

# THE MESSENGER

## *A Pastor's Ponderings*

With the passing of April, I have now been the pastor of this congregation for two years. Over the course of these two years my life has changed immensely - in both expected and unexpected ways.

I was taught in Seminary that when you begin a new pastorate you can expect to get at most a two year "honeymoon" period. A period of time when the congregation is just so happy they have a new pastor that they are happy to overlook whatever faults or flaws that you may have.

While I know that this was not presented as a hard and fast rule, here we are entering into year three. I want to thank you all for the grace and understanding you have shown me as I have gotten my "sea legs" here at First. And I will be bold and humbly ask that you continue to offer me this same grace and understanding over the years to come insofar as you are able.

I am in no way expecting you to not offer me feedback, even critical feedback, to the contrary I still very much want and appreciate opinions and assessments of my efficacy as your pastor. Such feedback is necessary for me to continue to grow into this office. I do however hope that you can be grace-filled and understanding with how you give your feedback and when it comes to the implementation of requested changes be it in worship, pastoral care or administration.

Though I had almost seven years of experience before coming to Scotia, the learning curve has been steep. I had to transition from virtually being a one man show to navigating a much larger staff and building. Everything is bigger here and so are the expectations, the vast majority of which have been completely responsible and understandable. I am acutely aware that I stand in the shadow of previous pastors who are rightly beloved for their service and deep dedication to this congregation.

I will admit that over these two years I have at times dropped the ball, stepped on a few toes and even hurt people. I would like to ask for your continued forgiveness and emphasize that my door is always open if I need to apologize to you directly in person.

At the same time, I am immensely proud of what has been accomplished in just two years. I see signs of vitality and vibrancy all over the place. I have sought to be a good financial steward of the church's resources while continuing to improve the church's programs and its facility. I have sought to deepen and strengthen existing leadership and cultivate new leaders within our worshipping community. I have sought to continue to grow our congregation not only in numbers but also in compassion and faith.

My pastor once told me as I was preparing to enter the ministry that most pastors never have the opportunity of getting lost in deep existential and philosophical questions because someone will knock on their door and hand them a paintbrush or a plunger. And truthfully, as a pastor sometimes I find myself doing odd jobs. As a millennial I have found that I am IT support for the office. My service here has certainly never been boring or dull.

To the contrary, I often find my weeks flying by as I jog from one Sunday to the next. Despite being more acclimated to the pace of life in this congregation, I will admit that I am still at times overwhelmed. But I promise that when you send me a text, or an email you are added to my ever growing to do list that is constantly being re-evaluated based on need and urgency. If you get frustrated when you don't hear back from me right away, I ask that you say a prayer for me. Admittedly, I hope that you are praying for me often regardless of how you feel about me or my job preference at that particular moment.

Often my work is highly confidential. I am often working with people or families in crisis. I also spend a lot of time putting out fires before most church members even realize there was a problem to begin with.

To be clear, I love working here. I thank God every day that I have been blessed with such a remarkable faith community to lead. I often feel guilty that I can't be in two places at once or that my time and energy is limited. Especially since this congregation has historically had two pastors serving at a time. I truly want and have striven to give you my all each and every day. I hope that you can recognize my effort even if you do not always agree with my priorities or the results that my efforts bring.

For example, the incredible late release of this issue of the *Messenger* is entirely my fault. I made the choice to focus on addressing other and in my opinion far more pressing and important needs. Not only did I need to catch up on things that piled up during the end of Lent and Holy Week, but also new and challenging situations that have required my attention.

A professor once told me that after ten years of full time ministry you might start to be a good pastor. So as I look forward to celebrating my 10 years of ministry in October of 2026, I hope that I may then start to be a good pastor. Thank you for your support, encouragement, prayers, and feedback. I continue to be humbled by the immensity of this position and the immensity of care and love I have received from all of you.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

*Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey*



## Let's Stay Connected!

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](http://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.



## "Renew" Bible study

We are taking a break for the summer! We will begin meeting again in September. The group meets at 12 noon on Tuesdays via Zoom. Contact Sunny Baldwin at 518-320-4562 or [csunnyb@nycap.rr.com](mailto:csunnyb@nycap.rr.com) with questions or to learn how to obtain the Zoom link.

## Genealogy Class

Twice in past years, I have offered adult education genealogy classes at church; and, three experiences with the Ballston Spa Ballston Lake school district. After inquiring with Pastor Christopher, he indicated that it would be a good thing to offer again. As some of you know, I have been a researcher for 52 years. Also, I currently research for the Schenectady County Historical Society's clients.

I will be covering sources that are both valid and invalid as well as where to find genealogical data that is not limited to the internet. Furthermore, there will be discussions relating to DNA data and the complexities of interpreting test results.

There will be no charges incurred except for your individual purchase of a flash-drive/thumb-drive with at least 16 gigabytes storage. After each session, files will be downloaded to the drive you provide. If you are interested in participating, please contact me at my genealogy email address [robert.baldwin.acctrng@gmail.com](mailto:robert.baldwin.acctrng@gmail.com), or call me at 518-320-4561. After some inquiries, date(s) for the sessions will be published.



## Community Lunch Update

The Grab and Go Lunch served 50 meals in April. We are having turkey sandwiches, mac salad cheese and a fruit cup for May's Community Meal on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

Thank you to all the volunteers and Vicki for her delicious cookies. Anyone who would like to volunteer please send me an email. We always welcome new volunteers!

## Backpack Program Update

If you have read the headlines recently, you are aware that the federal government is targeting cuts in programs designed to help poor and working families. One such program is SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) which many of our families rely on for food. In a recent Daily Gazette article, Natasha Pernicka, executive director of The Food Pantries for the Capital District (a coalition of 71 food pantries in five area counties, including Schenectady) was quoted as saying, "58,000 people were served in 2019. That number grew to 104,000, a 79% increase last year." She added that "a reduction to SNAP benefits will likely lead to even higher demand that pantries would likely struggle to meet." What is also extremely worrisome is that there are plans to cut billions of dollars from Regional Food Banks across the country. It is these Food Banks that provide and coordinate the food distributions to both the Backpack programs and local food pantries.

Knowing how important receiving this food is to the nearly 50 families in the Backpack Program, we are planning an additional food distribution before summer vacation. We are still asking for donations of personal care items and cleaning supplies to include in this distribution. We are coordinating this effort with the S-G school staff and students. A box is located in the entry hall.

When one parent was asked what the Backpack Program meant to her, she quickly replied, "I always know I will have food to feed my son." We pray that these proposed cuts will not mean the end of the Backpack Program.

## Pack the Cupboard

Have you seen the church's Community Cupboard? It's located outside the main entrance to Brink Hall to provide daily essentials to people in our community. All are welcome to take whatever they need, at any time, at no cost. The cupboard is stocked with the help of donations from our congregation and items the church purchases at a discount from the Regional Food Bank. Can you help us keep the cupboard stocked?

We've noticed three items in particular are very popular:

- Scott's brand individually-wrapped toilet paper
- 18-ounce plastic jars of peanut butter
- Canned fruit

If possible, please bring these to church on Sunday, May 18th. You can leave them in the narthex or under the table in the Brink Hall lobby. Of course, you're also welcome to drop them off any time. Thanks very much!

## June Garage Sale

**Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00am to 1:00pm &  
Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00am to 1:00pm**



To raise funds for our local missions, we will be participating in two ways:

- We will be renting spaces for a small fee, to those that wish to sell their items, but not at their own house or apartment. We advertise, you bring your items, you staff your tables and keep what you make. All remaining items must go home with you.
- You can donate items for the church to sell to benefit the church and our local missions. We staff and sell the items.

If you have interest in renting a space to sell your goods: you may go to our website and print a form or see Sharon in the office. You can donate items for the church to sell on Sunday, June 1<sup>st</sup> after both 8am & 10am services or on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> between 9:00am and 1:00pm

## May Mission of the Month: FRCS Emergency Food Distribution Program

Over the last several years, through our various programs, such as the backpack program and the free community meals, we have become known in the schools and in the community as a Church that can help people in need of food. The following are some examples of how we have been able to help:

- A social worker from one of the schools called me to say that a new family had moved to the district. Because this was a result of domestic violence, the mother and two children were housed in a motel and asked if we could help them with food, an electric pan/hot plate, dishes and utensils. Of course we did!
- A pregnant young woman came to the Church after an organization in Schenectady suggested she contact us. She had applied for food stamps but would not receive them for 2 weeks. She was hoping that we could help her. Of course we did! In addition to a large box of food, we also gave her milk and egg cards to Stewarts.
- A single mother of one of the students in the backpack program had missed almost 2 months of work because she had to stay home with her daughter who had significant health issues. She called to say that she was out of food and could we help her? Of course we could! Her daughter is much better now and she just let us know that she no longer needs the bags of food each week. She was so grateful we were there for them!

We never know when our neighbors will need us to help, but we always know that we can.



Since 1949, May has been Mental Health America Awareness Month. The theme this year is “**Turn Awareness into Action**,” which celebrates the progress that has been made in recognizing the importance of mental health – and challenges us to turn understanding into meaningful steps toward change.

To support this theme, the Health & Wellness team is sponsoring a program “**TALK SAVES LIVES: an introduction to suicide prevention**”. Talk Saves Lives is the flagship suicide prevention training of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Topics covered include the scope of the problem, research, prevention, and what you can do. Attendees will learn suicide prevention through awareness, identifying the warning signs, statistics and dispelled myths concerning suicide. The details follow:

**Presenter:** Mr. Thomas O’Clair, who is a retired New York State Office of Mental Health Advocacy Specialist II, Suicide Prevention Activist, & American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) volunteer.

**Location:** First Reformed Church of Scotia  
Brink Hall

**Date:** Wednesday, May 14, 2025

**Time:** 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

**Who should consider attending:**

- o Are you a person who ministers to others in the FRCS congregation?
- o Do you have or have you had a friend or loved one that you were concerned about and you weren’t sure how best to respond?
- o Do you want to be prepared should you be faced with questions regarding someone’s risk for suicide and how best to respond.

**Reservations required:** At Mr. O’Clair’s request, this program is limited to 20 people. Reservations will be accepted as they are received. A waiting list will be kept.

**How to make a reservation:** Contact Sunny Baldwin by email at [csunnyb@nycap.rr.com](mailto:csunnyb@nycap.rr.com) or call/text at 518-320-4562.



## Attention All Graduates!

In next month's issue of The Messenger (June 2025) we want to publish the names of everyone in our church who graduates this spring from high school, college, graduate school, and trade school programs. Please help us make sure we don't miss anyone. Email the church office at [office@firstreformedscotia.org](mailto:office@firstreformedscotia.org) by May 20<sup>th</sup>. Please include: the name of the graduate, the school issuing the diploma or certificate, and what the graduate's future plans are.



## CROP HUNGER WALK 2025



The 2025 CROP Hunger Walk was another success. We raised over \$700 towards addressing food insecurity. We thank Diana Ackner, Patty Marre, Shannon Whelan, Tina Haldeman and Claire Beauchemin for walking on a rainy day. Thank you for supporting this wonderful work!

## Open the House

**Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup> from 10:00AM to 4:00PM**

Come help Camp Fowler "open the house" and get ready for the summer! The Saturday before Memorial Day is your chance to be one of the first people to set foot on the grounds for the summer.

To make sure that Camp is ready to go for the campers who will arrive in June, we have a long list of work projects that need to happen. We could certainly use your help if you're interested in volunteering to help us with tasks like preparing cabin areas, opening up seasonal buildings, stringing name tags, and more. We will have tasks for all ages and ability levels. Work projects will be happening from 10am-4pm. Join us at noon for lunch.

Pre-registration is required. Go to [campfowler.org](http://campfowler.org) to register.



## Youth Sunday

**Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>**

*The Joy Of Pentecost*

Youth, K-12, will lead worship at the 10am service on Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>. We need musicians, speakers, singers etc. If you are interested in participating please reach out to Miss Diana.



## **May Faith Formation**

**May 4** - Faith formation for K-12th grades

*Why Communion?*

**May 11** - Faith formation for K-12th grades

*Why Pray?*

**May 18** - Faith formation for K-12th grades

*A Wind At The Door*

**May 25** - Faith formation for K-12th grades

*Sharing our Light*

## **A Special Note of Thanks**

Bill, Karen, Bill and Amanda would like to express their appreciation for “the prayers, cards, and many kindnesses shown to our family following the passing of our daughter and sister, Michele. May God continue to bless each of you, as you have blessed us”.

## **Kitchen Renovation Update**

The Kitchen Renovations Committee has started meeting to talk about ways in which the church’s kitchen in Brink Hall can be upgraded to modern standards and be more functional to support our many events. The committee is in the early stages of the discussion and anticipates a phased approach based on the church’s priorities and finances. The congregation will be kept informed as the plans are developed. The committee welcomes your input and suggestions.

The expenses would be paid for out of the general fund and the rebate the church received from the New York State Clean Heat program for the heating and cooling project that was completed in 2024. A final budget hasn’t been determined yet. The goal is for renovations to begin in early 2026. In the interim, the committee has approved the purchase of equipment such as bowls, pots and pans, along with replacing the old pizza oven with a new double oven.

We ask for your prayers and support as we work to improve the kitchen for today’s needs and for generations to come. The committee members are: John Ackner, Laura Bull, Mike DeMasi, Richard Doyle, Mark Holley, Bill Shave, Kristen Shave and Pastor Christopher.

## **May Financial Update**

As of 4/24/2025					
		<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>YTD Budget</b>	<b>Total to Date</b>	<b>Over/Under</b>
Congregational Giving		\$ 255,000	\$ 84,150.00	\$ 102,878.00	Over 22%
Other Income		\$ 266,450	\$ 87,928.50	\$ 54,007.00	Under 39%
Total Income		\$ 521,450	\$ 172,078.50	\$ 156,885.00	Under 8%
Total Expenses		\$ 521,450	\$ 172,078.50	\$ 142,789.00	Under 17%



**May Anniversaries:**

**Michael Linke & Sarah Cordts 4**  
**Bob & Laurie Cooper 11**  
**Robert & Priscilla Harvey 19**  
**Bill & Diane Faubion 19**  
**Fran & Nancy Landry 23**  
**Ken & Elaine Willcox 26**  
**Christopher McCloskey & Susan Damon 27**  
**Lonnie Hojnacki & Martha Gilgore 30**

**May Birthdays:**

**Susan Damon 3**  
**Elaine Willcox 7**  
**Bobbie Nelson 13**  
**Emilee Rosenberg 15**  
**Ann Armstrong 18**  
**Bill Faulkner Sr. 21**  
**Edward Graber 26**

**Katelynn Conroy 5**  
**Benjamin Doyle 9**  
**Madalena Crisci 14**  
**Linda Shaw 15**  
**Ken Swain 19**  
**Alex Gilgore 22**  
**Mark Graber 26**  
**Steve Warfield 29**

**Steve Mathes 6**  
**Denise Lansing 10**  
**Margaret Holley 14**  
**Ron Shaw 17**  
**Sue Fedak 20**  
**Phyllis Beck 24**  
**Alicia Hermance 29**

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