

# The First Church **FAMILY**

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

**September 2015**

## **WORSHIP: THE SEASON OF CREATION SUNDAYS**

- 6    **Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost** (Communion)  
9:00 AM – Last Drive-In Worship  
9:30 AM – FOCUS Combined Worship Service at Trinity United Methodist
- 13    **Planet Earth Sunday** (Communion)  
10:30 AM- Sanctuary Service John Paarlberg preaching  
Post Service: Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan
- 20    **Humanity Sunday**  
10:30 AM- Sanctuary Service Rev. Allan Janssen preaching  
Post Service: “The Worry and Wonder of Being Human”, Dr. Allan Janssen
- 27    **Sky Sunday**  
10:30 AM- Sanctuary Service John Paarlberg preaching  
Children & Worship begins; Open House  
Post Service: “The Way”; First Church Readers
- 4    **Mountain Sunday** (Communion)  
10:30 AM- Sanctuary Service John Paarlberg preaching  
Post-service: “The Way”

**Our Sunday morning service may be found anytime at [www.firstchurchinalbany.org](http://www.firstchurchinalbany.org).**

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## From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

For the past few years for four weeks in the fall we have observed the Season of Creation in worship, celebrating God's gifts in creation and praying for their healing and restoration. This year the four themes are *Planet Earth* (September 13) *Humanity* (September 20) *Sky* (September 27) and *Mountain* (October 4).

On September 13, "Earth Sunday," you are invited to bring a small container of soil to worship. During the service we will present various soils -- stony and sandy, loam and loess, clay or clabbered dirt -- giving thanks for the gift of the earth and remembering that in God's good creation even the soil is glad and rejoices (Joel 2:21).

Also on September 13, Albany mayor, Kathy Sheehan, will be our guest during the post-service time. She has graciously accepted our invitation to join us for a presentation and discussion about the future of downtown Albany.

Resident theologian Dr. Allan Janssen will be the preacher on September 20, "Humanity Sunday." During the post-service time he will lead us in a discussion about "The Worry and Wonder of Being Human," helping us to think theologically about what it means to be human.

The psalmist proclaimed "the heavens are telling the glory of God" (Psalm 19). The heavens still reflect God's glory, but are they also telling us something else? On "Sky Sunday" we will celebrate the wonder of the heavens but also consider the more troubling changes in the earth's climate and the warming of the planet. Are the heavens also telling the judgment of God? Is God calling us to a new way of living?

On Mountain Sunday we'll look at some of the many images of mountains in scripture. Mountains are scenes of revelation. Moses meets with God on Sinai. Jesus is transfigured on a mountain. He teaches the crowds from a mountain. Mountains can be places of trial and testing as well as symbols of promise and hope for a renewed and restored creation, where long-time enemies come together in peace and "shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord" (Isaiah 65:25).

The Belgic Confession, one of the historic Reformed confessional standards, speaks of God's two books, the book of scripture and the book of creation where "the universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: God's eternal power and divinity ..." We read with a book in each hand, as it were, paying prayerful attention to the words of scripture and the world around us, learning from both the theologian and the scientist as we rejoice in and care for "this fragile earth, our island home."

Sincerely,

John Paarlberg

## **A New Worship Center for 8-11 year olds**

This year we hope to offer an additional Children and Worship Center for children ages 8-11 years of age. Worship will take place at the same time as the younger group, ages 4-7 worship (during the adult worship service). Anyone interested in joining our worship team, please contact Rev. Sue Vincent Cox (c.796-8793) or Rev. John Paarlberg. Those who serve as storytellers and greeters lead for 4-6 week segments and we strive to have each worship team member serve for one segment per church year.

Every few years we come together with a C&W/RCA trainer to refresh our storytelling and greeter skills. This year for those who are new, we hope to have a training in early October. Because of the special way we lead through storytelling and “wondering” time we ask all who join to attend this 8 hour training. We also require completing a 2 hour video workshop on child safety. We offer both here at First Church. I have been through 3 training workshops over the years and I must say it is always inspiring and “a wonder” to behold. Rev. Sue Vincent-Cox

## **Pilgrim’s Walk 2 at First Church in August**

This summer we had PW 2 at our church. This was a small group gathering where we explored spirituality and the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of life (65 to end of life). Topics we explored included forgiveness, finding purpose in aging, faith and trust in God, what happens after we die, love and family, friendship, creativity, and compassion for self and others. Each week we chose a spiritual practice for that week and at times this included mindfulness meditation. This is a group of spiritual direction and sharing of faith, experience, and wisdom. It is also a great way to make deeper connections with others in our church. We hope to offer this group again sometime soon.

## **At Home with the WORD**

**Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary** [www.rca.org/athome](http://www.rca.org/athome)  
**September 1<sup>st</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup>**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Psalm 125                         | 16. Jeremiah 11:18-20                  |
| 2. Isaiah 35:4-7                     | 17. Psalm 54                           |
| 3. Psalm 146                         | 18. James 3:13–4:3, 7-8                |
| 4. James 2:1-17                      | 19. Mark 9:30-37                       |
| 5. Mark 7:24-37                      | 20. Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost |
| 6. Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  | 21. Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22        |
| 7. Proverbs 1:20-33                  | 22. Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29       |
| 8. Isaiah 50:4-9                     | 23. Psalm 124                          |
| 9. Psalm 19                          | 24. Psalm 19:7-14                      |
| 10. Psalm 116:1-9                    | 25. James 5:13-20                      |
| 11. James 3:1-12                     | 26. Mark 9:38-50                       |
| 12. Mark 8:27-38                     | 27. Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost  |
| 13. Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost | 28. Job 1:1, 2:1-10                    |
| 14. Proverbs 31:10-31                | 29. Psalm 26                           |
| 15. Psalm 1                          | 30. Genesis 2:18-24                    |

## ***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, 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 beginning on the last Sunday in September and continue through the first Sunday in November.

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

## **Join the Choir: First Rehearsal September 17th**

Choir rehearsals start Thursday, September 17th at 7:00 pm. Like to sing? Come join us for fun, food, fellowship and song. Everyone's welcome. You don't need to read music or have any special talent; just a love of singing. It's refreshing, uplifting and a great way to worship God and deepen your faith.

## **Choir Night Out: September 24th**

The choir is having dinner together on Thursday September 24th at 5:30. Everyone is welcome - family, friends, spouses, partners, potential choir members! You don't need to be a choir member to come! Meet the choir members in an informal setting. Stop by just for a drink or to join us for a meal! Contact Mary Bon at [maryebon@verizon.net](mailto:maryebon@verizon.net) or 463-4449 for more information.

## Faith Communities Keeping Seniors Connected and Engaged!

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

The keynote speaker was **Reverend Susan Vincent-Cox**, Minister of Discipleship & Mission at **First Church in Albany**. The Rev. Cox and Cheryl Gowie also were members of one of the panels.



## Weathervanes September is Game Month



Join the Weathervanes on Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, as we begin our 30<sup>th</sup> season! The Weathervanes is a social group for seniors, which meet once a month (usually on Wednesday) for lunch, fellowship, and an enticing program. Over the years some of the programs have included presentations from artists, historians, and musicians. We have shared our hobbies and enjoyed being 'armchair travelers.'

Come to Zimmerman Hall on the 16<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 p.m. and bring a sandwich. Coffee, tea, and dessert will be provided. Then enjoy Bingo with our Chaplain, John Bowen. A warm welcome awaits YOU! Please phone Audrey Ming (465-5485) to let her know you plan to attend.

## Room for All National Conference



"From Sorrow to Celebration," Room for All's 10th anniversary national conference, will take place in Grand Rapids, MI, October 22 - 25. The conference features LGBTQ-inclusive worship, workshops, speakers and support networks. Many have found previous RfA conferences to be life-changing. To register, look for a poster and brochures at the table in the lounge, or go to [www.regonline.com/roomforall2015](http://www.regonline.com/roomforall2015). Need-based airfare assistance is available. Further information about Room for All and the conference may be found at [www.roomforall.com](http://www.roomforall.com), or speak with Marilyn Paarlberg. Registration deadline is October 1st.



Will plan to meet Monday September 21<sup>st</sup> in the Parlor at 11:30 am. We have been meeting monthly to pray, talk together, make plans around giving prayer shawls to others, and to bless them and one another. Please come and join us. We would love to see you.

## First Church Readers

Like to read? First Church Readers are people who love to read. We get together once a month in the post-service hour to discuss a book we have read in the past month. We will resume meeting again on September 27 when we will be discussing *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand.

Future books are:

- October *Clara and Mr. Tiffany* by Susan Vreeland
- November *Campus Capers on the Hudson: College Fun Recollections of an Emeritus Professor* by William L. (Bill) Staats  
Copies of the book are available from Bill Staats.

## **Growing Green - Caring for Creation**

### ***Water is increasingly scarce in much of the world***

East Africa and the Horn of Africa are suffering the worst drought in recent memory. Since 2007 rainfall has been erratic or nonexistent - affecting 40 million people. Colombia, Pakistan, Australia, and Guatemala, are just a few of the other countries suffering severe drought conditions. Regions of China are experiencing the lowest rainfall on record.

In the US 30 % of the country is experiencing at least a moderate drought, and 7 states have at least 50 % of their territory experiencing severe drought.

In California more that 70% of the state is experiencing extreme drought and the governor has declared a state of emergency affecting both farmers and homeowners.

The Capital Region experienced one of the driest Mays on record and July was earth's hottest month ever recorded.

### **What can we do?**

**Stop** watering lawns, landscape with low-water plants, shorten showers

**Use** a rain barrel for garden watering

**Re-use** water bottles and drink tap water

**Work** to protect water on a local, national and global arena; patronize companies that use water wisely

A good resource is the faith based website: <http://www.webofcreation.org/>

## **NVC Practice Group**

The Non-Violent Communications Group will begin soon. Please let Rev. Sue Cox know if you are interested in joining a practice group. We hope to offer a Basics Workshop in NVC in late October.

## **Children and Worship Open House**

**Sunday September 20<sup>th</sup>**

**During Worship (after the children's moment)**

**Come hear a story and see the Worship Center**

**Meet some of our storytellers and greeters**

*We will begin weekly worship Sept 27<sup>th</sup>*

Bring a friend☺



## Summer Helpers



The First Church Food Pantry had some Summer helpers. Joshua Bliss, Hannah Dorn, and Emily Bianchine came on a regular basis to help out. Thank you!

## School Supply Team



The First Church Food Pantry supplied 35 children with brand new backpacks and back to school essentials for the coming year. Many thank-you's to the congregation for their generous donations. Special thanks to: Jean LaMere, Gertrude Dorn, Joeanna Brown, Becky Hudak, Joshua Bliss, Jane Ward and of course Noel Concepcion.

## Parking Lot: Important Information

**ANYONE PARKING IN FIRST CHURCH PARKING LOTS WITHOUT A DISPLAYED PERMIT MAY BE TOWED.**

Maiden Lane no longer has an attendant full time. A towing company polices the Sheridan Avenue lot, and if there is no ticket or permit visible in the visor or dashboard you may be towed. There is a ticket booth in the lot right next to the attendant house for purchasing tickets. The charge will be \$140.00 per vehicle or higher if you are towed. Parking permits are ONLY available through Denise, phone: 463-4449. When using the Orange Street parking lot, you need to have and display a permit. In addition, if you have an event at church you MUST contact Denise.

David Bradley Chair, Board of Trustees Parking Committee



## Building Renovation – Summer 2015



- The North and South Tower Acorns are now visible.
- On August 26, *Essence of Time* completed their work and we waited for noon to start the clocks so that they wouldn't have to wind them all the way around.



The deadline for the September issue of *FAMILY* is September 15.



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## **Congratulations**

Congratulations to Starlene and John Haviland on the celebration of their fiftieth wedding anniversary on July 18<sup>th</sup>.

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## **Thank You**

Many thanks for the “handmade prayer shawl” given to us by the “Prayer Group Ministry”. We appreciate you thinking of us. Alberta and Hank Fox.

We would like to thank you so much for the beautiful card and the beautiful sentiments for the summer season. We are glad to be thought of by such caring people. Once again thank you, Dennis, Helen and Ricky Kernahan.

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## **In Sympathy**

Sympathy is extended to Craig Bryce, family and friends on the death of his mother, Helen H. Bryce on July 20, 2015.

Sympathy is extended to Kathie Monthie, family and friends on the death of her good friend, Anne Marie Virgilio recently.

Sympathy is extended family and friends on the death of The Rev. William Cameron on July 26, 2015.

Sympathy is extended to Edward Baskerville, family and friends on the recent death of his step son, Calvin Newsome.

Sympathy is extended to Starlene and John Haviland, Sr., Dorene Haviland Robinson, John F. Haviland, Jr. family and friends on the death of their son and brother, Fred. J. Haviland on August 12, 2015.

## Memorials

In celebration of the life of **Helen Gardner** gifts have been received from Helen H. Bryce, Hugh and Suzanne Gardner, Peter B. and Janet A. Gardner for the **Music Fund** from Jane Ward, Hugu and Suzanne Gardner, Peter B. and Janet A. Gardner for the **Historical Fund** from Mark L. and Sarah B. Gardner for the **Capital Campaign Fund** from Mark L. and Sarah B. Gardner for the **General Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Matthew L. Hofnagel** gifts have been received from Ned and Kathie Monthie and Deborah and Michael Paris, Betty Pierce for the **Clee Park Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Helen H. Bryce** gifts have been received from Mark W. and Jane Ryan Levine, Robert A. Jaffarian, Carl and Lynne Hiemstra, Sheila A. Sullivan, The Rev. LeRoy Suess and Judith Utley Suess, Martha Leckonby, Marion Rogers Blodgett, Joyce Recene, David and Evelyn Dufresne, Beverly A. Sliter, Linda Diane Jaffarian, Kevin and Karen Bronner, William Staats, Roberta B and Laurence A. Short, George G. Firth and Jennifer J. Firth for the **Music Fund** from Leona Murray, Jane Ward for the **Capital Campaign Fund** from Shirley Bone for the **Capital Campaign (Twin Towers) Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Rodney Gaebel** a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the **Capital Campaign (Twin Towers) Fund**.

In celebration of the life of the **Rev. Lynn T. Joosten**, a gift has been received from the Joosten Family for the **Lynn T. Joosten Scholarship Fund**.

In celebration of the life of the **Rev. William M. Cameron**, gifts have been received from an anonymous donor, from Sandra Scudder, Shirley Joosten, Donna and Arthur Schultz, Kathleen Gregory, Rev. LeRoy Suess and Judith Utley Suess, Jane Miller Brew, Gertrude Dorn, Gloria F. Brown, Arthur F. Dicker, Harriet Sinclair, Betty Pierce, Rev. Carl and Lynne Hiemstra, William Staats for the **Drive-In Ministry Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Raymond J. and Eva Berg, Jr. and friend Norma Swift**, a gift has been received from Donna and Arthur Schultz for the **Capital Campaign (Steeple Tower) Fund**.

## Tech Volunteer Needed

We have suspended CD recordings of our worship services while we look for a volunteer to help continue this important ministry. These recordings have allowed our shut-ins to hear our services and also enabled posting of our services on our website. If you can help with this ministry, please contact Ian Leet, Worship Commission Chair, or the Church Office at 463-4449.



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