

The First Church FAMILY

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

March 2016

WORSHIP:

6 Fourth Sunday in Lent

10:15 am Lent Pre-Service Music
10:30 am Sanctuary Service (Communion)
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
Post-service: The Way

13 Fifth Sunday in Lent

10:15 am Lent Pre-Service Music
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
Post-service: The Way

20 Palm/Passion Sunday

10:15 am Lent Pre-Service Music
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
Post-service: The Way

24 Maundy Thursday

7:30 pm Maundy Thursday Service of Tenebrae

27 Easter Sunday

10:15 am Pre-Service Music
10:30 am Sanctuary Service (Communion)
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
Post-service: Coffee & Conversation

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

From the Pastor:

Dear Friends,

This month we will continue our Lenten journey focusing on the 'table stories' in the gospel of Luke. In each of these stories where he is a dinner guest, Jesus' words or actions provoke controversy. As we move through the gospel, Jesus both gains more followers and makes more enemies. The hostility increases and tensions rise as he journeys toward Jerusalem.

Fourth Sunday in Lent March 6
Luke 14: 7-14 (24) Choosing places of honor

Fifth Sunday in Lent March 13
Luke 19: 1-10 Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' house

Palm/Passion Sunday March 20.
The service begins with a celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and concludes with a reflection on part of the passion narrative in Luke 23.

Maundy Thursday March 24
Luke 22: 7-27 The Last Supper: A service of communion and Tenebrae

Easter Sunday March 27
Luke 24 The risen Jesus is made known in the breaking of the bread.

You are also invited to come on Wednesday evenings, March 2, 9 and 16 at 6 p.m. to share a simple supper together, and read and discuss the Bible passage that will be the text for the coming Sunday. You are welcome to come for one or two or all three sessions. We'll finish each time by 7:30 or 8:00.

Please let me know or call the church office if you plan to come.

Sincerely,

John Paarlberg

The Way:

WALKING TOGETHER ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Are you interested in exploring your own faith journey? 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?*
- *Where do I most long for change in my life and healing in our world?*
- *What might God be calling me to do or be at this point in my life?*

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.

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.

If you have a friend or neighbor who is not already involved in a faith community, consider inviting them to come along on *the Way*. Offer to come with them. We’ll meet after Sunday worship on March 6, 13 and 20. 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 please speak to Pastor John Paarlberg or email johnpaarlberg@verizon.net or contact the church office (463-4449).

At Home with the WORD

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary

March 1st - March 31th

Now available online at: www.rca.org/resources/home-word

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Psalm 32:1-5 | 17. Luke 22:14–23:56 |
| 2. Psalm 32:6-11 | 18. Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 |
| 3. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 | 19. Luke 19:28-40 |
| 4. Luke 15:1-3, 11-24 | 20. Palm/Passion Sunday |
| 5. Luke 15:25-32 | 21. Hebrews 9:11-15 |
| 6. Fourth Sunday in Lent | 22. Isaiah 49:1-7 |
| 7. Isaiah 43:16-21 | 23. John 13:21-32 |
| 8. Psalm 126:1-3 | 24. Maundy Thursday; Exodus 12:1-14 |
| 9. Psalm 126:4-6 | 25. Good Friday; John 18-19 |
| 10. Philippians 3:4-11 | 26. John 20:1-18 |
| 11. Philippians 3:12-14 | 27. Easter Sunday |
| 12. John 12:1-8 | 28. Acts 5:27-32 |
| 13. Fifth Sunday in Lent | 29. Psalm 118:14-29 |
| 14. Isaiah 50:4-9 | 30. Psalm 150 |
| 15. Psalm 31:9-16 | 31. Revelation 1:4-8 |
| 16. Philippians 2:5-11 | |

Prayer Shawl

This past January was the one year mark of our Prayer Shawl Ministry here at First Church. One Monday each month about 8 participants meet for knitting or crocheting together. We also pray together, identify needs for prayer shawls, enjoy fellowship, and share knitting tips. And at the end of our time together we gather around and bless the shawls.

To date **38 shawls** have been given to members of our own congregation and to friends and others in our community. Also many, many pocket shawls have been carried forward from the baskets at our sanctuary doors. These have been taken to share with others by participants at weekly worship and other services such as weddings, and celebration of life/funeral services.

Shawls are given when persons are experiencing a medical crises, or just to say “we are thinking of you”. They are given at baptisms and at any significant time in a person’s life. The significance of receiving a prayer shawl has been both touching for those who receive as well as for those who make and present them. Pocket shawls were also given at the Albany Classis Women’s annual meeting/worship last fall.

Skill and dedication to the craft and prayers, prayers, prayers have been a wonderful experience for all involved. We are all most grateful to do this work together. ***Please join us*** if you can, to be a part of this “creative” and caring ministry.

Yours in Christ, Ella Campbell, Jean Lamere, Mary Weijola, Gertrude Dorn, Cindy Gillespie, Joline Mondore, Kathy Monthie, Rev. Susan Vincent Cox

NVC at Albany Medical Center

On Tuesday Feb. 16th Sue Vincent-Cox and Jan McCracken (from Unitarian Universalist Church in Albany and a facilitator of NVC groups) co-led a presentation on Nonviolent Communication for the Pastoral Care Team at Albany Medical Center. This group of chaplains include the department’s head chaplains, Rev. Jake Marvel and Rev. Harlan Ratmayer, CPE students (clinical pastoral education), and several other volunteer chaplains that help support this department. The presentation took place over 3 hours with 11 chaplains present. All had a great learning experience.

Pilgrim’s Walk

Sandy Scudder and Pastor Susan Vincent Cox have started a new Pilgrim’s Walk group at Sheehy Manor in Latham. They will also be starting a new group at Beltrone Independent Living Center in Colonie on March 22nd. This is a second time offering PW at Sheehy Manor and a 5th time at Beltrone. Stephanie Wolos, the social worker at Beltrone, informed us this past week that there are 18 people signed up for this new group and she believes that there will be more by mid-March. Due to this high number of participants we will likely need to offer 2 groups instead of one. We are glad these groups have been so well received, filling a need for spiritual support and community. Cheryl Gowie and Sue also plan to offer a new group at Beverwyck in Slingerlands in April.

Being Pro-Israel & Pro-Palestine? We Can & We Must! A RCA/World Vision Israel-Palestine Training



You are invited to come learn more about the RCA's commitments to contribute to being:

- Pro-Israeli
- Pro-Palestinian
- Pro-Peace
- Pro-Justice
- Pro-Jesus

in an Israel-Palestine training for pastors, mission leaders, and other lay people.

For people who know little about the Israeli – Palestinian conflict and for those who know a lot.

March 10, 2016

475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115

1:30PM – 4:00PM

&

April 9, 2016

Regional Synod of Albany office, 1790 Grand Blvd., Schenectady NY 12309

1:30PM – 4:00PM

Co-sponsored by RCA (Earl James, Coordinator of Missional Mosaic, a Transformed & Transforming initiative) and World Vision (Craig Swandby, Director of Israel-Palestine Advocacy). Endorsed by the Rev. Amy Nyland, Executive Minister of the Regional Synod of New York, and the Rev. Abby Norton-Levering, Ministries Coordinator of the Regional Synod of Albany. Contact ejames@rca.org for additional information.

Pre-Service Music in Lent

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

- March 6** Music for Bassoon and Organ
March 13 Rose Hunsberger, soprano
March 20 Music of Johann Sebastian Bach with Peter Subers, baritone

Middle Eastern Luncheon and Presentation on Israel/Palestine on Wednesday, March 9

You are invited to join Albany Classis ministers and others for a Middle Eastern lunch and a presentation and discussion about how Christians can work and pray for peace in Israel and Palestine. Pastor John Paarlberg will share photos and reflections on his recent experience in the West Bank. Lunch will be catered by Mamoun's Falafel restaurant. (Suggested contribution is \$5). Please call or email the church office by Monday, March 7, to make a reservation.

FOCUS Combined Worship Service



On Sunday, February 7th First Church had the pleasure of worshipping together with all the covenant churches of FOCUS Churches of Albany at Westminster Presbyterian Church. We all welcomed the new executive director Rev. Jim Ketcham. First Church will host the Combined Worship Service on July 3rd.

Overflow Shelter Dinners

Scheduled for March 4th

First Church in Albany will be providing and delivering food for the Overflow Shelter Dinner at First Lutheran Church on March 4th (Chicken and International foods). Can you help by bringing a dish to serve 6-8 shelter guests or delivering the meal? RECYCLABLE containers are available at the hospitality table. Sign up at the hospitality table or email Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net!

Many of the shelter guests have dental problems so soft foods and foods that are easy to chew are a good idea. Also some guests do not eat pork products so if you make a dish that contains pork please label it “**Contains Pork.**”

Bring your dishes Sunday after church, weekdays between 9 am and 1:00 pm or Thursday night between 6:30 and 7:30.

NO First Church Readers Group in March



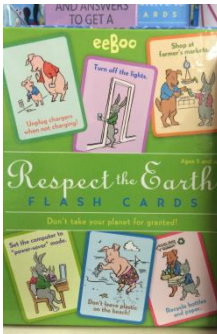
First Church Readers

The Reader's Group will not meet in March. April's book will be *To the Light House* by Virginia Woolf. May's book will be *Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes, Contests and Collisions* by our own congregation member, Tom Allison.

First Church Readers Group Is a group of First Churchers who like to read and get together once a month to discuss a book they have been reading during that month. Everyone is welcome to join us. Contact Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net or 463-4449 for more information or ideas for books.

Growing Green

Making things greener



Children ages 5 and up can have fun learning about respecting the Earth with these Flash Cards. Available at I Love Books in Delmar or through Amazon.

Cleaning: use vinegar and baking soda instead of bleach

Cooking: Use a toaster oven or microwave instead of a regular oven

Growing: Plant a garden or grow herbs in a sunny window

In March start onions and peas outdoors and tomatoes inside.

FOCUS Empty Bowls

Valentines Day afternoon was celebrated with friends at the FOCUS fundraiser. All enjoyed great soup, artisan bowls and helped raise money for those who struggle with hunger.



You may be affected by the Northeast Direct Pipeline

One of our sister congregations, the First Reformed Church of Bethlehem in Selkirk, is calling attention to the proposed Northeast Direct (NED) Pipeline. If constructed as planned, the pipeline would cut a huge swath through some of the church's forested land, land that was bought in 1795 from Stephen Van Rensselaer, one of the early Dutch patroons, and which is on the National Historic Registry. The proposed pipeline, which would carry gas extracted by fracking and would run from Pennsylvania through New York State and Massachusetts, also raises a number of environmental and health concerns. To learn more about the plans for this pipeline and efforts to oppose it, go to <http://stopnypipeline.org>

The Weathervanes : The American Circus



Join the Weathervanes for fellowship, lunch, and program on Wednesday, March 16 th, at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall. Bring a sandwich. Coffee, tea, and dessert will be served. After lunch, Tom Allison will amaze and astound us with his illustrated presentation of the American Circus – its forgotten history and its local roots. And the man who made it all happen is buried in Albany Rural Cemetery. Please call Audrey Ming (456-5485) to let her know that you plan to attend.

Capital Area Council of Churches: Good Friday

This year's Good Friday service will be held at Noon at the Hubbard Interfaith Sanctuary on the College of St. Rose. Burt Faye will be presenting, "Voices from Good Friday, a Passion Collective."

FOCUS Easter Sunrise Service



Wake up early and join us at the FOCUS Easter Sunrise Service on Easter morning, March 27th at 6:30 am at the West Capitol Park (opposite the Smith Building). The Rev. Peter Cook, new Executive Director of New York State Council of Churches will share Easter reflections. A community breakfast follows at Emmanuel Baptist at 7:05 am.

First Church Now on Facebook

First Church is now on Facebook. Please take a look. And, as they say: "like" us and "share" us with your friends. <https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchinAlbany> We will be posting a few times each week so check us out!

375th Anniversary Committee

2017 will mark the 375th year that First Church has been doing the work of God in this community and we will be planning special worship, artistic and historical events to celebrate. A committee is being set up to coordinate these events, and we would like three members from the congregation to join in the planning. If you are interested in the history of the church or in just helping to plan the events of what will be a festive year, contact Ian Leet at 482-6612 or at ian.leet@outlook.com.

Friendly Note

Hank and Alberta Fox – they miss everyone at church. The cards and letters received from church members and friends are read and re-read. Alberta finds it hard to write notes anymore so instead she will call people to find out how they are doing. They attend church services every Sunday at LedgeWood. This helps filled the void of not being at church and interacting with their church family and friends.

Easter Flowers

Orders for Easter memorials must be received at the Church Office no later than **March 18th, Friday**. 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.

Parking Lots:

IMPORTANT INFORMATION-SNOW-TOW WARNING

If you are parked in either First Church parking lot when the church offices are closed (after 5 or weekends), and the plowing company comes to clear the snow, you will be TOWED whether you display a First Church permit or not.



The deadline for the April issue of *FAMILY* is March 15.



Congratulations

Congratulations to Thora Paton who celebrates her 95th birthday on March 14th.

Congratulations to Patricia and Nicki Richardson on the birth of their daughter, Joanne Carol on February 9, 2016.

Thank You

Viola Baker cannot express words the outpour of feelings and emotion felt by each and every one. She loves her prayer shawl. Thank you and appreciation to all.

Thank you to Pastors Paarlberg and Cox, Denise, and members and friends at First Church, for their prayers, calls, visits, and cards during my recent bout with esophageal cancer. Thank you also, to everyone who drove me to my chemo or radiation sessions, and blood transfusions. And, thank you to those who brought me food during this period. Everything was much appreciated. Steve Hoffman

Memorial

In celebration of the life of **Dan Clayton** a gift has been received from Wilma Sheffer, and an anonymous donor for the **Music Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Eleanore House** a gift has been received from Wilma Sheffer for the **Community Ministry Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Ann Donigan** a gift has been received from Harriet Sinclair for the **Endowment Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Elsa Marie Kelp** gifts have been received from Gilbert J. Molella, Thomas and Valerie Newell, Stolz Agency, Inc., and the Past Matrons and Patrons of Van Rensselaer Star Chapter #256, Order of the Eastern Star for the **Music Fund**.

In Sympathy

Our sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Deborah Greene who passed away on January 25, 2016.

Our sympathy to Kim Gattie and her family on the death of her grandfather on February 2, 2016.

Sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Elsa Marie Kelp who passed away on February 9, 2016.



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