

The First Church **FAMILY**

*The First Church in Albany · Founded in 1642
Reformed Church in America*
July & August 2015

From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

About four years ago the Rev. Susan Vincent Cox came on staff in a part-time position as Minister for Discipleship and Mission and Mission. The main focus of her ministry has been the development and nurture of small groups. Our goal was to develop groups that involved both members of the congregation and non-members; and groups that included a focus on the inward journey—nurturing the spiritual life, and the outward journey—reaching out in ministry to others. Several such groups are now meeting regularly.

- A Children and Worship team is responsible for training leaders and planning the worship time for 4 – 8 year old children and they have begun working on an additional ministry for older children.
- Several groups have met to learn and develop skills in non-violent communication. Training sessions have also been held for FOCUS staff and volunteers, and this summer Camp Fowler will host a “Family Heart Camp,” helping parents and children learn the principles and practices of non-violent communication.
- A prayer shawl ministry group meets monthly, knitting shawls, praying for people in need, and bringing shawls to the hospitalized, homebound and others.
- Pilgrim’s Walk is a group for older adults and focuses on the spiritual journey in the latter stages of life. In addition to the groups involving several members of our own congregation there have been two groups at the Beltrone Center and others at Sheehy Manor and Beverwyck. Sue has also asked to be the keynote speaker at the senior issues forum this summer.

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

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It's clear that these groups are touching lives in significant ways and God is blessing us with opportunities to minister to people beyond our own congregation.

Recently the First Church staff and leadership committee have been exploring how we might build on this trend and how we can expand small group ministry in other ways, both within and beyond the congregation. We've discussed possible changes in Sue's job description, considering reducing some of her responsibilities in worship and preaching in order to respond to more requests for groups like Pilgrim's Walk and to allow her to devote more time and energy to developing new groups.

Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of Jesus as "the man for others," who lived, not for himself, but gave himself in love for others. Bonhoeffer also called on the church to be a church for others: "The Church is the Church only when it exists for others...not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell people of every calling what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others." — [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*](#).

We continue to live into that calling. We can be grateful that God is presenting us with new opportunities for ministry and fresh reminders that First Church is not here in order to promote or perpetuate itself, but that we are called to be a servant church, reaching out into the world for the sake of others.

Sincerely,
John D. Paarlberg

Summer Worship Schedule

July 5

9:00 Drive-in worship and Communion; Rev. John Paarlberg, preaching
9:30 FOCUS Worship and Communion @ First Presbyterian Church
10:45 Stewards of Advocacy Presentation: Solitary Confinement

July 12

9:00 Drive-in worship; Rev. Susan Cox, preaching
10:00 Worship and Communion; Rev. Susan Cox, preaching

July 19

9:00 Drive-in Worship; Rev. Dr. Al Janssen, preaching
10:00 Worship; Rev. Dr. Al Janssen, preaching

July 26

9:00 Drive-in Worship; Princeton Seminary student, Chris McNabb, preaching
10:00 Worship; Chris McNabb, preaching
11:15 Post-service presentation: "I was in prison and you visited me."
(Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement)

August 2

- 9:00 Drive-in Worship and Communion; Rev. LeRoy Sues, preaching
- 9:30 FOCUS Worship and Communion @ Emmanuel Baptist Church
- 10:45 Stewards of Advocacy Presentation: Wage Issues

August 9

- 9:00 Drive-in Worship; Rev. Susan Cox, preaching
- 10: 00 Worship and Communion; Rev. Susan Cox, preaching

August 16

- 9:00 Drive-in worship; Dr. Bob Paeglow, Koinonia Primary Care, preaching
- 10:00 Worship; Rev. John Paarlberg, preaching

August 23

- 9:00 Drive-in worship; Rev. John Paarlberg, preaching
- 10:00 Worship; Rev. John Paarlberg, preaching

August 30

- 9:00 Drive-in worship
- 10:00 Worship

September 6

- 9:00 Drive-in Worship and Communion
- 9:30 FOCUS Worship and Communion @ Trinity United Methodist Church
- 10:45 Stewards of Advocacy Presentation: The FOCUS Grocery Collaborative

Guest Preachers this Summer

On Sunday, July 26, we will welcome seminary student Christ McNabb to our pulpit. Chris is a student at Princeton Theological Seminary and working as a summer intern with the National Religious Coalition Against Torture. Chris previously interned with the Reformed Church in Highland Park, New Jersey. This summer he will be working with Albany area churches to raise awareness about the practice of solitary confinement in the US prison system and advocate for humane alternatives to long-term solitary confinement. Chris will preach at both the drive-in and sanctuary services on July 26 and will lead a post-service presentation and discussion after the 10 am sanctuary service.

This year and for the past two years the offerings received at the drive-in worship services have been designated for Koinonia Primary Care, a health ministry founded by Dr. Paeglow in the West Hill neighborhood of Albany and serving people in that area and beyond. We'll have opportunity to learn more about that ministry when "Dr. Bob" is the guest preacher at the August 16 Drive-in Worship.

The Way: Walking Together on the Journey of Faith

Do you know someone –a family member, friend or colleague who is interested in questions of faith?

- *Is God real?*
- *What does it mean to be spiritual? Is it the same as being religious?*
- *What, exactly, does it mean to be saved? From what? For what?*
- *Where do you most long for change in your life and healing in our world?*

The Way is an opportunity to explore such questions without assuming we have all the answers, or that we know the destination ahead of time. It is an opportunity to raise questions, listen to others share their thoughts and a time to listen to what God is saying through scripture and through your life experiences.

The Way is especially for those

- who are new to First Church or who are thinking about involvement in the life of the church
- who are inquiring about the Christian faith
- who are bringing children for baptism
- who are facing some other kind of life transition that is raising questions of faith
- or for those who are simply curious.

If you, or someone you know is thinking about questions of faith, consider inviting them to come along on *the Way*. Offer to come with them. We meet after worship for a light lunch and fellowship and then read a short passage of scripture together and prayerfully listen for what God is saying to us today. We'll meet again beginning on the last Sunday in September and continue through the first or second Sunday in November.

For more information please speak to the pastor or email johnpaarlberg@verizon.net or contact the church office (463-4449).

Nonviolent Communications at First Church

For close to 3 years now at FC we have had workshops and a monthly practice group teaching the basic tenets of nonviolent communication. Some folks at FOCUS, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Albany, and the community at large have joined us in a larger circle. All those leading and participating in practice groups are quite dedicated to learning more compassionate, respectful, and clearer ways of communicating with others. For many of us there is also a great spiritual desire to feel closer to God and live out what Jesus Christ asks us to do: live in accordance with the Gospel. We strive to do this by creating more peace and compassion in our families, our work places, our churches and neighborhoods. This in return we believe builds stronger and more loving communities.

A few opportunities coming your way:

Workshop on Empathy in August two Wednesday evening workshops will be offered by Rev. Sue Cox and Philomena Moriarty (member of UU Church). The first will be on empathy toward others and the second will be on empathy toward oneself. Empathy is the glue or the binding thread of NVC. This workshop will be offered to those who have taken a workshop or previous training in NVC. We require this because when you learn a new language, just like learning German or Spanish, for example, you need to know and practice its core grammar first in order to move toward mastery.

We will also offer another BASICS workshop in late October or early November for those who would like to learn NVC for the first time or for those who just want to better develop their basic skills.

“NVC at the Lake” This summer Jan McCracken, one of the trained leaders from the UU congregation, will offer a weekly practice group on Burden Lake in Averill Park. This offering again is for those who have taken a “basics” workshop. What a beautiful place to gather.

One Big Circle at Camp Fowler August 21-23 for children and their parents. Trainers will teach nonviolent communication during the everyday fun of summer camp. This camp is for everyone, no previous learning required. Wouldn't it be great for children to learn this language so they can speak nonviolence more fluently in adulthood? Kent Busman and others agreed with us that this would be a good idea.

Monthly Practice Group at FC led by Rev. Sue Cox and Steve Anderson will begin again in September.

The community of faith and the fellowship that has been cultivated in these groups has been invaluable to the many involved. Whether you would just like to take one workshop or whether you are seeking a community experience with fellow travelers just visit our church website for updates or call Rev. Sue Vincent Cox (518-796-8793) for more information. If you haven't joined one of our workshops yet, we hope you will.

Pilgrim's Walk 2

Notice the 2! At last we will offer a second Pilgrim's Walk. And don't worry PW 1 will not be a prerequisite. Here, we will explore the issues of the 3rd stage of life (65 yrs to end of life). Not only are we living longer (in 1776 our average life expectancy was 35) but we are living in much greater health affording a higher standard of vital life.

In an article in the NY Times on June 5th it stated of those in the 3rd stage of life:
“This is the fastest-growing age group in America: people age 85 and over, whom gerontologists have called the oldest old. In New York City, their numbers have grown five times as fast as the general population, rising nearly 30 percent since 2000. Yet they are largely invisible.”
NY Times June 5, 2015

We will read authors like Zalman Schachter-Shalommi and Kathleen Dowling Singh, and spend times on topics such as forgiveness, feeling invisible or not valued, gratitude, grief and loss, family, ageism, stress of illness, is there life after this, and most of all we will talk about our search for purpose and meaning in coming closer to God. As pilgrims “we seek that which causes us to seek.” and we recognize we are on a sacred journey walking to the Holy.

We will open our group with meditation, share openly and honestly our experiences, and ask questions because it is in the asking that God moves us to deeper understanding. We close with a group prayer/ritual.

PW is more interfaith based and as you have read in our previous newsletters we also offer this missional ministry to our community both local and afar.

We are offering PW2 weekly for 1 hour during the month of August into the first week of September. If you want to join and know you will only miss a week or 2 please sign up as it will be worth it. Missing more than that I would recommend joining this group another time and let me know so we can plan for another offering either this fall or in the winter of 2016.

Sign up will be outside the sanctuary door on the table in the lobby. At this point no pre-ordered books will be necessary.

In Christ's Peace
Pastor Susan Vincent Cox

Faith Communities Keeping Seniors Connected and Engaged!

The Capital District Senior Issues Forum and the Albany Guardian Society with 12 other faith communities are meeting together on July 22, 2015 from 8 am - 2:30 pm at the Carondelet Hospitality Center in Latham.

The keynote speaker is **Reverend Susan Vincent-Cox**, Minister of Discipleship & Mission at **First Church in Albany**, a member of the Reformed Church in America. The Rev. Deb Jameson will also be a member of one of the panels.

Contact Lois Wilson for more information. The complete registration packet, including a program description is posted on www.cdsif.org.

Thank You Choir!



Our Choir is taking a much needed break for the summer and will resume in September. Much of the choir's service is hidden. They meet each Thursday night and early every Sunday morning to rehearse before the Worship Service. They give their hard work, musical gifts, dedication and time to this ministry, and receive the rich rewards of fellowship, joy of singing, and a deepening relationship with, and service to

God. We all enjoy the fruits of their labors each Sunday in the beautiful music which enriches our worship, deepens our faith. Wouldn't you like to join the choir and be part of this great group next fall?

First Church Readers

First Church Readers has finished meeting for the season. We're a group of First Churchers who like to read. We get together once a month after worship to discuss a book we've been reading that month. We'll resume meeting again on September 21st when our book will be *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand. The group is open to everyone. Come join us!

Wednesday Noontime Concerts in June



Each Wednesday in June we had noontime concerts in our sanctuary. We had a great time putting together and performing lots of fun music for appreciative audiences. Thank you all - performers, Mary Bon, Neil Keen, David Bon-Keen, Peter Subers, Rose Hunsberger, - listeners, and Jeanne Bianchine for her publicity and beautiful postcard design.

Attending Camp Fowler this Summer:

Madison Vitas, June 28 - July 2, Week # 25

Joshua Bliss, August 9-15, Week # 82

Haleigh Bliss, August 9-15, Week # 80

To send a card address it to: Camp Fowler

Camper's Name, Week #

P.O. Box 131

Speculator, NY 12164

A Letter of Support for Emanuel AME Church From the First Church Bible Study Group

June 26, 2015

Mother Emanuel AME Church
110 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we met on Tuesday for our weekly Bible Study Group, our thoughts, hearts and minds went to you, who are mourning the loss of so many loved ones. We want to let you know that as Christians searching, studying and living the Word of God, we feel a strong solidarity with Mother Emanuel and the families of those lost to an act of senseless and incomprehensible violence. We want to express our sorrow and love for you all.

We also want to express our respect and admiration for the grace the families and Mother Emanuel have shown in the wake of this atrocity. You exemplify what we as Christians are called to do – to love our neighbors – to love our enemies. By walking the walk you have shown the world the unimaginable love of Christ. Your strength and faithfulness has strengthened us all.

The young man, Dylann Roof, expressed a desire to ignite a race war. Paradoxically, he has spurred Christians and non-Christians to join together in unity and solidarity. Clearly, he did not understand *Galatians 3:28*, which we are studying right now and believe: *“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of us are one in Christ.”*

As brothers and sisters in Christ, our steadfast prayer is that in your pain you will find peace in the still silence of lonely nights and that your faith will continue to comfort you. In closing, we leave with you *1 Cor. 16:13*: *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave and strong.”*

May the peace of Christ be with you all.

Your Sisters and Brothers,

The First Church in Albany Bible Study Group

A Note of Thanks

Recently First Church offer hospitality to a group of hikers from Hope Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. We received this note of thanks from Pastor Gordon Wiersma.

Dear John and Denise and Noel,

On behalf of the Hope Church 'Fish Club' hiking group for the Appalachian Trail, THANK YOU for your wonderful hospitality to us on June 9. It was both a huge help to our group to have a dry place to sleep on that Tuesday evening before we started our hike and a huge treat to be able to connect with our sister church in Albany. I know that such a last minute request was not an easy thing to accommodate, so special thanks to Denise for all her help over the phone and her hospitality upon our arrival, and many thanks to Noel for taking such good care of us through the evening. John, it was wonderful to see you in the evening and we're so glad that you stopped by to say hello.

It's a blessing to be a part of the body of Christ together, and please know that your hospitality made a wonderful impression on our group – it's good to know you truly do have 'Room for All' ;).

Blessings.

Peace/Shalom/Salaam/Amahoro/Vrede/Paz/Samadhanam,

Gordon **Hope Church**, Holland, MI

Congratulations



Lianne Parmalee graduated Albany High School and will study Environmental Science at the University of Vermont's Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Resources.

Michael Moore, nephew of Deborah Anderson and Joeanna Brown's grandson, graduated from Albany High School on June 28th. Michael plans to attend Hudson Valley Community College this fall. His long term plans include a career in the music world.

Jamee Mae Robinson is graduating from Colonie Central High School. She will be attending Hudson Valley Community College in the fall. She plans on majoring in Child Psychology.

At Home with the WORD

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary

Available online at: www.rca.org/athome

July 1st – July 31th

1. Ezekiel 2:1-5
2. Psalm 123
3. 2 Corinthians 12:2-10
4. Mark 6:1-13
5. *Sixth Sunday after Pentecost*
6. 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19
7. Psalm 24
8. Amos 7:7-15
9. Psalm 85:8-13
10. Ephesians 1:3-14
11. Mark 6:14-29
12. *Seventh Sunday after Pentecost*
13. 2 Samuel 7:1-14
14. Psalm 89:20-37
15. Jeremiah 23:1-6
16. Psalm 23
17. Ephesians 2:11-22
18. Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
19. *Eighth Sunday after Pentecost*
20. 2 Samuel 11:1-15
21. Psalm 14
22. 2 Kings 4:42-44
23. Psalm 145:10-18
24. Ephesians 3:14-21
25. John 6:1-21
26. *Ninth Sunday after Pentecost*
27. 2 Samuel 11:26–12:13
28. Psalm 51:1-12
29. Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15
30. Psalm 78:23-29
31. Ephesians 4:1-16

August 1st – August 31st

1. John 6:24-35
2. *Tenth Sunday after Pentecost*
3. 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33
4. Psalm 130
5. 1 Kings 19:4-8
6. Psalm 34:1-8
7. Ephesians 4:25–5:2
8. John 6:35, 41-51
9. *Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost*
10. 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14
11. Proverbs 9:1-6
12. Psalm 111
13. Psalm 34:9-14
14. Ephesians 5:15-20
15. John 6:51-58
16. *Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost*
17. 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43
18. Joshua 24:1-2, 14-18
19. Psalm 84
20. Psalm 34:15-22
21. Ephesians 6:10-20
22. John 6:56-69
23. *Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost*
24. Song of Solomon 2:8-13
25. Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9
26. Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9
27. Psalm 15
28. James 1:17-27
29. Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23
30. *Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost*
31. Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23



The deadline for the September issue of *FAMILY* is August 14.



Congratulations

Congratulations to Kim and Rich Gattie on the birth of their daughter, Katherine Rachael on May 25, 2015.

Congratulations to Jenifer and Bill Long on the birth of their son, William Franklin V on June 9, 2015.

In Sympathy

Sympathy is extended to Matthew and Paul Hofnagel, family and friends on the death of their father, Matthew L. Hofnagel on June 3, 2015.

Sympathy is extended to Ray Berg, III, Keith and Kendred Berg, family and friends on the death of their father, Ray Berg, Jr. on June 8, 2015.

Memorials

In celebration of the life of **Helen Gardner** gifts have been received from Jean G. and James R. Burns, Rev. LeRoy and Judith U. Suess , Kathie and Edward Monthie, III for the **Music Fund** from Dean and Patricia Ostrander for the **Historical Room Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Gregory A. Staats** a gift has been received from Rosemary T. Koveleskie for the **Music Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Andrew Leibach** a gift has been received from Rev. LeRoy and Judith U. Suess for the **Music Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Matthew L. Hofnagel** a gifts have been received from William Staats for the **Capital Campaign Fund** from Edward J. and Cathryn M. Carey for the **Clee Park Fund**.



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