

# The First Church **FAMILY**

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

**January 2020**

## **WORSHIP:**

**5 The Epiphany of Our Lord (Communion)**

10:30 am Sanctuary Service Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, preaching  
Children & Worship (During Worship)

Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

11:45 am Deacons Meeting – Parlor

12:00 pm Music Task Force – Powell Room

1:00 pm Mothers Group – Rev. Sue's Office

**12 First Sunday after the Epiphany – Baptism of Our Lord**

10:30 am Sanctuary Service Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, preaching  
Children & Worship (During Worship)

Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

11:45 am Congregational Conversation on Music

**19 Second Sunday after the Epiphany**

10:30 am Sanctuary Service Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, preaching  
Children & Worship (During Worship)

Post Service: Congregational Meeting and Pot-Luck Luncheon

**26 Third Sunday after the Epiphany**

10:30 am Sanctuary Service Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, preaching  
Children & Worship (During Worship)

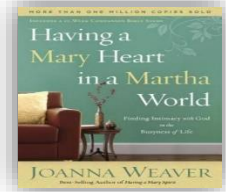
Post Service: Coffee and Conversation

12:00 pm First Church Readers – Powell Room

## FROM PASTOR MASHONA'S DESK

Happy New Year!! With any new season we are called to shift. This includes a new year, a new relationship, or a new stage in life. The transition working to retirement can fill us with excitement and dread. We long for the rest while fearing that our finances may not be enough. When we shift well, our hearts are light. When we shift poorly, everyone needs to make room for the baggage that enters the room with us. Making necessary transitions that we want and shifts that life presents can be difficult.

Joanna Weaver's book *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* comes to mind.



As you look ahead to a new year please consider the New Testament story of Mary and Martha. Jesus paid a visit to Martha's home. Let's stop right there. Jesus paid a visit to Martha's home. Like any self-respecting hostess Martha leaped into action. I'm sure there were floors to be swept, linen to wash, groceries to purchase and guests to serve. Picture Downton Abbey on steroids. Martha ran around doing what was always done when a dignitary stayed in her home. Unfortunately, the tasks did not feed Martha's soul and she became resentful. Meanwhile her sister Mary just sat at Jesus feet. How could she, when Martha was working so hard and doing so much! So, Martha asked Jesus to tell her sister to get up and help.

Instead of commending and agreeing with Martha Jesus lifts up Mary who has chosen God's presence over and above everything else. Jesus did not come to prop up a dying system that would not bring about salvation, no matter how historic. Jesus paid a visit to Martha's home to be with Martha and all who dwelled there. Yes, things need to be done, decisions need to be made but not at the expense of spending time with Jesus. We Martha's can forget that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. That is like a child not spending time talking to their parent when the parent walks into the child's bedroom because the child feels they must clean and tidy the room up. Yes, the parent wants the kid to keep a clean room but not at the expense of family time.

How many wonderful hosts during this past Christmas and Advent season were so busy with hosting, they didn't spend time with their guests? I had an aunt who has now passed. During Christmas season her home was filled with grand decorations and food from out of this world. My aunt never sat down. She was always buzzing about her beautiful home as the host with the most.

Over the years I began to ask her to sit down and spend time with us. Her home was often full of family and festivities but as the years rolled by, I longed to hear her story. Who was she as a woman? What was her childhood like? From where did all these recipes come? Who taught her how to garden? Why did she know so many home remedies? My aunt eventually developed Alzheimer's and the festivities at her home ended. I treasure the times we shared. Doing was her love language. But, many of her stories died with her.

As you approach this new year, how can you cultivate a Mary heart in a Martha world? Mary had a heart for worship. Mary wanted above all else to experience and savor the presence of the Savior. How do we cultivate a Mary heart in this new year? How do we, as the deer pants by the book, allow our souls to pant for God?

At First Church there are opportunities for work and worship. You can put action with faith by commendably joining powerful ministries: food pantry, prayer shawl, and communications to name a few. At the same time, you can open your heart by faithfully attending Sunday worship and joining us every Wednesday at 12 Noon in James Chapel for Centering Prayer where we like Mary get to sit in God's presence.

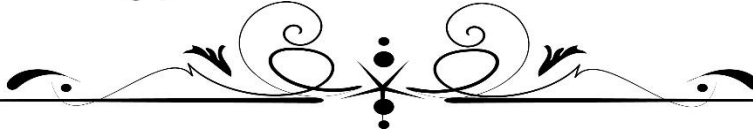
How do we live with a Mary heart in a Martha world? Mary embraced the new covenant over old customs. This year as you do the work that needs to be done, I implore you to begin your reflection with this question:

- How does this tradition, philosophy or task aid in building my relationships with God, self, and others?
- 

Luke 10:38-42 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

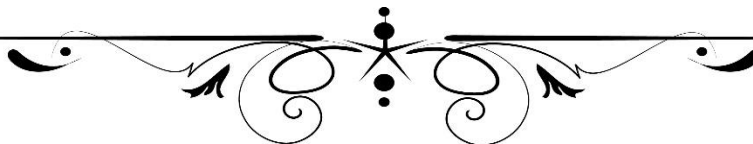
<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup> there is need of only one thing.<sup>[a]</sup> Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."



## AT HOME WITH THE WORD

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

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



## DEACON'S CORNER

**Deacons Christmas Fund:** Will be given to 2 different missions this year

### Local Mission

**IPH Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless** Sheridan Ave. Albany

Website: [www.interfaithpartnership.com](http://www.interfaithpartnership.com)

This is a local mission where our Deacons and staff often refer people who come through our doors and need shelter/meals. They provide emergency shelter and ongoing shelter up to 6 mos. or more, meals, medical and psychiatric help, clothing, etc. Deacons toured this main house on Sheridan Ave in November. Caseworkers let us know the residents could use new sheets for bedding this 30 bed unit.

### International Mission

**Kids Alive International**

Website: [www.kidsalive.org/where-we-work](http://www.kidsalive.org/where-we-work)

**Kids Alive International** is a Christian faith mission (based in Indiana & founded in 1916) dedicated to rescuing vulnerable children who have been orphaned, abandoned, abused, who are living on the streets, victims of poverty, disease, or war. Kids Alive Rescues children one at a time and enrolls them in a safe home, care center or school program, provides medical help. Currently this agency is reaching children in 12 countries.

They have received a 100% rating for accountability and transparency by Charity Navigator in 8/19

If you have not given already, please send donation to First Church earmarked for Deacons Christmas Fund and Deacons will pass on your contribution.

Thanks

Pastor Sue Cox

## FINANCIAL SECRETARY REPORT

### **Here's the guideline for Pledges & Donations as we near the end of 2019:**

ALL contributions for **2019** must be received by Sunday, January 12, 2020 and must be dated **2019**. All contributions received after January 12, 2020 will be posted to 2020. If you any questions regarding this reminder or for any matters concerning your donations, you can reach me at [wsivaslian@nycap.rr.com](mailto:wsivaslian@nycap.rr.com) or 518-495-6353.

Wayne Sivaslian, Financial Secretary.

## 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 Thursdays 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

## MOTHER'S GROUP AT FIRST CHURCH

In mid-November three mothers and I met to discuss the idea of a Mother's Group at First Church. This "great" idea came from one of the moms who attended. Mothers (and fathers) juggle a lot these days often working full-time. Some mothers are single-parenting, some are working more than one job and some have long commutes to work. Those who met felt it would be most helpful to meet once a month to support one another, share ideas, and have Bible meditation/prayer together.

Still in the planning stages the next group will meet on Sunday Jan 5<sup>h</sup> at 1pm in the Parlor. Additional ideas include: inviting both those who attend church regularly and those who do not attend First Church, having lunch for moms and their children before group and having regular childcare. This group would include moms who are actively parenting kids from infancy to late adolescents/early adulthood. Please join us. We will send out more information as this group forms.

In Christ's Peace  
Rev. Sue Vincent Cox

## FOOD PANTRY, TOYS FOR TOTS & CHRISTMAS SHOPPE

In November, our Food Pantry served a total of 144 households. The Food Pantry was open 8 days in November, and our staff and volunteers provided a total of 3,906 meals! Thank you for supporting the Food Pantry ministry with your financial gifts, food donations and prayers.



The Food Pantry was busy in November and December! Not only was food provided to many of our neighbors, but also Thanksgiving dinner fixings, Christmas Toys, books, hats and mittens were given to 52 children from 19 families.



**2019 Toys For Tots Was A Great Success  
and many parents walked away very happy!**

**Thank you to all who donated toys!  
and additional thanks to:**

**Lynn Fuierer, Kristen Defelice, Kaitlyn Herwig, Aimee Allaud,  
Amy Steiner, Veronica Mora, Lianne DeMieri, Joeanna Brown  
for all your hard work organizing, setting up, distributing &  
cleaning up the Toy Shoppe.**

**Thank you!**



## MUSIC TASK FORCE



### *SPEAKING OF MUSIC...*

*WHO? you and the Music Task Force*

*WHAT? a conversation about the role of music at First Church*

*WHEN? 12 noon on 1/12/20 during the post-service coffee hour*

*WHERE? Zimmerman Hall*

*WHY?*

- We praise God through our music.*
- Music binds us in community.*
- Music challenges us to deepen our faith.*
- Music touches our hearts.*
- Music teaches us about cultures and neighbors.*
- Music supports our understanding of God's Word.*





## CHILDREN AND WORSHIP



Children ages 8-12 will meet 2nd and 4th Sundays in the new year, beginning Jan 12th. They will gather in church after the Children's Moment and go with their leader up to the Fireside Room (3rd floor). Kim Gattie will begin leading this group. A short video will be offered, followed by some discussion and some time of fun.

## PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY



Join us in the parlor for Prayer Shawl Ministry, 3rd Monday of each month.

This month we will meet Jan 13<sup>th</sup> due to church office being closed the 3rd Monday. (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday).



## WEATHERVANES – PASTOR MASHONA



Join the Weathervanes on Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall. Bring a sandwich. Dessert and beverages will be served. Get to know our new pastor, Mashona Walston. She will tell us about herself and her life history.

Please contact Audrey Ming (518-456-5485) to let her know you are coming.

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AND POT-LUCK LUNCHEON

On Sunday, January 19 after worship, please come to share a potluck meal and to receive the 2020 church budget.



## Annual Congregational Meeting



## PASTOR MASHONA'S ~ SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT



**The MLK Committee of Troy  
Area United Ministries, in  
collaboration with  
partner agencies, presents  
two events celebrating:**

### **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 4:00 pm

#### **Interfaith Worship Service**

Bethel Baptist Church, 2165 Fifth Avenue, Troy, NY

#### **Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston**

Senior Pastor, First Reformed Church, Albany  
will be preaching.

An offering will be received for the Ronald J. Dukes Memorial  
MLK Scholarship Program. Reception to follow.

Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 8:00 am

#### **Community Breakfast**

Franklin Terrace, 126 Campbell Ave., Troy

**Col. (ret.) Gail Benjamin Colvin, USAF**  
Speaking.

**Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door**

392 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Troy, NY 12180  
(518) 274-5920      [www.taum.org](http://www.taum.org)



## FIRST CHURCH READERS GROUP – JANUARY 29<sup>TH</sup>

First Church Readers meets January 29th



First Church Readers will meet January 29th after worship to discuss *The Hamilton Affair* by Elizabeth Cobbs. Everyone is welcome.

- February's book is *The Line becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border* by Francisco Cantu
- March's book is *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah



Future Books we are considering:

- *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer
- *In the Hurricane's Eye: The Genius of Washington and the Victory at Yorktown* by Nathaniel Philbrick
- *The Women's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* by Elaine Weiss
- *Founding Faith: How our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty* Steven Waldman

## FOCUS COMBINED WORSHIP SERVICE ON FEBRUARY 2, 2020

As one of the six-member churches of FOCUS we have made a commitment to worship together with the other covenant congregations several times each year. On Sunday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will join the other FOCUS congregations in worship at Trinity United Methodist Church – 235 Lark Street, Albany, NY 12210. Worship service starts at 10:00 am.

## 2020 EMPTY BOWLS ~ SAVE THE DATE ~ FEBRUARY 2, 2020!

### 2020 EMPTY BOWLS

AN EVENT OF FOCUS CHURCHES OF ALBANY

**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 2ND**

**12:00-2:30**

**Delmar Reformed Church  
386 Delaware Ave. Delmar. NY**

Proceeds go  
to help  
fight hunger  
in our community  
and beyond

FOLLOWING  
THE FOCUS  
COMBINED  
SERVICE @  
TRINITY  
UNITED  
METHODIST



**\$25 PP  
UNDER 10 FREE**

A festive family event to support our efforts to end hunger and promote food justice. Choose a locally made soup bowl & enjoy gourmet soups, bread & baked goodies. The bowl is yours to keep as a reminder of the many empty bowls in the world. Your attendance supports the service and advocacy work of FOCUS Churches of Albany.





## **2020 BOWLING FOR BEDS BOWL ~ A ~THON!**

# ***BOWLING FOR BEDS 2020***

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**BOWL A THON TO BENEFIT EMERGENCY  
HOMELESS SHELTER All Ages Welcome:**

**Children, Youth, Adults**

**SATURDAY—FEBRUARY 8, 2020**

**12:30—4:30 P.M. Del Lanes 4**

**Bethlehem Court in Delmar**

*If you would like to receive a  
registration packet for your group,  
please contact Rev. Sandy Damhof,  
Protestant Campus Ministry, Interfaith  
Center at University at Albany—CC#346,  
1400 Washington Ave. Albany, NY 12222.  
You may also call or email your request  
to Email: [sdamhof@albany.edu](mailto:sdamhof@albany.edu) Phone:  
518-442-4491. We need to hear from you*

**NO LATER THAN JANUARY 11 TO  
RESERVE YOUR PLACE - ROOM IS  
LIMITED SO ACT NOW!**





***EACH MONTH WE'RE CELEBRATING AN  
IMPORTANT***

***AFRICAN AMERICAN COMPOSER***

**January's composer is John Wesley Work, Jr.  
1871-1925**



- Choral director, teacher, researcher and songwriter
- First African-American collector of Negro folksongs
- Probably born August 6, 1871 in Nashville, Tennessee. His father was a church choir director in Nashville
- Student, then, later, Professor of History, Latin and Greek at all-black Fisk University
- Became interested in Slave songs and spirituals while singing in the choir at Fisk
- Together with his brother, Fredrick, became a leader in the movement to preserve, study, and perform Negro spirituals
- Collected, harmonized and published numerous collections of spirituals
- With his wife, Agnes, trained, directed and performed with professional and student groups of the *Jubilee singers* at Fisk for more than twenty-five years
- Force to resign in 1923 as "black music" became unpopular at Fisk
- Became president of Roger Williams University but died two years later
- Several of his children became famous composers in their own right
- The most famous song he collected is *Go tell it on the mountain*

**Our choir has his collection "*Folk Song of the American Negro.*"**

**We'll be singing his spiritual "*Rise, Shine for Thy Light Is a-coming*" this month**

# Finding a Voice

Celebrating women composers

**Each Month we'll celebrate a different women composer.**

**January's composer is Elizabeth Poston**

**24 October 1905 -18 March 1987**

- English composer, pianist, and writer
- Collected folksongs and edited and published many collections
- During WW II worked as secret agent
- Worked for the British Broadcasting
- Wrote a wide variety of music including numerous scores for television and radio programs



In January we'll be singing her most famous piece, "*Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*"

## CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES

**Happy 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

**Charles Arnould Tournemire**

**22 January 1870 – 3 or 4 November 1939**

- Famous French organist, composer and teacher
- Was already a church organist by the age of eleven
- Organist at Basilique Ste-Clothilde, Paris which has a famous French organ by **Cavaillé-Coll**, the greatest organ builder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Professor of Music at Paris Conservatoire
- Wrote operas, symphonies and chamber music
- Most known for his improvisations and sacred organ music rooted in the great hymns and chants of the church, especially *L'Orgue Mystique (the Mystical Organ)* - fifty-one sets of organ pieces for fifty-one weeks of liturgical year

***We'll be playing your music this month***

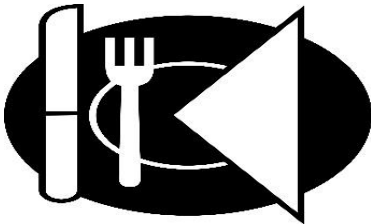




## HOMELESS SHELTER DINNER UPDATE

Dear Emergency Overflow Shelter contributors and friends

Thank-you to everyone who contributed to our Overflow Shelter Dinner in December. We are into our 11th year of providing dinners for the homeless men who find refuge at the Overflow Shelter. CONGRATULATIONS! We all appreciate all your help with past dinners and your dedication to this ministry of providing meals for guests at the Overflow Shelter.



In December we were unable to provide a complete meal for the last dinner. Luckily, we were able to fill some of the gaps, but many of our past contributors are no longer able to contribute as they have in the past.

### **THERE WILL BE NO SHELTER DINNER IN JANUARY.**

We have tentatively scheduled dinners for  
February 21 (Meatloaf) and  
March 27th (Chicken)

The Overflow Shelter is a special ministry dear to my heart. Unlike other shelters, the Emergency Overflow Shelter will take in anyone, including people who struggle with addictions and mental health issues. You do not have to be sober.

I thought we could try a couple more dinners and see if we can get more people involved before deciding on what to do for the future of this ministry.

Any thoughts, suggestions or ideas on how to strengthen and broaden this ministry would be much appreciated. Mary Bon 518-463-4449 (church,) 518-339-5460 (cell), or [maryebon@verizon.net](mailto:maryebon@verizon.net).

Thanks again,

Mary Bon

## THANK YOU – FROM PASTOR MASHONA

A special thank you to all who served to make this season of Advent/Christmas at First Church magical!

Thank you to Monica Marsh, Tom Allison, Josh Bliss, Ian Leet, Becky Mondore and all who worked to bless God's house with the hanging of the greens or simply getting the welcome out to the community. Christmas Eve service was majestic. The choir, soloists, instrumentalists, readers and light bearers helped moved us into a holy of holy spaces during worship. Thank you. Thank you to those who worked behind the scenes: Elders, Deacons, Trustees and staff. Thank you to Keith for fixing emergency facility issues, along with hanging banners, and clearing snow. Thank you to the Food Pantry volunteers who live the gospel for our community every Monday and Wednesday. Thank you, Valerie, for the support to other staff and all programming during this season when old things become new. Thank you, Sue, for continued pastoral care and support. Thank you to everyone for calls, prayers, visits, and remembering that we are all called by God to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We gather to receive and to go out to bring light into sometimes dark circumstances.

This Sunday after Christmas three new families with children visited First Church for the first time. They are from the city of Albany and will be back. Please know that all of your hard work is paying forward.

May God Bless you and yours in the new year and new decade! Your service helps fulfill the mission for God's house to be a house of prayer for all people.



Please join with thunderous applause as we thank God for our minister of music, Mary Bon. Thank you, Mary, for your commitment and enthusiasm. The entire First Church in Albany thanks you for 38 years of service. Christmas Eve was a culmination of talent, skill, leadership and love. God Bless you!

Sincerely,  
Pastor M

## THANK YOU – FROM SANDY SCUDDER

To My Dear Friends,

I have received so many letters, cards, and telephone calls that I made a decision to write one thank you response, reproduce it, and mail a copy to you all.

As usual, I have procrastinated, but truly appreciate your thoughtfulness in easing my transition by writing and calling from Albany, NY to Madison, Wisconsin.

Everyone here is welcoming and helpful and I am slowly feeling at home. Believe it or not, the most difficult decision was leaving my dog Heidi with Peter Subers. I only called once, and she is doing very well.

I miss you all so much and hope you are well and happy. Enjoy your holiday and best wishes for a New Year.

Sandy Scudder

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy".

## FIRST CHURCH FACILITIES ARE USED AND AVAILABLE FOR USE

First Church has a large facility with various spaces that are convenient for groups of various sizes, with ample parking and a convenient location in downtown Albany. Each year several groups receive permission to use our facility. Such requests are approved by the Building Use Committee, composed of members of Leadership and the Treasurer. First Church charges fees to cover out-of-pocket expenses, though the fees are waived for an RCA or FOCUS-related event. A higher fee schedule applies to for-profit organizations. In addition, tours are offered to groups that are interested in First Church's history and architecture. And many individual visitors from places near and far come to First Church unscheduled, and are welcome to take a self-guided tour of our historic sanctuary.



If you know of a group that would like to use our facility, please refer them to Valerie Williams, Parish Administrator, for further information. Making our facilities available for varied uses and groups is part of good stewardship and our outreach to the community and city of Albany. Consider us for the following needs:

- Office Space
- Large and Small Meeting Rooms
- Classrooms
- Large Hall with kitchen
- Weddings/Receptions

## IN SYMPATHY

- Our sympathy and prayers are with Monica Marsh, Wayne Sivaslian, Nicole and Adam Hall, the family and friends of Donna Marsh, who passed away on December 11, 2019.



**THE DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY'S ISSUE OF THE *FAMILY* IS JANUARY 15.**