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**ST. MARGARET'S**  
ECUMENICAL & RETREAT CENTER

**May - September 2026**



# All Welcome!

Halleluiah! Christ is risen! Happy Easter, friends! It's a glorious time of year; kind of hard to beat the hope of and promises of a life with our risen Lord. Though it was a cold, snowy winter, here we are with the birds singing, flowers are popping about, the grass is getting greener, and I'm drinking my coffee to the sound of the birds singing. It all makes my heart smile.

Come and enjoy a cool drink on the patio, spend a little time in prayer and enjoying God's beautiful world and people. We have filled our newsletter with loads of opportunities for you to nurture your faith; I hope that you find plenty of things that strike your fancy.

Maybe you'll consider traveling with us on one of the bus trips. Grab a friend and bring him/her along. We have a trip going to the Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and we have an overnight trip down to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to the show Joshua at the Sight & Sound Theatre. Give a shout for more information and to join us.

And lastly, I'd like to thank the Stewart's Holiday Match Foundation for their funding of the special mornings for children and their parent/grandparent that will occur in July and August. We'll have an activity for the kids and their adults to participate in and then we'll take time to conduct a service project for the betterment of our community. If you would like to help me facilitate these activities, please contact me.

Be well and see you soon I hope!

Wishing you peace,



Judy

Judith H. Reilly  
Executive Director

To learn more about any of our events or volunteer opportunities, for lunch and monthly dinner reservations, or to inquire about a personal or group retreat, please email [info@stmargarethshouseny.org](mailto:info@stmargarethshouseny.org) or call 315-724-2324.

# A Note From Father John LaVoe

Easter! It must have been a challenge for the earliest Christians. Where would the first followers of Jesus have looked for the essentials they'd need to decorate with? Bunnies, jelly beans, funny ears, and a big round rock for the garden.

I'm being silly, of course, and there's nothing evil or blasphemous intended in our "evolved" secular permutations for the central, most sacred, symbols for the core redemptive saving act of God's making, all things new, clean of sin, and reconciled to our highest ideals and most deeply cherished desires – namely, the gift, the blessing, and the miracle of life in its fullness. After all, who doesn't worship chocolate bunnies?

Getting "real" for half a second ask (or at least wonder) what would be appropriate during the Great 50 Days? Answers are actually pretty easy to suggest, and maybe "trite" (instead of "easy") is the word I mean. For example: "read the Bible," "pray and meditate," "be kind to the poor and needy marginalized unfortunate outcasts who, regrettably, are not like me." Is there something a little "trite" in there, tainting the good parts?

Would it be okay to NOT do something aimed at "getting even more gooder"? Never mind increasing your PQ (perfection quotient): what do you suppose God would be thrilled to see grow from this 50 day opportunity? We have lots of ideas about God's expectations, rules, and demands, but we rarely wonder why the presupposed rules appeal to God. I think it's not a deep dark mystery. If "God is love," then God loves doing, maximizing, and seeing what a loving being (i.e., God – or any loving parent, heavenly or earthly) would want as an outcome. What God would be thrilled with would be the most benevolent outcomes possible under the circumstances.

I'm a little ashamed of something worth mentioning. A day or two after our "not a war" broke out recently, I was part of a discussion that could have been about anything. We ended up talking about altar candles – do they have to be bee's wax? Then we drifted into genuflecting. I, myself, introduced the existence of "two knee" genuflections and their protocol. Later that evening, I asked myself why, when bombs were maiming real people somewhere far away, why did I collude that way? Which one delights God more: peace, life, bees wax candles, or the fine points of genuflecting?



Maybe this Easter Season we can ask ourselves what manner of celebrating the courage, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, appearances, ascension, letting God's Spirit loose among people and throughout creation unto the end of history and the dawning of the life of the world to come, would delight God if we tilted our Great 50 Days in that direction? It might even amuse and satisfy God more than a bunny rabbit sitting atop and hatching a basket of decorated jelly bean eggs.

In Peace, The Rev. Father John LaVoe, Chaplain

## ↻ **Community Volunteer & Donation Opportunities** ↻

### St. Margaret's Food Pantry



Grace Episcopal  
Church

**There are two ways to support community members who are food insecure through our Food Pantry!**

#### **Join It Takes A Village | Tuesdays from 2:00 to 5:00 PM**

Our social action-oriented initiative volunteers at the food pantry on Tuesdays. Please contact us if you would like to sign-up for one or more days.

#### **Donate Shelf Stable Goods, Bags, Grocery Gift Cards | Ongoing**

St. Margaret's is accepting bags, toiletries, coffee, and shelf stable goods (cereal, pasta, rice, dressing, canned goods, peanut butter, etc.), as well as gift cards to Aldi, BJ's, or local area grocers. Donations can be dropped off at St. Margaret's.

*Many thanks for your continued generosity and to the Episcopal Diocese of Central NY!*



Serving Women & Children  
Since 1983

#### **Friends of Emmaus House | 2nd Wednesdays at 10 AM**

Our group of volunteers meets monthly to help support the needs of Emmaus House, Utica's only emergency shelter that serves women with children. Support is provided by holding fundraisers and outreach events including the annual open house, taking place June 12th from 10 AM to 2 PM. We meet monthly to determine needs and find solutions to those needs.

*New members are welcome!*

#### **Helping Hands at St. Margaret's | Ongoing**

If you would like to volunteer at St. Margaret's, we are in need of assistance with projects in our library and gardens, as well as volunteers to assist with events. New members are welcome to join our Altar Society to assist with weekly Holy Eucharist held Wednesdays at 11:45 AM. Please call or email for more information and to get involved. *Thank you!*



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# Ongoing Events

## Weekly Activities

### **Worship Services Wednesdays at 11:45 AM**

Zoom and In-Person Worship Services - All Welcome!

*Please contact St. Margaret's for the information to join by Zoom*

### **Wednesday Lunches at 12:30 PM**

Please make a reservation by the Friday before - Suggested donation \$15

## Monthly Activities

### **Men's Group | 1st & 3rd Wednesdays from 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM**

Meant to be a time of fellowship and exploration, Father Nick Smith will begin each week by asking "What is saving your life today?" Is it spiritual practice? Is it coffee? Is it some curious enigma? Let's find out and share our conclusions!

### **Conversations with Father John | 2nd Wednesdays at 1:30 PM**

Join us for conversations about faith hosted by Father John LaVoe.

### **Caregiving Support Group | 3rd Mondays at 2 PM**

Facilitated by the Rev. Deacon Barbara Groves, the group's focus will be to provide a place for folks who are caregivers to gain support for themselves, and exchange ideas to help care for loved ones.

### **Grief Support Group | 3rd Fridays at Noon**

St. Margaret's continues to host a peer facilitated grief support group for anyone experiencing loss - new members are welcome to join.

### **Coffee and Conversation with Rev. Deacon Jean | 4th Wednesdays at 1:30 PM**

Join The Reverend Deacon Jean Skinner for conversations about faith. Please consider bringing a few cans of food for our food pantry as a donation.

## **Monthly Dinners:** Dine In at 5:30 PM and Take Out at 6 PM

Suggested Donation \$19; Please reserve your seat by the preceding Wednesday.

May 19th	Lasagna, Salad, Bread and Dessert
June 16th	Grilled Chicken, Rice, Vegetable, Salad and Dessert
July & August	no dinner
September 15th	Pork Roast, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Salad, and Dessert

# Special Events

## Sacred Sites Tours of 2026

We are excited to announce our tours for 2026, which are organized in collaboration with *Tours By Design*. Please call or email for a reservation form.

### **National Shrine of the Divine Mercy, Stockbridge, MA | June 8th at 8:30 AM**

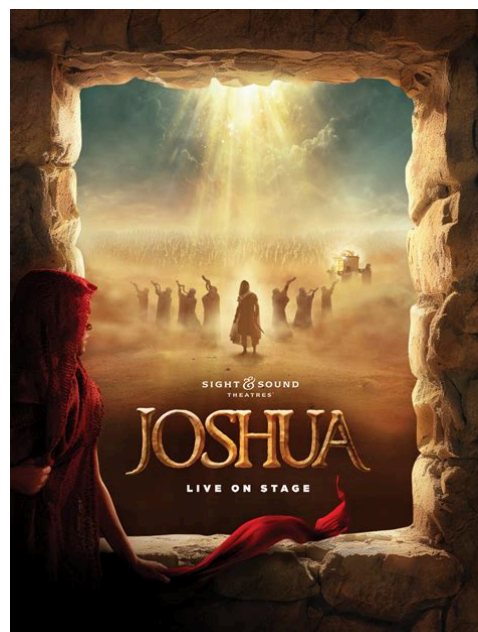
Experience the beauty of the Berkshires and the serenity of the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy—a perfect day of prayer, reflection, and renewal. We will meet at St. Margaret's for an 8:30 AM departure and arrive at the Shrine around 11:30 for a four-hour visit. We will then depart at 3:30 PM for a group dinner, returning to St. Margaret's around 8 PM. Cost per person is \$125 and includes: Round trip motorcoach via Hale Transportation, a visit to the National Shrine of Divine Mercy, and group dinner at Michael's of Stockbridge. Gratuity for drivers is separate.

### **Joshua at Sight & Sound Theatre, Lancaster, PA | Overnight, July 27th at 7:30 AM**

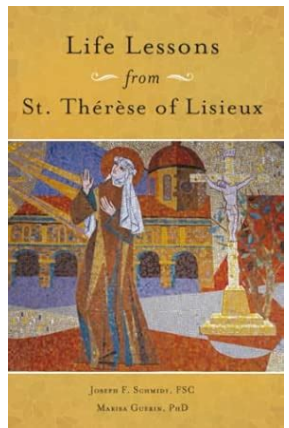
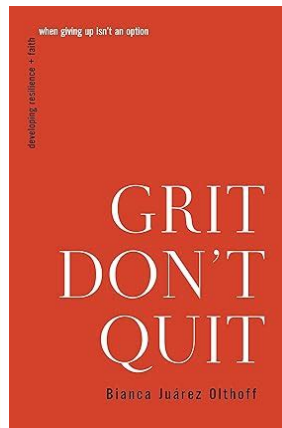
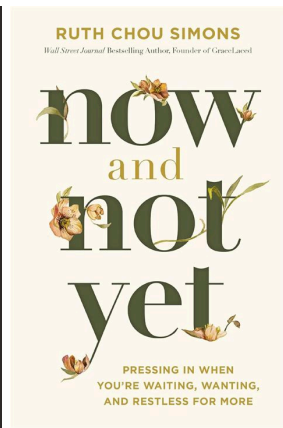
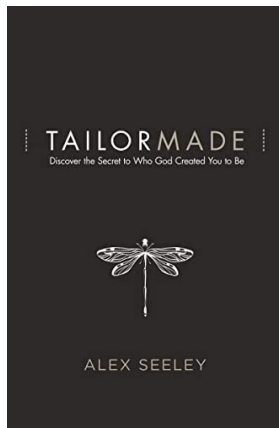
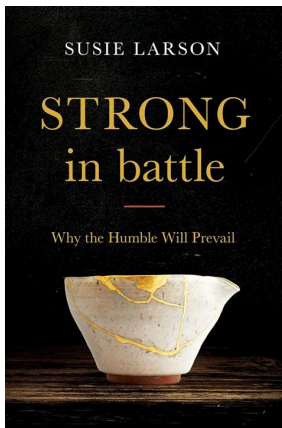
Experience one of the most redemptive stories of the Bible as it comes to life in this brand-new original stage production. We will meet at St. Margaret's to hop on the bus, which will depart at 7:30 AM on July 27th, and return to St. Margaret's the following day around 8:00 PM. Prices include transportation, lodging, and most meals: \$465 twin; triple \$445; quad \$435; and single \$550. \$100 deposit due upon registration. Gratuity for drivers is separate.



National Shrine of the Divine Mercy



## Book Club with Judy | Alternating Mondays and Thursdays, 10:30 to Noon



Please register one week prior to each session. Feel free to bring a snack to share!

- Monday, May 11**    *Strong in Battle, Why the Humble Will Prevail* by Susie Larson
- Thursday, June 11**    *Tailor Made: Discover the Secret to Who God Created You to be* by Alex Seeley
- Monday, July 13**    *Now and Not Yet: Pressing in When You're Waiting, Wanting, and Restless for More* by Ruth Chou Simons
- Thursday, Aug 13**    *Grit Don't Quit: Developing Resilience + Faith When Giving Up Isn't an Option* by Bianca Juárez Olthoff
- Monday, Sept 14**    *Life Lessons from St. Thérèse of Lisieux* by Joseph F. Schmidt and Marisa Guerin

## For Such A Time: The Story of Esther | May 15th and 16th

Eagle Tree Productions presents *For Such A Time: The Story of Esther*, a creative, family-friendly comedy that brings the powerful biblical story of Esther to life. Join us for an engaging performance filled with humor, heart, and timeless themes of courage and purpose.

Performances will be held at Crosspoint Church (317 Oriskany Blvd., Whitesboro, NY) on:

- Friday, May 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM
- Saturday, May 16, 2026 at 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM

Admission is free, with donations accepted. Seating is reserved—please call 315-486-0027 or visit [www.eagletreeproductions.com](http://www.eagletreeproductions.com) for more information. Bring the whole family and enjoy an uplifting theatrical experience!

## **Clean Up Days at St. Margaret's | May 27th and September 28th**

We invite members of the community to come help spruce up the grounds of St. Margaret's this spring and fall. Please feel free to join us for one or both days.

May 27th from 9:00 to 11:30 AM

September 28th, from 9:00 to 1:00 PM

## **Emmaus House Open House | Saturday, June 12th 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

Join us for Emmaus House's annual Open House at 1215 Kemble Street. Learn more about the house and its mission to provide emergency housing to women and children. There will be a raffle basket fundraiser as well.

## **St. Margaret's Day Celebration | Wednesday, July 22nd at 11:45 AM**

Please join us for our celebration of St. Margaret's Day Holy Eucharist and this July 22nd. Please make reservations for the luncheon by July 10th (\$20/person). The collection from the service will be donated to the Sisters of St. Margaret. *Thank you for your generosity!*

## **Summer Fun for Children and their Parent/Grandparent | July 9th, July 23rd, August 4th, August 18th all from 9:30 – 11:30 AM**

We're inviting children of all ages, along with their parent/grandparent to join us on the dates listed above for a special fun activity, snack, and a chance to take part in a service activity for people or animals in need in our community. Activities will be geared towards spending quality time with your special adult. And we know that giving back to others in need is ALWAYS a great way to spend time together. We'll provide any/all necessary materials and you'll do the work together. We're appreciative of Stewart's Holiday Grants Foundation for helping us fund these activities.

Activities will happen regardless of the weather, but please be sure to register at least one week prior to each activity. To register, please call 315.724.2324 with the number of children, their ages, and the number of adults attending for each date.

## **Annual Paris Hill Service | Saturday, August 29th at 4:00 PM**

Join us for this year's celebratory Eucharist at St. Paul's historic Episcopal Church in Paris Hill (2815 Snowden Hill Rd). Good music, good neighbors, and Holy Communion...can't beat that! *All are welcome.*

# St. Margaret's, Friends, & Events!



**Photos:** Magnolia in bloom, Labyrinth (which is available for personal meditations), The Rev. Father John LaVoe during Holy Eucharist, Around St. Margaret's, Ann with Praying in Color, and Zach, Judy and Dan playing during the Cèilidh.

# Emmaus House

Thank you to all who donate necessities and niceties to the women and children staying at Emmaus House!

**Friends of Emmaus House** is a group of volunteers who provide support to help meet the needs of the house & guests. This is done through donations, fundraisers, and our annual Open House. We meet monthly on 2nd Wednesdays at 10 AM to determine needs and find solutions to those needs.

*New Members Welcome!*



**Monetary Donations:** Donations can be mailed to St. Margaret's or made through our website: [www.stmargarethouseny.org](http://www.stmargarethouseny.org). All checks should be made out to "St. Margaret's." Please write "Emmaus House" in the "for" line if you would like your donation to go to Emmaus House. All donations are tax-deductible.

**Donations in Kind:** Emmaus House graciously accepts donations in kind to include New Home Welcome Kits and Hygiene Supplies, clothing, household goods, towels, shower shoes, slippers, laundry baskets, and underwear and pajamas for all ages/genders.

**Open House and Holiday Support for Emmaus House:** If you would like to help support special events at Emmaus House here is a list of our upcoming needs. Donations can be dropped off at St. Margaret's or Emmaus House four days prior to any event. Gift cards for area grocery stores will also be graciously accepted.

**Open House June 12th**  
**July 4th BBQ Picnic**

gift baskets for fundraising raffle  
hamburgers, hot dogs, rolls, picnic goods

Donations may be dropped off at St. Margaret's. Please call if you have questions.



Photos: Donations for Emmaus House and Friends of Emmaus House Outreach

# Personal & Group Retreats at St Margaret's

St. Margaret's has meeting spaces for group meetings and overnight retreats. We also welcome members of the community to come and stay at St. Margaret's for personal retreats. Those staying at St. Margaret's have use of the house, library, and chapel during their stay. There are many quiet sitting areas for relaxation and contemplation. We have a lovely path to the Wayside Cross on our grounds. Personal retreats are unguided and offer guests a chance to unwind and reconnect with themselves.

Guest rooms are \$65 per night and include overnight accommodation and use of the house and the guest kitchenette, which has a refrigerator, microwave, toaster, and instant hot water for tea and coffee. Groups of five or more can also have meals included for a total cost of \$100 per night per person.

If you would like to plan a meeting or retreat, please contact us for additional information and scheduling.



Photos: St. Margaret's Chapel, Living Room, Library, and Grounds.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION & RESERVATIONS:**

Phone: 315-724-2324 | Email: [info@stmargarethouseeny.org](mailto:info@stmargarethouseeny.org)



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