

The First Church FAMILY

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

May 2016

WORSHIP:

- 1 **Sixth Sunday of Easter**
9:00 am Drive-In Worship (Communion)
10:30 am Sanctuary Service (Communion)
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
Post-service: RCA Missionary Richard Otterness; CROP Walk
- 8 **Seventh Sunday of Easter, (Mother's Day), Heritage Sunday**
9:00 am Drive-In Worship
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
Post-service: Coffee & Conversation
- 15 **Pentecost Sunday**
9:00 am Drive-In Worship
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
(During Worship: Children & Worship)
11:30 am Coffee & Conversation
Post-service: First Church Readers
- 22 **Trinity Sunday**
9:00 am Drive-In Worship
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
(During Worship: Last Children & Worship until Fall)
11:30 am Coffee & Conversation
Post-service: Congregational Meeting & Pot-luck Luncheon
- 29 **Second Sunday after Pentecost**
9:00 am Drive-In Worship
10:30 am Sanctuary Service
11:30 am Coffee & Conversation

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

From the Pastor:

Dear Friends,

We are a congregation who values both diversity and community. *The First Church in Albany includes young and old, families, couples and singles, rich and poor, persons of various races, ethnicities, backgrounds, sexual orientation and gender identities, differing physical and mental abilities, believers and seekers.* That's diversity. But we aim to be more than a collection of diverse individuals. *Centered in Christ, we commit ourselves to breaking down dividing walls and building a community where all are loved.*

We value diversity *and* community. Sometimes those values are in tension with one another.

There is a growing diversity in our country but not, it seems to me, a growing sense of community. Rather there is increased partisanship and a tendency to connect with those who think like us and to separate from those who think differently. We are divided into camps—liberal or conservative, those who get their news from Fox or those who listen to MSNBC. If that continues pretty soon we will be living in echo chambers, hearing only what we ourselves have already said and agree with.

Social media aims to connect us, but it tends to connect us with those who share our interests, values and perspectives. We 'like' those who are like us and 'unfriend' those with whom we disagree. Social media can provide community—of a sort—but I'm not sure it fosters a diverse community.

We can have community at the expense of diversity—a gathering of like-minded people who care for each other, but who become insular and closed, shutting out people who are different. We live in enclaves and affinity groups, rarely crossing the boundaries or engaging in genuine conversation with those who think differently.

We can have diversity at the expense of community—a wide assortment of individuals but with little sense of belonging or of connection to each other. We live separate lives without much empathy or sense of responsibility for each other.

The greater challenge is to celebrate our differences while we build community. That will mean reaching beyond our comfortable, like-minded, separate enclaves. It will mean listening to those who disagree with us and being with people who are different from us. It will require humility, courage and patience. It is what God's people are called to do:

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
(Deuteronomy 10.19).

Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers (Romans 12.13).
I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25:35).

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.....But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return....for God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6: 32- 36).

We value *both diversity and* community, because God values both diversity and community. Diversity in community is God's promised future. We are reminded of that every time we come to the Lord's Table: "This is the joyful feast of the people of God. People will come from east and west, from north and south (that's diversity) and take their places at the banquet in the kingdom of God (that's community).

Centered in Christ, we commit ourselves to breaking down dividing walls and building a community where all are loved.

Sincerely,
John Paarlberg

Drive-In & FOCUS Worship Services

Drive-in worship services begin Sunday, May 1, and will be held each Sunday at 9:00 am through September 4 with the exception of the last Sunday in June (June 26) when we will worship at 10 am in Clee Park. Drive-In Worship services include 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 10:00 am the first Sunday of July (First Church in Albany), August (Delmar Reformed Church) and September (Westminster Presbyterian 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.

Drive-In Offering

The special offerings received at the Drive-In Worship this summer will be designated for Koinonia Primary Care/Compassion in Action, a ministry providing access to quality primary and mental health services for the underserved in West Hill and surrounding neighborhoods in Albany. Koinonia Primary Care, under the leadership of Dr. Robert Paeglow, has been serving people in Albany since 2002.

I've come to the realization that life is not designed for our comfort, or pleasure, but for us to discover our gifts and contribute what we can to make life better for others. Dr. Robert Paeglow

At Home with the WORD

Daily Bible Readings from the Common Lectionary

May 1st - May 31st

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

1. Sixth Sunday of Easter
2. Acts 16:16-24
3. Acts 16:25-34
4. Psalm 97
5. Ascension Day; Acts 1:1-11
6. Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21
7. John 17:20-26
8. Seventh Sunday of Easter
9. Acts 2:1-13
10. Acts 2:14-21
11. Genesis 11:1-9
12. Psalm 104:24-35
13. Romans 8:14-17
14. John 14:8-17, 25-27
15. Pentecost
16. Proverbs 8:1-4
17. Proverbs 8:22-31
18. Psalm 8:1-2
19. Psalm 8:3-9
20. Romans 5:1-5
21. John 16:12-15
22. Trinity Sunday
23. Kings 18:20-39
24. 1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43
25. Psalm 96:1-9
26. Psalm 96:10-13
27. Galatians 1:1-12
28. Luke 7:1-10
29. Second Sunday after Pentecost
30. 1 Kings 17:8-16
31. Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth;
Psalm 113

Guest Preacher in May

On **Sunday, May 1**, the Rev. Richard Otterness will be our guest preacher. Richard and his wife Carolyn are Reformed Church missionaries serving in Hungary, helping to train volunteers who work with the Roma (Gypsy) people, and helping to establish new Roma congregations, and improve access to health care and education.

One for the World
HUNGARY

RCA Global Mission
Pray for
Richard and
Carolyn Otterness

otterness.r@gmail.com (Richard)
cotterness@gmail.com (Carolyn)

www.rca.org/otterness
connect • pray • donate

Heritage Sunday is May 8

Join us on May 8th to celebrate Heritage Sunday, and the Sunday after Ascension. We'll experience some musical heritage from famous Dutch composers to Early American music to music of our own time. We'll eat Dutch cookies in the coffee hour. We'll have tours of our sanctuary. And, as First Church in Albany has each Sunday for almost 400 years, we will worship together; this year celebrating the Sunday after the Ascension of Christ into Heaven and remembering Christ's promise that he will not leave us comfortless – that the Holy Spirit will come to us at Pentecost.

Tuesday Adult Bible Study at First Church

Upon finishing our study of the Muslim faith in April all the members of our group were so struck by how many similarities there were between our Christian faith and the Muslim faith. We share similar commandments, such as to love our sovereign God before all else, and to love our neighbor, honor our parents, and more. We also share many of the same prophets. We came to see a great unity in our faiths.

But we also came to understand some of our fundamental differences such as how we pray differently, differences in our scripture, and most of all, our understanding of Jesus Christ, a prophet for the Muslim religion, but much more for us in our Christian faith. Central, and so foundational to our faith, is our Trinitarian understanding of God. God's presence with us in the humanity of Christ is most distinctive and most fundamental to our faith. This understanding of our differences led us to want to get more clarity on our own Reformed identity. So we decided to study our doctrines because the doctrines or supporting sacred text for both the Muslim and Christian faith help clarify our understanding of our scripture and uphold our theology from there.

This month, we begin a new study of our 4 Reformed Confessions: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Council of Dort, and the Belhar Confession. Who are we as Reformed believers and how do we encounter God in this imminent and transcendent experience of our Trinitarian faith? How is this clarified for us in our bible and in our confessions?

We will be studying first a book by M. Craig Barnes, **Body and Soul: Reclaiming the Heidelberg Catechism**. This is a video supported text that helps us to understand this very historic Catechism and how it is still highly relevant for us today. We were quite moved by the author's message to us in our first chapter.

Join us if you can! Also, if there is enough interest and you would like to join a study on this material in the evening or after church, please let me know at (518) 796-8793 or by email to coxwave2@gmail.com, or just let me know after church on Sunday.

In Christ's Peace,
Rev. Susan Vincent Cox

Choir sings portions of *Elijah* by Felix Mendelssohn

During worship Sundays May 29 through June 19th

Beginning on May 29th and continuing through June 19th the choir will be singing parts of Felix Mendelssohn's great oratorio *Elijah* which was based on the story of Elijah found in passages from Kings. The music will be complementing Rev. Paarlberg's preaching a series of sermons on Old Testament stories of the prophet, Elijah, from the first and second Book of Kings.

An early romantic composer, Mendelssohn loved Bach and modeled *Elijah* on the great *St. Matthew Passion* of Bach using story of the prophet, Elijah as the frame. The musical language Mendelssohn uses is much more lush, passionate, and romantic. *Elijah* includes such favorite choruses as *He Watching Over Israel*, *Lift Thine Eyes*, and *Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord* as well as powerful solos like *Lord God of Abraham*.

Mendelssohn wrote:

I picture Elijah as a grand and mighty prophet of a kind we would do well to have in our own day — powerful, zealous, but also harsh and angry and saturnine; a striking contrast to the court sycophants and the rabble; in antithesis, in fact, virtually to the whole world; yet borne on the wings of angels.

This oratorio is considered to be among the greatest oratorios ever written, keeping august company with works such as Handel's *Messiah* and Haydn's *Creation*.

Festival choir will sing on May 22

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 easy music! Just come at 9:30AM on Sunday, May 22th 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 24th. (If you let us know you're coming we can be sure to have enough music.)

Overflow Shelter Dinners THANK YOU!

A great big THANK YOU to all who contributed food or helped deliver the meals for our Overflow Shelter Dinners. From November through April we provided dinner 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.

Spring Fling Concerts

Wednesdays in June at Noon



Join us for a series of noon-time concerts in our sanctuary each Wednesday in June from 12:00 PM to 12:30 PM.

We'll have special music from our soloists as well as guest instrumentalists.

First Church Readers Group Meets May 15th



First Church Readers

First Church Readers will meet on May 15th during the post-service time to talk about May's book *Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes, Contests and Collisions* by our own congregation member, Tom Allison. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Got a book you think would be an interesting read for the summer or next fall? We welcome your suggestions. Contact Mary Bon at maryebon@verizon.net

Growing Green

Making things greener



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.

Prayer Shawl Ministry



Pastor John Paarlberg with some of the members of the Shawl Ministry team on Easter Sunday when he was presented with a shawl as he anticipated shoulder surgery.

Thank You Food Pantry Volunteers

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 281 households, including 247 adults, 87 children and 43 seniors.



Purchase Fair Trade Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Soap

Support the farmers of Palestine in the struggle for their livelihood and land.



Olives are an important crop for the people of Palestine. Purchasing olive oil and olive oil products through Palestinian cooperatives directly benefits families living in occupied Palestine. It is also a way of letting them know that they have not been forgotten in their hope for end to the illegal Israeli occupation and military rule.

Farmers are paid free trade prices through the Palestine Fair Trade Association. 750 ml bottles of olive oil from Zaton (*Zatoun* is the Arabic word for olive) are \$20. 500 ml bottles from Canaan Fair Trade are \$18. Please call the church office or contact John Paarlberg if you would like to purchase some for yourself or as gifts for others.

The Weathervanes: Old Friends Luncheon



The Weathervanes will again host the “Old Friends Luncheon” on Wednesday, May 18th at 12:30 p.m. 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, The Homespun Harmony, will entertain. Come and enjoy! Make your reservation before May 14 by telephoning Audrey Ming (456-5485).

Save the date:

Wednesday June 15 – Enjoy dinner at lunchtime and then travel to the Mac-Haydn Theater to see “Nice Work if You Can Get It.” Our tickets are limited, so call Audrey Ming (456-5485) for details and reservations before May 15th.

First Church Now on Facebook

First Church is now on Facebook. Please take a look. And, as they say: “like” us and “share” us with your friends. <https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchinAlbany>
We will be posting a few times each week so check us out!

375th Anniversary Committee

2017 will mark the 375th 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. A committee is being set up to coordinate these events, and we would like three members from the congregation to join in the planning. If you are interested in the history of the church or in just helping to plan the events of what will be a festive year, contact Ian Leet at 482-6612 or at ian.leet@outlook.com.

A Reminder:

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

Sunday Flower Date Available:

May 22nd 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.

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 or 518.429.1255.

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The deadline for the June issue of *FAMILY* is May 13.

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Congratulations

Congratulations to **George Kass** who celebrates his 85th birthday on May 7th.

Thank You

Thank you to Patty Salisbury for volunteering in the office by transferring the rolodex file of names, address, and phone number onto the computer. It is appreciated and will make it easier to make changes.

Memorial

In celebration of the life of **Dan and Suzanne Clayton** gifts have been received from Rev. Carl and Lynne Hiemstra, Edward and Kathie Monthie, The Rev. LeRoy and Judith U. Suess and Dave and Jodi Vitek-Hull, Stephanie and Bill Graves for the **Music Fund**.

In celebration of the life of **Natalie Parry** gifts have been received from an anonymous donor for the **Clee Park Fund** and from Shirley Joosten for the **Lynn T. Joosten Scholarship Fund**.

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

In Sympathy

Our sympathy is extended to Ken Parry, family and friends on the death of his mother, Natalie Parry on March 30, 2016.

Our sympathy is extended to Joline Mondore, family and friends on the death of her cousin, June Howe on April 11, 2016.

Our sympathy is extended to Erma Nelson, family and friends on the death of her father, Arthur Lee Nelson on April 13, 2016.

Our sympathy is extended to Jane Brew, family and friends on the death of her husband, David Brew on April 14, 2016.



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FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY

110 North Pearl Street
Albany, NY 12207-2231
518.463.4449

www.firstchurchinalbany.org

email: firstchurch@verizon.net

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