The Stepping Stone
May 2026

Pastor's Page

"In the Bulb there is a Flower" By: Natalie Sleeth

"In the bulb, there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter, there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see."

This is the first line of the beloved hymn, Hymn of Promise. And being that it is May and we have just come through one of the coldest and snowy winter, it seemed only appropriate to focus on the newness of God's creation in this world and in our lives.

"Hymn of Promise" was first conceived as an anthem in 1985, performed at the Pasadena Community Church in St. Petersburg, Florida, during a festival concert celebrating Natalie Sleeth's music. Long known as a composer of anthems, especially for children, Natalie Sleeth (1930-1992) contributed one of the favorite new hymns to The United Methodist Hymnal.

Married to Ronald E. Sleeth, a United Methodist clergyman and professor of homiletics at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, she served as music secretary at Highland Park United Methodist Church from 1969 to 1976. Sleeth received honorary doctorates from West Virginia Wesleyan College (1989) and Nebraska Wesleyan College (1990). Some of her compositions are described in her devotional book, Adventures for the Soul (1987).

Sleeth could compose both texts and music. Though "Hymn of Promise" has become a favorite hymn for funerals, it was written at a time when the author states that she was "pondering the ideas of life, death, spring and winter, Good Friday and Easter, and the whole reawakening of the world that happens every spring." Inspired by a T.S. Eliot line, the hymn's germ grew from the idea "in our end is our beginning," the phrase that opens the third stanza.

We have seen the darkest season of the year, yet it is nothing compared to what the world is witnessing. Yet, the hope of a new day dawning that begins with a bulb, a seed that bursts forth life into an apple tree, is only something that God can see. We cannot see the future. We are not prognosticators. We are supernatural beings having a human experience, and that experience can be as cold and snowy as the winter that we just ended.

Everything ends, but also everything begins again. The rebirth of creation and the hope for our lives remind us that God is continually at work in this world. Jesus never promised that this world would be easy or that life would always go our way. In Luke 12:49-52, Jesus says:

"I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."

It is not exactly a pleasant message that we want to hear; however, we must realize that there will be a time when judgment does fall upon the earth. One day, we will not be asked about our possessions, stock market portfolios, or how many homes or cars we own—we will be asked by Jesus, *"Did you love me, did you help the poor, the sick, visit the prisoner, and show compassion to all people—were you my hands and feet in this world?"* Nothing else on that day will matter.

In every death there is a resurrection. We have come into this spring having just celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. If that doesn't change us from the inside out, nothing will. The darkness of humanity's inability to love one another, wage war, kill innocents, and fleece the poor will always be present in this world. Yet Jesus reminds us in John 14:1-4;6

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going…I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

T.S. Elliot was right, "in our end is our beginning," and that, my friends, is the good news. Judgment will come, and the kingdom of God will be ushered in, but the promise is this: "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe. In God, believe also in me."—Jesus

"In the bulb, there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter, there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see."

Your future is not set—you cannot see it; however, God does and is planning the roads that you will walk. Thank God winter is over, and the promise of new life has come.

It is my prayer that you would embrace the life given to you in these moments and do kingdom work as you embrace the risen Christ.

Go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In Christ,

Rev. Daniel J. Bradley

Faith Journey United Methodist Church

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April 27th, 2026

Dear Friends,

On Sunday, April 26th, I announced that as of July 1, 2026, Bishop Héctor A. Burgos-Núñez has appointed me to serve the Cortland 1st United Methodist Church, the Cortland Homer Ave United Methodist Church, and the Harmony United Methodist Church.

My last Sunday preaching will be June 14th; however, I will still be on call until July 1st for pastoral care emergencies. I will not be able to return for baptisms, weddings, or funerals, as this is part of our clergy covenant.

This year will conclude my eighth year of pastoral ministry at Faith Journey United Methodist Church, and we have done great things together—no one ever expected Faith Journey would grow as it has or that Cradle and Beyond 2.0 would be what it is today. This hard work is because of each of you who has met every challenge and obstacle presented in faith.

As a congregation, you have cared for my family and me with grace and love in ways I could never have imagined. The impact you have had on my life, Mary's, and Kiah's will never be forgotten, but will be remembered always, as you are a part of us, and we will forever be a part of you.

Thank You.

Thank you for having faith in me when I did not have faith myself, and for the honor of serving as your pastor. It is in grace and thanksgiving that I complete this time in service at Faith. Journey.

In God's Grace,

Rev. Daniel J. Bradley

Rev. Daniel J. Bradley

The good work you did among us is appreciated. May your work in the ministry continue to shine for God's glory.

Dear Pastor Bradley, as you start and take another journey in your life, we want to express our appreciation for the endless guidance, support and inspiration you added in our lives. Your mentorship and leadership has made a lasting impact at Faith Journey UMC.

Over the years you have served us with humbleness, lots of compassion, and sincere love. As you step into a new chapter in your life, we pray you will be blessed with renewed strength to do God's work and continue to seek, serve and share your gifts and love for Christ with others. You will be truly missed!

What's Happening

MAY:

May 1st & 2nd—GNAC, Leading Ladies, 7pm
May 2nd—9th—50% off Long Pants @ *C&B*
May 3rd—GNAC, Leading Ladies, 2pm
May 6th—New Members Classes, 12-1pm
May 6th—Ministries Council Meeting, 6:30 pm
May 9th—Chicken BBQ Drive-Thru, 11am-until sold out @ *FJUMC*
May 10th—Mother's Day
May 13th—New Members Classes, 12-1pm
May 20th—New Members Classes, 12-1pm
May 23rd—30th—Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ *C&B*
May 24th—Pentecost
May 25th—Memorial Day
May 31st—Peace with Justice Sunday

FIRST CHICKEN BBQ DRIVE-THRU OF THE SEASON!

THE SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
We begin selling at 11:00 AM till sold out!

First BBQ of the season: Saturday, May 9, 2026 11:00 am until sold out!

Upcoming Dates: June 13th, July 11th, August 8th, September 12th, October TBA

$8.00—1/2 BBQ Chicken and roll with butter
$12.00—1/2 BBQ Chicken, salt potatoes, baked beans and roll with butter

Faith Journey United Methodist Church
8396 Morgan Rd. Clay, NY 13041

NEW MEMBERS CLASS

MEMBERSHIP • DISCIPLESHIP • SERVICE • MISSION

Classes will be held on the following dates from 12:00-1:00 at FJUMC.

May 6th, May 13th, May 20th

Reception of new members will be on Sunday, May 24th (Pentecost)
—Even if you are transferring in from another church you must attend all the sessions.

GNAC UPCOMING SHOWS:

LEADING LADIES

by Ken Ludwig

Friday, May 1st - 7pm
Saturday, May 2nd - 7pm
Sunday, May 3rd - 2pm

MEAN GIRLS JR.

Weekend 1: June 5, 6, & 7
Weekend 2: June 12, 13, & 14
Friday & Saturday: 7:00 PM
Sunday: 2:00 PM

Get your tickets now!
Visit TICKETOR.COM/GNAC

General Admission—$15
Student & Senior—$10

Great Northern Artists Collaborative
8396 Morgan Rd. Clay, NY 13041

Cradle & Beyond 2.0

7778 Brewerton Road

C&B 2.0
A Thrifty Boutique

Store hours:

Tuesday	4 pm - 7 pm
Wednesday	10 am - 4 pm
Thursday	10 am - 4 pm
Saturday	10 am - 2 pm

Contact Information:

Phone: (315) 980-8004
Email:Cradleandbeyond2@gmail.com
7778 Brewerton Rd. Syracuse, NY 13212

Happy May!

The calendar says spring… but Mother Nature clearly missed the memo. Hopefully sunshine and warmer days are on the way soon!

A huge thank you to everyone for your patience, teamwork, and flexibility with the new cash register system. You've all done a great job adjusting. Starting May 2, we'll be going register only and saying goodbye to handwritten paper receipts.

May Sales Are Here!

We have plenty of inventory and it's time to make room for summer!

May 2 – May 9: 50% Off All Long Pants (pajamas, jeans, sweats, leggings, pants, etc.) **After the sale, long pants will be replaced with lighter summer clothing.**

May 23 – May 30: $5 Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale, **You never know what treasures you'll find!**

To keep things fair and consistent, we've implemented a new pricing policy. All name-brand clothing, shoes, merchandise, kitchenware, and specialty items must have a price tag to be sold. If these items come to the desk unmarked, they cannot/will not be sold.

We are not increasing prices—this is simply to create consistency, and help prevent tags from being removed or switched. Our sorters will be working hard to make sure items are priced and help us keep merchandise moving - After the sale, the sorters will have bins of merchandise ready to go out to the floor.

Thank you for everything you do—you make a big difference every shift!

SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH - MAY - "IN GOD'S PERFECT TIMING"

"Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you." - John 15:16

MAY—HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Our sweet baby AJ is smiling, cooing and focusing, he can see more clearly and finds everything very interesting. He's due for his first round of vaccines in early May, so he will be meeting more people since he will be protected against sickness. It's been very rewarding watching him grow and discover new things, even with all the sleepless nights and jam-packed schedule— I'm adjusting to my role as a mother really well. I hope you all have a wonderful mother's day celebrating the important mother-figure in your life or receive tons of love from those who you mother daily!

"Change for Change" Mission

April Change for Change: We collected $80 to purchase boots and raincoats for the health care workers in South Sudan, thank you to those who contributed to this important mission!

For May, we will collect to support the 4th Annual Dash for Delaware. Bellevue Heights United Methodist Church organizes Blessings in a Backpack for EVERY student at Delaware Primary School, which is just across the street from Brown Memorial UMC. These backpacks are given out every weekend during the school year to insure that children have food for the weekend.

BELLEVUE HEIGHTS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK

The actual "Dash" is going to be held on Saturday, June 6th—starting at Bellevue Heights UMC and doing a scenic one-mile walk/run around Woodland Reservoir in the Syracuse Strathmore neighborhood. Please help support this worthy cause!

4TH ANNUAL DASH FOR DELAWARE
SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026 / REGISTRATION: 9AM | START TIME: 9:30AM
SUGGESTED FEE: $25 | KIDS UNDER 12: FREE!

Register online at: www.bellevueheights.org or donate by mail to Bellevue Heights UMC at 2112 S. Geddes Street Syracuse, NY 13207

MAY SCRIPTURE WRITING PLAN

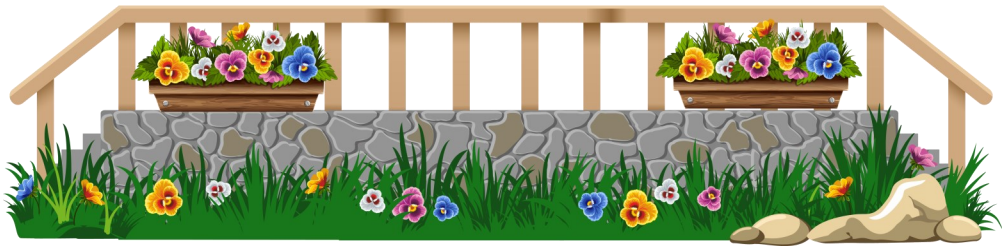
Each of the scriptures below takes ten minutes or less to copy out. Commit to spending ten minutes each day listening to God's voice and Connect with the word!

Day 1 - Song of Song 2:1
Day 2 - Isaiah 40:8
Day 3 - Matthew 6:28-29
Day 4 - Hosea 14
Day 5 - Psalm 103:15-16
Day 6 - James 1:10-11
Day 7 - 1 Peter 1:24-25
Day 8 - Song of Songs 2:12
Day 9 - Isaiah 35:1-2
Day 10 - Psalm 92:12-14
Day 11 - Job 14:1-2
Day 12 - Psalm 1:3
Day 13 - Jeremiah 17:7-8
Day 14 - Proverbs 31:30
Day 15 - Ecclesiastes 3:11
Day 16 - 2 Corinthians 2:14-15
Day 17 - Colossians 2:6-7
Day 18 - Galatians 5:22-23
Day 19 - Isaiah 61:11
Day 20 - Philippians 1:9-11
Day 21 - Psalm 104:24
Day 22 - John 15:5
Day 23 - Psalm 16:11
Day 24 - Romans 15:13
Day 25 - Zechariah 10:1
Day 26 - Isaiah 58:11
Day 27 - Revelation 22:1-2
Day 28 - Psalm 19:1-2
Day 29 - Genesis 2:9
Day 30 - Luke 12:27
Day 31 - Ephesians 3:17-19

What are Scripture Writing Plans?

Scripture Writing plans are something you can do every day and it will help you in your journey with God. Get your bible out and write out the scripture for that day. It is a proven fact that when you write something down is resonates more fully than just reading it.

So, write it out and speak those words into reality, this will also help with memorization of the word of God and your daily walk with Him.



RecipeCorner

Strawberries and Cream Cookies

"These Strawberries and Cream Cookies are better than the rest—they include browned butter, sweet brown sugar, freeze-dried strawberries and malted milk powder. These cookies are super delicious and make the perfect spring and summertime cookie, especially with Mother's Day weekend coming up!"

Recipe by: *Tieghan Gerard at halfbakedharvest.com/strawberries-and-cream-cookies/*

INGREDIENTS

- 2 sticks (1 cup) salted butter at room temperature
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups, plus 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup malted milk powder (or 1/4 cup additional flour)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup chopped white chocolate chunks or chips
- 1 cup freeze-dried strawberries
- 2-3 tablespoons strawberry jam

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Add one stick of butter to a skillet set over medium heat. Cook until the butter begins to brown, about 3-4 minutes. Remove from the heat and transfer to a heatproof bowl. Let cool 5 minutes or so.
3. To the brown butter, mix in the remaining 1 stick butter, the brown sugar, granulated sugar, eggs, and vanilla—beating until combined.
4. Add the flour, malted milk powder, baking soda, and salt. Gently fold in the white chocolate and strawberries, then very lightly swirl in the jam.
5. Roll the dough into rounded tablespoon size balls and place 2 inches apart on the prepared baking sheet.
6. Bake for 8 minutes. Remove from oven, rotate, and bake another 2-3 minutes or until the cookies are just beginning to set on the edges.
7. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheet, they will continue to cook slightly as they sit. Eat warm or let cool and store in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

Prep Time: 15 mins.
Cook Time: 15 mins.
Yields: 16 cookies, 250 kcal per cookie

Malted Milk Powder: *For those unfamiliar with malted milk powder, it's the best kept secret ingredient in the baking world. It's typically used to make milkshakes, among other things—it's made from barley wheat and gives off a nutty flavor with natural sweetness. It's very subtle but delicious and helps to flavor enhance the "cream" aspect of these cookies. That said, if you don't have/want to use malted milk powder, you can also substitute with flour, the cookies will still taste just as great!*

RECIPE

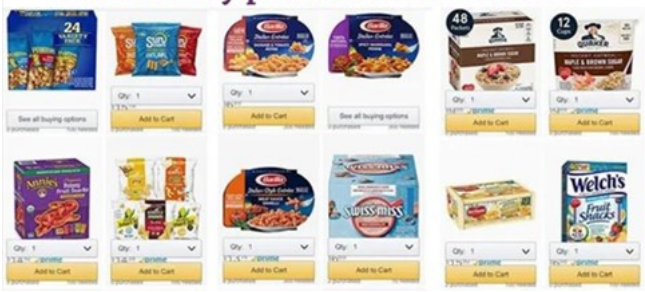
MAY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 ***GNAC, Leading Ladies, 7pm*** ***PSC Karaoke, 1:30-4***	2 ***GNAC, Leading Ladies, 7pm*** ***50% off Long Pants @ C&B***
3 ***GNAC, Leading Ladies, 2pm***	4 ***PSC Group, 10-2***	5 ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B***	6 ***Ministries Council Meeting, 6:30 pm*** ***New Member Classes, 12-1pm @ FJUMC***	7 ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B*** *9AM-12PM - Workday @ New Building*	8 ***PSC Karaoke, 1:30-4***	9 ***Chicken BBQ Drive-Thru, 11am -until sold out @ FJUMC*** ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B***
10 ***Mother's Day***	11 ***PSC Group, 10-2***	12	13 ***New Member Classes, 12-1pm @ FJUMC***	14 *9AM-12PM - Workday @ New Building*	15 ***PSC Karaoke, 1:30-4***	16 ***Pancake Breakfast, 9am @ FJUMC***
17	18 ***PSC Group, 10-2***	19	20 ***New Member Classes, 12-1pm @ FJUMC***	21 *9AM-12PM - Workday @ New Building*	22 ***PSC Karaoke, 1:30-4***	23 ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B*** *9AM - 12PM - Workday @ New Building.*
24 ***Pentecost*** 31 ***Peace with Justice Sunday***	25 ***Memorial Day*** ***PSC Group, 10-2***	26 ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B***	27 ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B***	28 ***Memorial Day Blowout Bucket Sale @ C&B*** *9AM-12PM - Workday @ New Building*	29 ***PSC Karaoke, 1:30-4***	30 *9AM - 12PM - Workday @ New Building.*

Food Pantry

For the month of May, Faith Journey UMC will be collecting individual food items *(cereals, granola bars, EZ mac n' cheese, ready to eat pasta or rice cups, Bumble Bee Lunch Kits, fruit snacks, crackers, pretzels, etc.)* **for Erin's Angels.**

Individually packed food is needed



Erin's Angels
FEEDING the FUTURE of CNY

Seek

We seek God's presence in our lives, to help others in their relationship with God and to strive to see God's work through all people.

Serve

We serve God through mission, encourage everyone on their spiritual journey and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Share

We create opportunities for all to share their gifts and talents and demonstrate openness, acceptance and hospitality.

God With Others

Office Hours & Location:

Tuesday—Friday

9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

8396 Morgan Road

Clay NY 13041

Contact Information:

Phone: (315) 652-9186

E-Mail: fjoffice@fjumc.org

Website: www.fjumc.org

Faith Journey UMC Staff:

Pastor Rev. Daniel J. Bradley

Maryna Mazhukhova - Musician

Jake Melnyk - Musician

Sara Mertz - Office Manager

Sean Townsend - Custodian