

The First Church **FAMILY**

*The First Church in Albany · Founded in 1642
Reformed Church in America*

February 2015

WORSHIP:

- 1 **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**
10:30 am FOCUS Churches Service (Communion)
 Guest Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Paula Gravelle
Post-service: Coffee and Conversation

- 8 **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**
10:30 am Sanctuary Service (Healing Service)

- 15 **Transfiguration Sunday**
10:30 am Sanctuary Service

- 18 **Ash Wednesday**
7:30 pm Sanctuary Service

- 22 **First Sunday in Lent**
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
Post-service: The Way

Our Sunday morning service may be found anytime at www.firstchurchinalbany.org.

FAMILY is published eleven times a year by First Church in Albany, 110 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12207-2231

From the Pastor

Beyond Mere Words

When I was a child, my first experience with talking with God was at bedtime. With the guidance of my mother or father, while kneeling at my bedside, I was taught an “order of prayer”, if you will. I was taught to first tell God what I was thankful for and then I prayed for others who I wanted God to comfort, protect, or care for in some way. Thirdly, I could ask God for what I needed. As I got a bit older I would write letters to God and in these prayers I often asked God to help me be a better person, or asked how I could please God more. I asked God for help to feel happier or for some kind of healing, transformation, and growth. But even then I would first be grateful.

In our worship we often begin our People’s Prayer each Sunday in gratitude, because it is this that opens and prepares us to be with God. This is truly a great beginning.

As I entered into adulthood and learned more about meditation and contemplative prayer I began to hear more and more the importance of listening to God. *Listen to God?* This was a new idea. And one I must say I have struggled to do. How can I tell what is God’s voice versus one of my own varied voices? How do we distinguish our ego from the great wisdom of God?

And... how often are we truly willing to listen to God? How often do we listen to one another, for that matter? Can we ***listen***, not try to problem-solve, or fix, or judge, or impart our own wisdom. How often do we quiet ourselves and really focus on what someone is saying, without wanting our own needs or desire to be heard first. How often can we sit and listen, not distracted, not wishing to hurry off somewhere else?

Listening and deep listening is quite an art, a highly valuable skill, a practice demanding patience.

God is speaking to us all the time, inviting us:

“Be still and know I am”

“Bring your burdens all who are heavy laden”

“Knock and the door shall be opened”

“Behold I am with you always”

We need to sit still long enough and trust the images and voice that we hear. We will always expand our heart, mind, and soul by listening to God speak. All answers will be given.

In a few weeks we will have a healing service, a time in our worship where we express our gratitude to God but where we may also lay before God our need for healing. This is a time in our worship when we can put all judgment aside, all our expectations, and listen to God. In our lectionary texts in January God asked us to come, to follow, to listen, and

to see. And we will be shown in the coming month again and again that we can come to God for our day to day needs, for healing of our body, of our hearts, souls, and minds.

This healing will help us to be more in tune to the wonder and love of our God, our God who is capable of all things.

Sunday February 8th we will have a Healing Service during our regular worship time.

This is a time for us to be with God and to ask God to clear what obstacles keep us from a deeper love and involvement with God and our world. It is an intimate time for us to listen to what God says to us. So until then, discern in your hearts what you ask God to do so that you might be more whole and more holy. What will you ask God to show you?

In Peace,

Rev. Sue Vincent-Cox

At Home with the WORD

**Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary
February 1st – February 28th**

Available online at: www.rca.org/athome

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| 1. <i>Fourth Sunday after Epiphany</i> | 15. <i>Transfiguration Sunday</i> |
| 2. Isaiah 40:21-31 | 16. Genesis 9:8-17 |
| 3. Psalm 147:1-6 | 17. Psalm 25:1-10 |
| 4. Psalm 147:7-11, 20 | 18. Ash Wednesday; Psalm 51:1-17 |
| 5. 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 | 19. 1 Peter 3:18-22 |
| 6. Mark 1:29-34 | 20. Mark 1:9-11 |
| 7. Mark 1:35-39 | 21. Mark 1:12-15 |
| 8. <i>Fifth Sunday after Epiphany</i> | 22. <i>First Sunday in Lent</i> |
| 9. 2 Kings 2:1-6 | 23. Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 |
| 10. 2 Kings 2:7-12 | 24. Psalm 22:23-31 |
| 11. Psalm 50:1-2 | 25. Romans 4:13-15 |
| 12. Psalm 50:3-6 | 26. Romans 4:16-25 |
| 13. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 | 27. Mark 8:31-38 |
| 14. Mark 9:2-9 | 28. Mark 9:2-9 |

Preaching Series in Lent

February 18	Ash Wednesday (7:30 pm) "Secret Righteousness"	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
February 22	Lent 1 "Never Again: The Covenant with Creation"	Genesis 9: 8-17 Mark 1:9-15
March 1	Lent 2 "Living By the Promise: The Covenant with Abraham"	Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16
March 8	Lent 3 "Words of Life: The Covenant at Sinai"	Exodus 20: 1-17
March 15	Lent 4 "Snake-bitten: The Covenant Broken"	Numbers 21:4-9 John 3: 14-21
March 22	Lent 5 "Inside Out: A New Covenant Coming"	Jeremiah 31: 31-34 John 12: 20-33
March 29	Palm/Passion Sunday "Upside Down: Subverting Empire"	Philippians 2: 5-11
April 5	Easter "The End Is the Beginning"	Mark 16: 1-8

Pre-Service Music in Lent Starts on February 22

Each Sunday in Lent beginning February 22 we will have pre-service music in the sanctuary at 10:15 am. Come early to pray, meditate, refresh yourself, or just listen to some beautiful music as we follow the Lenten road from cross to resurrection.

The senior choir is having an early Mardi Gras supper on Thursday, February 12 at 5:30 PM. Come celebrate the end of Epiphany, the season of light, with the choir. Everyone is welcome even if you are not in the choir. Look for more details in the bulletin or talk to Mary Bon or any choir member for more details.

The WAY: Walking Together on the Journey of Faith

Before the first followers of Jesus were known as Christians, they were called “People of The WAY.” Then, and now, The WAY refers to a style of life in which both believing and living are centered in Jesus Christ. The WAY is an opportunity for your faith to be explored, nurtured, and renewed, your commitment to Jesus Christ affirmed, and your walk as a disciple of Christ to be strengthened. The Way is especially for those new to First Church and for those who are interested in further exploring the Christian faith. We’ll meet after Sunday worship for most of the Sundays in Lent, February 22 through March 22. We gather in the church parlor for a light lunch and then meet for 30-45 minutes in small groups for reflection and discussion of the scripture text for the day. For more information contact Pastor John Paarlberg.

Mid-Week Study/Discussion Group in Lent

(Day and time to be determined)

Contrast Community: Practicing the Sermon on the Mount, by James Bailey

The Sermon on the Mount has been one of the most influential portions of scripture in renewing church and society. This book invites us to hear Jesus’ words in fresh ways and not only to study the Sermon but to sing it, pray it, and to put it into practice in our daily lives.

The author, James L. Bailey, has taught biblical studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, and Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. Jim is a graduate of Capital University, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

New, used and kindle editions of the book are available through Amazon.

Please let pastor John Paarlberg know if you are interested in being a part of this group.

CDS Available

Have you missed a service? Know of a neighbor or friend who would enjoy listening to our worship services? Or just want to hear that great sermon again? Our Worship Services are available, both on CD at the hospitality table, through the church office, and (for the computer savvy) on the church website at www.firstchurchinalbany.org.

Thank you to Dennis Kernahan who helps keep the CD ministry to our shut-in running smoothly. He duplicates and mails CDs, as well as providing donations of homemade envelopes. If you would like a weekly CD of our worship service or know of someone who would appreciate one, contact the church office.

First Church to Host the Winter FOCUS Service

FOCUS is a coalition of six covenant congregations united in a common calling and cooperating in shared ministries with people in need in the city of Albany and beyond. The covenant congregations-- Emmanuel Baptist Church, Trinity United Methodist Church, Delmar Reformed Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church, First Presbyterian Church and First Church Albany will join in worship on Sunday, February 1, at First Church. The Rev. Dr. Paula Gravelle, Executive Director of the New York State Council of Churches, will be the guest preacher.

Supporting the Farmers of Palestine in the Struggle for Their Livelihood and Land.



Thank you for your purchases of olive oil and olive oil soap. Members of First Church have purchased over two cases of olive oil. Proceeds directly benefit Palestinian farmers and children living in occupied Palestine and help create awareness for peace in Palestine. Also, one dollar of each bottle sold will go to help support *Project Hope* an arts and education program for young people in Palestine. An additional amount goes to replant olive trees inside Palestine which have been destroyed by the occupation.

Prices are \$20 per one 750 ml bottle of olive oil and \$4 per bar of olive oil soap. Contact John Paarlberg or Mary Bon for more information or to place an order.

Kibera Update

We received a New Year's Greetings and Thanks from Raphael:

"Happy new Year to you & and all my friends in First Church . we are happy to continue working with you & FIRST CHURCH in Albany, we wish you well and may GOD bless all of you .

*Thank you again,
i wish you well,*

Raphael"

The Weathervanes: The View from the Top



Join the Weathervanes for fellowship, lunch and program on Wednesday, February 11th at 12:30 pm in Zimmerman Hall. Bring a sandwich. Coffee, tea, and dessert will be served. After lunch, Ian Leet will show pictures he has taken of the renovation work being done on the exterior of First Church—many taken by climbing up the scaffolding with the contractors and workers. Please call Audrey Ming (456-5485) to let her know that you plan to attend.



First Church Readers February 22nd



The First Church Readers will meet February 22nd to discuss *Orphan Train* by Christina Baker Kline. First Church Readers is a group of First Churchers who like to read, and get together once a month after worship to discuss a book they have been reading during that month. This book is available from the Upper Hudson Library system as a hardcover book or an audio book.

The book for March is *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* by Anne Lamott.

Do you have an idea for a book for the reader's group? Want more information? Contact Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net or 463-4449.



Growing Green

For Valentine's Day: Buy organic fair-trade chocolate. Commercially grown cocoa bean is:

- one of the crops most heavily treated with pesticides
- often grown using child or slave labor
- uses techniques which deplete the soil
- farmers seldom receive a fair price for their crop

For more information on cocoa production check out <http://fairtradeusa.org/products-partners/cocoa>

Prayer Shawl Ministry



Join us **Monday February 9th at 11:30 am in the Parlor** (First Church) to begin knitting or crocheting prayer shawls and lap blankets. At least 8 have signed up to meet Mondays one time per month to knit and crochet together, help one another with our craft, and to pray over these shawls. Upon completion each shawl will be blessed and then will be given to those in need of healing, comfort, and prayers.

Shawls are a wonderful tangible way of giving God's love and care to those in need. We look forward to this time in a new ministry where we will pray, be creative, and be in fellowship with one another.

If you would like to join us, just come on February 9th or call Rev. Sue Vincent-Cox.

We look forward to seeing you.

Overflow Shelter Dinners Scheduled for February 13th and 27th

We are grateful to all the people in our First Church Family who have been providing food and doing deliveries for the Overflow Shelter Dinners at First Lutheran Church. THANK YOU! The shelter, sponsored by the Capital Area Council of Churches, turns nobody away. You can learn more about the shelter at <http://www.capareacc.org/emergency-overflow-homeless-shelter/>

In February we will be supplying dinners on Friday February 13th and 27th.

Our themes will be:

February 13th: Cold Weather Comfort Foods (mac 'n cheese? Pulled pork? whatever gives you comfort and extra calories in these cold months)

February 25th: Chicken Dishes

Sign up at the Hospitality Table to bring a dish or to help deliver. You can also sign up on <http://tinyurl.com/lmves99> or by emailing Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net.

Remember many of the shelter guests have dental problems so soft foods and foods that are easy to chew are a good idea. Bring your dishes Sunday after church or weekdays between 8:30 am and 2:30 pm or Thursday night between 6:30 and 7:30. We have RECYCLABLE containers available at the hospitality table to make it extra-easy to contribute a dish. TAKE ONE EMPTY BRING IT BACK FULL.

For more info contact Mary Bon at 463-4449.

Thank you for your generosity.



Healing Worship Services at First Church

During the past 3 years, on the second or third Sunday in July, we have had **Healing Services** here at First Church. This year we are going to also include a healing worship service on Sunday, February 8th, the second Sunday of this month.

For those who have not attended a service like this before, it is a more contemplative worship service where we gather to hear a brief message from one of our pastors about a scripture text on the miracle of healing. We also hear readings, prayers and/or stories of healing followed by some of our own time for meditation and prayer. This is a personal time with God during our weekly communal worship. We are not required to act externally in any way, but we are invited to come forward to the altar table and bring before God that which we know and feel called to heal in ourselves. You may do this by praying at your seat or by coming forward with others and laying a written requests on the alter table. You also may choose to take a quiet moment and pray at the alter table with the support of our pastor and an elder at your side.

This has been a very meaningful experience in our worship time. We hope you will come and experience the healing light of Christ's unending grace.

Free Organ Available

Electric. Two manuals. 43" long x 28" wide x 35" high. One octave of pedals. 18 stops. 8 rhythm buttons. Some keys don't work. Call Audrey 456-5485.



The deadline for the December issue of *FAMILY* is February 13.



Easter Flower Memorials

Orders for Easter memorials must be received at the Church Office no later than Friday, March 20th. A donation of \$10 or more per plant is requested. Please make your check payable to First Church in Albany marked lilies. After Easter, the plants will be distributed to our homebound members.

Congratulations

Bea Gray will be celebrating her 90th birthday on February 12th. Happy birthday Bea from the congregation, staff and friends at First Church.

Thank You

Natalie Parry thanks her friends at First Church for the birthday cards, Christmas cards, notes, and phone calls she received this past year.

Memorials

In celebration of the life of **Kay McCann** a gift has been received from Robert and Carolyn Akland, Kate Allard Group, Wilma Sheffer, Kathie and Ned Monthie, Betty Pierce, Marilyn Fink, Carl Wiedemann and Laura Wiedemann, William Staats for the **Music Fund** from Evelyn King and Richard Golding for the **Capital Campaign (Restoration) Fund**.

In celebration of the life of Inga May a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the **Capital Campaign Twin Towers Fund**.

In Sympathy

Sympathy is extended to Ella Campbell on the death of her brother-in-law, Kelvin Ozaki on December 29, 2014.

Sympathy to David and Barbara Andrews on the death of their good friend, Andrew Lawton.

Our sympathy is extended to Karen and Ray Van Epps and Family on the recent death of their good friend, Bob Burns.

Sympathy is extended to Patricia Thorpe and Family on the death of her mother, Etheleen Williams on January 20, 2015.

Sympathy is extended to Joyce Recene and Family on the death of her husband, Peter on January 22, 2015.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUIRED