

The First Church **FAMILY**

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

March 2017

WORSHIP:

5 First Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Sanctuary Service (Communion)

(During Worship: Children & Worship)

Post-service: "Changing the Conversation: What is Our Purpose?"

12 Second Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Sanctuary Service

(During Worship: Children & Worship)

Post-service:

19 Third Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Sanctuary Service

Rev. Al Janssen, guest preacher

(During Worship: Children & Worship)

Post-service:

26 Fourth Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Sanctuary Service

(During Worship: Children & Worship)

Post-service: First Church Readers

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

FAMILY is published eleven times a year by First Church in Albany, 110 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12207-2231

From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

The season of Lent, begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1. Worship with imposition of ashes is at 7:30 p.m.

Also during the six weeks of Lent some of us will be meeting for prayer and discussion using Rowan Williams' small book, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*. The title is important. Discipleship is more than a matter of believing certain things or behaving in a certain way; it is a way of *being*.

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, says of this book: "Here is quite the most beautiful writing on discipleship I know. I am grateful for the inspiration I find on these pages. I commend it to those who have been on this journey a long time, as well as to anyone who wonders what on earth following Jesus is all about."

We'll meet from 7:00 pm – 8:15 pm beginning on Monday, March 6, and continue meeting (some weeks on Monday, other weeks on Tuesday) through the second week of April. You are invited to participate in as many –or as few sessions as you are able. Or, if you are not able to join the discussion but would still like a copy of the book (\$6) please call the church office and let us know.

Last month parents (and grandparents) of younger children met to talk about how to nurture the spiritual lives of children—and in doing so learned some things about how we nurture our own spiritual lives as well. We'll meet again on Wednesday, March 8.

During Sunday worship in Lent we will be reading through the passion story in the Gospel of Matthew:

- First Sunday in Lent, March 5 The Last Supper
- Second Sunday in Lent, March 12 Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane
- Third Sunday in Lent, March 19 Jesus on Trial
- Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 26 Peter's Denial
- Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 2 Jesus before Pilate
- Palm/Passion Sunday, April 9 The service begins with a celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and concludes with the story of Jesus' crucifixion and burial.

This is not light reading, but it is at the heart of the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote that he “did not come proclaiming the mystery of God ... in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” What does it mean to know Christ crucified? How do we understand the meaning of the cross today? And how is the cross good news?

As part of our Lenten journey we'll ponder these questions, seeking not just information about what happened 2000 years ago, but what those events mean—and how Christ, crucified and risen, shapes our lives today.

Sincerely,

John Paarlberg

At Home with the WORD

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary
March 1st - March 31st

Now available online at: www.rca.org/resources/home-word

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 | 17. John 4:5-26 |
| 2. Psalm 32 | 18. John 4:27-42 |
| 3. Romans 5:12-19 | 19. Third Sunday in Lent |
| 4. Matthew 4:1-11 | 20. 1 Samuel 16:1-13 |
| 5. First Sunday in Lent | 21. Psalm 23 |
| 6. Genesis 12:1-4 | 22. Ephesians 5:8-14 |
| 7. Psalm 121 | 23. John 9:1-12 |
| 8. Romans 4:1-5 | 24. John 9:13-34 |
| 9. Romans 4:13-17 | 25. John 9:35-41 |
| 10. John 3:1-17 | 26. Fourth Sunday in Lent |
| 11. Matthew 17:1-9 | 27. Ezekiel 37:1-14 |
| 12. Second Sunday in Lent | 28. Psalm 130 |
| 13. Exodus 17:1-7 | 29. Romans 8:6-11 |
| 14. Psalm 95 | 30. John 11:1-16 |
| 15. Romans 5:1-5 | 31. John 11:17-37 |
| 16. Romans 5:6-11 | |



Non-Violent Communication: The Basics

Nonviolent Communications at First Church

Wednesday, March 8 & 15 6:00-8:30 pm

Non-Violent Communication: The Basics

Are you yearning to find ways to communicate compassionately, especially in situations where conflict or tension arises? Nonviolent communication is a way of looking at the world differently, a way to increase compassion, and it gives us a set of highly useful communication skills.

See Sue Cox Susan Vincent-Cox coxwave2@gmail.com or Becky Hudak for more information. Look for a sign up sheet in the church lobby or visit the First Church Website to register: www.firstchurchinalbany.org

We hope you will join us!

The Basics of Compassionate Communication

Wednesdays March 8 and March 15

6-8:30pm

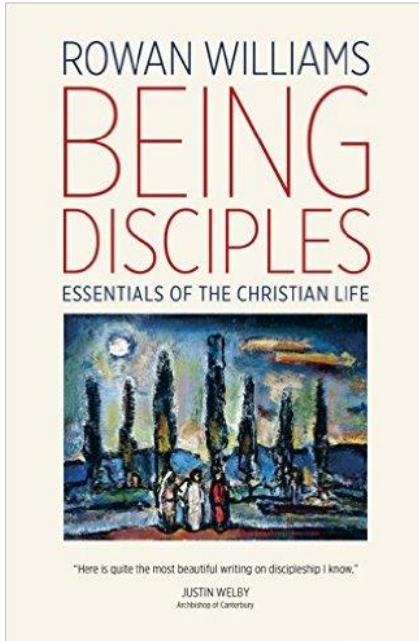
First Church Parlor

Led by Sue Vincent Cox and Becky Hudak

Small Groups in Lent

Starting Monday, March 6 7:00-8:15 pm

A small group will be meeting for prayer and discussion on Monday or Tuesday evenings in Lent beginning Monday, March 6, from 7 to 8:15 p.m. We will be using *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*, by Rowan Williams, as a resource.



"Discipleship," writes Williams, "is about how we live; not just the decisions we make, not just the things we believe, but a state of being."

This brief book about following Jesus and growing in faith has six chapters:

Being Disciples

Faith, Hope, and Love

Forgiveness

Holiness

Faith in Society

Life in the Spirit

If you are interested in participating and/or would like a copy of the book (\$6) please call the church office. The first meeting will be Monday, March 6, at 7 p.m.

"Being disciples means at least two things. It means very simply going on asking whether what we do, how we speak and act, is open to Christ and Christ's Spirit; developing the skills to ask ourselves the difficult questions about our consistency and honesty, how about how seriously we take what we say. And it is also about how we as a Church go on being a *learning community*, about how we grow in depth of relation with each other and God. The addresses collected in this little book are all in their different ways are all about these issues, and I hope very much that they may be a starting point exploring ways we can go on growing in that life that Jesus shares with us, so that we can become signs of life and hope in our world." --Rowan Williams

Pilgrim's Walk: Third Time Around

Our small group conversation began with Cheryl Gowie asking, "What roles have you played in your life? What is it like to give up or take on new roles as you age?" One member of this Pilgrim's Walk group, a minister who retired some time ago, shared, "It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do, giving up my role as a minister. I loved my work." Another shared how she is grieving into her new role as her husband's caretaker. And still others wondered, "What will the next chapter be?" Then we talked about who we are beyond the roles we fill. We are spirit, or essence (as one author put it). We agreed with Angeles Auriel in her book **"The Second Half of Life**, "we are spiritual beings having a human experience, rather than humans trying to have a spiritual experience." This profound difference makes all the difference.

Another member of our group finally shared that when her granddaughter asked, "Grandma, when you die how will I find you? She told her, "I will be the wind in your hair. I will whisper "I love you" in your ear."

Even though Cheryl and I are leaders, we are often the ones **who are led** in this deeply rich small group experience. We often witness much more than the sharing of participant's experiences. Last week one participant came and showed us a picture she drew during the week inspired by the readings and our talks. Others at times offer poems, songs and sometimes a favorite prayer.

We often introduce Pilgrim's Walk saying "pilgrimage is more than a journey, the words pilgrim and pilgrimage imply a life of meaningful intent and spiritual intensity. This is a far more vital way of looking at life." (Thibault and Morgan) One participant told us a few weeks ago (a third time member), "This group has made a tremendous difference in my life. I am no longer so afraid of dying." "How come?", we asked. He said, "Because I don't feel so alone anymore and I have learned a lot here."

Soon we hope to offer this small group in some other senior residential communities. This will be possible because we have a new co-leader "in training", Joeanna Brown. She is "shadowing" Cheryl and I in this current group at Beverwyck. Her rich wisdom, warmth, and deep listening will be gifts to the participants of these groups. We look forward to the journey.

Last week we ended with these words read by Cheryl Gowie,

"And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way." So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And he led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East." Minnie Louise Haskins

Shalom. Susan Vincent-Cox

Last Overflow Shelter Dinner is March 17th

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.

Our last dinner will be:

- March 17 Make your favorite dish (Stew? Chili? Chicken?)

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. 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 1:00 pm 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/>

First Church Readers Group Will Meet March 26th

The First Church Readers will meet March 26 to discuss March's Book, *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman – the bittersweet story of an angry old widower faced with new life choices when a young family moves in next door.



- April 23rd's book is:
Evicted by Matthew Desmond

- May's book is:
Lady Copy Makes Trouble by Amy Stewart

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

Church Library

We are working hard on getting the library organized for your use. At this time I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Cindy Gillespie, Joeanna Brown and David Mortenson who have been assisting me these past few weeks. I couldn't have done it without your very valuable assistance.

If anyone else would like to assist us in reorganizing the library, just stop by on any Thursday between 10 a.m. – 12 Noon. Also, if any of you have books that you would like to donate to the library, please feel free to do so. You can drop them off on Thursdays when we are there between 10 a.m. – 12 Noon, or any other day for that matter.

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. Each person pays for their own meal. Contact Donna E. Schultz at deschultz07@aol.com or 518.429.1255.

The Weathervanes

Our 375th Anniversary Tour

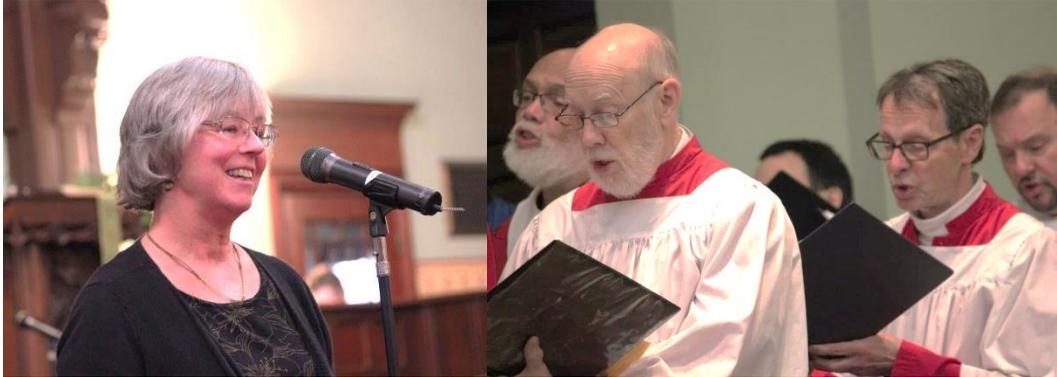


The February meeting was cancelled due to bad weather and we have re-scheduled it for March. Let's pray for good weather this time! Join the Weathervanes on Wednesday, March 15th, at 12:30 p.m. in Zimmerman Hall for fellowship, lunch, and program. Bring a sandwich. Coffee, tea, and dessert will be served. After lunch, Tom Allison will take us on an armchair tour of our church and tell us something of its past about which you may not know. From the lore of our two historic pulpits and beloved weathervane to some things that were hidden until 1931, you will find it is an interesting story.

Please telephone Audrey Ming (456-5485) to let her know that you plan to attend.

FOCUS Combined Worship on February 5

On Sunday, February 5, FOCUS will kicked off its 50th Anniversary with a special worship service at First Presbyterian Church, 10 am. FOCUS board member, Becky Hudak represented First Church during the service. Many of our First Church Choir members joined voices with the Combined FOCUS Choir.



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**, was held on a very snowy Sunday, **February 12** at the Elks Lodge, 25 S. Allen Street in Albany. Sixty two people showed up, plus 24 volunteers (some just dropped off soup). The gross is now over \$13,000. VIPs who showed included Congressman Paul Tonko and Assemblyman John McDonald. Several people walked so they could support the event. Kudos to the soup makers and servers, bakers and all the other volunteers for pitching in! "Neither rain, nor snow..."



Bowling for Beds Bowl-A-Thon

Saturday, February 11

11th Annual Bowling for Beds Bowl-A-Thon to raise money for the Emergency Overflow Shelter. First Church joined other youth groups and churches from the area who helped raise \$8,000 for the shelter.



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The deadline for the April issue of *FAMILY* is March 15.

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Thank you

In an email received from a neighbor:

“Thank you for putting up the banner that says "Immigrants and Refugees Welcome" outside your church. My grandparents were immigrants from Ireland and my grandmother was a long term resident of Albany, and it would have meant a lot to them in the current climate to see the support of the community so clearly. Thank you.”

Memorial

- In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received from Gary & Nancy Fox for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received from Steve Hoffman for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received from Roger & Wanda Murray for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received for the Lynn T. Joosten Scholarship Fund by a friend.
 - In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received from Judy Suess for the Community Ministry Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Henry Fox a gift has been received from Ned & Kathie Monthie for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Harriet Sinclair a gift has been received from Ned & Kathie Monthie for the Lynn T. Joosten Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Evelyn McMillan a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
 - In celebration of the life of Edna Smith a gift has been received from Shirley Bone for the Clee Park Memorial Fund.
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In Sympathy

Our prayers and sympathy go out to the friends and family of Henry (Hank) Fox who passed away on Thursday, January 26, 2017. Let us also pray for Alberta Fox as she mourns the passing of her husband.

Prayers and sympathy for Bill and Jenn Long and family as they mourn the death of Bill's mother, Susan Long, who recently passed away.



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