

The Rev. Craig J. Hoffman

The Rev. Jan L.Hoffman

THE MESSENGER

From Craig's Desk: **A HARD DECISION**



Twenty-one years ago our Consistory called Jan and me to come and become your pastors here at First Reformed Church. We eagerly agreed, for it was the right time for us. I had served the Pultneyville Reformed Church just east of Rochester, NY for fourteen-and-a-half years. They were good years, too, and that is where our sons were born. But Jan and I had long dreamed of serving a larger church together, and serving a congregation together was an important part of the call to ministry that we first experienced. So after our sons were both in school we began keeping our ears open for just such an opportunity. That opportunity came in Scotia, and we are so grateful that it did.

For twenty-one years you have welcomed us into your lives, and for twenty-one years our lives have been enriched by you. We have enjoyed excellent support from a wonderful parade of elders, deacons, Christian educators, musicians, and other leaders. It has all gone so fast, and I can hardly believe that nearly one-third of my life has been spent here as one of your pastors.

But Jan and I have decided that we are approaching the right time to move on to the next chapter of our lives. Jan now has a Medicare card, and I've already had one for some time. The long days and long weeks that come from time to time and with some regularity in the pastoral ministry leave us more tired than they once did. It's the right time for us.

But we also think it's the right time for you, the congregation we serve and that we love. Our Consistory is strong. Our staff, every one of them, is strong. There could not be better leaders invested in the life of our church than there are right now to steer the church through a time of transition.

Thus, as most of you already know, Jan and I have decided to retire at the end of June. Sunday, June 28 will be our last Sunday leading worship. Now that's still more than five months away, so it's not "good-bye" just yet. We intend to enjoy every last day that we have with you, and hope that you will do the same with us.



Thank You's:

Since we published the last issue of *The Messenger* we received the following thank-you notes and letters. They are posted on the tack strip outside of Pastor Craig's office. Read and enjoy them there for yourselves.



- Thank you notes were received from the following charities we supported in 2014:
Schenectady Inner City Ministry, Ronald McDonald House, The Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Western Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Joan Nicole Prince Home
- From Bob Atwood: Thank you to all who came by or sent cards to help me celebrate my big "surprise" birthday party.
- From Aileen Reinhardt: Many thanks for the beautiful poinsettia plant Joanna Clark brought me the day after Christmas. I am still enjoying its beauty and I hope you all had a blessed Christmas and that the new year is filled with much happiness and good health. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness.
- From Eileen Quick at Scotia Food Pantry: Congregants of First Reformed, thank you so much for the generous food donations during the month of December. We appreciate your support!

Shout Outs:

So many people do so much for our congregation, and we thank them all for it. This month we especially give a shout out to:

- Linda Lewis, who has been selected through Scotia-Glenville's PTA Council for the annual Founder's Day Award for a Community Volunteer in recognition of her devotion to school children! She will be honored on Tuesday, February at a Founder's Day Dinner at the River Stone Manor. Way to go Linda!
- Priscilla and Bob Harvey, who delivered the food donations to the Scotia Food Pantry for the months of December, January, and February.

Mission Of The Month:

Our Mission of the Month for February is Bethesda House, a ministry to the homeless community of Schenectady County. Bethesda House is committed to the principal of "Housing First." Housing First means that of all the many problems faced by homeless people such as unemployment, addiction, mental illness, lack of clothing and safety concerns, the issue to address first in order to be successful at addressing the others is housing – having a stable, safe place to stay. Bethesda House is located on State Street. Volunteers are needed during the day. Please call 374-7873 to volunteer. We regularly give used clothing and new toiletries to Bethesda House.

Designate your giving to Mission of the Month by using the month's yellow envelope in your box of offering envelopes, or by writing Mission of the Month on the memo line of your check. Please include your envelope number if you have one. Thanks.

Labyrinth Link: Candlelight Peace Walk

What better way to spend Fat Tuesday than to focus on peace and healing this Lent. We will be hosting a candlelight open walk for Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 p.m. in Brink Hall. Please join us for this prayerful evening and begin the season of Lent with intention and wellness.

Our labyrinth will be open for walks throughout Lent during church office hours. We will set up in Room 8 upstairs for anyone who would like a personal walk. Be on the lookout for area World Labyrinth Day events posted. World Labyrinth Day is May 2, and people from around the globe walk together at 1:00 p.m. as a symbol of unity and peace.



Fowler Spaghetti Dinner:

This year we'll be celebrating the gift of camp as we roll out our twenty-sixth annual Fowler Spaghetti Dinner. Come support our campers and enjoy delicious food and great company and take home a cake or two from our famous cake auction! Let's make

this our BEST YEAR EVER, as we celebrate Fowler with Pastors Jan and Craig in their last year with FRCS. We will be hearing from some campers through the coming weeks as we get their perspective on the benefits of Camp Fowler and how it has helped shape their lives. Volunteer opportunities and ticket sales will be posted shortly; think about taking part in this fun and important event! The mountains are calling!

Valentine's Luncheon:

This invitation is to all "Seniors" who would like to join our youth on **Sunday, February 15, at 12 noon.** We will have a time of fellowship followed by a piping hot soup luncheon served by the Youth Group and FROGs in our church. This is a wonderful time to get to know one another through the generations! Be sure to sign up on the board next to Pastor Craig's office so we know how much food to prepare. See you then!

Youth Group and FROGs families, please check out the Youth Group board to sign up for volunteer opportunities for this event!

Men's Retreat at Camp Fowler:

Winter Beckons at Camp Fowler!

The First Reformed Church Men's Retreat is set for the weekend of March 6-8. We will again gather in Pine Lodge at Camp Fowler, outside Speculator, New York.

Pine Lodge is a shared living space. Sleeping accommodations include bunk beds in three rooms; Pine supplies the bunks and mattresses, you supply the bedding, whether you prefer sleeping bags or bedrolls. We prepare and eat our meals together, using the newly remodeled kitchen. We share recreation time, whether it is skiing, snow shoeing, or just walking around the Camp during a typical Adirondacks mid-wintertime. We also share conversation, reflections, and a time of worship together.

We need volunteers to coordinate the five meals over the weekend. Bill Shave and Bob Baldwin are putting together Saturday night's dinner. We need Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast, Saturday lunch, and Sunday breakfast.

So please consider joining us! The cost is \$50 per person, and can either be paid to the office before that weekend, or we will collect at the end of the weekend. We can accommodate twenty people, and when I checked yesterday we already had fourteen names on the signup sheet outside Craig's office!

Any questions, please feel free to contact David Walsh at: sisudaw@gmail.com or 370-2320.

February Food Pantry Needs:

Every week our bulletin lists the food most needed for the Scotia Food Pantry. Below are the items for February. Please place your donations in the container in the narthex or in the one outside Brink Hall. What a great offering we would give if **everyone** brought the weekly item!

There is **always** a need for bags and for monetary donations. Donations are used to purchase milk certificates and other items available at the Regional Food Bank for just 16 cents a pound. Make out your check to the First Reformed Church of Scotia and put "Food Pantry" on the memo line. Here are this month's food requests:

February 1:

Canned Meat

February 8:

Rice

February 15:

Macaroni & Cheese

February 22:

Dish Detergent



Fowler Volunteers:

Registration for Camp Fowler in Speculator, NY is open online at campfowler.org. Our church will again offer \$150 scholarships to the youth of our congregation toward their camp registration. Make sure to let Pastor Jan know when you have registered so we can award your scholarship! Since registration is through the Fowler office and not our church, we don't know that you've registered unless you tell us. Email Jan at frcsjhoffman@verizon.net.

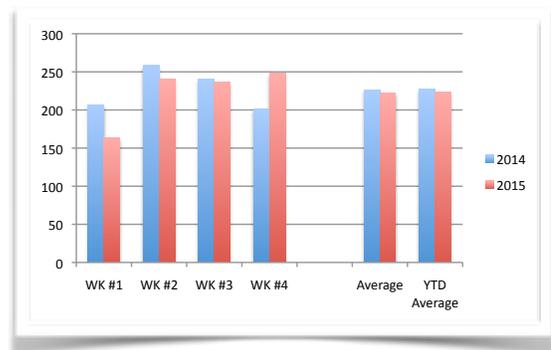
Camp Fowler needs adult volunteer cabin counselors, kitchen, and maintenance workers. Tee Munson, Ed and Kim Rosenberg, Maureen Dykstra, and Linda Willoughby have signed up to be volunteers. Pastors need to send recommendations if you volunteer – let either Pastor Craig or Pastor Jan know.

We raise Fowler scholarship money through our annual Spaghetti Dinner. This year it's on Saturday, March 21. Read about it elsewhere in this issue of *The Messenger*. Plan now to help by serving, buying tickets, or baking cakes for the cake auction. We need to raise at least \$3,000. Join us for this good time and worthy cause.

January Attendance:

We report our monthly worship attendance to encourage you to faithfully gather on the Lord's Day, and invite others to join you.

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
January week #1	164	207
January week #2	241	259
January week #3	237	240
January week #4	248	201
January Average	223	227
YTD Average	223	227



Family Finance:

Each month we report our giving. Here's how we gave in January.

<u>GIVING</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
January	\$21,912	\$21,267	\$645	3%
Total for the Year	\$21,912	\$21,267	\$645	3%

Fowler Winter Camp:

Ever been to Camp Fowler in the wintertime, gone snowshoe hiking, or enjoyed Polar Bear swimming in the snow? Young people in Grades 6–12 can go to the fifth annual winter camp over school break, Sunday dinner through Tuesday lunch, February 15-17, and stay in Chi Rho House. Returning summer staff and volunteers lead recreation, familiar songs, and a fun program to get you in the mood for summer camp. The cost is \$135. Register on-line at campfowler.org/winter-camp. Maddie Westervelt doesn't want to be the only one going to Winter Camp! Who else is going? Let Pastor Jan know if you're going; we'd like to let others know so you can carpool!



Prayer Shawl Ministry:

We are all human and sometimes we experience difficult times, changing times, new challenges, and confusing situations and feelings. In these life circumstances sometimes we need to be wrapped in prayer, held close by faith, and reminded that God's love is all around us. One way to provide this healing and support is through Prayer Shawl Ministry. There is room for you to be a part of this effort at FRCS. We will meet Sunday, February 22, in

Memorial Lounge at 11:30 to share projects, bless any new shawls, look at new needs, and continue to learn knitting techniques. Yarn and knitting supplies are available in the church office or contact Coordinator of Christian Living, Kristin Bodden at 703-1327 with questions or requests for shawls.

Confirmation Class:

Pastors Craig and Jan Hoffman offer a series of Sunday confirmation classes for youth in Grades 9 through 12 beginning on Sunday, March 1, with confirmation taking place on Sunday, May 3. We will gather for a light lunch at 12:30, then meet from 1:00 to 2:00. Confirmation is the process of helping a young person stand before his or her congregation and say, "Christian Faith is not just the faith of my parents and the faith of my church. It is my faith, too." Please talk with one of the pastors after worship some Sunday, or call the church at 370-4751, if you'd like to know more.

Gibson Brothers Concert:

Our own Leigh Gibson is one-half of the Gibson Brothers bluegrass band. Named the 2013 Bluegrass Band of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association, the Gibson Brothers will be in concert at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall on Friday, March 27, at 8:00 p.m. We are able to get group seating with \$3 off per \$30 ticket. Sign up ASAP on the sheet outside of Pastor Craig's office by Sunday, March 1, if you'd like to go. But signing up earlier than that helps us reserve a large enough block so that we can all sit together. Want to sample their music? Go to: www.gibsonbrothers.com.



Ash Wednesday:

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the season of the church year when we look inward and take inventory of our spiritual lives and of the directions we are heading in life. This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 18. We will mark this beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday worship in our Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m. Join others from your church family for a quiet service of reflection and prayer. Those who find it meaningful will be able to have a mark of ashes placed on their foreheads as a sign of repentance and as a sign of our mortality. Let worship on Ash Wednesday help you begin an important and faithful Lenten season.

Milestones:

Here are some milestones in the lives of people in our congregation since the last issue of *The Messenger*.

Congratulations to:

- Patrick and Allie Beauchemin on the birth of their son, Kevin John, on January 2.

We express our sympathy to:

- The family and friends of Gerald Hamm, who passed away on Monday, January 26.

Sexual Harassment & Abuse Panels:

We at First Reformed Church do everything we can to ensure that our people are treated with dignity and respect, and that everyone, especially children, are valued, protected, and cared for. To that end, our Board of Elders has established a policy on Sexual Harassment, and our Consistory has established a “Safe Sanctuary Policy” that helps us guard against child abuse.

Each year our Board of Elders appoints people to a Sexual Harassment panel. These people are prepared to hear and handle any complaints. If you ever hear of or witness an incident of sexual harassment within the life of our congregation, contact one of these people on this year’s Sexual Harassment Panel:

- Pastor Craig Hoffman
- Pastor Jan Hoffman
- Elder Laurie Cooper
- Elder David Schalekamp

The board also appoints people to our Safe Sanctuary Team. This team ensures that we establish and follow procedures that help prevent sexual abuse, and screens staff and volunteers who work with children. If you ever hear of or witness an incident of sexual abuse, contact one of these people on this year’s Safe Sanctuary Panel:

- Pastor Craig Hoffman
- Pastor Jan Hoffman
- Elder Laurie Cooper
- Elder David Schalekamp
- Kids Hope Director Tee Munson
- Coordinator of Christian Living Kristin Bodden
- Sunny Baldwin

A copy of each of the above policies is kept in a binder in the Mail Room for your inspection at any time.

FRCS People Serving RCA:

Our church has a number of people who serve the larger Reformed Church in America.

Regional Synod of Albany

- Kent Busman is the Director of our Fowler Camp and Retreat Center.
- Richard Doyle is a member of the Albany Synod Executive Committee.
- Kristin Bodden and Judd Hoffman are members of the Fowler Program Committee.
- Craig Hoffman is a delegate to this year’s May 4 meeting of the Regional Synod of Albany.

General Synod of the Reformed Church in America

- Dave Walsh is a member of the General Synod’s Nominating Committee.

Classis of Schenectady

- David Schalekamp is our elder delegate to Schenectady Classis, and Don Schermerhorn is his alternate.
- Jan Hoffman is a member of the Schenectady Classis Church Search Supervision Committee.
- Craig Hoffman is a member of the Schenectady Classis Ministry Oversight 2 Committee.

Are you interested in serving the larger church? Talk to Pastors Craig or Jan Hoffman about getting your name in front of the right people.

Kids Hope USA:

A Sacandaga Elementary teacher shared this week that her student was worried there would be another two-hour delay due to the weather. Usually kids can't wait for a delay or a snow day. Not this child. Delays and snow days were interfering with her mentor showing up and that was not okay! Sometimes teachers may wonder what makes students so attached to their mentor and Kids Hope USA.

One thing mentors do exceptionally well is to help their Kids Hope student move away from what psychologist Carol Dweck calls a "fixed" mindset to a "growth" mindset. Many, if not most of the Kids Hope students have been given fixed messages about who they are: "struggling student", "not good in gym", "no friends", "talkative", "hyper", "poor reader". Children who are influenced to have a growth mindset begin to realize they can learn skills or talents to become and do whatever they set their minds to. Mentors emphasize effort. This is something Kids Hope students can control! What are other things mentors do to emphasize a "growth" mindset?

- Talk to them about how their brain is like other muscles: it too can grow through hard work, determination and lots of practice.
- Avoid using words that imply the student was born with set skills and abilities that cannot grow or change through effort.
- Praise the process and not the results! Mentoring reminds the students that perseverance and practice help a child reach higher than ever thought possible.
- Embrace failures. We all potentially learn the most when we fail. Mistakes are part of the learning process. Mentors help their children work through a problem successfully.

First Reformed Church of Scotia's Kids Hope mentors regularly show students the way to grow.

(Thoughts from *The Power of Meaningful Praise*, by Carol Dweck)

Stephen Ministry Moment:

Stephen Minister Claudia Garrison writes our February Stephen Ministry Moment.

Grief

Stephen Ministers are healing people who provide empathetic support to individuals facing difficult hardships in their life's journey. They provide confidential listening ears, and total acceptance of their care receiver. One of the things Stephen Ministers are trained to give is support to those having difficulty as they go through the various stages of grieving.

When a loved one dies, whether it is a spouse, parent, child, or close friend, grieving is unavoidable. There are other reasons for grief. These may be an abrupt change in lifestyle, difficult transitions, a debilitating illness, the loss of a job, divorce, or moving out of a lifelong home to an assisted living facility. Grieving is a natural, normal, and necessary part of life, and avoiding this natural process only prolongs one's grief. It is healthier if we forgive ourselves and allow ourselves to grieve. No two people grieve in the same manner.

You don't have to walk alone; a Stephen Minister is willing to walk with you. They can give suggestions for coping to their care receiver by listening carefully and offering spiritual support.

Stephen Ministry is a ministry of one-on-one Christian caregiving in which a trained Stephen Minister confidentially comes alongside a person going through a life crisis or hard time in order to listen and be present for as long as necessary. For more information contact Pastors Craig or Jan Hoffman, 370-4751, or Stephen Ministry Leader Cheryl MacNeil, 382-8279.

New Consistory:

Our 2015 Consistory met for the first time on Monday, January 12, and organized itself for its work this year. This year's Consistory is made up of the following people:

Pastors:

The Revs. Craig and Jan Hoffman

Deacons:

Pete Lewis, Bill Monaghan, Kate Oaks, Erin Parker, John Pierce Jr., and Beth Vaccaro

Elders:

Laurie Cooper, Richard Doyle, Diane Faubion, Russ Garrison, David Schalekamp, and Don Schermerhorn

Consistory Officers:

President, Craig Hoffman

Vice President, Jan Hoffman

Elder Vice President, Diane Faubion

Clerk, Erin Parker

Other Members of the Executive Committee: Richard Doyle and Russ Garrison

Councils assist our Consistory in planning and organizing the ministries and activities of our church. Membership on one of our councils is open to anyone who is part of our worshipping community - church member and friend alike. Unlike the Consistory whose members are called and elected, council members can volunteer for Consistory appointment. Are you interested in serving on one of our councils? Speak to Pastors Craig or Jan Hoffman. They'll tell you more.

Here are this year's council leaders:

- Administration Council: Don Schermerhorn and Diane Faubion
- Buildings & Grounds Council: Kate Oaks and John Pierce Jr.
- Christian Education Council: David Schalekamp and Laurie Cooper
- Congregational Care Council: Richard Doyle, Bill Monaghan, and Beth Vaccaro
- Missions Council: Erin Parker
- Worship Council: Pete Lewis and Russ Garrison

Have you even wondered what your Consistory does? The most recently approved Consistory minutes are always posted on the bulletin board outside of the pastors' offices. If you ever have any questions about what you read, simply ask either of your pastors or any other member of your Consistory. Their names are printed regularly in the bulletin and are part of the posted minutes.

From Our Elder Vice President:

Craig and Jan's announcement about retiring at the end of June may have some of you wondering what happens next. We are fortunate that the Reformed Church in America has a well-established process in place for us to follow, much like the one we used twenty-one years ago when we first called the Hoffmans. Your Consistory has already met to become familiar with the procedures involved. First, we will begin a search for an Interim Pastor who we hope will begin soon after the Hoffmans leave. Schenectady Classis will also assign us a supervisory team of one elder and one minister from the classis to help guide us. As we embark on this journey, we will communicate our progress and be happy to discuss any questions you may have. Let's enjoy our time with the Hoffmans and be faithful in our worship as we celebrate this new chapter in the life of our church.

February 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Jan & Craig out of town	2 7:15 PM Admin Council	3 7:00 PM Health and Wellness Ministry Meeting	4 6:30 AM CANCELLED- Bible Study AM - ML 12:00 PM CANCELLED- Bible Study PM - LH	5 9:00 AM Morning Bells - BR 7:15 PM Choir Rehearsal - S	6 4:00 PM Jerry Hamm Calling Hours	7 10:00 AM Jerry Hamm Memorial Service
8 6:30 PM Missions Council Meeting 7:15 PM Consistory Meeting	9	10 11:30 AM Caregivers Meeting 7:15 PM STEPHEN MINISRTY - ML	11 6:30 AM Bible Study AM - ML 12:00 PM Bible Study PM - LH	12 9:00 AM Morning Bells - BR 7:15 PM Choir Rehearsal - S 7:15 PM Meeting in Lakehill 8:00 PM Choir Social - ML	13	14 2:00 PM Wedding: Joanna Clark/Brian Fresoni
15	16 7:00 PM Labyrinth Candlelit walk	17	18 ASH WEDNESDAY 6:30 AM Bible Study AM - ML 12:00 PM Bible Study PM - LH 1:30 PM Sharing & Caring - ML	19 9:00 AM Morning Bells - BR 7:15 PM Choir Rehearsal - S	20	21
22 COMMUNION	23 7:15 PM Congregational Care Council	24 10:00 AM Kathie's Card Group	25 6:30 AM Bible Study AM - ML 12:00 PM Bible Study PM - LH	26 9:00 AM Morning Bells - BR 7:15 PM Choir Rehearsal - S	27	28

Eastern Time Time Zone

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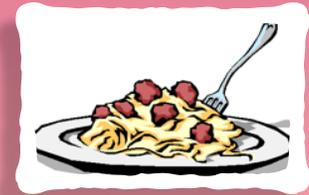
Ash Wednesday Service



Confirmation Classes



Gibson Brothers Concert



Fowler Spaghetti Dinner

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