

THE MESSENGER

A Pastor's Ponderings

As a preacher, I spend just as much time studying contemporary culture as I do scripture. As the theologian Karl Bart once famously wrote “We (preachers) must hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.” While admittedly, I cannot remember the last time I picked up a physical newspaper, I am constantly observing and evaluating current events and culture.

While I have no special qualifications to do so, I often find myself trying to diagnose some of the cultural ills of our time. One such concern of mine has to do with our ever evolving technology. It seems like not a day goes by without someone prophesying about either the utopian future that AI (Artificial Intelligence) will usher in or the world-ending cataclysm that it heralds. I remember however not too long ago when similar predictions were made about the internet. In both cases, both the optimists and the pessimists got it wrong. Frankly, the internet has been a mixed bag. It has connected the world in ways previously unimaginable. It has exposed the masses to immense stores of information and knowledge. It has made possible new careers and allowed for important cultural exchange. While at the same time it has been used for unspeakable evil; obscuring the identity of predators and facilitating the commerce of illicit material. It has also caused our current state of hyperpolarization by way of digital echo chambers and in even more insidious ways has been tearing at the fabric of society.

Ultimately, it is not however the technology that is the problem, but our relationship with it. Back in the early days of the internet, it was always talked about as a tool; a tool for research, data sharing and information gathering. But over the years, the internet has been increasingly talked about not as a tool to be used, but as a destination to be visited.

I believe we need to once again return to thinking of the internet as a tool. A tool that assists us in living life, not as a place where life happens. We need to go back to thinking about the internet as a tool from which we can get directions to wherever we need to go, or to learn about

current events or to connect with new people to build relationships with IRL (In Real Life).

I believe that AI, like the internet, will also be a mixed bag, but if we learn from our experiences with the internet we will be all the better for it. We must never stop understanding AI as a tool. A tool to make work easier so that we can spend more time with family and friends. We must remember that AI is to be an enhancement for life, not a replacement for living.

Yet already there are stories of people building relationships, even romantic relationships, with AI. And it is this that I am more concerned about than any other possible impact of this new technology.

Just like the internet, AI has the potential to trick us into thinking we are connecting even though our brains and bodies know we are not. The internet and AI must never be a replacement for people. We need to remember that they are simply tools. And yet today we have allowed the “social” internet (more like the antisocial internet in my opinion) to make our society sick. I believe a society’s health can be measured in part by examining the health of its children. And unfortunately our children have ever more mental health challenges and ever less patience.

I am not a luddite, I do not think we should ban technology, but I do think we as a society need to carefully look at our relationship with technology. We need to make it clear that the internet is a tool, not a location. That AI is a tool, not a replacement for people. Fixing this relational problem will not be accomplished through laws or regulations. It can only be addressed relationally. And I believe the church has a role to play as we seek to mend our culture's broken relationship with technology. Because the church is a real place, but more importantly it is filled with real people and real relationships.

Do you agree with my cultural diagnosis? How do you think this congregation could be a part of the cure?

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey



Ice Cream Social!

We will be having our Annual Ice Cream Social on the Plaza this Sunday, August 3rd after the 10:00am service. There will be flavor favorites including a gluten free option.

Renew Bible Study

This September the group will resume studying Entering the Psalms: Meeting God in Scripture, written by the Upper Room, which is a study about the different types of Psalms and how they relate to our current lives. There are a total of five lessons to complete. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays at 12 noon via Zoom. Books cost \$5 and are available from Diana Ackner.

The schedule is as follows:

- September 9th, Noon - There is an optional make up session for the Intro and Chapter 1.
- September 23rd, Noon - The full group resumes to start studying with Chapter 2.

Contact Sunny Baldwin at 518-320-4562 or csunnyb@nycap.rr.com with questions or to obtain the Zoom link.



Genealogy Class Update

Twice in the past few years, I have offered adult education genealogy classes at church; and, three experiences with the Ballston Spa Ballston Lake school district. As some of you already 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.

Besides an instructional information format, each session will allow for question-and-answer segments to guide participants with their individual queries. It is my intention to provide bi-weekly evening sessions and eventually transition to monthly workshops.

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 used in each session 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, or call me at 518-320-4561. After some inquiries, date(s) for the sessions will be published as well as received personalized messages to registrants.

Community Lunch Update by Mark Holley

The past two meals in June and July have been very busy. At the June meal we had turkey gobbler wraps. At the grab and go lunch we had potato salad and sandwiches. We are at a total of 7,156 meals.

The meal for July 26th was our Polish fest. We had cabbage rolls and pierogos. I would like to thank all who volunteer for the meals: Deb and Mark, Spike and Carol, Norma, Diury, Sue, Linda, Sunny, Karen, Cindy, Laura, Jill, Mike and Emma, Pam and David, Miss Stephaine, Lynne, Ryan and Catherine, Janet, Bob, Ed, Jason, Joyce, Richard and Terri and many many more. If I have forgotten anyone I'm sorry. I appreciate you all. Also have to thank the Consistory and Pastor Christopher, plus our wonderful church staff Vicki, Diana, Sharon and Paul.

Backpack Program Update by Linda Lewis



We continue to meet the needs of the families in our Backpack Program during the summer months. In July, we packed 40 boxes of food, that also included 5 lbs of potatoes, 2 dozen eggs, fresh cherries and grapes, ground beef and sausage. Our next distribution is scheduled for August 14th and then we have one more on September 11th. The regular backpack program begins in mid-October, so families are so grateful for these extra distributions. Thank you for your continued support.

Mission of the Month: The Scotia Food Pantry

Our mission of the month is The Scotia Glenville Food Pantry. Located in the City View Church on Mohawk Ave, this community accessible location provides food to neighbors in need. It is open from 5:30pm-7:00pm on Tuesdays and 9:00am-11:00am on Fridays. Please consider a donation to help this important local mission that provides access to nutritious food to anyone without question.

American Red Cross Blood Drive

There will be a blood drive at our church on August 21st from 12-5.





Health & Wellness Note: August is National Wellness Month, an annual observance dedicated to promoting self-care, stress management, and healthy habits. During this month people are encouraged to focus on their physical, mental, emotional, and social health using everything from outdoor recreation, exercise and nutrition to prayer, and personal reliance. This can also involve prioritizing connecting with others, and learning about mental health resources. Often it's easy to put our health and wellness on the back burner due to stressors like workloads, traffic, family obligations and other stressors. However, self-care helps us to manage our stress and promotes our happiness. Self-care doesn't have to be difficult or expensive. It can be as easy as taking an outdoor walk, trying a new yoga pose, spending time with friends or in prayer with God.

Recently Baylor University professors offered these practical strategies:

1. Monitoring caloric intake while increasing your water intake.
2. Adding more fruits and veggies to your meals.
3. Monitoring your sleep and making adjustments for better sleep habits when necessary.
4. Joining a yoga, walking, or aerobics class. (The library offers free yoga classes.)
5. Learning to meditate.
6. Scheduling fun activities or hobbies at least once a week. Get together with friends, garden, read, enjoy music, take a hike or cook a favorite recipe.
7. Developing a healthy prayer life: spend time reading scripture or devotional book, spend time in silence, focus on simple breathing and contemplation or express gratitude to God through prayer and service. Offer prayers to God.

Everyone can take a step towards self-care. What will you choose?

76th Annual Dutch Fair

The Dutch Fair will be here before we know it! This year's Dutch Fair will be held on Saturday, September 20th, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It's time to start cleaning out your closets!



What We Will Accept:

- Clean, gently used clothing and household linens, towels, & bedding.
- Everyday Household items such as kitchen supplies, small electrical appliances and tools. *(Plates, bowls, and glasses must be dishwasher and microwave safe)*
- Small furniture *(end tables, small bookcases, etc – must be easy to lift and store)*
- Toys
- Books
- Jewelry *(Donations can be dropped off at the office, M-F, 9:00am-1:00pm)*
- Sporting Goods

What We Will NOT Accept:

- Monitors, TVs or computer screens.
- Computers, printers, keyboards or stereos
- Tires
- Large or upholstered furniture
- Candles or cosmetics (new or used)
- Office supplies



Nothing musty, moldy, or broken.

If you would like to volunteer please contact Laura Bull, Sue Pitts, or Linda Naumowicz. We are always looking for volunteers to help sort donations, set up, work the day of the Fair and clean up. Teenagers, this is a great way to get some community service hours needed for school! If you have managed an area in the past, please let us know that you are willing to do so again this year.

We will be accepting donations! Clothing, Linens, Books and Media can be donated starting Sunday September 14th after 10am worship and Monday-Thursday from 9-1 in Brink Hall.

Vendor Applications can be found on the church's website (firstreformedscotia.org) under Calendar & Events → 2025 Dutch Fair.



Kids Hope

I am so excited for another year of Kids Hope. I have started planning for the 2025-2026 school year but I need your help! WE NEED MENTORS! If you love kids and want to have a fulfilling and amazing experience contact me. Want to learn more? Contact me. I'm happy to meet with anyone and share this experience of changing the world one kid at a time.

Diana Ackner education@firstreformedscotia.org

518-428-2914(cell)



Faith Formation classes resume on **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th** for grades K-12.

Join Miss Diana at 10:30ish for a time of learning and worship.

CRAZY Family Fun CARNIVAL

Sunday, September 7th following 10am Worship
Bounce house, Carnival games, Prizes, and more!
Everyone is welcome!
More information to come!
The winner of Summer Bingo will be announced!



Summer Bingo



There is still time to play some Summer BINGO! The object is to see if your household can get a BINGO before September 7th. Do the things in any 5 boxes on the BINGO sheet. The card and links are posted on our FRCS webpage (Christian Ed tab). Let Miss Diana know if you get a BINGO - any 5 boxes; your name will go into a drawing for a special prize. The winner will be announced at the Carnival on September 7th.

Financial Update

As of 7/29/2025	Annual Budget	YTD Budget	Total to Date	Over/Under
Congregational Giving	255,000	147,900.00	159,982.00	Over 8%
Other Income	266,450	154,541.00	101,672.00	Under 34%
Total Income	521,450	302,441.00	261,654.00	Under 13%
Expenses	521,450	302,441.00	284,843.00	Under 6%

Congregational giving continues to be strong! Thank you! The giving total to date has been 'over' our year to date projections. We have been trying to limit draws from our investments given the volatility of the market. This explains why our 'other income' is 'under' our year to date projections. In order to be good stewards of the church's resources we have kept our expenses as low as possible, this is why expenses are 'under' our year to date projections.

August Anniversaries:

James & Rebecca Penn 6
Dave & Pam Walsh 6
Steve & Amiee Warfield 7
Peter & Glenda Lewis 9
Cheryl & John Miller 9
Bruce and Barbara Wurz 11
Tom & Chris Bodden 12
Christine & Nick Stryjek 15
Ken & Michele Swain 18
Ron & June Shaw 22
Keith & Lynn Makrin 26
Patrick & Allison Beauchemin 28

August Birthdays:

John Sheehan 5
Barbara Graber 9
Rylan Beauchemin 12
Nancy Landry 17
Linea Kilgallen 20
Abbey Naumowiz 23
Tee Munson 27
Lillian Rooney 30

Joyce Murray 7
Lori DeMasi 10
Karen Squires 15
Miles Torelli 17
Aaron Madison 20
Rebecca Jarczyński-Okpoti 24
Amy Grumbling 28
James Rooney 30

Bowden Stryjek 7
Fern Lee 10
Bill Shave, Jr 16
Russ Garrison 19
Olivia Munson 21
Michael Marré 26
Emily Kohout 30
Patrick Beauchemin 30