowering the cross.

When you come to church that day, please bring a 4" stemmed flower to add to the cross which will be located in the sanctuary front. There will be other flowers provided for you to use there, as well, so please add a few. Our completed flowering cross will be placed on the front lawn for our neighbors to enjoy afterward, as well. This is a beautiful tradition that we would like to continue, please join us!



VUMC, the children will again be asking for help during LENT for collecting food for the food pantry starting this Sunday. (Remind the folks that the three parts of LENT are Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. The collecting of food for the food pantry is how the children will give Alms and how they invite the congregation to participate. Below you will find a list of items that are in need.

VUMC Lenten Food Collection

Vestal UMC Lenten Food Collection will be supporting the Vestal Food Pantry again in 2024. The pantry is located at Vestal High School and is open to the community. Thank you so much for supporting the Vestal Food Pantry. Any donations are appreciated.

Here are some items the pantry needs on a regular basis;

Dinner kits (hamburger helper/taco kits)	water bottles	ramen noodles
instant rice	pancake mix	deodorant - mens/womens
flavored rice/noodle packets	syrup	pasta sauce
jelly - not grape	nutella	pasta
toilet paper	tuna	dressings
pickles	cereal	mustard
paper towels	laundry soap	ketchup
crackers	dish soap	mayo
juice	granola bars	spaghetti's
juice boxes	oil	chunky soup
	sugar	
	nuts	

HISTORY OF METHODISM CLASS OFFERED

Leader: Jhonilyn Gilbert

All are Welcome. See below for how to sign up.

To assist in this church's transition, our intentional interim pastor, Rev. Sundar Samuel, has provided our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) an outline, with possible questions, and areas to look into while guiding us on this journey as a church.

Some of these possible goals are as follows:

- Examine the present in the context of the church's whole history.
- Discover your true identity as a church.
- Reconnect with your denomination.
- Reconnect with your purpose for being a church.
- Come to terms with recent events.
- Find a positive vision for the future of this church.

Therefore, to assist in this process, I am inviting all of you, the whole church congregation, to join me during the Sunday School time - 11 am following the worship service - beginning Sunday, April 21st, and continuing on for several weeks to examine the history of Methodism from its origins in Great Britain to America, and to the 21st century. We will begin with a DVD about John Wesley on April 21st.

In order to determine which room to set up in, please sign up on the sign-up sheets under the balcony, or notify the church office of your plan to attend.

There is also a sign-up genius you can use to sign up. The link is
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0F49AAA92DA3FD0-48015313-history>

VESTAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

presents

BACK *to* 80's

Lent Chain

The Children's Sunday School class has started a Lent chain. Each child has written something they will do or not do for Lent and added it to the chain. We will be adding to it each week. The chain is in the back of the church if our adults would like to participate. Our goal is to get 40 links to represent the 40 days of Lent.

Easter Egg Hunt

We will be holding our annual Easter Egg Hunt and social on Easter Sunday immediately following the service in the bell tower (and surrounding classrooms). All are welcome to join us as we celebrate Easter Sunday! We are seeking donations of candy to put in the eggs. We are also looking for refreshments for the social. A sign up is located in the back of the church on the bulletin board or on-line: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4AA5A923A5FBC70-4B135657-easter>

SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH

AT SKATE ESTATE
ENJOY A NIGHT OF
MUSIC FOOD
DRINKS SKATING
AND FUN!

7 P.M. UNTIL 9 P.M.

TICKET: \$18 PER PERSON

TICKET INCLUDES:

**ADMISSION, SKATE RENTAL, TWO SLICES
OF PIZZA, AND A DRINK**



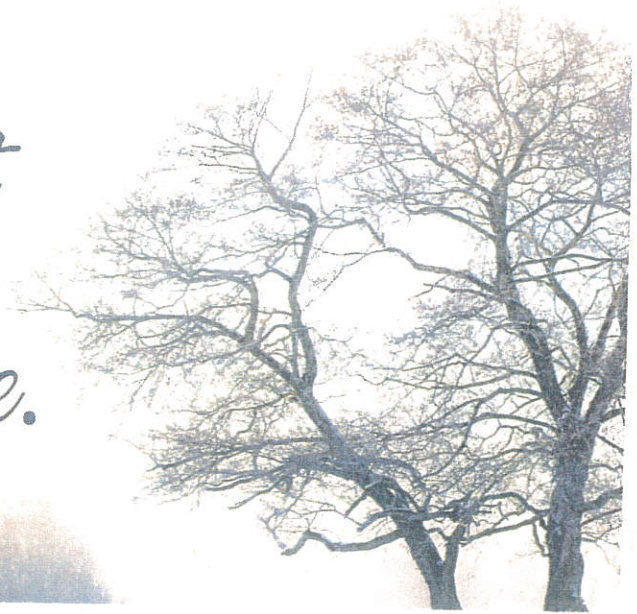
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*You don't
have to
grieve alone.*



GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

If you have experienced the loss of someone you loved
- a parent, spouse, child, sibling, or best friend -
we'd love for you to attend. This is a supportive and confidential
space where you and the other participants can learn more about
the grief process and go through it together
with others to lean on and support you.
You will form a bond and trust with others
and they will become an important part of your healing process.
Group is limited to 8 participants,
with a minimum of 4,
to help form stronger relationships.

**Group begins Wednesday, April 3rd
and meets for 10 weeks
1:00-3:00**

Once a group begins, registration will be closed. Any additional
interested participants will need to wait until a new group is formed.

**Meets at Vestal United Methodist Church
328 Main Street, Vestal
www.vestalumc.org**

**PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by calling 607-785-3367.
Registration closes at 1:00 p.m. on April 1st.**

GRIEF SUPPORT

A grief support group is being offered to those finding difficulty coping with the loss of a loved one due to death. This group will offer support and guidance from others who are experiencing the same unresolved feelings of others in the group.

The group will be facilitated by Jan Hallock. While Jan is not a trained professional, she comes to the group with compassion and empathy having experienced multiple losses herself. She's well-read in the field of grief and has facilitated other grief support groups here at VUMC.

Participants will form a bond and trust with others in the group and they will become an important part of the healing process. Each group, with a **minimum of 4**, is limited to a **maximum of 8** to help form stronger relationships. Confidentiality is necessary.

This **10 week** program will begin on **Wednesday, April 3rd** and will meet in the library from **1:00-2:00**.

Pre-registration is required by 1:00 April 1st by contacting the church office at 785-3367 or by contacting Jan Hallock directly at 607-237-5363.

Jan would appreciate your prayers for herself as well as the participants as they travel this journey together.