

The First Church FAMILY

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

April 2019

WORSHIP:

7 Fifth Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Sanctuary Service

Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

12:00 pm Confirmation – Parlor

1:00 pm Mother's Group – Powell Room

14 Palm Sunday

10:30 am Sanctuary Service

Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

12:00 pm Confirmation – Parlor

18 Maundy Thursday

7:30 pm Sanctuary Service

21 Easter Sunday

10:30 am Festival Easter Communion Service

Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

28 Second Sunday of Easter

10:30 am Sanctuary Service

Nat Phipps Jazz Trio

Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

11:45 am First Church Readers

12:00 pm New Members – Parlor

FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR

Dear Members and Friends,

During the season of Lent, we have been framing our worship services with two questions, one for the entire season and one for each week. The seasonal question is this:

*When I wake up on Resurrection Sunday morning,
how will I be different?*

We who are Christians understand that the resurrection of Jesus changed and changes the world. But do we think about how the resurrection might make us different? What does it mean to be different?

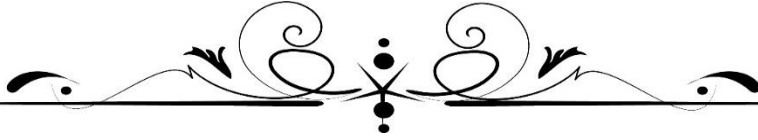
Becoming different – in any way – is both an exciting and an unsettling reality. Becoming different means leaving behind the reality of now, the reality of being the same. All of us, at one time or another, have been glad of change: we formed a new friendship, started a new family, visited a new place, became healthy after being ill, were glad to wake up to experience a new day. But we have been reluctant about change as well, because a new time or condition means something familiar is left behind: the freedom of how things were, the comfort of where we used to live, the support of people we loved, the stability of a job we enjoyed. Even when our old life is hard and even painful, sometimes we move slowly and fearfully onto a new path or through a new door, believing “the devil we know is better than the devil we don’t!”

Although the demons of hesitation and uncertainty seem always to lurk close-by, Jesus grabs the hand of God and walks through pain, anxiety, loneliness and even death toward something new. He invites us to take that walk with him, in our personal lives and as a faith community.

Perhaps it will be in letting go of the devils we know and grabbing God’s hand that something new begins to grow in us. Perhaps it will be stepping out to embrace new ideas, locations, structures. Perhaps it will be discovering that the trust and comfort we have in our circle of friends, family and leaders can grow as we welcome new faces, new stories, new energy. It surely must come in believing that what we have seen, heard and known already is not all there is!

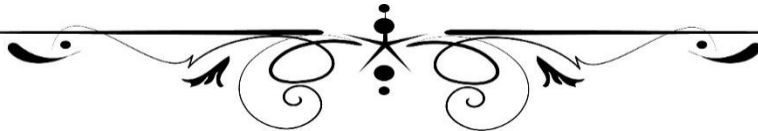
With great hope in God’s new day for each of us and all of us and the world around us,

Lynn



HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday	April 14	10:30am – Sanctuary Worship
Maundy Thursday	April 18	7:30 pm – Communion and Tenebrae
Good Friday	April 19	12:00 pm – St. Francis of Assisi, 391 Delaware Ave, Albany, NY 12209 Sponsored by the Capital Area Council of Churches 1:15 pm – St. Peter's Episcopal Good Friday Music St Peter's Episcopal 107 State Street, Albany, NY.
Easter Sunday	April 21	FOCUS Sunrise Service 6:30am at West Capital Park Easter Breakfast at Emmanuel Baptist Church 10:30am – Festival Service in the sanctuary



PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

On Wednesdays at noon for a half hour, the sanctuary is open for a weekly time of unstructured prayer the life and future of First Church. You are welcome to stay as long or as little as you have time for. If you are unable to be present physically, then join us by praying for the church wherever you are.

REV. CAMERON MONTHLY BRUNCH

Rev. Bill Cameron began gathering a group for lunch on the first Thursday of the month. The group continues to meet each month at the Gateway Diner, 899 Central Avenue in Albany. Anyone can join us starting starting at 12:15 pm and stay until you wish to leave. We all pay for our own. Contact Donna E. Schultz at deschultz07@aol.com

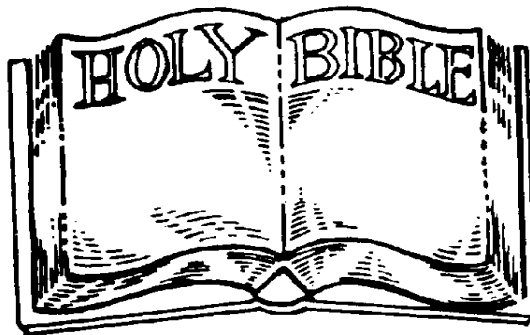


AT HOME WITH THE WORD

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary www.rca.org/athome

April 1st – April 30th.

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





SENIOR MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Search Committee is now entering the most important phase of its work: interviews with candidates for the Senior Minister position at First Church. We plan two stages of interviews - a preliminary interview by Skype or similar technology, and an in-person interview with candidates who are finalists. Two first-stage interviews are scheduled during the month of March. Each of the two people to be interviewed is an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America, in New York State. We believe that each of the two candidates have strong experience and ability in ministry. Some other applications have been received that do not merit further consideration. We expect more applicants, because our church profile has been widely distributed within the RCA and to other Formula of Agreement denominations. The Search Committee thanks the congregation of First Church for its strong interest in our work. Let us hope and pray together for a successful search for a Senior Minister who will lead us with faith, hope, and love into the future that God intends for us all.

Norma Jean Ballou
Imani Brewer
Janet Conti
Jim Folts
Monica Marsh
Jean Lamere
Andy Mondore
Jay Reohr
Ross Westhuis



REPORT FROM THE ELDERS:

At our Elders' meeting in March we listened to some of the concerns voiced during our post service Consistory Conversations. One of the concerns is the use of only gluten-free bread for communion. We have been trying different types of GF bread, most recently a multi grain that seems, to some, more palatable. We will look for feedback on this change in the coming months. Moving forward, when we take communion by intinction, we will have a dedicated station for those needing GF bread.

We discussed at length what it means to be the body of Christ, how *all* are welcomed at His table and what it means to be welcomed and included. We acknowledged that while the choice of bread (GF or wheat base) can sometimes taste less than satisfying, we are reminded that communion is a sacrament, one that nourishes us *spiritually*. We want to focus on ensuring that no one feels left out or singled out. Even when it may seem like we might be focusing on a small group within our fellowship, the Lord's table is welcome to all.

Blessings,
Becky Hudak, Elder



CHURCH LIBRARY

You have a wonderful church library available for your reading pleasure. There are books for all ages. It is on the main floor and is always open for your use. Examples of some good books we have can also be found on a table in Zimmerman Hall and also on the table where you get off the elevator to go to the sanctuary. Also please note that when books are taken out they should be returned within a reasonable time – like three weeks. Some books that were taken out over a year ago have not been returned to the library. Please check and see if you have a book from the library that you forgot to return. Also, Alexander Hamilton is still missing! The book was purchased last year specifically for the library for everyone's use. If you have it, would you please be kind enough to return it.

Mary Weijola

Staff

STAFF: CHANGE IS CONSTANT

Having begun her ministry seven years ago as Minister for Discipleship and Mission, on May 1, 2019 Susan Vincent Cox's position will be renamed as Minister of Discipleship and Pastoral Care.

This change reflects a reality here at First Church as we move through this time of transition. Sue has been the primary staff for pastoral care during the interim through home/hospital visits and in office counselling. She also continues to lead programming through small groups, like the bible study, has helped evolve new and important ministries, like the Mothers' Group and Care Callers, and let go of others like Pilgrims' Walk and Prayer Shawl as others took leadership of these groups.

Beginning in May, Sue's time with First Church will also transition to quarter time, based on our sense of the current needs of the church, and her calling to ministries of healing that extend outside the church. Sue plans generally to be present in the office on Mondays, and available for meetings on Monday and Tuesday nights as needed. She will assist in worship once a month and be available to preach twice a year. She will step back from serving on the FOCUS Board.

We are so grateful to God for Sue's ministry at First Church! We truly value her deep affection and sense of calling to serve among us.

- Between now and May 15, teams composed of members of Leadership will be engaging all full-time and program staff in support reviews. Lynn Carman Bodden will talk with all part-time people. This is one more way we show our staff how much we appreciate their time, talent and energy, and learn ways to make our staff team, and our church, stronger.
- In March, per New York State law, full-time and program staff have participated in Sexual Harassment Prevention training.

Lynn



“The Underground River Next to First Church”

What’s that big hole in our parking lot? Who did it? What are they doing? Early this month a city contractor dug the hole near the parking attendant’s booth, providing an access point to inspect and repair an important part of Albany’s infrastructure. It is a trunk storm sewer line that starts far up Sheridan Avenue and empties into the Hudson River. Visual surveillance of the sewer several months ago was conducted with robot technology. The fuzzy video images revealed some areas that need repair. The high-resolution images accompanying this article, taken recently, show clearly the sewer’s remarkable construction—cut-stone walls and arched roof, about six feet high.

The Albany Water Board’s engineer says that the sewer probably was constructed in the 1790s, and it is still functioning today, over two hundred years later. Old-timers in First Church always said that “there’s an underground river” running by our church. They were right. What was once called Fox Creek now runs through the sewer. The city’s early decision to divert the creek may have contributed to the decision to build our church in 1796, since the flooding threat had been mitigated.

Continued on page 9

But flooding in “Sheridan Hollow” is still a problem during severe cloudbursts. The sewer fills up, and the water coming down the hillside flows into our parking lot, in places two feet deep. City engineers are considering solutions to that problem. Meanwhile the current project will be completed by the first week of April. An access point (manhole) will be installed to facilitate future access to Albany’s “underground river.”



FOCUS CHURCHES

Are you concerned about **housing**, **immigration**, and **addressing racism** in the community around us? If so, you’re not alone. FOCUS, of which we’re a member, has identified these areas for response through advocacy, collective participation by our covenant churches, linking with community partners, and providing direct service.

If you have background or knowledge in any of these areas of concern, have a passion for addressing them, or simply want to learn more about one of these areas, we invite you to join us in forming a task group to explore ways in which our FOCUS churches can do more to address these needs.

To express interest or request further information, contact: Lynn Carman Bodden, Sue Vincent Cox or Pete Pagerey

FOCUS has been active in our community for over fifty years. As an organization of six “covenant churches,” FOCUS is dedicated to fostering relationships among the churches and doing together in social ministry what any one single church cannot achieve alone.

Thanks for your interest!



FOOD PANTRY

The First Church Food Pantry is part of a coalition, The Food Pantries of the Capital District, serving Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties. In 2018, together we distributed food for 3,234,891 meals to people who came together over 340,478 visits! Our coalition distributed food, diapers, formula and hundreds of thousands of dollars in food funding and resources through funding and gift certificates for food at the Regional Food Bank, Stewart's Milk cards, grocery store gift certificates and donated food and items.

Our First Church Food Pantry received:

- 47,173 pounds of food
- 4354 pounds of bread and sweets
- 3859 food, produce and product donations

The cost for this food was offset by grants:

- \$2156 through The Food Pantries for our account at the Regional Food Bank, and for grocery and milk gift cards
- \$1017 FEMA funds for emergency food and shelter.

In February 2019, our staff and volunteers were able to serve 156 people from 108 households. Each person could come twice during the month and received food for eighteen meals per time. We were open six days rather than our usual eight due to bad weather and federal holidays.

Thank you, especially to those who have donated personal care products which cannot be purchased with SNAP funds. Every toothbrush, razor, bottle of shampoo, box of feminine hygiene products, bar of soap helps someone.

And thank you to the faithful members of Bethany Reformed Church who make monthly donations!





OVERFLOW SHELTER DINNERS THANK YOU

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. Hope you will consider participating again next fall when our dinners will begin again.

The Emergency Overflow Shelter at First Lutheran Church in Albany, sponsored by the Capital Area Council of Churches, is a “shelter of last resort” when other shelters are full or for those not eligible for other shelters because of addictions or mental health issues. It is open during the winter months and turns nobody away. First Church has been providing meals each month for the Shelter since 2008.

ALBANY CLASSIS



Connecting Christ Communities

Hi folks, as many of you heard at our February Classis meeting, we have a classis website!! It contains an area for upcoming events, a discussion forum, and a classis-wide calendar. It can be found at <http://www.albanyclassis.com>.

I encourage you to check it, share it with your congregations, help fill it with great stuff. Submissions for the website can be sent to albanyclassis@gmail.com.

Nancy Landrigan, Clerk of Classis





FOWLER SUMMER CAMP:

Registration for Camp Fowler in Speculator, NY has been open online since December 1, 2018 at campfowler.org. Check out the Camp Fowler information in the lobby for details on the weeks available. Register now if you have not, because camps are nearly full.

Scholarships are available to First Church campers through the church and through the Albany Classis. If you would like to go to camp and need a scholarship, please speak with Pastor Lynn or Pastor Sue.

Volunteer Opportunities are available as well for those who would like to be a part of the Fowler family in a different way. Fowler needs you! Check out campfowler.org for details on how to get involved as a cabin counselor, kitchen helper and more.



COLLECTIVE BRASS CONCERT RESCHEDULED FOR MARCH 31 at 3:00 pm IN THE FIRST CHURCH SANCTUARY



COLLECTIVE BRASS QUINTET FREE CONCERT SUNDAY MARCH 31ST: 3 PM @ THE FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY

A HIGH ENERGY BRASS QUINTET PERFORMING A BROAD RANGE OF EXCITING AND VIRTUOSIC BRASS MUSIC. ITS MEMBERS COME FROM THE FINEST PROFESSIONAL PERFORMING ENSEMBLES INCLUDING THE WEST POINT BAND. JOIN US FOR A WONDERFUL HOUR OF MUSIC FROM EARLY MUSIC TO CONTEMPORARY FAVORITES.

110 NORTH PEARL STREET
ALBANY, NY WWW.FIRSTCHURCHINALBANY.ORG

COLLECTIVE BRASS will be performing The First Annual Memorial Concert on Sunday, March 31 at 3:00 pm at First Church in Albany, 110 N. Pearl St, Albany, NY. The concert will include works of Monteverdi, J. S. Bach, Sacco, Bernstein and Diliberto. The building is handicapped accessible and there is amply free parking. The Concert is Free!

Founded in 2016, **COLLECTIVE BRASS** is an energetic chamber group based in the Hudson Valley. The Quintet performs a broad range of exciting and virtuosic music. Members of the quintet have trained at the most prestigious music schools and conservatories in the country and now hold positions in major performing ensembles in New York.

In addition to performing traditional and contemporary brass chamber music spanning the centuries, COLLECTIVE BRASS continues to create original arrangements and editions of early music for brass – much of which was recently recorded on their acclaimed album, In Thy Sweet Name. The group has performed widely in New York and New England. Its members, Carl Stanley and Bill Owens, trumpets; Drew Mangus, French Horn; Alaina Alster, trombone; and Keith Kile, Tuba, also serve as teachers, clinicians and solo performers.

Please Join Us!

Forty years ago, a group of concerned community members came together through the Capital Area Council of Churches to work together to support the area food pantries. Forty years later, The Food Pantries continues in the spirit of cooperation, to do together what no one of us can do alone.

On April 16th we will be honoring our 40th Anniversary and some of the special people and organizations who have contributed to our work.

40th Anniversary Honorees:

- Recognizing our founding organization, **Capital Area Council of Churches**
- Recognizing the Community Auction founding volunteers John Rosch and Margaret Vella
- Recognizing our core Community Auction volunteers: Kathleen Samaniuk-Hayes, Diana Murphy, Margaret Vella, **Lorraine Houk**, and Valerie Houk
- Recognizing our food pantry member **Volunteers of the Year**, to be announced.

The Food Pantries' 40th Anniversary Luncheon

- April 16, 2019
- Shaker Ridge Country Club, 802 Albany Shaker Road, Albany
- 11:30 AM -1:00 PM

Registration:

Luncheon tickets are available for purchase at www.TheFoodPantries.org

Thank you for celebrating with us!

FIRST CHURCH READERS GROUP WILL MEET APRIL 28TH



First Church Readers is a group of people who love to read. We meet once a month to discuss a book we have read that month. Everyone is welcome. Come join us.

Our next meeting is April 28th when we will discuss *Learning to Walk in the Dark* by Barbara Brown, noted preacher, theologian and author explores darkness and light. Why is light associated with goodness and darkness with evil? "How to find our footing in times of uncertainty and giving us strength and hope to face all of life's challenging moments."

May - *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry* by Fredrik Backman –a tale of the touching relationship between a grandmother and the granddaughter for whom she cares - by turns heartwarming and heartrending.

Questions? Contact Mary Bon at firstchurchmeb@gmail.com or 518-463-4449.

DRIVE-IN WORSHIP SERVICES

Drive-In worship services begin Sunday, May 5th, and will be held each Sunday at 9:00 am through September 4 with the exception of the last Sunday in June (June 23) when we will worship at 10 am in Clee Park. We gather in the Sheridan Avenue parking lot and in Clee Park for a half-hour worship service led from the outdoor pulpit.

We thank the Drive-In Committee, its chair Marilyn Bradley, and the hard-working Drive-In volunteers who set up each Sunday morning and greet our Drive-In Worshippers with a cheerful hello - rain or shine. Drive-In Worship services also include special music and we depend on the generosity of guest musicians to supply music for our services.

CROP HUNGER WALK

Sunday May 5

The 2019 Albany CROP Hunger Walk will be held on May 5, at the First Lutheran Church on Western Avenue in Albany. The CROP Hunger Walk is an annual community-wide event sponsored by Church Wide Service and organized by local volunteers 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 3-mile loop or a shorter one-mile loop. In 2018 First Church raised \$1,047.00 through the efforts of nine walkers. Plan to walk yourself or sponsor another first church walker. Pick up a packet after worship in the lobby. I am looking forward to 2019 Albany Crop Walk. You can join the "First Church in Albany" team of hunger fighters for the Albany CROP Hunger Walk: Simply copy and paste the following URL into your web browser to sign up: <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny/Team/View/100850/First-Church-in-Albany>



TULIP TIME MINI ORGAN CONCERTS

Saturday, May 11 1:00 pm – 3:15 pm

Presented by Eastern New York American Guild of Organists

Mary Bon – First Church, 110 N Pearl St, Albany

William Douglas – Cathedral of All Saints, 62 S Swan St, Albany

Al Fedak – Westminster Presbyterian, 262 State St, Albany

Trevor Kahlbaugh – First Presbyterian, 362 State St, Albany

Neil Keen – St. Peter's Episcopal, 107 State St, Albany

Municipal organs have been a great source of civic pride in Holland for centuries. This year Tulip Time visitors can enter, rest, and enjoy the peace, architectural beauty, and stained glass of the city's downtown churches, while enjoying five of its finest pipe organs played by five of its finest organists.

15-minute programs will be repeated every half hour: 1:00, 1:30, 2:00, 2:30, and 3:00 PM

Admission is free; donations are welcome.

WEATHERVANES – NO MEETING IN APRIL



There will be no Weathervanes meeting in April due to the fact that the third Wednesday in April falls during Holy Week.

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday, May 15th** when we will have our annual Old Friend's Luncheon. Come and enjoy a chicken a la king lunch, some entertainment and a chance to visit with friends old and new. Stay tuned for more details. There is no charge for this event. If you would like to make a reservation please call Audrey Ming at 518-456-5485.

JOINING FIRST CHURCH

Have you been thinking about making your relationship with the First Church in Albany official? Come to explore what membership means to us, and to share what church membership means to you. All who are interested are invited to meet with Lynn Carman Bodden, Sue Vincent Cox and members of the Board of Elders to talk about how First Church works, what it means to be a part of the Reformed Church in America, and the significance and benefits of active church membership. Join us March 31st and April 28th in the Parlor.



MEMORIALS:

- In memory of Harold Madison a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the Clee Park Fund.