

“Who would roll away the stone?” They focused on the problem, not the solution God had already promised, as they had been told repeatedly.

Community is where we confront the darkness of this world. Community is the place we bring our hope, joy, sorrow, and grief. Community is the key to unlocking the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. These sacraments do not exist in a vacuum. They happen in a community of faith. A community that collectively comes together and confesses one’s sins in the shadow of a merciful, loving God that gives us the power to resist evil in whatever forms they present. Sometimes we can see

evil and call it for what it is; evil. Other times it is deceptive, like a little white lie that gets bigger as time goes on.

Thinking back over the past couple of years, I have buried more people than I care to recall. It is hard to remove yourself from the reality of the shadow of death when it is staring you in the face. Yet, every time I kneel at the casket before a funeral, I thank God for the community that has come together to mourn and celebrate an individual’s homecoming to the kingdom of God.

To continue reading visit, <https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/we-are-community> or scan the QR code.



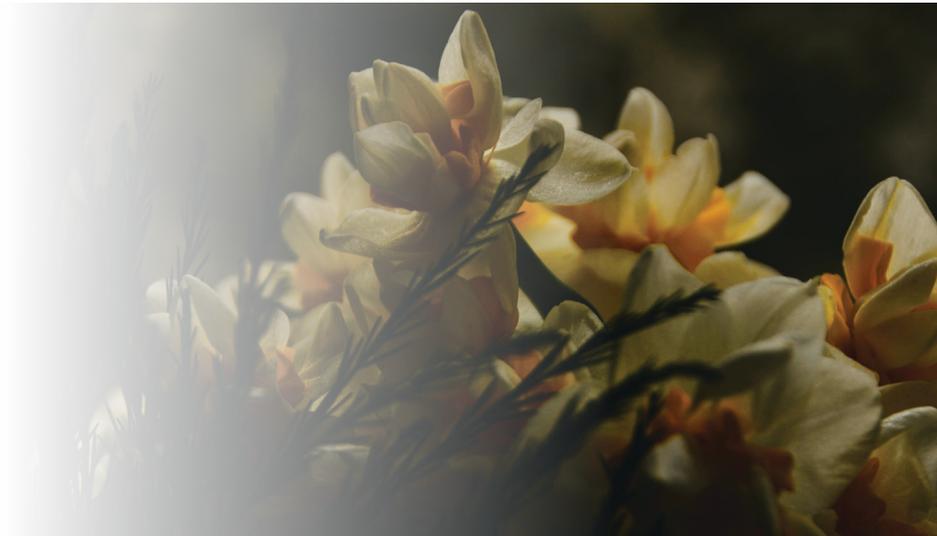
UNY has a podcast— *On the Mission*



Upper New York has launched its podcast called *On the Mission*. This great resource starts with a six-week series through the Lenten season called “Better Together.” Visit www.unyumc.org/news/podcasts or scan the QR code for to our channel on Simplecast. The podcasts can also be found on iHeart, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Pandora, Stitcher, and Amazon Podcasters.



The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York area and the world. For more news and stories visit: www.unyumc.org



“Faith happens when we walk the road of life with the people God has placed on the path with us.”

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 *The Upper New York Conference’s vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God’s love with our neighbors in all places.*



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Reflection on Lent

Why do we have this period of preparation, of fasting and self-denial, of repentance and confession, of putting our spiritual house in order? Simply so that we can be prepared for Easter. Lent is about embracing the Resurrected One with a whole and longing heart.

What we discover as we make those preparations is that there

are so many things that get in the way of our true embrace of the risen Christ. Some of those things are external, but many of them are internal. They are habits, preferences, and inclinations that clutter our souls. So, the season of Lent comes along to give us space and appropriate reminders that we need to clean house to receive the one we call Lord.

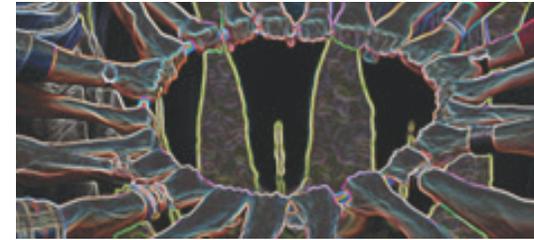
We are community

By Pastor Daniel J. Bradley,
Faith Journey UMC

Community is at the heart of everything we do as the Church of Jesus Christ. Faith does not happen in a vacuum. Faith happens when we walk the road of life with the people God has placed on the path with us. We don't get to pick and choose who is on the road. What we do with those individuals is integral to their faith and ours.

Scripture tells us stories of individuals experiencing God sometimes on their own and at other times together as a community. When I have been in the community, I think of the times in my life that have had the most profound impact on my faith.

In 1995, while attending Ashland University, there was a faith—awakening on campus. I won't call it a revival, but it was a faith—awakening. It started with a small group of committed Christians who came together to pray, confess, and join in mission and ministry. That faith—awakening changed my life. I began to understand who I was and whom I belonged to clearly; God. I met some of my closest friends that I would have in college and grew leaps and bounds spiritually. Time passed, and so did that faith—awakening event, and



one thing and another happened, and before we knew it, we were graduating and going our ways. Some individuals I have stayed in touch with have taken different paths. We can't stop people from stepping off that path or going in a different direction.

One of my favorite scripture stories about the strength of community is the story of the women who came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. They arrived early in the morning with expensive spices and prepared to find the body of their Lord.

"When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'" —Mark 16:1-3

They found the stone rolled away and the grave clothes neatly folded. That was not what they expected. They thought,

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