

The First Church **FAMILY**

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

MARCH 2014

WORSHIP:

- 2 **Transfiguration Sunday (Communion)**
John Paarlberg preaching
Post-service: Worship Commission

- 5 **Ash Wednesday, 7:30 pm**
John Paarlberg preaching

- 9 **First Sunday in Lent**
John Paarlberg preaching
Post-service: Pot-luck Luncheon

- 16 **Second Sunday in Lent**
John Paarlberg preaching
Post-service: Small Groups

- 23 **Third Sunday in Lent**
John Paarlberg preaching
Post-service: Small Groups

- 30 **Fourth Sunday in Lent**
Susan Vincent-Cox preaching
Post-service: Small Groups

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

FROM THE PASTOR

Beloved Congregation of Jesus Christ,

Breathing in and breathing out are essential to life. They are also essential to the life of the church. We breathe in, receiving God's gifts of peace, hope and life. "Jesus breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). We breathe out, sharing God's gifts and witnessing to Christ's love with those around us. "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you'" (John 20:21). We receive and we give; we are blessed in order to be a blessing. The Jesus who lovingly welcomes us with, "Come to me all you that are weary," is the same Jesus who sends us out in mission: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Breathing in and breathing out are indications of a healthy life and a healthy church.

The church which only breathes in, one which is all prayer and little action, develops an insular and selfish piety, existing only for itself and is then no longer a church but a religious club for members only. A church which only breathes out, one which is all action and little prayer, becomes exhausted and spiritually empty, and risks becoming no longer a church, but another helping agency or social service program.

First Church breathes out. Through the food pantry, the summer urban day camp, meals prepared for the men at the homeless shelter, our developing relationship with Arbor Hill School, and other ministries we are reaching out into the community. But we also need to breathe in and attend to the inner journey.

During the season of Lent we are offering several opportunities to meet in small groups to help nurture the inner journey. Some of these groups will follow the practice of *Lectio Divina* (Latin for divine reading), a prayerful and meditative reading of the Gospel lessons for the Sundays in Lent. This way of reading the Bible treats scripture not so much as a text to be studied but as a guide for listening for God's living word to us today. One *Lectio* group will meet on Sunday after worship, another at 7:30 Wednesday mornings and a third on Wednesday noon. (A fourth group, meeting on Wednesday evenings is already filled.)

In addition to the *Lectio* groups two other groups will meet. One will gather after worship on Sunday to read and discuss *Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Steps for Everyday Life*, a guide for practicing the disciplines of silence, contemplation, obedience in daily life. There are a few openings in this group so if you are interested in participating please let me know. And Rev. Sue Cox and Steve Andersen will offer a workshop in Non-Violent Communication on Wednesday evenings, 6:00 -7:30, March 12, 19, 26, April 2.

With the exception of the non-violent communication workshop the groups will be limited to 8 or 9 people. It is also important to stay with the same group over the four to six weeks. As we listen to God's word together community develops, relationships deepen, questions and insights are shared.

I have participated in several such small *lectio* groups and I continue to be surprised at how God speaks to me anew. In conversations with brothers and sisters in Christ I discover something in the text I hadn't noticed before. And I frequently discover something new about myself. I not only read scripture, but scripture reads me. And often it's like a breath of fresh air.

Sincerely,

John D. Paarlberg

At Home with the WORD

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

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

1. Psalm 2
2. SUNDAY Matthew 17:1-9
3. Exodus 33:7-23
4. 1 Kings 19:9-18
5. Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
6. Jonah 3:1-10
7. Jonah 4:1-11
8. Psalm 51
9. SUNDAY Matthew 4:1-11
10. Hebrews 2:10-18
11. Psalm 32
12. Matthew 18:10-14
13. Isaiah 51:1-3
14. Romans 3:21-31
15. Isaiah 51:4-8
16. SUNDAY John 3:1-17
17. Numbers 21:4-9
18. Psalm 128
19. Ezekiel 36:22-32
20. Colossians 1:15-23
21. Exodus 16:9-21
22. Exodus 16:27-35
23. SUNDAY John 4:5-42
24. 2 John 1-13
25. Psalm 81
26. Jeremiah 2:4-13
27. Ephesians 4:25-32
28. Ephesians 5:1-9
29. Psalm 23
30. SUNDAY John 9:1-41
31. Acts 9:1-20

Lent Begins March 5

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5. There will be a service of worship with imposition of ashes at 7:30 pm in the sanctuary.

On the first Sunday in Lent, March 9, a congregational pot-luncheon will follow the worship service.

The Gospel readings for the Sundays in Lent are stories of encounters with Jesus:

March 9	Jesus and the Tempter
March 16	Jesus and Nicodemus
March 23	Jesus and the Samaritan woman
March 30	Jesus and the man born blind
April 6	Jesus and Lazarus
April 13	Jesus and the crowd in Jerusalem

During the season of Lent we encourage you to participate in one of the small groups that will be offered. Several of the groups will focus on the Lenten Gospel readings. No prior biblical knowledge or preparation is expected or required for participation in these groups, other than to come with an open mind and prayerful heart. And if you'd like to be a part of a group but can't find one that fits your schedule, please let us know. If there is interest we'd be glad to try to add another group at an alternate time.



First Church Joins FOCUS Churches

On Sunday February 2 we celebrated our becoming a member of the FOCUS Churches. Shown here are members of First Church in Albany alongside members of Delmar Reformed Church.



Small Groups in Lent

Prayerful Reading of the Gospel Texts

Sundays after worship (approx. 11:50- 12: 45) March 16, 23, 30, April 6
(contact Rev. Sue Cox)

Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Practices for Daily Life

Sundays after worship (approx. 11:50- 12: 45) March 16, 23, 30, April 6
(contact Rev. John Paarlberg)

Prayerful Reading of the Gospel Texts

Wednesday mornings, 7:30- 8:30 March 12, 19, 26 and April 2 and 9
(contact Rev. John Paarlberg)

“Soup, Bread & Bible”

Meeting on Wednesdays for lunch, March 5 through April 9.
A simple lunch and discussion the Gospel readings for the Sundays in Lent.
We especially welcome food pantry guests, First Church neighbors
and those who work in the area.
(contact Rev. John Paarlberg)

Non Violent Communication Training

Wednesday evening, 6 -7:30 pm in the church parlor. March 12, 19, 26 and April 2
(contact Rev. Sue Cox)



Home Communion

In the Reformed tradition the consistory and especially the board of elders has the responsibility “to provide for the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” This includes providing for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper with those who because of health or other reasons are unable to participate in Sunday worship. In that case, one of the ministers with an elder will visit and celebrate communion in the home or hospital. Reformed Church polity also allows for an elder to administer the sacraments, if authorized by the board of elders. It also specifies that at least one other elder shall accompany an elder administering the sacraments in the home or hospital.

Recently several members of our board of elders met for a workshop to discuss the theology and meaning of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the contents of the communion prayer, and practical and pastoral concerns in serving home communion. Several elders were then authorized to administer the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

The ministers with an elder will continue to serve home communion, but now pairs of elders will also be calling on homebound members to celebrate the sacrament with them. If you, or someone you know has not been able to be in worship and would like to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, please contact one of the ministers, an elder, or call the church office.

Compassionate Communication in Our Churches



You have all been hearing the “buzz word”, **nonviolent communication** around our church. And as you can see from this newsletter we are having a class to teach what this is all about in just a week or so. Hopefully you will join us and bring a friend.

Why are we teaching this here at church?
NVC or **Compassionate Communication /**

Compassionate Living (2 other terms often used) provides us with a very practical skill set for how to live what we learn and teach as disciples in our churches. It is a way of better “walking the walk” of our faithful commandment to **love our neighbor as ourselves**.

One significant way to **love our neighbor as ourselves** (Leviticus 19:18) is to balance our own needs with our neighbor’s needs. I believe trouble begins when we believe we have a greater right to meet our need over our neighbor’s need and vice versa. To believe we have this right over another person, we minimize the dignity of that person and ourselves.

One of the principals of NVC is being able to identify and articulate for yourself and others **your needs**. We also encourage others to tell us what they need. And here a need is not so much “I must have 7 Maserati sport cars to complete my collection”. Here needs are defined more as universal values so they include the need for inclusion, understanding, food, water, shelter, medical care, safety, peace, dignity, self-worth, rest, reassurance, closeness, meaning, to name a few.

People come into strongest harmony together when they feel honored and are able to meet their universal values/needs for themselves and their loved ones and/or the people they wish to serve. If we don’t feel we can meet our needs with others we often become manipulative and angry and we either distance and cut off from others or become more aggressive toward them.

Deborah Van Deusen Hunsinger and Theresa F. Latini, tell us in their book **Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Leadership in Action**, that many of us are raised in our churches to believe we must put our needs last and we are to meet the needs of others first. We have been taught that this is what Christ calls us to do. Well, as you can see from the above list, needs are more complex than we often understand or talk about with one another. The need for food will trump our need for peace in many circumstances, but not all circumstances. We need to talk about what is most essential for us and articulate this, value this, and then make decisions together on how to meet this for all involved.

Peace is created when both parties feel they are able to be valued, when they are both able to meet important needs.

So, if we can share ourselves with one another and be honest with one another and do this together before God, we can walk together toward finding more peace and joy together in our daily lives.

Peace to You in the Name of Jesus Christ,

Susan Vincent-Cox

Pre-Service music in Lent

Beginning March 9th we will have pre-service music in the sanctuary each Lenten Sunday at 10:15 AM. Come early to pray, meditate, refresh yourself, or just listen to some beautiful music as we follow the Lenten road from cross to resurrection.

- **March 9th** American Music including Barber's - *Adagio for Strings*;
- **March 16** Music for Bassoon with David Bon-Keen
- **March 23** Music for Double Bass with Tristen Jarvis
- **March 30** African-American Spirituals with Peter Subers and Rose Hunsberger

First Church Readers meets April 27th

(No March Meeting)



To allow time for small study groups in Lent, First Church Readers will not meet in March. Our next meeting will be April 27th when we will discuss *The End of Your Life Book Club* by Will Schwalbe. The book is available through the UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM both as an ebook and in a hard copy. Come join us.

Upcoming books are: May - *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northrup

KIBERA UPDATE

Thanks to Steve Andersen and Diane Wuerstlin, approximately \$1,200 was raised from two sales in February. We continue to explore ways to support the artisans and Sosep school in Kibera. Send us your ideas at beckyhudak@hotmail.com.

Here is a recent email from one of the artisans:

"Hi am Thomas from Kibera Jewelry & Handicraft CBO, I have a comment on behalf of other artists making fine products from Kibera slums project . We are very happy with First Church leadership & Stephen Andersen for having the good hart to promote and support our project in terms of organizing Tradefairs in Albany & its sourondings . The orders we get from the tradefairs have been helping us (artisans) & our families very much, and to the customers who have been buying our products, we are very happy because through your support of buying our products, you have keep us & our workshop busy. I would like to thank those who have bought our fine products & those who may be thinking of how to support this wonderful Kibera project . Much thanks to everyone ."

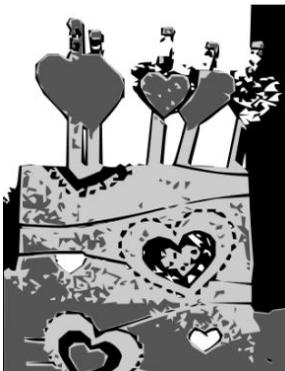
Thomas an artist from Kibera Jewelry & Handicraft CBO

March Weathervanes: The Polar Bears of Hudson Bay



Join the Weathervanes for fellowship, lunch, and program on Wednesday, March 19th, at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall. Bring a sandwich; coffee, tea, and dessert will be served. After lunch Cheryl Gowie will share her photographs of polar bears she took in November on a trip, sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation, to Hudson Bay to learn about climate change and its effect on polar bears. Please call Audrey Ming (456-5485) to let her know that you plan to attend.

Arbor Hill Elementary & First Church



A group of 'crafty women' gathered on February 8 to make centerpieces for a student Valentine's Day luncheon at Arbor Hill Elementary. Kim Reohr, Jean Lamere, Deb Anderson, Diane Wuerstlin, Cindy Gillespie and Becky Hudak glued 480 hearts to pencils and created the festive centerpieces. Although school was cancelled on February 14, each student received a new pencil!

On Wednesday, February 26, we 'surprised' the faculty and staff of Arbor Hill Elementary School with an appreciation breakfast. A big thank you to all who contributed to this very early morning breakfast!!! This mid-winter, mid school year treat was greatly appreciated by the entire staff.

FIRST CHURCH PARTICIPATES IN GREENFIBER COMMUNITY PAPER RECYCLING PROGRAM



First Church is a GreenFiber collection point for waste paper that is recycled into cellulose insulation. GreenFiber has over 300 collection bins, mostly at schools and churches within a 70 mile radius of its manufacturing facility located in Hagaman, near Amsterdam. Based in Charlotte, NC, GreenFiber is the nation's largest manufacturer of cellulose insulation products, with seven plants. GreenFiber encourages recycling by regular payments to host facilities, the payment depending on the current market price for waste paper. First Church's waste paper bin is located in the Orange Street parking lot and is also used by nearby businesses. (Contact church receptionist for loan of the key to the collection bin.)

Overflow Shelter Dinners for March 28th and April 11



Thanks to your generosity we have been providing dinner twice a month to about 25 guests and staff at the Albany Emergency Overflow Shelter. We only have two more dinners this season - March 28th - Meatloaf and Hamburger dishes, and April 11th -Chicken and Pork Dishes. Can you help by contributing a dish (main dish, side dish, bread, drinks or dessert) or helping with delivery? Sign up at the Hospitality Table! The week of the dinner, bring your dishes Sunday after church or weekdays between 8:30 and 2:30 p.m. USE NON RETURNABLE DISHES. (There are dishes available on the hospitality table for your use.) For more info, contact Mary Bon at 463-4449 - and thank you for your generosity.

Save the Date: Young Adult Fowler Retreat

Young Adult Fowler Retreat
March 14th-Sunday March 16th.
See Andy Mondore or Monica Marsh for more information.

Save the Date: First Church in Albany Rummage Sale

Saturday, April 12, 2-4 pm –Drop Off or call for Pick-Up
Friday, April 25, 9:30 am-3 pm
Saturday, April 26, 9:30 am-12 Noon
110 North Pearl St. Albany, NY 12207
Call 463-4449 for more information.



The deadline for the April issue of *FAMILY* is March 14.



Congratulations

Congratulations to Kate and David Paarlberg-Kvam on the birth of their daughter, Josephine Jane on February 9th. Proud grandparents are John and Marilyn Paarlberg.

In Sympathy

Sympathy is extended to the family of Harold Harder, Jr. who passed away on January 17, 2014

Sympathy is extended to the family of Ted Michalski who passed away on February 10, 2014. He was Helen Simon's good friend

Easter Lilies

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



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