

*The Rev. Megan Hodgkin, Senior Pastor**The Rev. Jason White, Associate Pastor*

THE MESSENGER

From Pastor Megan's Desk

“A Light In the Darkness”

The days are growing shorter. The nights are growing darker. The chill in the air is growing colder.

This is winter. Every year at this time we grow closer and closer to the “longest night.” Thursday, December 21 will be the 2017 Winter Solstice, the day of the year with the shortest amount of daylight.

It is no coincidence that this is also the season of Advent. A season of waiting, of wanting something more, of growing our expectations for a coming King. Advent reminds us that this darkness is not our enemy. Instead, it is a pallet, a backdrop on which the light of salvation can dance and play and warm us through the long winter's night. Light and dark may be opposites, but they also complement one another. The deeper the darkness, the brighter the light appears.

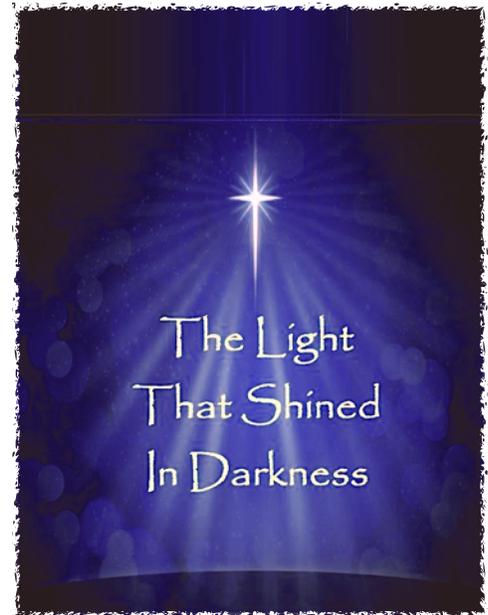
The same is true for the good news of the gospel and the church's call to share the love of God. When the events in the news or the brokenness in our neighborhoods coaxes us toward deeper discouragement, despair, and cynicism, practicing the virtues of hope, love, joy, and peace fosters a much needed sense of encouragement and healing. Advent reminds us that we are waiting for a King who has endured even the darkness of death, and still rose to new life.

As we enter the Advent season, let us share this prayer together, borrowed from the poet, Edward Hays:

In the heart of every person on this Earth
burns the spark of luminous goodness;
in no heart is there total darkness.
May we who celebrate the Light of the World,
by our lives and service, by our prayers and love,
call forth from one another the light and the love
that is hidden in every heart.
Amen.¹

-Pastor Megan

¹ *Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim.*



Snow Closing Policy:

What happens when there is a heavy snow? Our policy is to hold worship whenever possible. However, if the Scotia or Glenville Police Departments declare a Snow Emergency and ask citizens to keep off the streets, we will comply and cancel our Sunday morning schedule or day and evening programs. If we do cancel our Sunday morning schedule, we will make every effort to announce our closing through the school closings network. Check the TV and radio stations to find out if worship is canceled if you are unsure.



Poinsettias:

Each year on the fourth Sunday of Advent and on Christmas Eve we fill our sanctuary with lovely poinsettias. You can help us do so by making a donation to our Flower Fund. Your contribution to the Flower Fund not only helps provide Christmas poinsettias but also helps us provide fresh flowers in worship throughout the year. We invite you to make your donation in honor or in memory of a special person or event. We will print the names of those so honored or remembered in the Christmas Eve bulletins. Please call Kristen in the church office, (518) 370-4751, before Monday, December 18 to arrange your donation and citation.

Year End Giving:

Attention all of you who itemize your church giving when you do your income tax: The Internal Revenue Service has clear regulations about the way churches must report your charitable giving. For us to report your gift to First Reformed Church as a charitable contribution for 2017, we must receive it in the church office no later than Friday, December 29, the offering plate on Sunday, December 31, or by mail in an envelope postmarked no later than December 31. Please plan your year-end giving accordingly. Thank you.

Prayer Shawl Ministry:

Those going through life changes, whether in joy or sadness, we bless each other with prayers of hope, healing and peace. Our Prayer Shawl ministry touches so many lives in our church community and beyond. A prayer shawl is knit or crocheted with prayer within each stitch. They are made using soft soothing yarn and made into a comforting shawl for people going through a life change. You too, can be part of the prayer shawl ministry of this congregation. Can you knit, crochet or sew? We could use lap blankets, shawls, baby blankets or small throws. We have yarn available in room 5 as well as prayer aids and resources for your project!



If you'd like to suggest someone who would appreciate receiving a prayer shawl, please speak to Kristin Bodden, email education@firstreformedscotia.org or call her at (518) 703-1327.

December Mission of the Month:

The Mission of the Month for December will be used for Camp Fowler Ministries. Camp Fowler is located on 245 acres off Route 8 outside of Speculator in the Adirondacks. Camp Fowler offers a Christian camping experience to over 850 campers and 150 adult volunteers. Campers have finished third grade and attend through high school. In addition to that, Camp Fowler has staffed week-long Day Camps for about 300 more youth at 6 Albany Synod churches. But Camp Fowler isn't just about summer camp. There are retreats held all year long in several facilities. We regularly use Fowler for an annual Epiphany women's retreat and an annual men's retreat. Fowler is a year-round ministry to many groups and individuals. See more information at: www.campfowler.org/retreats.

Camp Fowler does not receive direct financial support from Albany Synod. Instead, Fowler needs to raise at least \$150,000 annually from churches, organizations and individuals who share its vision for ministry. Our offerings help provide that support – support all the more necessary because Fowler has tried to keep its user and camper fees as flat as possible.

KIDS HOPE USA NEWS - Life Together is Life at its Best

Why are prayer partners such a strong component of a successful Kids Hope USA program? A few years ago, Kids Hope USA National commissioned a secular, external research firm to determine what aspects of Kids Hope work best and have the most benefit to students. The results surprised everyone including the Kids Hope national office in Zeeland, Michigan. The research found that “student outcomes increase twofold whenever there is a highly engaged prayer partner.” The research firm came at this finding from an accountability and camaraderie standpoint—mentor and prayer partner being partnered for the life of a child. Kids Hope National viewed it as quantifying the fact that God listens to the prayers of the prayer partner.

Dr. Emilie DeYoung is a Kids Hope USA staff psychologist on-call to Kids Hope Directors and mentors in programs all over the country. Dr. DeYoung states, “We have seen situations where something feels completely impossible. When we engage the prayer partner the impossible becomes possible. Through the work of the Holy Spirit time after time it’s the prayer that makes the difference when we don’t know what else to do. We pray and it changes things.”

Kids Hope USA is a national non-profit with a unique mentoring model in that it observes strict adherence to church and state separation at schools, yet it exists as a faith-based program because of the existence of the prayer partner role. First Reformed Church of Scotia’s commitment to Kids Hope USA and the Prayer Partner role reinforces the faith we have in knowing who really does facilitate and cause life change to happen in our kids. As Kids Hope National President David Staal states, “The mentors play a role, but God is the one that changes lives.”

The following people have completed the screening, training and orientation required for Kids Hope USA. Please welcome our newest mentors!

Pastor Megan Hodgin, Teresa Lopez-Long, Tim Monaghan,
Paul Munson, Linda Willoughby

The following thoughtful hearts and minds have agreed to be new (with two returners!) prayer partners this school year. They will complete an orientation to the program and the prayer partner role in the coming weeks!

Karen Faulkner, Paul Munson IV, Bill Shave,
Val Morehouse, Claudia Garrison

We thank them for wanting to make a difference in the life of a child!



Women’s Retreat 2018:

The women of First Reformed Scotia will be joining together in fellowship and prayer at Fowler on January 5-7, 2018. Pastor Megan along with collaborative teams will lead us as we focus on the blessings of Epiphany. We will have time for crafts, games, fun, quiet, laughter, hikes and more! We have opened up a few more spaces so see Kristin Bodden if you’d like to join us on this wonderful women’s get away! The cost is \$130 which includes lodging and meals. Assistance is available.

Green Shed Volunteers and Donations:

The Green Shed will be open to receive gently used donations the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. Bring your donations during that time and please feel free to stay and help to organize. Volunteers are always welcome! More open times to come, be on the lookout!

Fowler Fall Events:

Camp Fowler isn't just a summer camp for kids. It also offers retreats during the year for both kids and adults. Check out the following opportunities! Register online at campfowler.org, or call the camp office, (518) 631-6789. Here some upcoming Fowler events:

- **Adirondack Artists Retreat**, Sunday thru Tuesday, January 14-17 2018.
Chi Rho House, \$150 for double occupancy, \$250 for single occupancy Sun-Tues OR \$225 double and \$325 single for Sun-Wed. Includes meals, lodging and programming. Creativity abounds as we take time for our artistic endeavors in this beautiful winter setting. Register today on campfowler.org
- **Winter Camp** for kids in Grades 6-12, DATES TBD
Can't wait for summer? Here you go – come to Camp in February. Youth stay at Chi Rho Lodge along with returning summer staff and volunteers. The cost is \$150.
- There are retreats offered during Lent and again following Easter in 2018
- Summer Registration is OPEN!!! Register online at www.campfowler.org

Speak to Kristin Bodden to find out more or to learn about financial aid.

Update on Sound System:

Friends, I'm very happy to tell you that we've accepted a bid to install a new sound system in the Sanctuary and Brink Hall!

After a lot of deliberation, we have contracted Sound Solutions of Saratoga to perform the work. At this point the details have been addressed, contracts are signed, and equipment and materials are being ordered. If everything goes smoothly bringing the new equipment, the new sound system should be installed in the sanctuary by Christmas Eve, and the work in Brink Hall completed in January.

Thank you once again for your patience and support through this effort. I'd like to specifically thank Kristen Shave, Russ Garrison, Joe Bodden, and Paul Munson for being on the planning team... and a special thank you to Paul for putting in his free time to squeeze the most out of the current sound system in the sanctuary while we evaluated new contractors. The finish line is in sight, please continue to ask questions.

Sincerely, Barret Germain

Health & Wellness Note:

Everyone knows that December can be one of the most wonderful, but busiest times of the year. Here are some simple, meaningful, un-busy advent activities that you and your family might enjoy.

- Read aloud the Christmas story, Luke 2:1-20. Ponder what the story means to you this year.
- Play Christmas music.
- Find a cozy spot in your home and read a Christmas story to younger family members.
- Go for a winter hike. Many parks are still open and have available paths.
- Look at photo albums of past Christmases and reminisce.
- Collect 3 things to donate to charity- toys, food, clothes.
- String popcorn for a simple garland for your tree or animal friends.
- Have a Christmas Tea Time or a picnic in front of the tree. Get out your Christmas table cloth and teacups. Serve some of those Christmas cookies and enjoy your time together.
- Take a walk in your neighborhood one evening. Bundle up and look at the Christmas lights and the moon and stars. Enjoy a cup of hot cocoa when you return.



Lastly, remember to take a breath and enjoy all the gifts of the season!

Christmas Eve Worship:

On Sunday, December 24, there will be three worship services in the sanctuary: at 10:00 in the morning, 5:30 and 10:00 in the evening.

10:00 a.m. Christmas Eve Morning Worship:

This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday! To honor the Incarnate One whom we claim as Lord of all, we will gather in the sanctuary to worship with one morning service at 10:00. We will celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent, light the fourth candle, and hear the story of the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would be the one to deliver the Savior into the world. Join us as we echo her prayer, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word!"

5:30 p.m. Service: Our Sunday School will present a Christmas pageant. This service will be approximately 45 minutes, allowing those of you hosting a Christmas Eve dinner to be home early enough to enjoy your meal and get children tucked into bed. The Nursery Room will be open during the service for your use, but it will not be staffed.



10:00 p.m. Service: For the later service, the musical prologue will begin promptly at 9:30.

Each of the evening services will feature familiar carols, special music, and candle lighting during the singing of "Silent Night."

Give yourself the gift of worship this Christmas! Invite your friends and neighbors and out-of-town guests to join you. Your invitation could be the finest gift you give this year.

Come and behold him, born the King of Angels!

Christmas Offering:

Our Christmas Eve offering is designated to local feeding agencies our church supports through the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York. For each dollar contributed, our designated agencies are able to purchase \$10 worth of food for the hungry.

Congregational Meeting:

On Sunday, December 10, the congregation will convene following the 10:00 worship service in the sanctuary for the annual Congregational Meeting. The Consistory will review the past year's life and ministry. The 2018 Ministry Spending Plan will be proposed, seeking your counsel and advice.

The Consistory will also place a single slate of nominees for Elders and Deacons to join the Consistory in its work on your behalf. Additional nominees may be offered from the floor, provided that any person nominated is present to accept the nomination. You will be invited to confirm two people to serve as Elder, and one as Deacon.

This year Erin Parker has agreed to serve a second term as Deacon, while Laurie Cooper (Elder), Russ Garrison (Elder), and Karen Trbovich (Deacon) will be completing their terms. We are deeply grateful for Laurie, Russ, and Karen and the contributions they have made during their terms. Please thank them when you see them. Please encourage Erin as she begins a second term, as well, and continue to hold her and the other Elders and Deacons in your prayers.

Your input in the life of your church is critical. Please plan to be present on December 10 following worship in the sanctuary.



Christmas Pageant:

This Christmas Eve our youth will be putting on a Christmas Pageant retelling the Christmas Story at our 5:30 service. All children and youth are invited to participate in this one act play. Some Sunday School classes will be practicing songs and themes but we would love for everyone to attend all rehearsals. The rehearsal dates and times are as follows:

December 3: Extended Sunday School to 11:30 for music rehearsal Room 9, upstairs

December 10 from 11:15 - 12:30 in the Sanctuary

December 17 from 11:15 - 12:30 in the Sanctuary

We ask that all performers arrive by 4:30 on December 24.

See Kristin Boddin for more information: (518) 703-1327. We need adult volunteers for various tasks!

Advent Resources:

This Advent season we focus on the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love that awaits us on Christmas. Daily devotionals, advent calendars, and children's activities are available to help you best experience this season. See the table in Brink Hall or the Narthex.

Children's Offering Envelopes:

We offer our Sunday school children and youth their own special boxes of offering envelopes as a way to encourage regular giving. Sunday school students select a mission to support with their offerings each term of Sunday school. Parents: these boxes of offering envelopes are an opportunity for you to teach your child the discipline of regularly giving to their church. These envelopes will be available in Brink Hall or see Kristin Boddin for your set.

Christmas Caroling:

On Saturday December 16, our FRCS community will join together and share Christmas Carols with some of our shut-ins and senior citizens. We'll meet at the church at 4:00 and then head out to spread some Christmas joy. After singing, we'll head back to church for a potluck dinner. Please drop off your dish in Brink Hall. There's a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board by the Pastor's office. This is a church wide event and we hope you can join us for one part or all of this event: singing or dinner! Please contact John Hoffman for more details: (518) 727-2626.

Holiday Concerts:

If you are looking for some holiday entertainment, please consider checking out one of the concerts being held here at our church this month!

Mohawk Valley Chorus is a 100-voice choir with members from Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady, Saratoga, Schoharie, Albany and Hamilton counties. MVC also has three other performing groups: a sextet, the Sentimentalists, made up of chorus members, and two youth groups; The MVC Kids; and the MVC Youth Chorale. Consider coming to see them on Friday, December 1 at 8:00 in the evening. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 senior Citizens and students, Free to children 12 and under.



The Wildwood Holiday Choir will present their annual Holiday Concert on Tuesday, December 12, at 7:00 in the evening. Our own Phil Hermance is one of the talented individuals in this choir! Come to hear your favorite holiday songs and catch the holiday spirit! A reception in Brink Hall will follow the concert. The concert is free and open to the public.

Men's Group Gathering:

There will be a FRCS Men's Group pancake breakfast December 9 at 8:00 in Brink Hall. Our guest speaker will be Richard Lewis. Richard will be presenting interesting historical facts about Scotia that you will not want to miss! There is a sign-up sheet outside the pastor's office for men interested.



Bring your appetites and inquisitiveness to enjoy this event. Should you have questions, please contact Bob Baldwin at (518) 374-9276.



Pastoral Needs:

If you or someone you know in the church is hospitalized, or has emergent needs, please let Pastor Megan or Pastor Jason know. We have a strong web of care here at First Reformed, and it's important to us to know how we can support you as your church family. It is far better to let us know multiple times than for us to miss an opportunity to pray for you or visit in your time of need.

You may call the office (518) 370-4751 or send email to pastormegan@firstreformedscotia.org and pastorjason@firstreformedscotia.org. On Fridays, both pastors observe Sabbath, so you can call the church office and Kristen Shave will know how to reach the pastors quickly.

Giving Stock:

Our church's brokerage account is Fenimore Asset Management of Cobleskill. If you give to your church by donating stock, please contact Church Treasurer Tom Lansing, 372-6082, Church Administrative Assistant Kristen Shave, 370-4751, or Church Financial Secretary Bobbie Nelson, 377-7176, for the information that you need. Donating appreciated stock to your church in the proper manner may help you to avoid capital gains tax. Check with your own tax professional.

Matching Gifts:

Matching gifts help us expand our ministry. People in our church regularly give money to agencies that qualify for matching gifts from area employers. If your employer has a matching gift program, here's how you can expand the ministry of your church:

1. Select one of our missions you'd like to support that qualifies for a matching gift from your employer. For example, General Electric matches gifts made to the Samaritan Counseling Center, Schenectady Inner City Ministries, City Mission, and Habitat for Humanity.
2. Make out your check to the organization you'd like to support -- to the organization, not to the church. But bring or mail your check to the church.
3. We'll forward your check to your designated organization, but include your donation in the mission giving that we track and report, thereby giving a truer view of our congregation's mission outreach.
4. You will get confirmation of your gift for income tax purposes from the organization you supported rather than from the church.



Do you match?

Many companies will match their employees' donations. Check to see if your company can double your donation!



Youth Discipleship:

Blessed Advent season to you all! During the month of December youth have the opportunity to volunteer and get involved. On Wednesday December 13 from 5:00-7:00 in the evening, a group of us will go to the Regional Food Bank's warehouse to help them sort the many items they receive during the holiday season. If you'd like to participate, contact me. On December 10, the Youth Group will help lead worship. They will do the advent candle lighting/reading, and hopefully help lead other liturgical parts of our worship service. Please offer your prayers and support as they step into the sometimes uncomfortable waters of public speaking. Also, any youth interested in reading scripture or leading other parts of the service that morning, please get in touch with Sunny or Bob Baldwin, or me. There's also space for any youth who would like to help shepherd our younger kids during the Christmas Pageant. If you're interested in helping please contact Kristin Bodden or me. Lastly, my Installation service is January 14 at 3:00 in the afternoon, but planning has already begun. One youth group member has already expressed interest in being a liturgist during the service, and if any other youth are interested in having a role during the service that would be great, and I'd love to find space for you!

- Pastor Jason



Giving:

Each month we report our giving.
Here is how we gave so far this year:

(as of November 27, 2017)			
	Budget	Income	Difference
Congregational Giving	\$348,700	\$297,625	-\$51,075
Other Giving	\$127,400	\$87,458	-\$39,942
Total Income	\$476,100	\$385,083	-\$91,017
Total Expense	\$476,100	\$394,318	-\$81,782

November Attendance

(as of November 27, 2017)			
	2017	2016	Difference
MONTHLY AVERAGE	221	187	34
YTD AVERAGE	185	196	-11

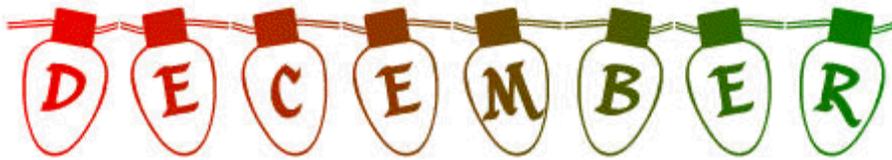
Flowers:

We would like to thank the following people who sponsored chancel flowers in the month of November:

The Hermance family.

If you would like to sponsor chancel flowers, call the office to arrange a date. The normal cost of the two arrangements is \$50; but negotiations are possible. Larger arrangements are also possible through the florist.





Carol Arnold	2
Sue Penn	3
Karl Griffith	5
Michael Healy	7
Rebecca Carpenter	9
Cathy Deamer	9
Kristin Bodden	10
Mark Lansing	10
Kathy Reynolds	10
Tanya Healy	11
Glenda Lewis	11
Bob Hummer	12
Tim Monaghan	12
Donna Ahnert	13
Mike Torelli	13
Debra Griffith	14
Bob Cooper	15

Emil Jarczyński	15
Kelly Kilgallen	15
Zachary Swain	15
Faith Libby	18
Lynn Carman Bodden	19
Ed Naumowicz	19
Caroline Rooney	19
Dorothy Horstkkotte	20
Michael Carpenter	21
Bob Atwood	23
Nelson Corby	23
Richard Crisi	23
Nickolai Swain	23
Dorothy Brooks	24
Jesus	25
Steve Eddy	25
Natalie Monaghan	25
Henry Kohout	27
Milton Barton	28
Sarah Hoffmann	29
Pat VanPatten	29
Mike Atchley	30
Mike Torelli	30
Richard Doyle	31
Beth Vaccaro	31



Bill and Natalie Monaghan	1
John Sr. and Emily Pierce	10
Kurt and Donna Ahnert	11
Joe and Kristin Bodden	27
Barbara and Mark Graber	27
Dirk and Linda Francois	28
Matt and Erin Parker	28
Tom and Karen Pirigyi	28
Jim and Kim Pierce	29
Duane and Pat VanPatten	29
Paul and Kristen Rooney	30

Please note: We list the birthdays and anniversaries of our church's local active members and friends. If we missed yours, please call the church office, 370-4751. Thank you.

December Food Pantry Needs:

Every week our bulletin lists the food most needed for the Scotia Food Pantry. Below are the items for December. Please place your donations in the container in the narthex or in the one outside Brink Hall. What a great offering we would give if **everyone** brought the weekly item!

There is **always** a need for bags and for monetary donations. Donations are used to purchase milk certificates and other items available at the Regional Food Bank for just 16 cents a pound. Make out your check to the First Reformed Church of Scotia and put "Food Pantry" on the memo line. Here is this month's theme:

"Keep It Clean"

- Dish Soap
- Laundry Soap
- Toilet Cleaner / Brush
- Multipurpose Cleaner
- Sponges
- Handi-Wipes



December Calendar:

F Dec 1: 8:00 Mohawk Valley Chorus
 SU Dec 3: Communion
 Pageant Rehearsal
 2:00 Holiday on the Avenue
 TU Dec 5: 5:30 Worship Council
 SA Dec 9: 8:00 Men's Breakfast
 1:00 Cookie Walk
 4:00 Caroling & Potluck
 SU Dec 10: Pageant Rehearsal
 11:00 Congregational Meeting
 MO Dec 11: 11:30 Caregivers
 7:15 Admin Council
 TU Dec 12: 7:00 Wildwood Concert
 7:15 Caring Ministers
 W Dec 13: 5:00 Youth - Food Bank
 TH Dec 14: 7:00 4-H

SU Dec 17: 11:15 Pageant Rehearsal
 M Dec 18: 7:15 Consistory
 W Dec 20: 1:30 Sharing & Caring
 SU Dec 24: 10:00 Morning Worship Service
 5:00 Early Christmas Eve
 Service - Pageant
 10:00 Late Christmas Eve
 Service - Music at 9:30
 MO Dec 25: - OFFICE CLOSED -

EVERY WEDNESDAY:

8:30 Time of Prayer, Sanctuary

EVERY THURSDAY:

9:00 Mission Bells, Bell Room
 7:15 Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

EVERY SUNDAY:

8:00 & 10:00 Worship, Sanctuary

Address Service Requested

First Reformed Church of Scotia
 224 N. Ballston Avenue
 Scotia, NY 12302
 (518) 370-4751