

# The First Church FAMILY

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

**May 2015**

## **WORSHIP:**

- 3     **Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
9:00 am     Drive-In Worship (Communion)  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service (Communion)  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post Service:   CROP Walk
- 10     **Sixth Sunday of Easter (Mother's Day)**  
9:00 am     Drive-In Worship  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post-service:   Coffee and Conversation
- 17     **Seventh Sunday of Easter**  
9:00 am     Drive-In Worship  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
                  (During Worship: Children & Worship)  
Post-service:   Luncheon & Congregational Meeting
- 24     **Pentecost Sunday**  
9:00 am     Drive-In Worship  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
Post-service:   Coffee and Conversation
- 31     **Trinity Sunday**  
9:00 am     Drive-In Worship  
10:30 am     Sanctuary Service  
Post-service:   First Church Readers

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

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## From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

Later this month at our congregational meeting on May 17 we will elect elders, deacons and trustees. As it happens, one of the lectionary texts for that Sunday is a story about how the early church chose its leaders. The story is in the first chapter of Acts and takes place after Jesus ascension and as his followers are waiting in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit.

With Judas' demise, the disciples were down to eleven. *Twelve* is a number with biblical and theological significance. So it seemed good and proper to get the disciples back to "twelve." There was a position to fill.

Peter makes this proposal: *"One of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection."* So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, *"Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."* And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1: 21-26)

There are several things to note here:

- The fundamental qualification for leadership: Someone who had been with Jesus. They did not seek out someone who was an eloquent speaker or gifted administrator. The only thing that mattered on the candidates' resumes was whether they had been with Jesus. Leaders in the church must first and foremost be people who know Jesus.
- The task: to be a witness to the resurrection. Elders, deacons and trustees have their specific responsibilities. Elders are called to a ministry of spiritual care and nurture; deacons are called to lead the congregation in ministries of mercy, justice and outreach, with a particular concern for those in need or distress; trustees are called to care for the physical and financial assets of the congregation. But above all their task, like that of all followers of Jesus, is to witness to the resurrection. In their words and deeds they are to bear witness to the love and power of the living Christ.
- The process: They prayed and cast lots. They acted in the faith that God was involved in the selection process. Prayer is essential. They served as a kind of nominating committee, but God made the final choice. We also believe that the selection of elders and deacons is not merely a human choice, but a God-guided decision. At their ordination elders and deacons are asked: "Do you believe in your heart that you are called by Christ's church, and therefore by God, to this office?"
- The result: Matthias is chosen and we never hear of him again. This is the only mention of Matthias in the whole of the New Testament. Being a leader does not necessarily mean being in the limelight. Not all leadership is charismatic. People who are quietly faithful can also be effective leaders.

- And finally, while we believe the Holy Spirit works *through* the constituted assemblies and official actions of the church, the Spirit is not *confined* by the church. The church chose Matthias as the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle, but just a few more chapters into the Book of Acts and Paul becomes the dominant figure. The Apostle Paul, who was not one of “The Twelve” becomes the leading missionary to the Gentiles. Not all leaders are ‘official leaders.’ God can raise up leaders beyond and outside the official structures of the church. You may not be chosen to serve as an elder, deacon or trustee, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that you are not being called to lead. God may be calling you to lead in other ways.

I hope we can keep these thoughts in mind as we go about the process of choosing leaders in our congregation. Above all to remember that the most important responsibility for the congregation in this process is to pray.

Sincerely,  
John D. Paarlberg

***On April 19, we welcomed several new members to First Church.***



**Sarah Kaiser** lives in Colonie with her husband Mike, 10 week old son David and their bulldog Eli. She teaches at Veeder Elementary School in South Colonie. Mike works at Kaiser Body Shop in Latham. Sarah enjoys spending time with family and friends, being outside and practicing yoga.

**Bill and Jenifer Long** have been married for 11 years and have been together for 18. Bill was born in Jacksonville, Florida and raised in Orange County, New York, and Jen was born and raised in Saugerties, New York. Bill has his Master's Degree in English and Spanish Education and was a finance manager before becoming a stay-at-home dad. Jen is a social worker for the NYS Office of Mental Health Division of Forensics. They have a 3 year old daughter Olivia and a son on the way due in June.

**Zachary Morton** works as a criminal justice policy analyst for the state of New York. His wife Frances, a member of First Church, works for the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities. Their son, Thaddeus James was born in October 2013.

**Lucesse Njounda** was born on Cameroon, Africa, and lived in Paris, France, where she studied health and sciences at the University of Paris and graduated with a master's degree. She has been a fashion model and sang in the gospel choir at her church in Paris, before moving to United States in 2013. She currently lives and works with her aunt who has a hair salon in Albany.

**Adrienne Pagerey**, originally from Saugerties, NY, has lived in several different states before moving back to the Albany area last year from West Virginia. She works at LaSalle School in Albany as a School Psychologist/ Behavioral Specialist with traumatized male youth. Her daughter, Clover Adela, recently turned two. Together they enjoy being outdoors, taking walks, and playing with the dog.

**Kelly Pilato** and her husband Shane were married at First Church. Kelly is an ultrasonographer at St. Peter's Maternal Fetal Medicine. Shane is the landscape designer and coordinator for North Country Landscapes in Coxsackie. Their daughter, Margeaux, was born in August and joins a family that includes Frances, Fielding, and Bronwyn.

**Denise Wright** grew up at First Church where she participated as a choir member, in the summer lots program, and worship commission. She has now returned with her husband of 26 years, Jeff and her two daughters, Elisa, 24; and Rachel, 19 to her "home" church. In their spare time they love to go geocaching and golfing together. Denise teaches English 11 and 12 at Rensselaer High School and enjoys singing again in the First Church choir. Her hobbies include historical re-enacting, playing the ukulele and guitar, and decorative painting.

*May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant us to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*  
(Romans 15: 5-7)

## **At Home with the WORD**

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary

May 1<sup>st</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup>

Available online at: [www.rca.org/athome](http://www.rca.org/athome)

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. 1 John 4:17-21                 | 17. <i>Seventh Sunday of Easter</i> |
| 2. John 15:1-8                    | 18. Acts 2:1-13                     |
| 3. <i>Fifth Sunday of Easter</i>  | 19. Acts 2:14-21                    |
| 4. Acts 10:44-48                  | 20. Ezekiel 37:1-14                 |
| 5. Psalm 98:1-3                   | 21. Psalm 104:24-35                 |
| 6. Psalm 98:4-9                   | 22. Romans 8:22-27                  |
| 7. 1 John 5:1-6                   | 23. John 15:26-27, 16:4-15          |
| 8. John 15:9-12                   | 24. <i>Pentecost Sunday</i>         |
| 9. John 15:13-17                  | 25. Isaiah 6:1-4                    |
| 10. <i>Sixth Sunday of Easter</i> | 26. Isaiah 6:5-8                    |
| 11. Acts 1:15-17, 21-26           | 27. Psalm 29                        |
| 12. Psalm 1                       | 28. Romans 8:12-17                  |
| 13. 1 John 5:9-13                 | 29. John 3:1-8                      |
| 14. Ephesians 1:15-23             | 30. John 3:9-17                     |
| 15. John 17:6-10                  | 31. <i>Trinity Sunday</i>           |
| 16. John 17:11-19                 |                                     |

## **Drive-In & FOCUS Worship Services**

Drive-in worship services begin Sunday, May 3, and will be held each Sunday at 9:00 am through September 6 with the exception of the last Sunday in June (June 28) when we will worship at 10 am in Clee Park. The Lord's Supper will be celebrated the first Sunday of each month. Drive-In Worship services are enhanced by special music and we depend on the generosity of guest musicians to supply music for our services. We gather in the Sheridan Avenue parking lot and in Clee Park for a half-hour worship service led from the outdoor pulpit.

The FOCUS congregations will worship together at 9:30 am the first Sunday of July (First Presbyterian Church), August (Emmanuel Baptist Church) and September (Trinity United Methodist Church). There will not be a worship service in the First Church sanctuary on those Sundays. Drive-in worship will be held each Sunday at 9 am through the summer.

## **Pastor John Paarlberg to Receive Grace B. White Peace & Justice Award**

The Palestinian Rights Committee of Upper Hudson Peace Action has awarded the Grace B. White Peace & Justice Award to pastor John Paarlberg for his work in supporting the struggle to end to the Israeli occupation and advocating for peace and justice for all Israelis and Palestinians. The speaker at the May 3 award dinner at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church will be Mark Mishler from Jewish Voices for Peace.

# BUILDING RENOVATION REPORT – MAY 2015

By James Folts, President Board of Trustees



First Church is entering the second season of its major building renovation project. The renovation committee offers to the congregation this report on work completed in 2014 and planned for 2015. The new parish house roof was the major accomplishment of 2014. The old slate roof replaced with new slates and a new rubber membrane underneath to shed water. Asbestos was discovered and abated, the insecure main chimney was rebuilt. Metal dormer windows and new gutters and down spouts completed the work.

The 110-foot towers are an iconic feature of First Church. The scaffolding has permitted close-up inspection of exterior conditions and removal of the sixteen columns. Over the winter craftsmen rebuilt the columns and capitals, and one of the completed columns is now installed temporarily in the Sheridan Avenue lobby. The oval windows have been removed and are being refurbished. Work on the towers this season will be extensive repairs to woodwork, and scraping, stripping, priming, and painting. The original metal dome roofs, possibly the earliest in the U.S., are being preserved and covered with stainless steel. Inside the towers, the floors now have a new membrane roof, and cabling will increase structural stability. Ian Leet has obtained proposals for reactivating the four tower clocks.

The final phase of the project is replacing the church's copper roof and repairing the built-in gutter system along the north and south sides. Scaffolding began to be erected along the south wall on April 13. The roof will be replaced with new copper sheets with standing-seam covered joints. The eaves, soffits, and gutters will be rebuilt, then scraped, primed, and painted.

The renovation committee, the Board of Trustees, and the Joint Boards have determined to get these big jobs—the roofs, the towers—done now and done well, because conditions would only worsen and costs would only increase. But we have never lost sight of the fact that our church home, however beautiful and historic, is a house of prayer and worship, of song and praise, of mission and service.

## **Pilgrim's Walk Small Group Ministry**

On Tuesday April 22<sup>nd</sup> we started our 5<sup>th</sup> Pilgrim's Walk Group. This group is at Sheehy Manor in Watervliet per the request of one of our First Church members. Twenty residents signed up and we were delighted to hear from 3 of these residents that they had heard good feedback in their community about Pilgrim's Walk.

In the Pilgrim's Walk group we meet one hour, one time per week, for 7 weeks and share the experiences of the third stage of life. These experiences include the fears and triumphs of aging: the desire for purpose, the struggle of loss, gratitude, end of life concerns, and the need for support and care from one another in community. Central to all of this is our relationship with God. Our connection to the sacred is the rock we stand on.

Stephanie Wolos, the social worker at Beltrone Living Center in Colonie says,  
*"We are very pleased to have the Pilgrim's Walk program at Beltrone. Our residents have praised the 7 week program, emphasizing the uplifting message, the opportunity for mutual support, and the blossoming of new friendships. Pilgrim's Walk has filled an important need for our residents in the form of personal guidance on how to find joy and hope while coping with the challenges that come with age. I am not aware of another program like it."*

Stephanie has been instrumental in helping us bring Pilgrim's Walk to the Senior Citizens at Beltrone. Sandy Scudder, a member here at First Church, also has been instrumental as she has been a co-leader with Pastor Sue Cox and participants say they very much enjoy her honest sharing and wonderful humor.

Rev. Susan Vincent Cox has been asked to be the keynote speaker at the **Senior Issues Forum in Albany on July 22<sup>nd</sup>**. She will be talking about the significance of Pilgrim's Walk with its central focus on spiritual community and support.

If you are interested in hearing more about Pilgrim's Walk or if you would like to know if a group can meet in your residence please call Rev. Susan Vincent Cox at (518) 796-8793.

## **Musical Thank Yous**

The wonderful string quartet and the excitement of the *Hallelujah Chorus*, are gone, but the joy of the Easter season is still with us. The choir and soloists are still hard at work and, again, we thank them for their faithful witness illuminating our worship together with their beautiful music.

## **Join the choir for Festival Choir Sunday, May 17th.**

Like to sing? Can't find the time to join the choir? The [Festival Choir](#) is for you! No Mid-week rehearsals! No Long-term commitment! Fun music! Just come at 9:30 am on Sunday, May 17th to rehearse; then sing with the choir during worship. It's easy and it's fun! Talk to any choir member or Mary Bon for more information, or just join us on May 17th.

## **Spring Fling Concerts**

**Coming Wednesdays in May at 12:30 pm**

Join us for a series of noon-time concerts in our sanctuary each Wednesday in June from 12:30 PM to 1 PM. We'll have special music from our soloists as well as guest instrumentalists.

## **Overflow Shelter Dinners... THANK YOU!**

A great big THANK YOU to all who contributed food or helped deliver our Overflow Shelter Dinners. From November through April we provided dinner twice a month for 20-25 men. If you were a part of this ministry heartfelt thanks! We couldn't have done it without you. If you would like to be part of this ministry for the next season, contact Mary Bon at 463-4449 or [maryebon@verizon.net](mailto:maryebon@verizon.net).

## **The Weathervanes: Program for May**



The Weathervanes will again host the "Old Friends Luncheon" on Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm in Zimmerman Hall. If you would like to renew some friendships or make some new friends, partake of an excellent Chicken a la King lunch, and enjoy a great program, please plan to join the "regulars" at this Weathervanes Special. After lunch, a barbershop quartet, Homespun Harmony, will entertain. Come and enjoy! Make your reservation before May 16 by telephoning Audrey Ming (456-5485).

**SAVE THE DATE:** Thursday, June 4—Enjoy dinner at lunchtime and then travel to The MacHaydn Theatre to see "The Drowsy Chaperone." Our tickets are limited, so call Audrey Ming (456-5485) for details and reservations, which must be made by May 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **Kate Allard/ Young Adult Rummage Sale**

Thank you all who helped with the Rummage Sale. It was a great success.

## First Church Readers Meets May 31

First Church Readers will meet on May 31 during the post-service time to talk about *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. Come join us!

June's book is *The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* by Daniel James Brown. Got a book you think would be an interesting read for the summer or next fall? We welcome your suggestions.

Contact Mary Bon at [marybon@verizon.net](mailto:marybon@verizon.net).



## Growing Green



*This is part of an ongoing series on how we can “grow green.”*

*Each month we share a few tips on simple practices that may increase our stewardship of God’s good earth.*

- Start your own garden. If you don't have space, make a garden in a large pot; a 5 gallon pail will support a tomato and lettuce plant. (be sure to put a drainage hole in the bottom.)
- Support Local Farmers; shop at a Farmer's Market or join a CSA; our food travels an average of 1600 miles to get to our tables
- Bring your newspaper/cardboard to First Church for recycling. We get paid for every pound we collect. Contact Denise for more information.

## Garden Time

### Mary Bon has home grown seedlings available

It's not too late to start a garden! Mary Bon has lots of home-grown seedling including flowers, and many varieties of tomatoes, broccoli and cabbage. The seedlings are available free but if you are able to make a donation for your seedlings, all donations are being split between the **Camp Fowler Urban Day Camp** and the **Sosep Nursery School in Kibera, Kenya**. Contact her for more information at [maryebon@verizon.net](mailto:maryebon@verizon.net)

## **CROP Hunger Walk Sunday May 3**

The 2015 Albany CROP Hunger Walk will be held on May 3, at the First Lutheran Church on Western Avenue in Albany. The CROP Hunger Walk is an annual community - wide event sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local volunteers to raise funds to help end hunger globally and locally. Here is the First Church online site: <http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/goto/firstchurch2015>.

The walk will begin begin at 1:30 pm, preceded by registration at 12:30 pm. Walkers can follow a 3 mile loop or a shorter one mile loop.

Cindy Gillespie (439-4188) or Diane Wuerstlin (373-3271).

## **First Church Food Pantry**



Many thanks for your generous support of the ministry of our food pantry, and especially to the volunteers who donate many hours each week picking up produce from the Regional Food Bank, packing grocery bags and serving guests. During January through March of this year we served 270 families, including 294 adults, 132 children and 43 seniors, for a total of 7,035 meals.

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## **Easter Flower Memorials/Celebrations**

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

**We are in need of plastic gallon milk containers for our Sunday flowers to be distributed to our homebound/hospital.**

This June marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of the Reverend Wilbur Ivins to the Gospel ministry. We'll be celebrating this milestone with an informal gathering and time of fellowship on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at the Lawyersville Reformed Church Hall. You are invited to drop in at any time from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. If you are unable to attend the gathering but would like to send a card or a written remembrance, you can email Wil directly at: 4969 State Route 145, Cobleskill, NY 12043. (Rev. Ivins was a staff member of First Church form 1989-1999.)

## Thank You

Thanks to all for your prayers and get well wishes. Joanna Brown

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## Congratulations

Congratulations to Noel Concepcion on the birth of his grandson, Benson Rivera born on 4/17/15.

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## In Honor

In honor of Pastor John Paarlberg, Pastor Susan Vincent-Cox, Mary Bon and the many members whose ministry has reached far and wide and reached me several times personally both in sickness and health. Helen Bryce

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## Memorials

In celebration of the life of **Peter Recene** a gift has been received from Carl and Caroline Wirth for the **Community Ministries Food Pantry Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Etheleen Williams** a gif has been received from Carl and Caroline Wirth for the **Clee Park Fund**.

In celebration of the life of the **Rev. Lynn T. Joosten**, a gift has been received from the Joosten Family for the **Lynn T. Joosten Scholarship Fund**.

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## In Sympathy

Sympathy is extended to William Staats, family and friends on the death of his son, Gregory A. Staats on 4/14/15.

Sympathy is extended to the family and friends of E. Helen Gardner who passed away on 4/20/15.

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**The deadline for the June issue of *FAMILY* is May 15.**

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