

THE MESSENGER

A Pastor's Ponderings

Have you ever noticed as you flipped through your Bible that some passages are indented while many others are not? This indentation is meant to visually represent the structure of Hebrew poetry. This structure is most pronounced in the Book of Psalms, as it is filled with scripture that was used liturgically, that is in worship. In a worship setting they may have been sung or spoken in call-and-response.

While some Hebrew poetry did rhyme, this is often very difficult to represent in English translations. Good translations will, however, try to preserve the original poetry's parallelism, that is Hebrew poetry's tendency to repeat itself for emphasis.

Some Hebrew poems were acrostics, meaning each verse or section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (See Psalms 111 and 112). As it was written over many centuries, Hebrew poetry in the Bible reflects many different forms of poetry. This is just like how in English some poems rhyme, while others do not, some use a structure like the Haiku or Limerick, while others just do their own thing.

Yet outside of the Psalms, you will find that the prophets also frequently use poetry as a part of their messages. Some even used poetry almost exclusively. Both the major prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and the minor prophets like Amos and Hosea employ poetry.

All Will Be Okay
By Kirsten Robinson

It's okay
it's okay
no matter what
comes your way
even when you
have no words to say
and your bluebird skies
turn shades of grey

You are here
you are breathing
there is something
to believe in

Please don't lose faith
all will be okay

The prophets wrote using poetry as a way of connecting with people emotionally. The prophets used poetry to paint pictures loaded with emotional impact. In order to engage with their audiences, they employed figures of speech, word play and intricate nuances that are unfortunately difficult to convey in translation. The prophets wrote poetry in order to speak to peoples' hearts because they wanted to *change* peoples' hearts.

Instead of just calling for justice, they make us feel like we are the ones facing oppression. Instead of just calling for compassion, they help us remember the last time compassion was withheld from us.

As I have struggled with our ever changing world, I have looked to poetry to help me make sense of all the different things I have been feeling. I have found myself turning to poets like Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes. And as I read them, I am reminded that poetry, even poetry written today, is filled with prophetic power. That in poetry, great poets call upon us to change, grow and hope by engaging our emotions.

I encourage you to challenge yourself to read some poetry this month. And I don't just mean read, I mean experience, I mean feel. Allow each poet's words to paint pictures in your mind and speak to your heart. When so much in the world seems to make no sense, I think it is in poetry that we might find some greater understanding of ourselves and those around us.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

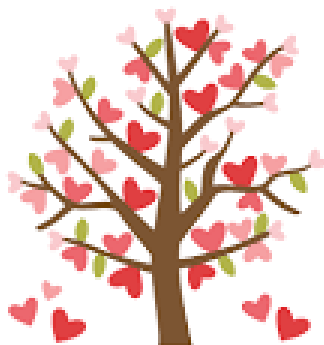
Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey

2nd Annual Talent Show!

Come one, come all, Scotia's Got Talent! On Saturday, February 1st, 2025, at 6:30pm Fellowship Council will be hosting a talent show! Please join us for a fun evening of entertainment.

Winter Warm-Up Rummage Sale

Our first sale of the year will be held Friday, Feb. 7th & Saturday, Feb. 8th in Brink Hall from 9:00am-1:00pm. Donations will start being accepted on Sunday, February 2nd. Items we are looking for: housewares, clothes, books, jewelry, baked goods, clothing (warm/seasonal) & toys. Jewelry donations are also being accepted for the Winter Sale. Please drop off at the Church Office February 3rd-6th from 9:00am - 1:00pm. We are also in need of volunteers. Please see Sue Pitts if you can help, or call her at 518-370-1964.



Valentine Luncheon

Sunday, February 9th

11:30-1:00

Come join us for soup, conversation, fun & games

Open to everyone!

New Member Interest Meeting

Are you interested in becoming a formal member of First Reformed Church of Scotia? On Sunday February 16th following both the 8:00 am & 10:00 am service, there will be an interest meeting in the Memorial Lounge. Not sure what membership means? Come to the meeting. Not sure why you would want to be a member? Come to the meeting. Coming to the meeting does not obligate you to join and no pressure will be applied. If you are interested, but unable on the 16th, please email Pastor Christopher at pastorchristopher@firstreformedscotia.org. Not sure if you are a member or not? The most recent edition of the church's directory notes your membership status.

Worship Fest: “Worship: The Work of the People”

We are thrilled to be hosting the Regional Synod of Albany for their upcoming Worship Fest. On Saturday, February 22nd from 9am to 3pm. The day includes the opportunity to participate in multiple workshops led by pastors and elders from across the regional synod.

All are invited to this time of learning, fellowship and celebration.

You can register on the Regional Synod website or by going to:

<https://albansynod.breezechms.com/form/3fcb34>

Conversation Project Workshop on Advance Directives.

Please save an hour after 10:00 worship on **Sunday, February 23** to join a workshop with Dr. George Giokas and Kelly Leonard, RN from Ellis Medicine to learn about advance directives. This program will build on our previous advanced care planning programs addressing advance directives and medical issues related to serious and terminal illness. Dr. Giokas and Kelly Leonard, RN are experienced clinicians in this field.

A sign up sheet for this workshop will be located on the table in the Narthex and also on the table in the Brink Hall foyer. This will allow us to plan for the room size needed to host this event.

Dr. Giokas said it would be helpful for them to know what specific questions you have on this topic prior to the workshop on February 23 so they could focus their remarks. Thus, please feel free to email Pam Walsh (pam.t.walsh@gmail.com) with your specific questions or write them out and leave them in Pam’s mailbox in the mailroom.

Faith Formation

Feb. 2 - Faith formation for K-12th grade w/Miss Diana

Jesus’ message

Feb. 9 - Family/Intergenerational learning experience

Different power/Valentine Luncheon

Feb. 16 - Faith formation for K-12th grade w/Miss Diana

Making decisions - Who to trust

Feb. 23 - Faith formation for K-5th grades

Story of Joseph



Renew Bible Study

The **Renew Bible Study** group will be reading Giving Up Bad Things for Lent, by Rev. James W. Moore, during Lent this year. During Lent, many Christians give up something as an act of sacrifice and spiritual discipline. Often it is something like chocolate, knowing that on Easter they can once again enjoy what they have given up. This seven session study challenges readers to seek God's help to focus on eliminating one habit or attitude that is

destructive. Imagine giving up envy, jealousy, self-pity, apathy, procrastination, gossip, resentment, or negative thinking, how much better life would be. Each week we review the readings and follow with a discussion time.

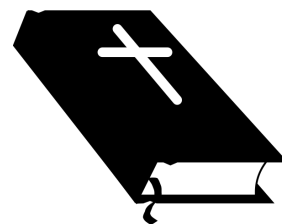
The group meets on Tuesdays at 12 noon via Zoom. Meetings end by 1:15 pm. See Sunny Baldwin at church or contact her at 518-320-4562 or csunnyb53@gmail.com to obtain the weekly Zoom Link for this course.

Ash Wednesday

Lent begins this year on Wednesday, March 5th. This day has traditionally been recognized by receiving ashes. We will have a brief Ash Wednesday service that evening at 7:00pm in our sanctuary.

Planning ahead - Lent Bible Studies

- Renew Bible study with Sunny Baldwin will be using the book "Give Up Something Bad For Lent" - Tuesdays at 12:00 via Zoom starting in March.
- Miss Diana will lead a Bible study based on our Lenten devotional Wednesday night at 7:00 beginning in March.



Fowler Spaghetti Dinner & Cake Auction

Save the date: Saturday March 15th

4:00pm - 7:00pm

More info will be coming soon.

February Mission of the Month: Over the Bridge Outreach (OTBO) is a ministry started by our very own Doug Bartling before the Pandemic, that's focused on

- Sharing Jesus Christ through actions of love, by giving hope to ALL people regardless of their race, gender, beliefs, sexual orientation or background.
- Providing encouragement and inspiration to all who they come in contact with
- Feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, being a friend to the lonely, a crutch to the addicted and a motivator to the helpless- all in the name of Jesus.
- And so much more....



If you would like more information regarding this important mission of First Reformed, or would like the experience of riding along with Doug, please contact the church office.



Backpack Program Update by Linda Lewis

Consider these facts: More than **50 million** people in the U.S. relied on food assistance from food banks/pantries, charities, and other organizations in 2023. Every single county in the U.S. reports food insecurity.

14,000,000 (14 million) children in the U.S. faced hunger every day in that

year!

These statistics are startling, but true. We must remember that these numbers represent people, most of whom are working. We, as a church community, are committed to be part of the efforts to help these individuals in need.

Locally, the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, which serves **23** counties, distributes **49,446,997** pounds of food each year to families facing hunger. You read that correctly----almost **50 million pounds of food!** Our congregation feeds over 85 students in the Scotia-Glenville School District each week. With Trinity Presbyterian Church packing an additional 20 bags of food, that's more than **100 children** being helped.

In preparation for our February distribution of extra food during vacations, I was able to order from the Regional Food Bank **2,851** pounds of food **for free!** This includes enough for two whole chickens, three pounds of ground beef, one to two pounds of hot dogs, a pound of sausage, two dozen eggs, and a 50-pound box of food purchased at a reduced cost for 50 families. Even with this free food, our cost per distribution is between \$1200-\$1300. Please consider donating to this important cause.

Annual Assessment



As you may, or may not know, our church pays assessments as a member of the Reformed Church in America. For 2025, we have been “assessed” an amount of \$87 for each member of our church. If you are willing and able to help cover this cost, please submit a separate payment to cover your assessment (over and above your pledge). It would be greatly appreciated. Please mark clearly on your check and/or payment that this is for your assessment so that it is recorded correctly. Thank you for your consideration.

Offering Envelopes

Once again, this year we will NOT be providing “numbered” offering envelopes. We WILL, however, have offering envelopes available for your use. These envelopes are available in packages in the Narthex and the Brink Hall lobby. Envelopes are not necessary, you can put your check right into the offering plate as long as your name is on it. Cash should be put into an envelope if you wish to receive a statement credit. Thank you again for your generous offerings to this church which is used to do the various missions and activities happening in this church as well as maintain our facilities and pay our staff.

National Self-Check Month, which takes place in February each year, serves as a reminder that it is possible and ultimately our responsibility to take charge of our health. Self-checks serve as a way to increase the chances of avoiding chronic disease and other mostly preventable health conditions. It’s recommended to get early detection checks for cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, which are conditions that are often preventable and treatable if found early enough. If you haven’t seen your healthcare provider in a while or have found something out-of-the-ordinary, now is the time to schedule a physical exam! Many people are reactive when it comes to their health; they seek out information when they are already sick or a friend or perhaps a well known person is diagnosed with a condition.



Instead it is better to be proactive. These are two resources to help learn about ways to prevent the advance of preventable diseases: 1) The American Cancer Society website has a section on “Prevention and Early Detection Guidelines”, and 2) Self Chec, an organization whose mission is to provide the best and most comprehensive one-to-one tools and resources- free of charge- to help protect you and those you care about from cancer, heart disease, and other chronic diseases that are often preventable and treatable if found early enough. Visit selfchec.org for the free resources and to sign up for a monthly newsletter of health information and nudges.

Remember, you CAN take charge of your health!

Camp Fowler Summer Registration Now Open!

Register online at campfowler.org.

We ask that you only pay the deposit so that FRCS scholarship can be applied. Scholarship code is SCOTIA2025.

Hope to see you all at camp this summer!



Snow Closing Policy

What happens when there is 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.



If you aren't on our Constant Contact email list, this is a great time to add yourself, so that we can all stay connected! Please go to the church website: firstreformedscotia.org, and click on the "NEWSLETTER" tab. If you scroll all the way to the bottom, you will need to click on "JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST." From there, you just fill out your information, and click "SIGN UP." We look forward to hearing from you.



Community Lunch Update by Mark Holley

The Grab and Go lunch had 48 meals go out in January. We are at a total of 6,456.

We will not have a Grab and Go lunch in February. The Community Meal will be February 15th. The meal for February is turkey noodle soup, grilled cheese and fruit cup.

February Anniversaries

Linda and Richard Lewis 21

February Birthdays

**Tina Haldeman 1
Jason White 2
Mark Rahn 7
Sophia DeMasi 9
Wesley Kohout 12
Norma Hamm 20
Terri McKenzie 23
Julia Penn 28**

**Mark Holley 2
Amanada Faulkner 4
Walther Pfuntner Jr 8
Lynn Makrin 10
Terry Paulson 12
Viktoriya Falcon 22
Sara Madison 26**

**Simon Trbovich 2
Jason Bull, Jr. 5
Emma DeMasi 9
Ellen Schultz 11
Sue Torelli 16
Chris Bodden 23
Maggie Pfuntner 27**

Address Service Requested

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