

# The First Church FAMILY

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

**December 2018**

## **WORSHIP:**

- 2     **First Sunday of Advent** (Communion)  
10:15 am     Pre-Service Music  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service Rev. Susan Vincent-Cox preaching  
                  Children & Worship (During Worship)  
Post Service:   Journey Through the Psalms
- 9     **Second Sunday of Advent**  
10:15 am     Pre-Service Music  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service Rev. Lynn Carman Bodden preaching  
                  Children & Worship (During Worship)  
Post Service:   First Church Readers
- 16    **Third Sunday of Advent**  
10:15 am     Pre-Service Music  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service Rev. Lynn Carman Bodden preaching  
                  Children & Worship (During Worship)  
                  Dedication of Prayer Shawls (During Worship)  
Post Service:   Confirmation Meeting with youth and parents
- 23    **Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
10:15 am     Pre-Service Music  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service Rev. Lynn Carman Bodden preaching
- 24    **Christmas Eve**  
7:00 pm     Pre-Service Music  
7:30 pm     Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols  
                  with Choir.  
8:45 pm     Wassail Hour
- 30    **First Sunday after Christmas**  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service

## FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR

After the September meeting of the FOCUS Board, an email arrived from the Rev. Marcy Rudins, Albany Synod Fellow at Delmar Reformed Church, asking if we would like to participate in a FOCUS Church Advent devotional project. First Church was assigned four days, and without any trouble at all our three members of the FOCUS Board: Becky Hudak, Sue Vincent Cox and I, along with intrepid Breakfast Club volunteer, Leroy Suess, were all in! That devotional is available to you in the lobby at church! I hope you will find it a good companion in this season!

I share this story because in a small way it is a parable for this season of Advent and the coming of our celebration of Christ's birth. In September, we were gearing up a new program season in the life of First Church and God whispered that something exciting was coming. We paid attention and readied ourselves to receive it. In October, we were deep into meetings and worship, planning for the profile and stewardship, and God urged us to do some different work, so we'd be ready for what was coming. By the end of October, every author had turned in his/her/their piece to the editor, even though we continued to engage all the regular fall church things. We all found ourselves thinking ahead, making ready, imagining sharing the good news not only of the devotional, but also of the promises its words hold of God's love and incarnation. We were excited now to include all of you in the whispers, urgings, work and waiting.

Christ is coming! When we finish our readings, reflections and prayers on Christmas Day, will we be ready for this transforming presence of God born once more among us? Are we ready to be changed? Are we prepared for the new things that await us as a church: new leadership in the pulpit, in the building, on our boards; a new look to Clee Park and our Sheridan entrance; new ideas coming to life; new ways of receiving communication in our congregational life as the Family goes online? Are we ready for what will change in the world around us?

God is always in midst of changes, present and ready to encourage and to prod us, to comfort and to unsettle us, to listen and to teach, to love and restore. May we be alert, watchful and ready for the holy that is being born in us, through us, in spite of us, for us and for our salvation.

Blessed Advent!  
Lynn

## **AT HOME WITH THE WORD**

**Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary [www.rca.org/athome](http://www.rca.org/athome)  
December 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup>.**

- |                            |                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Luke 21: 29-36          | 17. Micah 5:2-5                  |
| 2. First Sunday of Advent  | 18. Psalm 80:1-3                 |
| 3. Malachi 3:1-4           | 19. Psalm 80:4-7                 |
| 4. Luke 1:68-75            | 20. Hebrews 10:5-10              |
| 5. Luke 1:76-79            | 21. Luke 1:39-45                 |
| 6. Philippians 1:3-8       | 22. Luke 1:46-55                 |
| 7. Philippians 1:9-11      | 23. Fourth Sunday of Advent      |
| 8. Luke 3:1-6              | 24. Christmas Eve; Isaiah 9:2-7  |
| 9. Second Sunday of Advent | 25. Christmas Day; Luke 2:8-20   |
| 10. Zephaniah 3:14-16      | 26. Psalm 148                    |
| 11. Zephaniah 3:17-20      | 27. Colossians 3:12-17           |
| 12. Isaiah 12:2-6          | 28. 1 Samuels 2:18-20, 26        |
| 13. Philippians 4:4-7      | 29. Luke 2:41-52                 |
| 14. Luke 3:7-14            | 30. First Sunday after Christmas |
| 15. Luke 3:15-18           | 31. Psalm 72:1-7                 |
| 16. Third Sunday of Advent |                                  |

## **FAMILY GOES ONLINE!!!**

This is the last issue of the Family that will be mailed by US Post to every household. If you have email, be on the watch for notice of the link that will take you to the Family on the First Church website. If you do NOT have online service, or have notified the office of your preference for a paper copy, you will be able to pick up your copy of the Family at church after the first of each month, in the lobby. They will be arranged in alphabetical order for easy access. After the first full week of each month remaining copies will be mailed.

Please help us with this change! Your good stewardship saves staff time, paper, toner and postage which is no longer at the bulk rate. And your online version will be available to you as soon as it's done, in full color!

Thank you!

## REBUILD – RECONNECT – RE-ENERGIZE – RECLAIM

If you were not in worship every Sunday during our Stewardship season, you missed some powerful reflections by four of your fellow church members. Here are a few excerpts:

“I felt called to help in the process even in the midst of a hectic, busy schedule. The seed was probably laid a year ago by a colleague at work who attends another church. Throughout the year, she would share about what she was doing within her church – my thought was how do you have the time? We both became busier and busier at work – but still she found time and I found excuses. I started asking and praying – how can I help? How can I help? What can I do to be a good steward of First Church and what God calls us to be? What can I give of my time, my gifts – during this time of **re-building**? The question I ask of you – what can you do to be a good steward of First Church and the Glory of God?” ~ Becky Mondore

“There have been times in my life (like the search for meaning in my college years) that I've been disconnected from my faith and asked the questions: Who is God? Who am I? How do I live the life of Christ?

“Yet in this place, with this congregation, I have been **reconnected** with God: Over twenty years ago, I relocated from Boston and for over a year sought a church home. I happened one Sunday to amble up the steps here on Pearl Street and was awestruck by the generosity and cheerful embrace of me, a stranger.... Years later, I was tried by the challenges of job transition, fractured relationship, and recovery from serious surgery – I was sure that God was testing me. Our pastor convinced me that God was walking beside me in this journey and that my brothers & sisters in Christ were there for support. In this place, with this congregation, I was reconnected with God... I have, thus, been blessed with the gifts of this place, this congregation, our God.... [and] what I...offer, without condition, are the contributions of time, worship, prayer, and service. ...” ~ Chip Welge

“For 46 years I was a swimming and diving coach and had to motivate high school athletes who were getting ready for their championship meet. Every year I started with new and returning athletes who had doubts as to their ability to compete at the highest level. They would give in to negative thoughts putting obstacles in their way. I would talk to them about all the training and hard work they put in in order to get ready for the championship meet. Their goals were to be ready, perform and enjoy the experience. The training prepared them, but the energy they felt at the meet allowed them to create a positive experience.

“...We need to celebrate our activities and feel energy from each activity. Whether it is the prayer shawl group, volunteering in the pantry, Adult Bible Study, Youth Mission trips, Search Committee, or any of the other activities in the church, it is the same as practice each day in the pool. It gives us the basis to feel and show the **energy** of the First Church in Albany.” ~ Ned Monthie

“We usually think of **reclaiming** as retrieving or getting something back that we gave up, or lost, or forgot, or was taken from us.... [So] what have we possibly given up, or lost, or forgotten, or had taken from us, especially during this time of transition for First Church?

1. Well, we LOST familiar people who were part of our church fabric: a preacher, a choir member, a friend, a long-time member.
2. To some degree, we GAVE UP the security of knowing how things would be done or said, or used, or by whom.
3. We may have FORGOTTEN to keep Christ as our focus and to profess our beliefs in word and action in the ways we used to, while we are concerned about an uncertain future.

“We've been fortunate that our interim minister, and Pastor Sue, knew what we'd be facing - and probably feeling- and they have guided, supported and encouraged us to continue and strengthen our mission in our corner of the world.

But for our congregation to be strong, to grow, to serve our community and share our holy message, we must be able to focus on that mission...to reclaim (and even ramp up) our previous levels of involvement, dedication and support of First Church... What commitments are we ready to make to reclaim things we have forgotten or given up doing for First Church? We each have gifts waiting to be used...let's not waste them!!”

~Janet Conti



## PLEDGE UPDATE

*“[Our] church budget [both income and expenses] reflects the dreams of the people of the church. It is a practical tool for [clarifying who we are, and] accomplishing what we wish to do...as a church. Not everything we do in church costs money - some of the most significant things that happen here are absolutely free. But none of them would be happening if the church were not here in the first place, and it costs money to have a church. The budget is the heart of the church because without it we would not have this place in our lives to experience God’s grace.... The church budget is not a necessary evil or a mere tool; it is a celebration of organized generosity....”*

As of this writing, we have received 42 pledges totaling \$109,821 for 2019. This is 78% of our budgeted goal of \$140,000. THANK YOU to all who have pledged already. Remember: Should your personal situation change at any time, either in increased resources or because of financial downturns, your pledge can be adjusted simply by contacting Wayne Sivaslian, Financial Secretary, [wsivaslian@nycap.rr.com](mailto:wsivaslian@nycap.rr.com).

## REMINDERS FROM THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

- Remember to complete your Offering Pledge for 2018 if not already fulfilled.
- All 2018 contributions must be received by Sunday, January 13, 2019.
- These contributions must be dated 2018.
- After January 13, 2019, all contributions will be posted to 2019 regardless of the date on your check.

If you have any questions regarding this note or for any matters concerning your donations, please contact me at [wsivaslian@nycap.rr.com](mailto:wsivaslian@nycap.rr.com) or 518-495-6353.

Thank you.

Wayne Sivaslian, Financial Secretary

## FOOD PANTRY

In October, our Food Pantry served a total of seventeen new clients (12 households) in addition to 214 continuing clients from 140 households. The Food Pantry was open 9 days in October, and our staff and volunteers provided a total of 4158 meals! Thank you for supporting the Food Pantry ministry with your financial gifts, food donations and prayers.

## THANKSGIVING BASKET DISTRIBUTION

Thank-you to our volunteers and to the congregation Sunday for putting together the packages. Also, big thank-you's to Lynn Fuierer, Becky Slytebo and Ned Monthie for bagging up the apples, potatoes & onions on Monday.

On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, our dedicated First Church volunteers (Jean, Gertrude, Harry, Ross & Ned) distributed 55 Thanksgiving packages to our pantry families. Bags were overflowing with fresh veggies, stuffing, fruit, coffee, chocolate and apple pie.



## FIRST CHURCH YOUTH GROUP @ EQUINOX



Prepared 2,500 to go containers of gravy to be delivered to 10,000 people to receive Thanksgiving Meals on Thanksgiving Day.



## 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 Ave. in Albany. Anyone can join us on December 7<sup>th</sup> starting at 12:15 and stay until you wish to leave. We all pay for our own. Contact Donna E. Schultz at [deschultz07@aol.com](mailto:deschultz07@aol.com) or 518.429.1255.

## MITTEN TREE FOR CHRISTMAS SHOPPE

The Giving Box: Located in the Lounge

Mittens, gloves, hats and scarves (children & adult sizes)

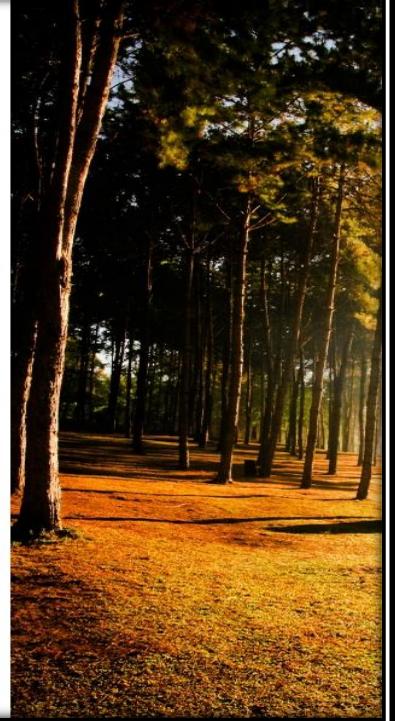
These will be given to the children for the Christmas Shoppe.

### FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY

#### Registration for Camp Fowler 2019 Summer Programs opens December 1 at midnight!

The first 150 applicants campers will receive a free T-shirt with the summer theme AND the first 30 cabin counselor volunteers will as well. Check the bulletin board in the lobby or visit [campfowler.org](http://campfowler.org) for more information.

Scholarships are  
available from First  
Church



## PRE-SERVICE MUSIC ADVENT SUNDAYS

Beginning at 10:15 am December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Each Sunday during Advent we have special music at 10:15 am in the sanctuary. Come to Worship early to relax, refresh yourself, and prepare again for the coming of Christ.

**December 2** – Advent hymns voluntaries for organ

**December 9** – Peter Subers, Baritone

**December 16** – Rose Hunsberger, Soprano

**December 24** – Doug Persons, trumpet, David Bon-Keen, basson

## HANDEL'S MESSIAH AT ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

On Sunday, December 2nd at 3:00 pm, G. F. Handel's *Messiah* will be performed at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 107 State Street, Albany, with St. Peter's Choir (Neil Keen, conductor), soloists, chamber orchestra and organist Mary Bon, organist. The concert is free, but there will be a free will offering.

## WEATHERVANES – HOLIDAY DINNER & CHRISTMAS PARTY AT LUNCHTIME



The annual Christmas party will be on Wednesday, **December 5th** at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall. There will be a chicken marsala dinner, music and stories. Cost is \$15.00 and reservations and money are requested to be in to Audrey Ming (518-456-5485) by November 25th. We will also be collecting money to buy books for the children of food pantry clients. Suggested donation is \$5.00 or more.

## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA MEMORIALS

Please send a note or call the church office (518.463.4449) by **Friday, December 7th** to place your order for Christmas Poinsettia memorials. A minimum donation of \$10 per plant is requested. Make your check payable to First Church in Albany (marked: Poinsettias). After Christmas, the plants are shared with our homebound members and friends.



## HANGING OF THE GREENS

Come join us for the hanging of the Greens.

We will hang all decoration on one day this year:

**Saturday, December 8** at 10:00 am. Breakfast will be served at 8:30 am. We will decorate the sanctuary, lobby trees, and outside building. The sign-up sheet is on the display table in the Lobby.

## FIRST CHURCH READERS WILL MEET DECEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>.



Like to read? First Church Readers are a group of people who love to read. Each month we read a different book and get together on a Sunday to discuss it. We'll meet on December 11<sup>th</sup> after worship to discuss *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II* by Liza Mundy. More than 10,000 girls were recruited to do the secret work of breaking codes in WW II. Their work was forgotten and their sacrifices were unsung until this highly readable, well researched and documented story.

### BOOKS FOR 2019

**January - *A Dictionary of Mutual Understanding: A Novel*** by Jackie Copleton

Follow a family from prewar Japan through the utter horror of August 9, 1945 to the struggle to adapt to post war life. Explore themes of heartbreak, guilt and family secrets, and get a glimpse into Japanese culture and traditions before, during and after WW II.

**February - *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*** by Gail Honeyman – A simultaneously hilarious and heartbreaking story of a young woman learning to finding herself.

**March - *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.”

**Overflow  
Shelter Dinner**

**NEXT DINNER IS DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>  
(CHIL)**

SIGN UP SHEETS AT THE HOSPITALITY TABLE

CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE A MAIN DISH, SIDE DISH OR  
DESSERT FOR 6-8 PEOPLE?

BRING YOUR DISHES TO FIRST CHURCH THAT WEEK  
ANY DAY FROM 8:30-1:00PM,  
TH. EVE FROM 6:30-7:30PM  
OR FRIDAY BEFORE NOON.

WE'LL DELIVER THEM TO THE SHELTER ON FRIDAY  
AFTERNOON.

- USE NON-RETURNABLE DISHES  
- CLEARLY LABEL ALL PORK DISHES  
- QUESTIONS? CONTACT:  
MARY BON 518-463-4449  
MARYBON@VERIZON.NET

*thank you!*

**The deadline for the January issue of *FAMILY* is December 15.**

## **CHRISTMAS SHOPPE**

Each year through the ministry of the First Church Food Pantry we help parents provide Christmas gifts for their children. The Christmas Shoppe will be held the week of **December 17<sup>th</sup>**. Toys for Tots has not yet assigned a date for their toy delivery. The Christmas Shoppe will be held from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. in Zimmerman Hall.

# **Blue Christmas Service**

**THE FIRST CHURCH  
IN ALBANY  
DECEMBER 19TH AT 7PM**

**110 NORTH PEARL STREET, ALBANY**

"Blue Christmas" is a service of worship during the Advent season that invites people who may be living with grief, loss, illness, underemployment or financial struggles, or other challenges to enter into God's presence as they are.

In readings and silence, with singing and candles, through prayer and action the meaning of Christ's birth is opened in the reality of our lives with hope.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

**A COMBINED SERVICE OF FOCUS CHURCHES**

**[WWW.FIRSTCHURCHINALBANY.ORG](http://WWW.FIRSTCHURCHINALBANY.ORG)**

**[WWW.FOCUSCHURCHES.NET](http://WWW.FOCUSCHURCHES.NET)**

## **READERS NEEDED CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**

If you would like to be a reader at the Christmas Eve Service, please talk to Rev. Lynn Carman Bodden. Thank you!



## **CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP**

**7:00 pm** – Pre-service

**7:30 pm** – Candlelight Service of Lessons  
and Carols with Choir and  
Instruments

**8:45 pm** – Wassail Hour



## **CHRISTMAS OFFERING**

The Christmas letters will be sent out soon with the Board of Deacons 2018 designation for the Christmas offering for 2018. It will also be announced in worship. So, stay tuned!

## **“RING IN THE NEW YEAR”**

With Bells at Worship on December 30st

### **The Sunday after Christmas**

Come join us on December 30th as we ring in the New Year with the joyful sound of bells. Ringing and singing with young and old, strangers and friends is fun. Bring your own bell or use one of ours. We'll have lots of extra bells available. “Ring Them Bells”

## **THANK YOU!**

- Shirley Bone for your monetary gift to the First Church Food Pantry Thanksgiving Baskets.
- Alfred S. Mueller for his monetary gift to the First Church in Albany.

## **MEMORIALS**

- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Steven Hoffman for the Drive-In Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Denise Lobdell for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from James M. DeVito for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Jack & Karen Morrison for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Joel & Terry Langlois for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Carl & Deborah Rubenstein for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Edward & Eleanor Fleming for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from Robert & Carolyn Akland for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from R.W. Hinkley for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from David L. Rounds for the Music Fund.

- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from GERALYN & LAURENT CHAPUIS for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from B.J. MANGOLD for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from SHEILA MAHAN & PETER SANZEN for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from MICHAEL DEMAIO & JACQUELINE HILLGRUBE for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from RONALD & SUSAN MARKS for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from WARREN & DOROTHY PRATT for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from REV. LEROY & JUDITH SUESS for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from CHARLES & ANNETTE WATERS for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from the WATERS family for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from VERONICA KOSLOSKY for the Music Fund.
- In celebration of the life of Bill Staats a gift has been received from SONJA & MICHELLE VANBUREN for the Music Fund.

## IN SYMPATHY

- Our sympathy and prayers are with Carl Hiemstra, the family and friends of Lynne Hiemstra, who died on November 14, 2018.

- Our sympathy and prayers are with Mary Walker, the family and friends of Leigh Walker, who died on November 22, 2018.

*This Christmas  
mend a quarrel  
Seek out a forgotten friend.  
Write a love letter.  
Share some treasure. Give a  
soft answer. Encourage youth.  
Keep a promise. Find the time.  
Forgive an enemy. Listen.  
Apologize if you were wrong.  
Think first of someone else.  
Be kind and gentle.  
Laugh a little. Laugh a little more.  
Express your gratitude. Gladden  
the heart of a child. Take pleasure  
in the beauty and wonder of the earth.  
Speak your love. Speak it again.  
Speak it still once again.  
~ Anonymous*



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## **FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY**

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Albany, NY 12207-2231  
518.463.4449

[www.firstchurchinalbany.org](http://www.firstchurchinalbany.org)

email: [firstchurch@verizon.net](mailto:firstchurch@verizon.net)

RETURN SERVICE REQUIRED