

THE MESSENGER

A Pastor's Ponderings

As the foliage turns from verdant green to vibrant yellows, oranges and reds and eventually falls to the ground, we are reminded that Autumn is fundamentally a season of change and transition. As we enjoy this yearly display of changing leaves, it is important to remember that this doesn't simply occur because it is beautiful, but primarily because it is functional. If a tree were to hold onto its leaves through the winter months it would put itself in great peril. As the weight of snow and ice would threaten to break its branches. However, I would honestly understand a tree's reluctance to let go of its leaves that it spent a whole season growing. Not only had this taken energy, but the leaves themselves had given the tree life. And yet they must let go. Even the fallen leaves have a purpose, as they decompose and their nutrients are recycled so that new things can grow and thrive. We too in times of change and transition need to learn to let go and allow for new things to grow.

As I wrote about in my March newsletter article, the Reformed Church in America is restructuring. At the end of this year, both the Classis of Schenectady and the Regional Synod of Albany will come to an end and be replaced with new bodies called Middle Assemblies. Both institutions have served the church well and even if you are not very familiar with these entities, we have all benefitted from them. They both have provided oversight and support to this congregation and its pastors for two centuries or more. The Regional Synod of Albany was formed in the year 1800 and the Classis of Schenectady was formed the year 1826, thus being 226 years old and 200 years old respectively.

At the final stated Classis meeting on October 27th representatives from all 17 current

congregations gathered to give thanks to God for the Classis' two centuries of service. The Rev. Dr. Yohan Bosman, pastor of Christ Community Reformed Church in Clifton Park and final President of the Classis preached on Joshua 1:1-9.

Moses has just died and now Joshua is appointed to lead God's people into the holy land. Despite not knowing exactly what was next, God tells Joshua to **proceed**. God instructs Joshua to be strong and courageous and promises to be with Joshua just as God had been with Moses before him. Joshua is reminded that there is no need for fear or dismay for God will go with him wherever he goes. Rev. Dr. Bosman then charged us to also **proceed boldly** into the future trusting that God is still with us.

The meeting also marked some changes and transitions within local congregations, which included a handful of retirements of Ministers. Yet we also prepared for new Ministers to join us in the near future who will no doubt bring new energy and imagination to our area.

We now join 60 other congregations in a new body called the Northeastern Middle Assembly or NEMA for short. This body already gathered for its organizational meeting in late September, and I am very hopeful about what this new organization will bring.

So may we, like the trees, have the strength and foresight to let go of our leaves as a new season comes and allow them to become nutrients for new growth in the future. Let us **boldly proceed** into a new season without fear knowing God is with us indeed.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey

Time Change

Don't forget to fall back an hour on Sunday, November 1st as DST comes to an end. We will be 'falling back' or 'gaining' an hour.



All Saints Day

For the first time in many years, this congregation celebrated All Saints Day in 2025 with a stand alone evening service to commemorate loved ones who have been called home to God. The service was very well received and appreciated. This service will be offered again this year and we plan to make this an annual celebration. We will gather on Sunday, November 1st at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary. The service will include reading of the names of those who have gone on to heavenly glory.



Renew Bible Study

The Renew Bible Study, a small group study, meets on Tuesdays at noon via Zoom. We continue reading *Why Science and Faith Need Each Other* by sociologist Elaine Howard Ecklund. We will meet 2 weeks in November to discuss Creativity and Healing. If you'd like to join in the discussion, contact Sunny Baldwin, csunnyb53@gmail.com, 518-320-4562, for the Zoom link. Obtain a book from Diana Ackner, Director of Christian Education. Cost is \$11.



Adult Education Series

Rev. McCloskey adult education continues into November. The series is entitled "Neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire: the Holy Roman Empire and the Protestant Reformation." The class gathers on Tuesday evenings at 6:00pm in Brink Hall.

Faith Formation

Our theme for the year is DISCIPLESHIP.

November 1: Patience

November 8: Forgiveness

November 15: Love

November 22: *Communion* - No Class

Hanging of the Greens

Nov. 29: Advent 1 - Hope

Kids sing in worship



Faith Growing to be
more like Jesus
Formation

New Pledge Cards & Consecration Sunday

In order to better acknowledge that Stewardship is not just about financial giving, but also about gifts of time and talent, this year's Pledge Card has been redesigned. The top portion concerns gifts of treasure, while the lower portion concerns gifts of time and talent.

Pledge cards will be formally collected on Consecration Sunday, November 8th. We humbly ask and strongly encourage everyone to complete a 2027 Pledge Card.



Labyrinth Walk

Join a conversation about the history of labyrinths on November 1st following 10 am worship. Two brief videos will be shown to explain the origin and purpose of labyrinths, followed by a discussion on "how" to walk the labyrinth.

The following Sunday, November 8th, the FRCS six circuit medieval labyrinth will be available to walk in Brink Hall after 10 am worship. Bob Baldwin will provide meditative music to enhance the experience.

Labyrinths are pathways that have been used as spiritual tools for thousands of years. They have a single path that leads to the center. Walking a labyrinth can clear the mind, calm anxieties, guide healing, open the heart, and lead to personal and spiritual growth. Over the summer of 2014, members of FRCS designed and painted a 23 foot canvas labyrinth that was sewn in an octagon shape. The six circuit medieval design was painted in a liberty blue. The design is similar to a Chartres pattern. Psalm 16:6 was penciled on the blank canvas and the first stroke of blue paint was used to cover the words. FRCS has been blessed to have this wonderful meditative tool.

Labyrinth Walk

Pattern of lines cut into stone,
Directions laid out as citadel of peace.
I create a soft footfall over winding path,
While pale blue lies silent in the sky.
My heart's engine paces the walk,
Surrounding landscape carries no tumult.
Music raises a warm background beat,
Sunlight marks out my rhythmic steps.
A life can ease and sweep across the journey
Allaying blows and shocks of human noise.

By David Walsh



American Red Cross Blood Drive

The church will host another American Red Cross Blood Drive on November 17th from 12-4pm. There continues to be a great need for blood donations. Please consider giving the gift of life.



Christ the King Sunday

Every year, Christ the King Sunday marks the last Sunday in Ordinary Time before the beginning of a new liturgical year with Advent. On Sunday, November 22nd, we will mark the occasion with the Celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Hanging of the Greens

We will be decorating our building for the Christmas Season on Sunday, November 22nd after 10am service. Plans are underway so save the date!



Men's Fellowship

Our November gathering will be on Tuesday the 10th at 7:00pm.

If you would like to receive notifications about the Men's Fellowship, please contact Bob Baldwin at frcsmen@gmail.com.

If you have any questions feel free to contact any of the leaders below:

Joe Bennett jlbenett43@gmail.com or 518-469-4788

Bill Shave wshavejr@gmail.com or 518-573-1098

Bob Baldwin frcsmen@gmail.com or 518-320-4561

Genealogy Workshop

The genealogy group has a new name, GENEALOGY WORKSHOP. Our next meeting will be November 4th at 7-9pm in Brink Hall. The topics will be "Where do you come from and how do you acquire information?", a personal approach to your search. There will be plenty of time for questions, answers and discussions after reviewing the topics. If you have not previously attended, no worries...you are always welcome at any time. Remember to bring your thumb drive to download documents shared during the evening as well as other sessions that you have missed.

If you have questions, please contact me, Bob Baldwin via text 518-320-4561 or email at Robert.baldwin.acctrng@gmail.com. The more, the merrier!

Community Meal Update by Mark Holley

In September, we had 96 meals given out. We had baked potatoes with taco meat, cheese, lettuce, salsa, sour cream and corn chip toppings. It was a great turnout. A celebration of the volunteers took place before the meal. I couldn't do the meal without their efforts and dedication to our guests. Thank you.

We have the Thanksgiving meal on the 24th and 25th of November. Anyone that wants or needs a meal please let me know at holleydad11@gmail.com. On the 24th of November the meals will be delivered or picked up by noon. We are at a total of 9,310 meals shared so far.

November Mission of the Month: Over the Bridge

Over the Bridge Outreach is a ministry started by our very own Doug Bartling that's focused on:

- Sharing the Good News of 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.



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

Over the Bridge Update

The Daily Gazette has recently had several stories about the controversy surrounding whether or not to let the homeless sleep on the hard cement area outside the library. But what is the solution? There are complicated reasons that people remain homeless, but they are still human beings that deserve to be treated with respect and compassion, knowing that God loves them. That is the premise of Over the Bridge. We do not judge people, but we do offer them food, water, and warm clothing, blankets and sleeping bags. We try to learn their first names and use them in our interactions. I encourage each of you to ride with Doug one Sunday afternoon just to experience the gratitude we receive from these individuals. They often say "God bless you" before we do. To me, Over the Bridge isn't just our mission----it is God's mission.

Community Cupboard Update

With Thanksgiving around the corner, let us begin our celebrations by remembering our guests who visit our Cupboard. We often hear expressions of thanks from them. Recently one person shared, "I work two jobs and can make my monthly bills. There isn't enough left to buy many groceries. I'm so grateful for this Cupboard and all of the people who make this food available!"

As we give thanks and share our blessings through our donations to the Community Cupboard, please consider offering both traditional Thanksgiving menu items, like gravy and stuffing, and less traditional items like shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and deodorant, which are always in high demand. Food - or personal care - for thought!

Are you interested in joining the Community Cupboard team? There are a variety of small tasks from stocking to shopping. We welcome participation! Contact Karen Wentworth 518-441-8478 or Cindy Taft 518-369-3324.

Here at the Community Cupboard the spirit of giving is year round! Monetary donations are always welcome. We have volunteers who will do the shopping!



BackPack IS BACK!

1 IN 6 children in our community experiences food insecurity.

We provide food to help carry students and their families through the weekend when they do not have access to school breakfast and lunch.

We provide **4** plentiful distributions during the school year to supplement families over the school breaks.

The cost per student for the year is approximately **\$300.**

The BackPack program is back and ready to serve our community for the 2026-2027 school year!

As pictured, our dedicated volunteers work together to pack bags and organize supplies, demonstrating the generosity and community spirit that make this program possible.

You can make a difference!

DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THE BACKPACK PROGRAM MAY BE MADE THROUGH THE CHURCH MISSION FUND.

Thank you to our volunteers, donors and supporters for helping make the BackPack program a success!

Operation Christmas Child

Families and individuals can make fun and meaningful memories this year by packing shoebox gifts for children in need! What a great way to start a Christmas tradition that emphasizes giving. There's nothing like the personal touch of shopping for and filling shoeboxes together to ensure that boys and girls around the world receive quality gifts for Christmas. Here's how:

Step 1. Get a shoebox from Miss Diana or from home.

Step 2. Get Instructions on how to pack a box.

Step 3. Go shopping (this is the fun part)!

Step 4. Pack your shoebox.

Step 5. Label your box (Miss Diana has labels).

Step 6. Leave the completed shoebox on the cart next to Miss Diana's office at church with a \$10 donation, if possible, for shipping cost.

Boxes need to be returned by **November 15th**!

Have more questions? Contact Miss Diana at education@firstreformedscotia.org.

Advent Devotionals

Advent devotionals will be available by Sunday, November 22nd. This year's theme is *“Until the Dawn, Actions for the Work of Advent”*



Women's Retreat 2027

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 8th-10th**. The cost for 2027 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! To sign up or to get more info please contact Miss Diana at education@firstreformedscotia.org.

Health and Wellness Note

Each year there is a World Diabetes Day. which is November 14th this year. The 2026 theme is, “Early action on diabetes,” which highlights the importance of earlier diagnosis, access to comprehensive care and reducing diabetes stigma.

Currently there are more than 40% of people around the world who are unaware of their diabetes diagnosis. Without a diagnosis, people living with diabetes may not be able to access the care, treatment and support they need to manage their diabetes and live healthy lives.

According to the World Health Organization these are some key points for you to do:

General public: Know the symptoms of diabetes.

1. Learn the symptoms of diabetes and encourage family and friends to do the same.
2. Don't ignore possible symptoms of diabetes. Seek medical advice if you notice symptoms such as increased thirst, frequent urination, unexplained weight loss, tiredness or blurred vision.
3. Every conversation matters. Challenge stigma, choose empathy and ask questions with curiosity.

People living with diabetes: Share your experiences and help drive change.

1. Your experience matters. Share your diagnosis journey and experiences to help raise awareness, challenge stigma and encourage earlier diagnosis.
2. Support others by sharing trusted information and encouraging people to seek care.
3. Join the conversation on social media: #ActEarlyOnDiabetes #WorldDiabetesDay

Healthcare workers: Know the symptoms. Start the conversation. Support every person.

1. Help reduce diabetes stigma by communicating with empathy, avoiding assumptions and involving people living with diabetes in decisions about their care. Include instruction about diabetes prevention.

Remember, although there is no cure for diabetes, with early diagnosis and treatment it can be controlled so you can have a significantly higher quality of daily and longer life!

What are you waiting for?

November Anniversaries

Bev and Glenn Haringa

20

Kristin and Joe Bodden

27

November Birthdays

Joan Grant	1	Maggie White	13	Rheana Gravell	18
Al Snyder	2	Ken Willcox, Jr.	13	David White	20
Dave Wentworth	3	Spike Ahl	17	Jim Pierce	22
Meredith Reece	5	Jay Harlow	17	Philip Hermance	26
Shannon Warfield	9	Jane Brehm	18	Karen Faulkner	29

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