



June 2007

I find myself reluctant to write this final article for the *Tower Crier*. It is hard for me to imagine that the next church newsletter I write an article for will be called **The Beacon**. (**The Beacon** is the name of Church on the Hill's newsletter.) June holds for me so many transitions that my head begins to swim trying to think of them all, and my heart aches as I think about all the goodbyes that will be said in a few short weeks. But a new call to a new church beckons, so transition I must, and good-bye I must say.

Stephanie and I will say good-bye to the first house we shared together, to the hospital and the city where our son, Gavin, was born. We will say good-bye to the streets we walked daily with our dog, and to the neighbors with whom we shared an evening conversation and a wave as we drove by. We will say good-bye to the friends that we have made here, hoping that distance will not fade the strength of our bonds.

We will say goodbye to you, the congregation of First Reformed Church which has been for us a place where we were birthed, in many ways, into new thinking, new culture, and new models of what it means to be a church. We will say good-bye to people we have served with and have grown to love.

Thank you for being for us a place of learning, of challenge, of fellowship, and of faith. We will miss worshipping with you in the wonderful, awesome, and historic sanctuary. We will miss the community shared at the Fresh Faith service.

I will miss the youth group trips, the service projects, the parties, the Lenten classes, the seasonal festivals, and the bouncy bounce. I will miss the lunches shared with youths and adults as we talked about life and faith. I will miss, believe it or not, consistory meetings and retreats. I will miss the children who come rushing forward for children's messages, and painting faces on the church lawn at the beginning of each year. I will miss the ministers and the staff that I have had the privilege of working with.

You as a congregation and as individuals have meant more to Stephanie, Gavin and me than I could ever express in this short page. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your lives, as we have journeyed here these last four years. Know that we will think of you fondly, and hope to hear now and again about the great things God is doing among you and through you in Schenectady.

Grace and Peace,

Justin

FAREWELL TO THE MEYERS!



You are invited to an open house to celebrate Justin's new ministry! Join Justin, Stephanie and Gavin at the Daniels' home on Friday, June 8th any time from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Party like it's 1999, which is the year Justin was born! Beverages, meats and party ware will be provided; please bring a side dish, salad or dessert. RSVP to Kate at the church office at 377-2201 so the Daniels know how much BBQ to cook. Bring the whole gang, and be prepared to send the poor sod off in style. Songs, poems, jokes, and pranks are encouraged, until someone calls the cops. 1413 Clifton Park Road, in Niskayuna (take Nott Street almost up to Balltown, turn right on Clifton Park Road before you hit the Co-op). See you there!

Interfaith Worship 2007

This April, First Reformed and Temple Gates of Heaven continued a long tradition and worshiped together. I preached at their synagogue on Friday evening and Rabbi Matt Cutler preached in our sanctuary Sunday, April 29th. A good time was had by all. After the worship service here, Rabbi Cutler stayed for the Forum and a lively discussion ensued. We talked openly about the relationship between Judaism and the nation of Israel and our need to continue to work and worship together. Our fellowship has had a long tradition of inter-faith cooperation and we look forward to expanding it in the future. Next fall perhaps we can visit a Sukkot festival.

~Bill Levering

June Events in a Nutshell

- June 3 Confirmation Sunday
- June 8 Justin Good-bye Potluck at Daniels'
- June 10 Graduates' Sunday
Church Picnic and Good-bye to Meyers
- June 17 Justin's Last Sermon (here)
- June 22 Summer Solstice Open House at the
home of Bill and Abby Levering
- June 24 Bill Preaches

Youth Groups in June

SHYG

June 3: Confirmation Sunday

June 3: presentation on the Washington, D.C. trip following the worship service for Adult Forum.

June 10: is Graduates Sunday.

June 10: 6 p.m. at the Golden Phoenix in St. James Square we will meet for dinner and to say good-bye to Justin.

JHYG

June 9: We leave church at 7 a.m. and head to Boston to go to the Aquarium and to Quincy Market. Cost is \$10 for the whole day, but you might want to bring spending money for Quincy Market. We will eat lunch in Boston and catch dinner along the way home. We will return to church in the evening.

Web Updates

You will find more resources online than ever in the future. Our website now has cartoons, calendars, news, weather, and Bible verses. Check in once a week to see what's happening and what you have missed.

2007 Schenectady/Nijkerk Exchange

A reminder that ten youth are coming to Schenectady this summer from Nijkerk the Netherlands. This year's exchange is from Friday, July 13 to Thursday, July 26. Host families, drivers, and day guides, along with financial and other support are being sought.

Host families have the opportunity for their youth to sail with their Dutch guest aboard the Half Moon, the replica of Henry Hudson's 1609 Dutch exploration ship, on a 3 ½ day *Voyage of Discovery*.

For further information on this youth exchange contact George Trimarco at 3555-7464. The Schenectady/Nijkerk Council is meeting at FRC every other Wednesday evening until our young visitors arrive, June 13 and 27 and July 11 at 7:00 p.m. New members are welcome.

Next year, in the spring of 2008, and adult delegation will go to Nijkerk from Schenectady. If you are interested in this trip, please contact Ellen McNett at ellen-mcnett@webtv.net or 372-1270.

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Welcome New Members:

Angela Case, Bill Clock, Rich, Diana and Jie Jie Bennett, Keith and Susan Muse, and Jeanne Shoulder.

We are pleased to introduce the following new members who joined First Reformed this spring:

Bill Clock lives in Glenville on Sacandaga road (where he has a spectacular view of the mountains to the east) with his wife Jennifer. Bill originally lived in Rotterdam and has been back in the area for almost two years after seven years in Hoosick.

This is the second time Bill has joined First Reformed. He was a member back in the late 60's and 70's during the time Dean Dykstra was our Senior Minister and has always felt Dean was a great influence on him. The fact that there was "a lot going on" both in the church and the community at that time made First Reformed an exciting place to be.

Bill is a pilot and holds a commercial license, although he now flies only general aviation. He and a friend own a 1945 Piper Cub and while Bill doesn't fly as often as he wishes, he enjoys it.

More of Bill's time is taken up hiking. He has topped 111 peaks of over 4000 feet in New York and throughout the Northeast. This makes him a "46'er" by default. One or two weekends a month will find Bill on some trail or another.

His other hobby is cycling. Bill really enjoys getting on a bike and "going somewhere." He frequently goes to Albany and has trekked to Poughkeepsie and Burlington, VT in this area and when on Cape Cod he likes to trek out to Provincetown, a round trip of about 75 miles.

~Rob Dickson

Keith and Susan Muse and their adorable baby girl Ava are Schenectady residents. Keith is an attorney with Schenectady County and Susan commutes to Albany to work as an architect of Interior Design. They enjoy camping and hiking a great deal and can often be found visiting with family from Syracuse, New Hampshire and Georgia. Look for Ava's big day as a new member when she's baptized in June!

~Wendi Matusic

Jeanne Shoulder is the daughter of Marie Pletenik – and grew up in this church. As their neighbor it has been my privilege to know and admire Jeanne since she was a teenager. She is now the mother of two children – Rachel with the Peace Corps in Tanzania, and Danny, studying at the Community College here.

Jeanne is presently working for the NYS Department of Health and will be starting a PhD in chemistry at RPI in the fall. She has already shaped our congregation by beginning a fair trade coffee, tea and chocolate service.

~Sally Knutson

Rich, Diana and JieJie Bennett moved to Niskayuna from Charlton, NY in 2004 and lived in Galway a number of years before that. When they were in Galway, Diana was a 4-H Agent with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County. She worked with the youth of Saratoga County, including, as they are finding out now, several from First Reformed. Diana is currently the Executive Director of the Scotia-Glenville Children's Museum, which, we might note, was founded by FRC member Janne Pontius Mathes.

Rich has been a Legislative Assistant with the New York State Senate, worked with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and was recently appointed Special Assistant to the Commissioner of New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

JieJie attended Brown School and is now a student at Rosendale Elementary School. In her spare time, she participates in Chinese cultural activities.

Rich and Diana are both originally from Queens. At an early age, Diana moved to Dolgeville. JieJie was born in Le Chang, China in October 1999. Rich and Diana brought JieJie home to Galway in August of 2000. Rich and Diana, even though city kids, pursued agricultural interests and met as counselors at an FFA (Future Farmers of America) camp in the Adirondacks.

The Bennetts attended our Christmas Eve Children's Service several years ago and were captured by the church community as a "comfortable place for all of us."

~Clarence and Laura Linder

07-07-07

On the seventh of July at four o'clock in the afternoon at the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Dorothy Jeanette Linder, daughter of Laura Lee and Clarence H. Linder, Jr. will be united in marriage with James Russell Mitchell, son of Sara and Auburn Mitchell of Austin, Texas. Members and friends of our church family are invited to attend the wedding ceremony.

June Preaching Schedule

June 3	Confirmation Sunday
June 10	Graduates' Sunday
June 17	Rev. Justin Meyers
June 24	Rev. Bill Levering

Planning Festival Wish List

Over 50 people gathered on May 12th to look at new ideas for the life of our congregation. The flood of ideas was quite overwhelming. So many people had so much passion for so many different ideas that the room could barely contain the energy. We managed to get down on paper almost a hundred different suggestions for actions for the church.

In general, folks were looking for missing pieces in the life of the church. They articulated the need for:

New worship opportunities.

Ideas for a Wednesday night Evensong and a Sunday Jazz Vespers were floated.

Action on environmental issues.

A task force was established to move on advocacy and personal action.

Social and celebration opportunities.

Progressive dinners, a couple's club.

An alternative Christmas fair.

Promoting fair-trade, mission, and a humble celebration.

A high profile lecture / concert series.

National speakers and important music and choral festival.

Small groups with spiritual emphasis.

New regular studies with depth and relevance.

Attention to new members.

Nametags, mentoring, welcoming, follow up and "welcome wagon."

Transparency and accountability on financial matters.

Folks want clear objectives and complete reporting.

Greater visibility in the community.

Attention to advertising, street visibility, broadcasting, and community presence.

Local mission, especially on Hamilton Hill and with SICM.

Clothing shop, Child care, Habitat for Humanity, to Prisoners and Outcasts

Support to members

Parish nurse, bike rack, closer retreats, talent sharing.

This list will be hashed out by the committees of Consistory and many of the ideas implemented as early as this fall.

Labor Day Weekend at Fowler with First Reformed Church

What a glorious place and relaxed time to make and deepen friendships with other members of our congregation! There will be opportunities for swimming, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, playing soccer, volleyball, Frisbee, hiking, talking, singing, feasting, daydreaming, and simply resting. This year we'll again have the pleasure of sharing Fowler Camp and Retreat Center with Delmar Reformed Church.

The weekend begins on Saturday, September 1st, after 10 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon with orientation, activities, etc. following. Monday's lunch will conclude our time there.

This completed form and a \$50 deposit delivered to the church office by Friday, June 8th, will secure your reservation for this wonderful weekend. The balance due may be paid upon arrival. Various accommodations are still available:

1. **Chi Rho House:** comfortable private rooms, baths, towels and linens provided; single per night - \$55; double per night - \$45 per person, floor mattress - \$20 (one per room); children 5 & under are free.
2. **Cabins:** rustic bunkbeds, (linens or towels not provided) \$10 per person per night; \$30 family maximum per night; children 5 & under are free.
3. **Campsites:** rough'n-it; \$27 per hook-up site with power per night.

Camp Fowler provides all our meals - \$45 per person; 5 and under free.

Yes, I/we will be going!

Name(s): _____ Accommodation preference: _____

Expected arrival time: _____; departure: _____

If you can't get away for the three days, you're still welcome on Sunday (\$20 for meals; church van transportation is a possibility).

Yes, I/we'll come Sunday only! Name(s) _____

Those with questions or in need of financial assistance or transportation, see/call Rev. Daniel Carlson (377-2201).

Exhibit Dedicated to James W. and Kathryn Sharp Pontius

Mysteries in Stone: The Architecture of Edward Tuckerman Potter is now on exhibit in the narthex display cases at either side of the church's front door. The title, from longtime Union College professor Carl J. George, refers to studies of the Victorian Gothic architecture of our church building and other works by architect Potter.

Edward Tuckerman Potter of New York was engaged to design the fifth church structure of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady. The east display case shows a variety of images including several postcards of this church, which was built in 1862-63. Our church of today was rebuilt from three stone walls of this church that were left standing after the devastating fire of the sub-zero Sunday, February first 1948.

The left case also shows other examples of E. T. Potter's Victorian Gothic architecture, the Nott Memorial at Union College, designed in honor of his grandfather, Eliphalet Nott, and the Church of the Good Shepherd and Mark Twain's home in Hartford, Connecticut. At the center of the display is an hexalpa and examples of where this feature may be found in Potter's work.

Potter wrote a booklet that was printed in 1868 describing how he designed his A. D. 1862-63 First Dutch Reformed Church. An original copy with a reprint is in the west window. Behind them is a copy of the congregation's 225th anniversary booklet that tells how Potter designed and built the church during the Civil War.

At the center of this window are sample images from the photographic portrait of the church taken in 1930 by the White Studio of Schenectady for the congregation's 250th anniversary. Enlargements of this collection of photographs hang on the walls at either end of the narthex. The exhibit in this window also shows a few vouchers from the construction of the church along with items from the time capsule that was in the cornerstone of the architectural landmark. A note from Potter about his work is there with a sketch of the church on its envelope.

This window too demonstrates characteristics of Edward Tuckerman Potter's stonework and other architectural features. It too includes references to his incorporation of

religious and scientific symbolism, hexalphas, floral patterns, inscriptions, and geometric designs expressed through purposeful use of many types of stone and other materials. Potter was fond of ivy, and a few pieces of ivy from the lighting fixtures of the church were found after the fire and are in this display.

The architect's initials, ETP, may be found on the back of the finial over Potter's minister's entrance to the church. That finial was originally on the north peak of the main roof, but was moved to its current location in the rebuilding of the church after the fire. The hexalpa finial Potter originally had over this entrance is not to be found in the current church. Whatever became of this hexalpa finial?

To learn more about this church read **Three Centuries: The History of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, 1680-1980**, by Pearson, Griffis, Potts, Pontius, DeJong and Dykstra. This 1980 publication is in two volumes and sells for \$25.00 at the church bookshop or the church office. It is also available in the Church Library.

This exhibit about the work of Edward Tuckerman Potter was in many ways made possible by and is therefore dedicated to James and Kathryn Pontius. Jim and Kay were instrumental in recognizing, gathering, preserving and making available the archives and history of this church. Their many contributions include the reprint of Potter's booklet, the conservation and restoration of the Schenectady Academy Charter, securing a grant with the Schenectady County Historical Society to microfilm the minutes and other early records of this church making them more readily accessible for research, and the publication of **Three Centuries: The History of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, 1680-1980** for the congregation's tercentennial. Thanks also to their leadership and active participation in establishing the Archives and Historical Concerns Committee, support continues toward keeping our "inheritance in order." (Three Centuries, Volume Two, page 317.)

Exhibit organized, designed and installed by Laura Lee Linder, Archives and Historical Concerns.

Congratulations to Susan Houpt

Susan Houpt was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the United Way of Schenectady County at its May meeting. Good job, Susan!

June Post Service Schedule

June 3	<i>Senior High Mission Trip Report</i>
June 10	<i>Church Picnic and Farewell to the Meyers Family</i>
June 17	<i>Post Service Refreshments in Huntley Garden</i>
June 24	<i>Post Service Refreshments in Huntley Garden</i>

Render Unto Caesar

~by Almy Coggeshall

Almy Coggeshall's essay is yet another voice in the continuing debate about Creationism and Evolution.

This story starts in 1936 when I was a sophomore in college. I had come home for a weekend and my dad had arranged a dinner party where one of the guests was Dr. Harold Larabee, professor of philosophy at Union College.

College sophomores believe that they know everything and I was holding forth on some topic when Larabee brought me up short by asking,

“Almy, was what you just said a public thought or a private thought?”

“Wha...wha...what's that?” I replied.

So Larabee explained to me that both of us could look out the window and agree that the sun was shining, the sky was blue and the grass was green. He called these “public thoughts.” Then he said there was another class of thinking that was real and vivid but which could not be explained or shared with another unless that person had had a closely similar experience. He called these “private thoughts.” The example he gave was watching a well-intentioned adult trying to make a convincing explanation to a seven year-old boy what it was like to fall in love.

I have been pondering on what Larabee said ever since.

Let us go forward to the 1970s when I was working on problems relating to electrical insulation at one of the laboratories at General Electric. I considered myself a pretty good experimenter but I soon found out that I could not design an experiment that a new colleague at the lab, Karl, could not improve upon. I would consult with him frequently. Late on a winter afternoon when we had finished the business of the day, we were shooting the breeze, concerning the nature of truth.

“Do you have a “for instance?” asked Karl. I replied, “Do you have an example?”

“Sure” answered Karl. “It concerns how Einstein's theory of relativity was proved correct by experiment.”

Then he explained how Einstein had proposed his theory of relativity in 1905. His logic and mathematics were impeccable, but the conclusions were unbelievable. Einstein held that systems were speeded up, clocks would run more slowly, and everything got heavier. This concept could not be tested on earth because in order to obtain an appreciable effect, the speed had to be increased to an appreciable fraction of the speed of light. The velocity of light is such that it can go around the world seven times in a second. A laboratory to observe this effect would have to zip around the world in something like two to three seconds, an obvious impossibility.

However, an opportunity to experimentally test Einstein's theory came in 1919. One consequence of the theory of relativity was that a beam of light would be bent by a strong gravitational field. Therefore, the light from a

star passing close to the edge of the sun would be slightly bent and would appear to have shifted its position when observed on earth. This could be seen only during a total eclipse of the sun when the moon blocked off the glare of the sun.

The eclipse of the sun of 1919 offered an opportunity to look for this effect and two expeditions were organized to observe it; one on the east coast of South America and the other on an island off the west coast of Africa.

When the results came in, not only was the light from the star bent, but the amount of bending was within ten percent of what Einstein had predicted!

At this, Einstein's stock rose appreciably and the world began to take him seriously.

Karl had given me a test of truth but he had not produced an actual definition.

Much later I learned that words that deal with abstractions cannot be defined by themselves, but only as they are applied to some definite situation where all the governing conditions are known.

I had a chance to apply this concept when our former minister, Dr. Robert A. White, asked me to help him understand a project then in progress at Princeton Theological Seminary.

This project was intended to settle the apparent conflict between science and religion. The Seminary had assembled a group of world-class scientists and theologians who had constituted themselves as a learned society where members read erudite papers which were then duly discussed. These papers and the following discussions were then published as the proceedings of this society. This group had chosen to tackle ultimate creation: the theory of the Big Bang, itself.

White had accumulated about three feet of bookshelf space full of these proceedings, but he could not understand them; would I please help! So I left for a summer vacation with a big cardboard box full of books and all summer I read heavy-duty theology on the one hand and quantum mechanics and Big Bang theory on the other.

At the end of the summer, White wanted to know what I had learned and this is what I told him.

I replied: The two sides were unable to reach a consensus. The theologians would say, “You scientists can say anything you want about ultimate creation and the Big Bang as long as you leave a little room for some Divine Intervention.”

The scientists would reply, “As individuals we can comply with your request and some of us can believe in both the Big Bang and at the same time have a strong perception of God and sensitivity for religious belief in our

minds. But as an institution, science is in the business of developing explanations of natural phenomena by means of discerning observation and experiment. If these experiments turn out as predicted, we feel we are on firm ground to advance knowledge by a continuation of the same process. But a supernatural being can do anything. It can set aside the laws of Nature just like that! Therefore, we cannot allow consideration of any supernatural intervention.”

Now let us return to Harold Larabee and come full circle. Religious faith and religious experience is probably the most private and rewarding example of private thought.

But this example will also be the most incomprehensible to those whose minds are stuck in the realm of what Larabee deemed as public thought.

I am reminded of the quotation in Matthew: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.”

Senior Moments

I have mixed feelings about the title "Senior Pastor" but have decided to call my monthly reflections "Senior Moments" as an ironic way of dealing with my feelings. I would like to let you know about a few things informally this month. Justin Meyers is leaving and we hope you all will be able to make one of his goodbye events. As we look to the future, I anticipate that we will find an interim solution replacing his wonderful ministry while we try to figure out how we should move into the future. The Consistory will consider the dimensions of a job description and how it relates to our future. All ideas are welcome at this point.

The planning festival highlighted what vibrant and passionate opinions are held by members of our congregation. I love the bright mix of ideas we have here. So far, everyone has played nicely about the future and I encourage us to remain cordial and even loving about our pet projects.

At the planning meeting, I introduced an idea that I will now take to Consistory that will streamline our meetings a bit. It turns out that we were meeting to **run** the church more than we were meeting to **be** the church. I hope we can be more efficient, using the web and good

meetings to shepherd our time in order to get to the meat of our spiritual endeavors: sharing and studying and deepening our faith together.

Abby and I would like to invite you to an open house so you can see our new place. We will host a summer solstice open house on June 22 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Stop by to chat and see where we live. Bring the kids and neighbors. There will be food about and friendly talk.

If you are out of town this summer, I encourage you to check out some local congregation and bring back news of how other churches are doing things. If you are in town, please feel free to join us. The dress code has been relaxed for the summer and you will no longer be ejected if you don't have on a dinner jacket. We'll have ice cream a few times after worship and some good times.

After re-reading this, I get a new appreciation for the rambling nature of Paul's letters in the New Testament. There is so much to talk about in a vibrant, loving church. May we all appreciate the great foundation of our faith that undergirds all our meetings, all our plans, all our breath.

May your summer breaks be full of peace and grace.

~Bill Levering

Poetry Corner

submitted by Mary Jane Fleming

This was written in the author's youth and was meant to be read many years later, perhaps even after the poet died. It is to remind the woman of her former youth and loveliness, and of the man who understood and loved her best. My own late husband enjoyed Yeats so very much. This was being prepared for my 80th birthday last week.

When You Are Old

When you are old and gray and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And his face amid a crowd of stars.

~William Butler Yeats



*Spring Picnic
and
Farewell Celebration for the Meyers' Family*

Guaranteed Fun For All Ages!

SUNDAY, JUNE 10TH

11:00 a.m. -1:30 p.m.

On the Side Lawn outside Poling Chapel

Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, and Beverages will be provided

Please bring a salad, side dish, or dessert to share.

Bring a friend or two!

Sponsored by the Youth Education and Nurture Committee

Fresh Faith on Sabbatical

Fresh faith, our early Sunday-morning worship service, will take an extended break at the end of May. This service has met the needs of members over the years, but a group of participants who met to plan its future noted declining attendance. They decided to take a break and to invest in other worship opportunities for the time being.

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