

THE MESSENGER

Pastor's Ponderings

On Sunday, November 2nd I preached a sermon entitled *Seek, Rescue, Defend & Plead*. The title reflects what the Prophet Isaiah calls on us as people of faith to do for the poor and the oppressed. He tells us that we must seek justice for them, rescue them, defend them and plead for them. I selected this reading (Isaiah 1:2-4 & 11-18) to respond to the looming food crisis caused by the defunding of SNAP due to the government shutdown. SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program commonly called food stamps.



I had hoped that this congregation would boldly respond to this call to action to do what we could to feed the hungry. Admittedly I assumed, given that I have come to intimately know the heart of this congregation, that the response would be earnest and faithful. However, I have been overwhelmed by the response. Hundreds of dollars have been donated! And with the help of the Scotia-Glenville Middle School, we have collected over 2,000 items of food!

We have kept the Community Cupboard, our 24-hours food cabinet, full. We are also preparing to do a special Blessing Box distribution. This is in

addition to the regular food distribution done through the Backpack Program and the Thanksgiving meals going out through the Community Meal Program.

Frankly, there are far too many individuals to thank by name, but to all of you please receive my heartfelt 'Thank you!' And so all that is left to be said is 'Thanks be to God!' The Holy Spirit is no doubt moving in this place! We are being the church!

Halleluia! We are showing our gratitude to God for the gift of grace! I rejoice that I have the opportunity to lead this wonderful community.

Thankfully, with the government reopened, SNAP funds have been restored. Sadly, the damage has already been done, with many individuals and families still struggling in the wake of this massive disruption to their access to food. However, this church has faithfully responded and continues to respond to help repair the breach!

May God continue to bless this congregation as we give glory to our Savior, Jesus Christ! May we all find great hope, love, joy and peace this holiday season!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey

Hanging of the Greens

We will be decorating our building for the Christmas Season on Sunday, November 30th after 10am service. There will be crafts, food and lots of fun! Pizza will be served in Brink Hall after we decorate. Steve Mathes will also be taking pictures to update our photo board in Memorial lounge. Hope you can all come and enjoy!!



Christmas Eve Prelude

The Advent season will soon be upon us, and with it, the joy of all things festive. Whether you are a singer or an instrumentalist, you are invited to take part in this year's Musical Prelude before Christmas Eve Service. If interested, please reach out to Diana Ackner.

Christmas Eve Worship

At 5:30pm the children and youth of our congregation will present a Christmas pageant. The traditional evening candlelight service will begin at 8:00pm following a musical prelude beginning at 7:30pm, a half hour of music will be presented by members of the church, including instrumental and vocal solos. We look forward to worshipping with you on the 24th. Whether you are worshipping here or elsewhere on Christmas Eve, may you be filled with the light of love, peace, joy and hope!



Christmas Eve Special Offering: Samaritan Care Fund



Our Christmas Eve Special Offering this year is for the Samaritan Counseling Center's Care Fund. The Samaritan Counseling Center provides therapy for individuals, couples, and families, and is the largest nonprofit interfaith counseling practice in the Capital Region. The Care Fund provides

assistance to uninsured and underinsured clients, and helps them continue their therapy.

Advent Devotionals and Calendars

Advent Devotionals and Advent Calendars are available for all to enjoy. They are available in the narthex and the Brink hall lobby. This year's theme is *What do you fear? Insisting on Hope this advent.*



Renew Bible Study

The group continues its study of *What Do You Fear?: Insisting on hope this Advent* from Sanctified Art. According to their website: “This Advent series takes seriously the angels’ message and trusts that Christ’s birth truly is good news of great joy for all people. The resources look closely at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and invite us to consider the fears we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us and even be used as a tool for oppression. But what if we formed a different relationship with fear? Can we acknowledge fear without letting it rule us? Might we catalyze our fears into love and action? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work?”

The group, led by Sunny Baldwin, continues to meet at 12 noon on Tuesdays via Zoom. Anyone interested in participating is welcome! For the reading schedule and Zoom link, please contact Sunny at 518-320-4562 or csunnyb@nycap.rr.com.

Breakfast with Santa

On Saturday, December 6th we will be having Breakfast with Santa from 9am to 11am in Brink Hall. Breakfast includes pancakes, sausage and eggs. A free will donation will be collected to benefit the church’s food programs. All are welcome to eat and get a picture with Santa!



Cookie Decorating

All ages are welcome to join Miss Diana on Sunday December 7th after worship to bake and decorate cookies for this year's Cookie Walk. Join us in the church kitchen for some holiday fun while baking for a mission!

Cookie Walk

Our annual Cookie Walk is on Saturday, December 13th from 11:00-2:00pm (or until sold out). Come purchase delicious cookies for all your holiday gatherings and gifts, to support the Food Distributions for our Backpack Program Families!



Could you donate cookies to the Cookie Walk? We ask that you bake 5 pounds of the same cookie (this is equal to about a triple or quadruple batch). Cookie drop off is December 12th between 12pm-5pm. This is important – so we can prepare for the event. Please remember to tell us the name of your cookies, and indicate if it contains nuts. (Forms and further instructions are also available on the church website.) We also need helpers for the day-of!

Annual Congregational Meeting

A Congregational Meeting has been called for Sunday, December 14th, following the 10:00 am worship service. The purpose of the meeting will be to elect new members to the Consistory, and the 2026 Nominating Committee. The 2026 Budget will also be presented and an advisory vote will be taken. The Annual Report on the state of the church will also be presented. All active confessing members have voice and vote, but anyone interested is welcome to be present for the proceedings.



Poinsettias



Help us vest our sanctuary for Christmas by making a donation towards the purchase of poinsettias. You may make your donation in honor or in memory of a special person or event. Dedications will be printed in our Christmas bulletins. The poinsettias will be distributed to shut-ins or those we wish to remember this season after the Christmas Eve service. Please submit your donation and dedication slip by Monday, December 15th.

December Faith Formation Schedule

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| November 30th | Advent 1 - God is always with us | Kids sing with choir in worship Hanging of the Greens |
| December 7th | Advent 2 - Signs of hope are all around | |
| December 14th | Advent 3 - We are called to be courageous | |
| December 21st | Advent 4 - We can look to other people for help - Pageant rehearsal | |
| December 24th | Christmas Eve Family Service at 5:30pm* | |



*Please let Miss Diana know asap if you want to participate



Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to everyone who packed a box or gave a donation to Operation Christmas Child! We were able to send 50 boxes. That's 50 kids who will get Christmas gifts that wouldn't have Christmas without us. Thank You!

Women's Epiphany Retreat 2026

January 9th-11th

It is time for us to think about our annual Women's Retreat! We'll be joining together in the comfort of Chi Rho Lodge at Camp Fowler from **January 9th-11th**. The cost for 2026 is **\$200** per person and includes meals, room & board. Please note that if we don't get 24 participants the cost may go up. *Scholarships are available.* Sign up is first come first serve. Prepare for a weekend of faith-focused discussions, games, crafts, fun and more!

Want more information please contact Miss Diana at education@firstreformedscotia.org.

Please make checks payable to First Reformed Church of Scotia.



Camp Fowler summer registration is 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 SCOTIA2026.

Hope to see you all at camp this summer!



Stewardship Update

On behalf of the Consistory and Admin Council, we would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who pledged for 2026. If you have not made your pledge, it is not too late! Leave your pledge in the offering plate or mail to the Church Office. Thanks and gratitude to Kathe Sheehan who led another successful campaign.

Mission of the Month: Concerned for the Hungry

Our Mission of the Month for December Concerned for the Hungry. Concerned for the Hungry (CFH) is an entirely volunteer organization working to fight hunger in Schenectady County. CFH was started by a small group of individuals in 1979. It began with the realization that the need for emergency food was growing. After over 40 years, CFH remains a leading force in providing essential food services and support throughout Schenectady County.



Thank you!

The Old World Santa craft class led by Patty Marré last month raised \$780 for Over the Bridge!



Health & Wellness Note: The holidays are upon us and simultaneously the weather cools and we spend more time indoors. That can mean more exposure to viruses, like colds, the flu and COVID. Here are some ideas from the Mayo Clinic Health System and others to help keep you healthy during the holidays and into the winter.

- **Wash your hands.** This is the number one way to prevent the spread of infection. Wash often and for 20 seconds being sure to wash all surfaces.
- **Limit exposure to those that are ill.** Staying away from viruses is another line of defense.
- **Drink 6-8 cups of water daily.** While eggnog, hot cocoa, or a cocktail may be your beverage of choice this time of the year, they do not hydrate your body like water.
- **Stress less.** Many of us know that is easier said than done. Focus on the things that bring you joy, like visiting with friends and family and the reason for the season. Find something to be grateful for each day.
- **Allow time for self relaxation and adequate sleep.** Sleep helps our bodies to repair itself. Plan how to have time for relaxation and sleep. Also avoid or limit caffeine, alcohol, daytime napping and large meals before bed.
- **Dress warmly and limit your time in the cold.** Remember headwear that fully covers your ears, wear mittens rather than gloves and pull on well-insulated socks when dressing for the weather. Instead of wearing one big coat, dress in several layers of loose, warm clothing. This will better protect you against wind, snow and rain. If your clothes become wet, change them as soon as possible.
- **Exercise.** Plan how to keep exercise as part of your routine at least three days a week, even if it's shorter than usual. Regular exercise can keep you healthy, both mentally and physically.

With these ideas you can be on your way to a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

December Anniversaries:

Bill & Natalie Monaghan 1
Ron & Sharon Locke 9
Barbara & Mark Graber 27
Paul & Kirsten Rooney 30

December Birthdays:

Carol Arnold 2
Cathy Deamer 9
Glenda Lewis 11
Walter Clark 14
Kelly Kilgallen 15
Caroline Rooney 19
Natalie Monaghan 25
Pat VanPatten 29

Sandra Lundstedt 2
Kristen Bodden 10
Robert Hummer 12
Randy Bekkering 15
Faith Libby 18
Joe Bodden 21
Henry Kohout 27

Sue Penn 3
Kathy Reynolds 10
Mike Torelli 13
Bob Cooper 15
Ed Naumowicz 19
Richard Crisi 23
Sarah Hoffman 29
Richard Doyle 31



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