

# THE MESSENGER

## *A Pastor's Ponderings*

Our world pulls us in so many different directions. Everyday everyone and everything constantly demands our limited energy and attention. And yet, we live in a time of near endless distractions. The pervasiveness of technology has made it so we never have to be bored, we never have to sit in silence, and we never have to interact with anyone, at least in person.

Our attention spans are shortening, our social skills deteriorating, our digital connections eroding real connection and with it the very fabric of society. In response to the chaos that has taken over our world and even our minds, Lent is an opportunity to be countercultural. It is an opportunity to mentally and spiritually regroup. To pull ourselves out of our self-destructive tailspin. To choose to sit in silence. To choose to spend time to let our minds sit idle and go unentertained. To choose to reconnect with people in person and push ourselves to expand and strengthen our social connections.

I have found that moments when I am most tempted to withdraw and isolate myself are truly the moments that I need to be most connected. While Lent calls us to a time of refinding our center, we should not assume the best way to do this is always on our own. Silent prayer and meditation is often most powerful when done together. It is also in deep, honest conversations with other people we can often come to a better understanding of ourselves.

There is a real reluctance today to have conversations especially with people we do not know well or at all. There is a fear that they might

have a different opinion or viewpoint than we hold and conflict might arise. However, we need to reclaim that value in speaking with others for the purpose of simply seeking deeper understanding, and not for the purposes of changing other people's minds. We have become so isolated in our self-imposed echo chambers that we truly lack understanding of those that have chosen a different echo chamber for themselves.

I believe all people have a story to tell and we all benefit when our stories are shared. Lent calls us to strive for an ever deeper commitment to empathy, mercy and understanding. Lent is about being honest with ourselves about the mistakes we have made so that we get ourselves on to a better path. And this is so much more difficult alone. We all need mutual support and mutual accountability.

During the season of Lent we are called to be very intentional about how we use our time, our focus, and our energy. Lent calls us to look inward so that we are better equipped and prepared to look outward.

So this is your challenge. Unplug and then reconnect with people in person. Turn off the television, turn off the news and spend time talking to people. Let yourself be bored. Let your mind wander and be alone with your thoughts even when it is scary. Then talk to someone about how you have been feeling. Risk vulnerability and honesty. Risk real connection. Lent is a time for us all to do things differently.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

***Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey***



## Ash Wednesday Service

You are invited to join us for an Ash Wednesday Service on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary. It will be a quiet contemplative service to help prepare us for Lent.

## Lent Bible Studies

### Lenten Bible Study

Diana Ackner will be leading a Lenten Bible Study on Wednesdays beginning March 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm. This study will coordinate with this year's Lent devotional entitled "Everything in Between." Please contact Diana if you have any questions.

### "Renew" Bible Study

This year the group has selected the book, Give Up Something Bad for Lent, written by Rev. James W. Moore to read during Lent. Instead of giving up something like chocolate as an act of sacrifice, the author challenges us to take it further— to give up something we're better off not doing, like a habit or attitude, that is destructive. The group, led by Sunny Baldwin, continues to meet at 12 noon via Zoom. Anyone interested in participating is welcome! For the reading schedule and Zoom link, see Sunny at church or contact at 518-320-4562 or [csunnyb@nycap.rr.com](mailto:csunnyb@nycap.rr.com).



### Lent Devotionals

This year's Lent devotional entitled "Everything in Between" is now available! You may pick up your copy in the narthex or Brink Hall lobby. Also available, Lent in a bag - Activities designed for families.

## Come Walk the Labyrinth during Holy Week

The Labyrinth offers us a space to reflect, to recognize that God is with us at every turn on the path, and is always full of love for us. The big labyrinth will be available for a guided walk in Brink Hall after worship on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.



**Daylight Savings Time** begins on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>.

Remember to spring forward!

## Easter Flowers

Donations are being received in the office or in the Sunday offering. After Easter worship, plants are delivered to members who cannot attend Easter Sunday worship. Donations and dedications are due to the church office by April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

## Community Lunch Update by Mark Holley

The Community meal was a bag lunch for February 15th. The weather report did not look favorable to have the meal so we made 30 lunches on Friday (thanks to Norma, Linda and Cindy who baked cookies). When I saw the storm pushed back until later in the afternoon I decided to get more supplies. Laura and I gave out 50 bag lunches. We are thankful that we still had the meal and our guests got a lunch. I would like to thank Laura, Norma, Linda, Cindy and Sharon who printed our sign for the door.

The grab and go is March 5th. We will have a giving table and hot soup that day.



The Community meal guests are invited to the Spaghetti dinner on March 15th. As this is the second year of this, many of the guests are very excited.

## Backpack Update by Linda Lewis



On February 13-14, we distributed 48 boxes of food and bags of meat, eggs, and cottage cheese. Families, as always, were extremely grateful, but what they need, in addition to food, are personal hygiene items and cleaning supplies that are not available through the SNAP program.

So, with the April distribution of food, we would like to include those items, such as toothpaste and toothbrushes, shampoo and conditioner, soap or body wash, laundry detergent, dish detergent, and paper products such as toilet paper and paper towels. There will be a box outside the office and in the narthex for your donations. Can you imagine not having detergent to wash your children's clothes or shampoo to wash their hair? Toilet paper is the most popular item taken from our community cupboard. Please help us in this effort.

## Winter Warm-Up Sale

We had a wonderful turnout for our Winter Warm-Up Sale. Many thanks to all the volunteers who worked so tirelessly to make it a success. We realized over \$3,000 in proceeds from this mission project.

## March Mission of the Month

The Mission of the Month for March is Camp Fowler Ministries. Camp Fowler, located near Speculator, NY does not receive direct financial support from Albany Synod. The annual budget for the camp is at least \$150,000, which is raised from churches, organizations, and individuals who share its vision for ministry. One goal of Fowler is to keep the fees affordable for the children who attend. Camp Fowler is an important part of the life of this congregation. We contribute and receive incredible benefits from this partnership.



## Fowler Spaghetti Dinner & Cake Auction

Fundraiser for Camp Fowler Scholarships

**Saturday, March 15th 4-6:30 pm.**

In person or take out. Cake auction starts at 4:30pm.

Adults: \$17 Kids(under 10): \$8

Volunteer sign ups are located in the narthex and

Brink lobby or contact Miss Diana:

[education@firstreformedscotia.org](mailto:education@firstreformedscotia.org)

## Save the Date: EASTER EGG HUNT!

The annual Easter Egg Hunt will be on

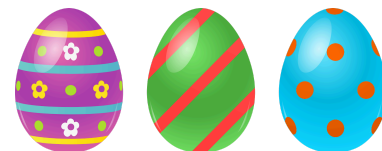
**Sunday, April 13th at 11:15**

If participating in the egg hunt, bring **12 filled eggs per child.**

Kids will be provided a bag to decorate while the eggs are being

hidden. A story and some crafts will be available. Feel free to

contact Diana Ackner: [education@firstreformedscotia.org](mailto:education@firstreformedscotia.org)



## Faith Formation

**March 2** - Faith formation for K-12th

*Transformation*

**March 9** - Family/Intergenerational learning experience

*Lent 1 - Good Samaritan parable*

**March 16** - Faith formation for K-12th

*Lent 2 - Mary & Martha story*

**March 23** - Faith formation for K-12th

*Lent 3 - Fig Tree parable*

**March 30** - Faith Formation K-5th

*Lent 4 - Lost Sheep parable*

## The Church has Gone to the Birds! By Susan Damon

As you may have noticed, many people walk the church property in the hopes of catching a glimpse of one of our neighboring eagles, the water birds on Collin's Lake or other local birds. This sets the perfect stage for a Fun-raiser! So, grab your binoculars and get ready to have some fun! On Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup> from 3:00pm-5:00pm in Brink Hall, we will be having a family friendly, educational bird event. Whispering Willow Wild Care will be joining us and providing a live bird presentation starting at 3:00pm and lasting for about an hour (Please make sure to arrive a little early to get a good seat). This Schenectady based organization cares for orphaned and injured wildlife with the ultimate goal of releasing them back into the wild. When this is not possible, they provide permanent housing for un-releasable birds and offer live educational programs with their bird ambassadors.

After the live bird presentation, activities include a free craft with Miss Diana, as well as a bake sale and raffle. We will also be joined by a talented local artist who lives in Scotia and specializes in bird watercolor paintings. These beautiful paintings will be available for purchase, so you can go home with your very own bird painting to remember the day.

This event is open to the public, so feel free to spread the word and bring friends, but all children must be accompanied by an adult. There is a suggested donation of \$5 per person so that it is accessible to all.

If you are interested in volunteering on Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup> (the day of the event), please come to the general interest meeting after the 10:00am service on March 16<sup>th</sup> in Memorial Lounge. If you are interested in donating an item or basket for the raffle on behalf of yourself or your business/organization, please contact Susan Damon at [susandamon1@gmail.com](mailto:susandamon1@gmail.com). A baking sign-up sheet will also be located in the lobby outside the office for those willing to donate baked goods. Bonus points for bird themed donations to the raffle and baked goods (ex. bird watching/feeder or owl basket, hummingbird cake, chocolate bird nests etc.). Hope to see you there!



## Health and Wellness Note

Chances are you or someone you know suffers from hearing loss. So this month we are looking at World Hearing Day, which is observed on March 3 annually. This day is designated by the World Health Organization (WHO), which aims to promote ear and hearing care around the world. According to the WHO, 466 million people worldwide, or 5 percent of the world's population, are affected by hearing loss. Thirty-four million of those affected by hearing loss are children. If we do nothing, over 900 million people will have disabling hearing loss by 2050! Disabling hearing loss means that adults over the age of 15 have hearing loss greater than 40 decibels (dB). Children between the ages of 0 and 14 have hearing loss that is greater than 30 dB.

Each year there is a theme. This year's theme is "Empower Yourself Changing Mindsets Make ear and hearing care a reality for all!" Hearing loss is important to address because it affects many aspects of a person's life. Some negative repercussions of hearing loss include decreased socialization, depression, increased irritability, communication problems, increased risk to personal safety, weakened memory, and reduced work performance.

**So are you ready to observe World Hearing Day?** To participate: 1) Schedule an appointment for a hearing screening; ) 2) Use hearing devices if needed; 3) Learn about ways to protect your hearing. For example protect your hearing from loud sounds; 4) Download the [hearWHO app](#); 5) Educate yourself on treatment options for hearing loss; and 5) Encourage someone with a hearing loss to seek treatment.

**Remember, there is something you can do about hearing loss. It starts with a screening!**

## March Financial Update

Report as of 2/26/2025	Annual Budget	YTD Budget	Total to Date	Over/Under
Congregational Giving	\$ 255,000	\$ 43,350.00	\$ 59,649.00	Over 37%
Other income	\$ 266,450	\$ 45,296.50	\$ 54,519.00	Over 20%
Total Income	\$ 521,450	\$ 88,646.50	\$ 114,168.00	Over 29%
Expenses	\$ 521,450	\$ 88,646.50	\$ 84,092.00	Under 5%

**March Anniversaries**

Jack and Carol Arnold	20
Jay and Judy Harlow	27
Edward and Kim Rosenberg	28
Dennis and Sheryl Pelkey	30

**March Birthdays**

Ellie Zenner	5	Ryan Makrin	13	Jeff Taft	26
Sheila Dort	8	Tom Pirigyi	15	Deborah Rahn	26
Bob King	9	Anneliese Conley	16	Sharon Locke	28
Dave Murray	9	Jae Schalekamp	16	Peg Kniskern	28
Ken Willcox III	9	Wayne Penn	17	Kristen Shave	30
Georgia Grant	11	Nancy Passer	24		
John Hoffman	12	Jacob Hoefler	25		

**Address Service Requested**

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