

The First Church **FAMILY**

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

APRIL 2014

WORSHIP:

- 6 **Fifth Sunday in Lent (Communion)**
Pre-service Music
John Paarlberg preaching
Post-service: Small Groups
Trustees Meeting

- 13 **Palm/Passion Sunday**
Pre-service Music
John Paarlberg preaching
Post-service: The Land of Jesus

- 17 **Maundy Thursday, 7:30 pm**
John Paarlberg preaching

- 20 **Easter Sunday**
Pre-service Music
John Paarlberg preaching

- 27 **Second Sunday of Easter**
Susan Vincent-Cox preaching
Post-service: First Church Readers

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

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

Our Lenten journey began on Ash Wednesday with the sign of the cross marked in soot: "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). On Easter we behold an empty cross and hear the words which were spoken at an empty tomb: "He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again" (Luke 24:5-7).

Remember you are dust... Remember how he told you...

We need both kinds of remembering. We get plenty of reminders of the first. Time passes, bodies age, systems fail, friends depart. We'd like more reminders of the second: the assurance that beyond betrayal, abandonment and death is resurrection. We are dust and ashes. But because Jesus took on our mortal, dusty flesh and by death conquered death, we bear within us the hope the resurrection.

Paul said it this way: *We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh* (2 Corinthians 4: 7-10).

There is honesty and humility here, an acceptance of our limitations and mortality with no promises of an easy and stress free life. But there is also resilient hope. "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed."

What all of this says to me is that we are going to make it. There is a big difference between being beleaguered, which we will be, and being done in, which we will not be, thanks to the grace of God. We will likely have a life that has its share of trouble, but our lives and their troubles will not get the best of us. According to Paul, this resilient strength is a gift made available to us through the 'extraordinary power' that comes from God through Jesus' death, and resurrection, "the life of Jesus made visible in our mortal flesh."

That is a mystery I cannot explain, but one I have witnessed. I've known a number of 'earthen vessels' who honestly and openly acknowledged their imperfections and limitations, but didn't dwell on them; who had more than their share of afflictions, perplexities and persecutions, but bore them grace. They knew they were but dust and ashes yet they carried within them a radiant hope and a lasting peace —the life of Jesus made visible in their mortal flesh.

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.

Sincerely,

John D. Paarlberg

At Home with the WORD

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary
April 1st- April 30th

Now available online at: www.rca.org/athome

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Isaiah 42:14-21 | 17. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 |
| 2. Psalm 146 | MAUNDY THURSDAY |
| 3. Revelation 10:1-11 | 18. John 18:1–19:42 GOOD FRIDAY |
| 4. Psalm 130 | 19. Romans 6:3-11 |
| 5. Ezekiel 36:8-15 | 20. John 20:1-18 EASTERSUNDAY |
| 6. Ezekiel 37:1-14 SUNDAY | 21. Colossians 3:5-11 |
| 7. 1 Kings 17:17-24 | 22. Colossians 3:12-17 |
| 8. Ephesians 2:1-10 | 23. Matthew 28:1-10 |
| 9. Matthew 22:23-33 | 24. Colossians 4:2-5 |
| 10. Philippians 1:1-11 | 25. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 |
| 11. Philippians 1:21-30 | 26. Psalm 16 |
| 12. Mark 10:32-34 | 27. John 20:19-31 SUNDAY |
| 13. Matthew 21:1-11 PALM SUNDAY | 28. 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 |
| 14. John 12:1-11 | 29. 1 Corinthians 15:19-28 |
| 15. John 12:20-36 | 30. Matthew 12:38-42 |
| 16. John 13:21-32 | |

Easter Offering

The Board of Deacons has designated the Easter offering for Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region and for the ministry of Reformed Church missionaries Dick and Carolyn Otterness. Trinity Alliance provides a range of services to the local community in support of families, adults, and children, including an after school arts and recreation program, emergency food pantry, drug rehabilitation and housing assistance.

Dick and Carolyn Otterness work with the Hungarian Reformed Church to train volunteers who work with the Roma people. Roma (Gypsy) people make up the largest ethnic minority in Central and Eastern Europe. They are very poor and isolated, mostly illiterate, and almost universally unemployed. Working with the Hungarian Church they establish new Roma congregations, improve access to health care and education, and help find employment. Dick and Carolyn have also worked with partners in Ukraine, where people are experiencing a great deal of turmoil and uncertainty. We encourage you to support these ministries with your gifts and to remember them in your prayers.

Palm Sunday Post Service Program

Steve Andersen recently returned from three weeks in Israel and Palestine where he participated in a workshop on Non-Violent Communications between Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals. Steve was also able to visit several of the Biblical sites mentioned in the Gospels including the Mount of Temptation, the old city of Jerusalem, and the church of the Holy Sepulcher, the traditional site of the crucifixion. After the worship service on Palm Sunday Steve will share photographs and reflections on his experience.

We'll also have more opportunity to talk with Steve about the work toward non-violent communication between Palestinians and Israelis at a supper (with Middle Eastern food!) on Monday evening, 6 p.m. April 28.



Children & Worship

Each Sunday after the children's sermon children ages 4 -7 gather in the worship center to worship God through storytelling, singing, prayer, and creative expression.

Pre-Service Music in Lent

There will be pre-service music at 10:15 am on Sunday April 6th and April 13th. Come early to pray, meditate, refresh yourself, or just listen to some beautiful music as we follow the Lenten road from cross to resurrection.

Thank you Choir! (No Choir Rehearsal on April 24th.)

Our choir and soloists are hard at work preparing for Holy Week and Easter and we thank them for their faithful witness, hard work, and beautiful music which enriches and illuminates our worship together.

The choir always welcomes new members. Our next new member could be YOU. How about considering joining the choir? It is fun, relaxing, and inspiring - and the company is great.

First Church Readers Meets April 27th



Our next book group meeting will be April 27th when we will discuss *The End of Your Life Book Club* by Will Schwalbe. The book is available through the UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM both as an ebook and in a hard copy. Everyone is welcome. Come join us.

Upcoming books are:

May - *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northrup

New books we are considering are:

Clara and Mr. Tiffany by Susan Vreeland and

In the Sanctuary of Outcasts by Neil White

Summer is coming. Got an idea for summer reading? light or heavy? religious or not? current events or old classics? Pass it on to Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net.



Welcome Spring with the Weathervanes

Join the Weathervanes for fellowship, lunch, and program on Wednesday April 9th at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall. Bring a sandwich; coffee, tea, and dessert will be served. Come prepared to enjoy another one of John Bowen's great stories when he and Phyllis return from their warm winter vacation in Florida. Please call Audrey Ming (456-3485) to let her know you plan to attend.

Garden time at First Church



It's almost time to start your garden! You can plant peas, lettuce and onions right now! Mary Bon will again have many varieties of vegetable seedlings (tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli) for your garden. The seedlings are offered as a fund-raiser for **Sosep Nursery School in Kibera, Kenya**. Plants will be available in mid-late May.

If you have any small containers to use for transplanting seedlings, (Small pots; yogurt, sour cream, pudding, ices, etc.) give them to Mary or drop them off in the work room.



Arbor Hill Elementary & First Church Projects

A **big** Thank You for your contributions to our projects at Arbor Hill during the month of February. The principal and staff really appreciate what we've done!

Although school was cancelled on February 14, the children celebrated both Black History month and Valentines Day on February 28. The children enjoyed a special lunch complete with our Valentine centerpieces!

Bright and early (7am!!) on Wednesday Feb 26, eight of us delivered an amazing spread of breakfast goodies for the faculty and staff. The surprise breakfast preceded their faculty meeting. Some of us stayed to thank the teachers for their dedication to the children at Arbor Hill Elementary. As the teachers came into the room and saw the food, and us sitting there, they sat down cautiously. Typically, when strangers come into a faculty meeting, it means some new mandate is on the horizon! When we got up and simply thanked them for what they do, the room burst into applause!!!

Again, thank you for making these 2 events possible. I think it is a great way for us to begin a relationship with the school that is only a few blocks from our church home!

Becky Hudak

Growing Green



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 some plants

Overflow Shelter Dinners April 11th



Our last Emergency Overflow Shelter is Friday April 11th - Pork and Chicken Dishes. Sign up at the Hospitality Table to bring a dish or to help deliver. You can also sign up via email by emailing Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net. Bring your dishes Sunday after church or weekdays between 8:30 and 2:30 p.m. We now have RECYCLABLE containers on the work room 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.

Save the Date: First Church in Albany Rummage Sale

Saturday, April 12, 2-4 pm –Drop Off or call for Pick-Up

Friday, April 25, 9:30 am-3 pm

Saturday, April 26, 9:30 am-12 Noon

110 North Pearl St. Albany, NY 12207

Call 463-4449 for more information.



We endeavor to
pursue the vision of
Christ: "That... all
may be one."
(John 17:21)

Save the Date: Sunday, May 18

Celebration of 50 years of Ecumenical Activity.

The Capital Region Ecumenical Organization (CREO) will host a panel discussion at 4 p.m. at Emmanuel-Friedens Church, 218 Nott Terrace, in Schenectady. Representatives of several faith traditions will discuss how the Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism has affected their denominations, especially locally. Time for questions and comments will follow. Refreshments will be available at 3:30 p.m. before the program, and the program will close with an ecumenical worship service at 5:30 p.m. More information to come.

Medieval Feast

Lords and Ladies,

Prepare and mark your calendars for May 3rd. Travelers, countrymen and countrywomen from all parts of the region will gather in the Great Hall at Emmanuel Baptist Church for the fourth annual Medieval Feast. They will be filled with delicious food in the Medieval style. All will smile, laugh, and look in amazement as singers entertain, magicians surprise, poets wax poetic, and storytellers cast spells of intrigue. Auction items for the evening include:

- An Adirondack weekend getaway
- Access to the church tower with friends to watch the 4th of July fireworks
- A week in the Caribbean
- Restaurant gift cards
- Craft weaving, pottery, and more unique items to come

Tell your friends and buy your tickets early to reserve your spot. Call Dorothy at Emmanuel 465-5161 or Edith 482-6612 for tickets. Costumes are not required but add to the fun. All proceeds will support the exterior restoration of our historic building. We look forward to welcoming you for an evening of fun and frolic.



CROP Hunger Walk Sunday May 4

The 2014 Albany CROP Hunger Walk will be held on May 4, at the First Lutheran Church on Western Avenue in Albany. The CROP Hunger Walk is an annual community-wide event sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local volunteers from the various Capital Area Council of Churches to raise funds to help end hunger globally and locally.

The walk will begin at 1:30 pm, preceded by registration at 12:30 pm. Walkers can follow a 4.5 mile loop or a shorter one mile loop.

Cindy Gillespie (439-4188) or Diane Wuerstlin (373-3271) will be available during coffee hours after worship for the month of April to provide information and for you to sign up.

Last year First Church raised \$2,640 with 23 walkers.

Come walk with us...!



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



Memorials

In celebration of the life **Andy Eury**, a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the **Clee Park Fund**.

In Sympathy

Sympathy is extended to Donna Miller Jones and Charnelle Jones on the death of mother and grandmother, Joyce Miller on March 1, 2014.

Sunday Flower Date Available

April 27th is available for the dedication of sanctuary flower arrangements. The cost is \$45 for two vases. Please call the Church Office (463.4449) if you are interested.

Easter Lilies

Please call the church office by April 11, 2014, to place your Easter memorial. A donation of \$10 or more per plant is requested. Please make checks payable to "First Church in Albany" and mark the corner of the check "lilies". After Easter the plants are distributed to our homebound members.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUIRED