

# The First Church FAMILY

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

**January 2017**

## **WORSHIP:**

- 1     **First Sunday after Christmas**  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service (Communion)  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)
  
- 8     **First Sunday after the Epiphany: Baptism of the Lord**  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post-service:   First Church Readers
  
- 15    **Second Sunday after the Epiphany**  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post-service:   U.S. Committee on Refugees & Immigrants
  
- 22    **Third Sunday after the Epiphany**  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post-service:   Pot-luck Luncheon and Congregational Meeting
  
- 29    **Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany**  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post-service:

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

## From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

The ministry of hospitality is an essential part of the life and witness of our congregation.

*"We welcome into the full life of the church all those whom God sends us. Centered in Christ, we commit ourselves to breaking down dividing walls and building a community where all are loved."*

At the consistory meeting last month we had occasion to talk again about our church's welcoming statement and how we live into it. An organization called "Faithful America" has invited churches to purchase and publically display a large banner that reads "Immigrants and Refugees Welcome." The banner includes a picture of Joseph with Mary and the baby Jesus on a donkey fleeing to Egypt for safety. The consistory decided to purchase and display the banner but also agreed that we need to learn more about the situation of immigrants and refugees in Albany and how we might respond if called upon to do so. To that end we've contacted the Albany office of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. On Sunday, January 15, representatives from the office will lead a post-service presentation and discussion in our church parlor. I hope you will plan to join us.

The following week, January 22, there will be a pot-luck luncheon and congregational meeting after the worship service. The meeting will include the presentation of the annual budget for 2017 as well as a celebration of the year past and a look at the year ahead, including the celebration of the church's 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If you have photos of some of the events in the life of our congregation in the year past and are willing to share them, please send them to Church Communications Coordinator Jeanne Bianchine: [Jeanne@firstchurchinalbany.org](mailto:Jeanne@firstchurchinalbany.org)

Sincerely,  
John D. Paarlberg

## **At Home with the WORD**

**Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary**

**January 1<sup>st</sup> - January 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Now available online at:** [www.rca.org/resources/home-word](http://www.rca.org/resources/home-word)

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. First Sunday after Christmas Day  | 17. Psalm 27:1, 4-9                  |
| 2. Isaiah 42:1-9                     | 18. 1 Corinthians 1:10-12            |
| 3. Psalm 29                          | 19. 1 Corinthians 1:13-18            |
| 4. Acts 10:34-38                     | 20. Matthew 4:12-17                  |
| 5. Acts 10:39-43                     | 21. Matthew 4:18-23                  |
| 6. Epiphany; Isaiah 60:1-6           | 22. Third Sunday after the Epiphany  |
| 7. Matthew 3:13-17                   | 23. Micah 6:1-5                      |
| 8. First Sunday after the Epiphany;  | 24. Micah 6:6-8                      |
| 9. Isaiah 49:1-7                     | 25. Psalm 15                         |
| 10. Psalm 40:1-5                     | 26. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25            |
| 11. Psalm 40:6-11                    | 27. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31            |
| 12. 1 Corinthians 1:1-9              | 28. Matthew 5:1-12                   |
| 13. John 1:29-34                     | 29. Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany |
| 14. John 1:35-42                     | 30. Isaiah 58:1-9 31.                |
| 15. Second Sunday after the Epiphany | 31. Isaiah 58:10-12                  |
| 16. Isaiah 9:1-4                     |                                      |

## **Nonviolent Communications at First Church**

Approximately 3 ½ yrs ago we offered a workshop at First Church that taught the basic principles of Nonviolent Communication. What we believed would be a helpful topic and an offering for just a few months, now continues almost 4 years later. First Church has offered several workshops both here and out in the community and we support an on-going monthly practice group.

This past year, we were asked by Jim Ketcham, the Executive Director of FOCUS Churches and Jake Marvel, head chaplain at Albany Medical Center, to come and offer some training to their volunteers and chaplains. We did this in October and at both meetings participants signed up for more workshop opportunities.

Also, many of us realize last year was a difficult year in our country. We witnessed a highly divisive political campaign. And as many of us anticipated this divisive atmosphere is even stronger after the election. Many of us here at First Church also realize that because of this, it has become more and more important that we talk and try to understand those who think differently from us. If we split off from one another, into our parties, our camps, our factions we increase the likelihood of misunderstanding,

alienating, and “demonizing” the other. We need to find common ground, ways to understand our differences and unify, rather than shut each other out.

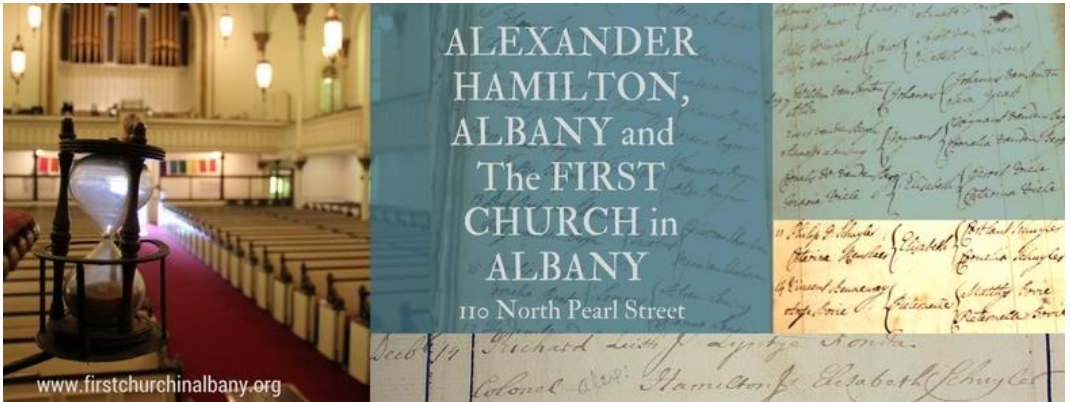
It says pretty clearly in our gospel and in more ways than one, “we are to love our neighbor as ourselves”. And this is not just a suggestion. It is a commandment! And the First Commandment, which is intimately related to this one, is to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. Out of this love comes a way forward. Out of compassion and empathy, more specifically, we eventually see a more visible path out of the darkness. It is compassion and empathy that pull people together to build thriving communities, to overcome fear, and to establish good will and peace. Nothing else works like this divine expression of love.

As the theologian Walter Wink tells us, “Nonviolent Communication is a third path. A path that departs from our 'fight or flight' responses.” Here, we strive to live not by forcing others through intimidation, nor by running away or ignoring what is important in building peace and upholding God’s justice. Here we learn through compassion, empathy and clear communication how to follow Jesus in the 3rd Way.

***We hope you will join us!***



**The Basics of Compassionate Communication**  
**Wednesdays March 8 and March 15**  
**6-8:30pm**  
**First Church Parlor**  
**Led by Sue Vincent Cox and Becky Hudak**



## Alexander Hamilton and Albany and The First Church

The image of his face is familiar to all, imprinted on the ten-dollar bill. His career is fictionalized and popularized in a Broadway musical play, whose high-priced tickets must be bought a year in advance. Evidence of his Albany connections, especially through his wife's family, the Schuylers, is currently on exhibit at the Albany Institute of History and Art. Television station WMHT broadcast "Hamilton and Albany" on December 4, and an important interview for that production was recorded at First Church.

Who was Alexander Hamilton? Why is he important in our history? What did he think of religion, of the church, of Christian doctrines? He was born illegitimate in the West Indies, probably in 1755, of Scottish, French, and English descent. His talents were recognized early, and patrons encouraged him to move to New York City where he attended Kings College (now Columbia). He became involved in New York's revolutionary movement against British rule, and at the outset of the Revolutionary War, when he barely twenty years old, Hamilton was commissioned a captain to command a company of artillery. He soon became the personal secretary and aide to General George Washington, and later served with distinction at the Battle of Yorktown, in 1781. After the war's end Hamilton studied law on his own and easily passed the oral bar exam. He entered politics as a delegate to the Continental Congress and a member of the state Assembly.

Hamilton became one of the "founding fathers" of the United States and tirelessly advocated for a strong national government. He was a delegate to the convention in Philadelphia in 1787 which framed the U.S. Constitution. Pamphlets under the title "The Federalist," authored by Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, persuaded a majority of the voters in the thirteen states to ratify the Constitution. As the first Secretary of the Treasury, under President George Washington, Hamilton was instrumental in stabilizing the finances of the U.S. government and establishing the nation's first bank. He was acclaimed as a brilliant orator and debater, masterful attorney, and skillful politician, but he was self-confident almost to the point of arrogance. His biographer Ron Chernow describes Hamilton as "short and handsome, witty and debonair, and fatally attractive to

women.” He made enemies as easily as he made friends. Hamilton’s long-time acquaintance, political opponent, and greatest enemy was Aaron Burr (elected Vice-President in 1800), who killed him in a duel in 1804.

Hamilton’s youthful spirits were on display when, before his marriage, he described the ideal wife: “In politics, I am indifferent what side she may be of; I think I have arguments that will easily convert her to mine. As to religion, a moderate streak will satisfy me. She must believe in God and hate a saint.” Hamilton’s wife would be Elizabeth Schuyler, the daughter of Philip Schuyler, an Albany patrician who was a major-general in the Revolutionary War and later a U.S. Senator. Her pastor, *Domine* Eilardus Westerlo of the Albany Dutch church, married them in the Schuyler family mansion in 1780. She maintained her more than “moderate” Dutch Reformed piety through her very long life; she died aged 97 in 1854.

Hamilton’s genius was darkened and troubled by his fear of social and political disorder, which men of property and standing could prevent by establishing and dominating sound institutions of government. As he wrote in one of the “Federalist” pamphlets, “Men love power.” Hamilton detested democracy, in which every man would have the vote and possibly vote for demagogues. He saw his worst fears realized in the runaway revolution in France, which temporarily destroyed and replaced the entire fabric of society. A guardian of social stability was religion, and Hamilton proposed in 1802 establishment of a nationwide “Christian Constitutional Society.” The organization would have supported both the Christian religion and the U.S. Constitution, and enable the Federalist Party, in which Hamilton was a leader, to promote its values against those of the Democratic-Republican Party headed by President Thomas Jefferson.

Hamilton, like his Scottish father, was raised as a Presbyterian, and he contributed to building of a new Presbyterian church in Albany. Hamilton insisted that his teen-aged children go to church on Sundays, and his wife certainly went even if he did not. He was buried in the churchyard of the Trinity Episcopal Church in lower Manhattan. In the face of tragedy and mortality, Alexander Hamilton took comfort in the promises of the Christian religion. When his oldest son Philip Hamilton, who had been baptized in Albany during the war, was killed in a duel in 1802, the grieving father wrote that “he is now out of the reach of the seductions and calamities of a world, full of folly, full of vice, full of danger ... I firmly trust also that he has safely reached the haven of eternal repose and felicity.”

On the eve of his own death, he wrote to “my very dear Eliza,” to say that if he did not survive he expected “to begin, as I humbly hope from redeeming grace and divine mercy, a happy immortality.” The Dutch Reformed Church on North Pearl Street was packed with mourners to hear Hamilton’s friend, the Reverend Eliphalet Nott of Albany’s Presbyterian Church, deliver an eloquent eulogy which denounced the evil of dueling. It was one of the most influential funeral sermons in American history. It helped mobilize public and political opinion against dueling, and it led eventually to passage of a law requiring every public officer in New York to taken an anti-dueling oath.

## **Pot-luck Luncheon and Congregational Meeting**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 22**

Bring a dish to share and enjoy a meal together as we give thanks for the year past and look forward to the year ahead. The annual church budget for 2017 will be presented for discussion and vote.

## **Upcoming Overflow Shelter Dinners**

**Scheduled for January 13th and February 3th**

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. THANK YOU! The shelter, sponsored by the Capital Area Council of Churches, turns nobody away.

Our next dinners will be:

- January 13th Meatloaf and Hamburger Dishes
- February 3th Chicken and Chicken Dishes

Sign up at the Hospitality Table to bring a dish or to help deliver. You can also sign up by emailing Mary Bon at [maryebon@verizon.net](mailto:maryebon@verizon.net). Remember many of the shelter guests have dental problems so soft foods and foods that are easy to chew are a good idea. Also since some of the guests don't eat pork, label all dishes containing pork. Bring your dishes Sunday after church, weekdays between 9 am and 1:00pm or Thursday night between 6:30 and 7:30. We now have RECYCLABLE containers available at the hospitality 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.

You can learn more about the shelter at <http://www.capareacc.org/emergency-overflow-homeless-shelter/>

## **A Special Thank you !**

**Thank you** to our choir, soloists, and instrumentalists, who gave generously of their time and energy to rehearse and perform the music that beautified our Advent and Christmas worship services. Each choir member contributes 4-5 hours each week from September to June to make the music you hear in worship possible.

# First Church Readers Group Meets January 8<sup>th</sup>

The First Church Readers will meet January 8th to discuss:



- *Girl Waits with Gun*  
(A Kopp Sisters Novel) by Amy Stewart
- February's Book is  
*The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kid

Future books we are considering include: *The Annotated Emma* by Jane Austen and David Shapard; *Toxic Charity: How the Church Hurts Those They Help and How to Reverse It* or *Charity Detox: What Charity Would Look Like If We Cared About Results* both by Robert Lupton and *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert.

Do you have an idea for a book for the reader's group? Contact Mary Bon at [maryebon@verizon.net](mailto:maryebon@verizon.net) or 463-4449

## Christmas Shoppe – Thank You



On December 15<sup>th</sup>, First Church volunteers distributed toys to 75 children from our pantry families ages 6 months to 16. Special thanks to Becky Hudak, Kim Reohr, Cindy Gillespie, Rose Hunsberger, Joanna Brown, Kathy and Ned and of course, Noel, Larry & Valerie.

## Thank You

A special thank you to all who helped in so many ways to make the Wassail Hour such a wonderful experience on Christmas Eve.



## Church Library

I am in the process of trying to set up and organize a library for First Church. I do believe this would be a wonderful addition to our church. What I need right now are some volunteers who would be willing to give me an hour or so of your time to help me get the books organized and on the shelves.

If you feel called to serve in this project and help me, please call me at [518 – 463-2547](tel:518-463-2547) or email me at [mew@nycap.rr.com](mailto:mew@nycap.rr.com) or you may speak to me at church.

Your help will be very much appreciated. Yours in Christ, Mary Weijola

## 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 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.

## The Weathervanes January is Game Month



Start the New Year with the Weathervanes on Wednesday, January 18th, at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall for fellowship, lunch and program. Bring a sandwich. Coffee, tea, and dessert will be served.

Then enjoy Bingo with our chaplain, John Bowen. Please phone Audrey Ming (456-5485) to let her know you plan to attend.

## 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Calendar

2017 will mark the 375<sup>th</sup> 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. Whether you are near or far you have the opportunity to commemorate this festive year. We have created a beautiful 2017 First Church wall calendar that highlights important dates in the history of First Church. Calendars will be on sale mid-January. Please contact Valerie Williams at the church office 518.463.4449 or [vwilliams@firstchurchinalbany.org](mailto:vwilliams@firstchurchinalbany.org) to place your order.

## Reminders from the Financial Secretary

- Remember to complete your Offering Pledge for 2016 if not already fulfilled
- All 2016 contributions must be received by Sunday, January 8th, 2017
- These contributions must be dated 2016
- After January 8th, 2017, all contributions will be posted to 2017 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 [atwsivaslian@nycap.rr.com](mailto:atwsivaslian@nycap.rr.com) or 518-495-6353.

Thank you.

Wayne Sivaslian, Financial Secretary

## A Reminder:

If you haven't made a contribution for your Christmas plant you may make your check payable to "First Church in Albany" (marked poinsettias) in the amount of \$10 or more a plant.

## Sunday Flower Date Available

January 15<sup>th</sup> is available for the dedication of sanctuary flower arrangements. The cost is \$50 for two vases. Please call the Church Office (463.4449) if you are interested.

## FOCUS Combined Worship on February 5

Please reserve Sunday, February 5 for the opening worship service of the 50th anniversary of FOCUS Churches. We will gather at First Presbyterian for a 10 AM service and a reception will follow. Rev. Rick Spalding, former Associate Pastor at Westminster Presbyterian, who was very active in FOCUS Churches, will preach. Join us as we begin our celebration!

◆           ◆           ◆  
The deadline for the February issue of *FAMILY* is January 17.  
◆           ◆           ◆

## FOCUS Empty Bowls Fundraiser on February 12



**Empty Bowls, a fundraiser for both FOCUS Churches and our ally, the Hunger Action Network of New York State, will be on Sunday, February 12 from 1 to 3 pm** at the Elks Lodge, 25 S. Allen Street in Albany. We are seeking honorary hosts (those who donate at least \$100) as well as volunteers to set up, serve and clean up. The idea behind Empty Bowls is that for a minimum donation of \$25, you can choose from a wide selection of pottery soup bowls to take home. You will also get to sample wonderful soups and bread donated by Albany area restaurants and chefs. Free parking will be available.

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### Memorial

In celebration of the life of LeRoy Love a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the Cleve Park Fund.

In celebration of the life of Rev. Wil Ivins a gift has been received from Robert & Carolyn Akland for the Music Fund.

In celebration of the life of Rev. Wil Ivins a gift has been received from Edward & Katherine Monthie for the Cleve Park Fund.

### Thank You

Demitra "Tulla" Pangburn would like to thank friends at First Church for all your thoughtful cards throughout the year. The Lord has been with me through my "journey" of grief and sorrow.



Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
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Albany, NY

## **FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUIRED