



LIGHT FROM THE TOWER

January 2015

The mission of historic First Church is to bring diverse people of metropolitan Buffalo together to follow Jesus Christ through worshiping God, fostering spiritual growth and serving the community.

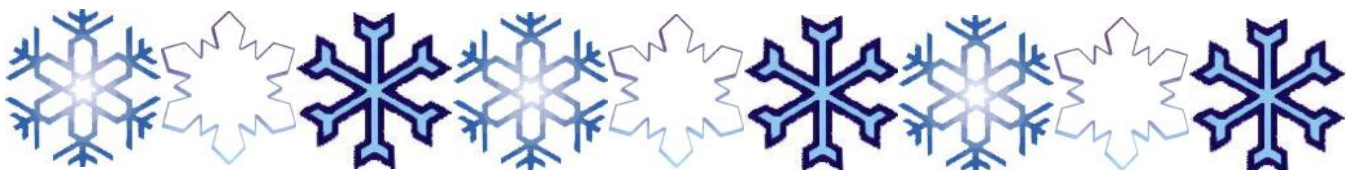


Enhancing Mission at First Church

We are excited to announce a new addition to our church family, an AmeriCorps member! Last year, our Session voted to enhance our missions and community programming by engaging an AmeriCorps ABLE member to serve with us. We are happy to share that we've found an ideal candidate, offered him the position, and he's already been begun as of November 6th. **Alexei Carstensen** is now on board to help us to build bridges within International Prep High School across the street, collaborate with Houghton College's academic support center in our building, and begin to offer after school programming and mentoring opportunities for high school students. This was inspired in part by vision to bring back something like the Fight Back program that our church used to run.

This investment is about enhancing the outreach of our church. That means as a church, we will need to engage in making this happen alongside of him. Please join us in praying about this new effort, and stay tuned for ways that you can get involved! To learn more, talk to Rev. Phil Gittings or Stephanie Smith.

Mr. ALEXEI A. CARSTENSEN earned his B.F.A. in Theatre Studies from Niagara University. Since 2004 he has actively served as Skating Instructor, Associate Concept Designer & Choreography Assistant for Gliding Stars Adaptive Ice Skating Programs (Western New York Chapter). He also serves as a deacon and sings in the choir at Westminster Presbyterian Church here in Buffalo. Alexei has also served as Drama Club Director at the Charter School for Applied Technologies. He is thrilled to begin his service with this church community and his work in a local school.



Adult Christian Education

A Study and Exploration of the Holy Spirit

Led by Virginia McIntyre

Sunday mornings at 9:30 AM in the Pastor's Study

There are four very important truths about the Holy Spirit:

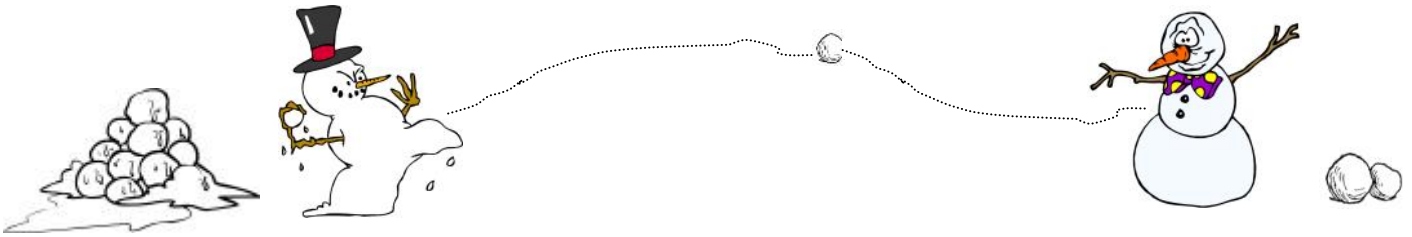
1. ***The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.*** His role is to glorify Jesus, to illuminate the truth, love, and power of Jesus in the world.
2. ***He is the Spirit of mission.*** In the book of Acts we are forever seeing the Holy Spirit in action, guiding the church, coming in power in the apostles and in dwelling in all believers. The Spirit is keenly involved in enlarging the family of God and welcoming new disciples, and continues to apply the work of Jesus Christ to every new situation and age.
3. ***He is the Spirit of the church.*** When someone becomes a Christian he or she receives the gift of the Holy Spirit., who lives within the Christian giving the same understanding and guidance and direction as we read about in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit is the center of the church's unity and mainspring of life.
4. ***He is the Spirit of power.*** How effective our churches could be if it could be reported like the church in Acts in chapter 4.

So where does all of this leave us? In the very same way, two thousand years later, the Holy Spirit gives to those who follow Jesus Christ the power to speak to God, and to defend our faith. The Spirit gives us power to speak boldly, to face adversity, and endure threats, and endure abuse. The Spirit enables us to discern truth from error, both inside the fellowship, and from the world outside. The Spirit enables us to discern new directions for our lives, whether by moving us physically in order to accomplish a particular task or career, or simply to point us towards something or someone. How often in our life have we felt that little prompt, that little nudge of conscience which tells us that we ought to make ourselves known to a visitor, or speak with someone who's looking troubled, and how often we've ignored it. Ever thought that that it might be the Holy Spirit doing the prompting? Lastly the Holy Spirit enables us to be of service to others, by all sorts of means- through our administrative talents maybe, by being the church treasurer— by giving freely to those who need is greater than ours- and by caring for the physical and spiritual needs of others. We can do all of these things because the Spirit, as he dwells within the life of the believer, develops the character of Jesus in our lives.

These truths and more will be explored in this class on Sunday mornings. Please join us for one class or all the classes.



The Spirit Gives Life



Couchside McLaren Young Adults' Fellowship

Our discussion of Brian McLaren's "Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World" continues!

We will be meeting **Thursday, January 15** at 7:00 PM in the Pastor's Study at church, to discuss Part II: The Doctrinal Challenge, chapters 12-18. If anyone needs to get in touch, contact Stephanie Smith (smithstephaniee@gmail.com / 716-531-3450). Join the Facebook event for more details.

Whether or not you've had a chance to read the chapters, please come enjoy snacks, fellowship, and discussion together!



Sunday, January 25

Psst... Have you joined the church in the last two years? We want to hear from you! Please join the Membership Committee for "Coffee & Conversations," Sunday January 25th, 12:30 p.m. after service in Historical Hall. We hope to enjoy some fellowship, refreshments, and dialogue together about what your experiences have been and what it means for you to be meaningfully engaged within the church. We also have some resources about the church to share with you. It is helpful if you RSVP to Stephanie (smithstephaniee@gmail.com / [716-531-3450](tel:716-531-3450)) so that we can expect you, but either way, please join us!

First Presbyterian Church presents:

Jazz Vespers



Sunday, February 1 @ 7 PM

Poetry & Jazz music combine to create a
unique worship experience.

Featuring Jazz Pianist Michael McNeill and Bassist Brian DeJesus
Potluck dinner at 6:00 PM

WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

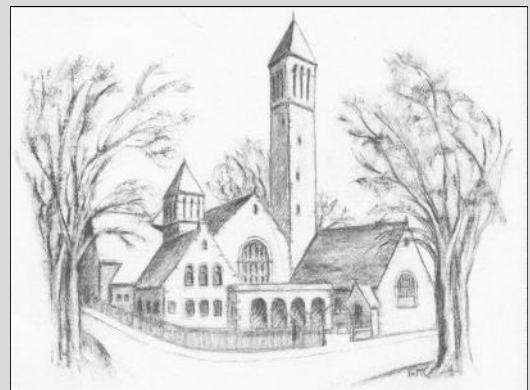
Women's Book group will meet on
Thursday, January 22 at 6:00 p.m. for a pot
luck meal, and to discuss the book Great
Expectations by Charles Dickens. The
gathering will be at JoAnn Doerr's home.



ONE SYMPHONY CIRCLE NEWS

One Symphony Circle now has a website! Please
consider online giving or through the church in
support of our efforts to preserve and restore our
historic building as an asset for future generations.

www.OneSymphonyCircle.org



The Christian New Year

By Meg Doerzbacher, Christian Education Director

While the secular world is celebrating the arrival of a new year in January, the church began its new year with the season of Advent. Now that we have celebrated the arrival of the eternal Son of God with Christmas, we will celebrate Jesus' Epiphany, Baptism, and the beginnings of his ministry in January. We will remember how he called his first disciples. Today, in 2015, Jesus still calls us to be his body in the world. Will we follow, and be witnesses to our Savior?

What does it mean to be a witness to Jesus Christ? In January, as we study Jesus' early ministry from the gospel of Mark, we will learn what it means to carry on these ministries. It is the role of the church to equip Jesus' witnesses for these ministries, to do the work Jesus calls us to do. This is what Christian Education, or spiritual formation, is all about. But we can't be equipped if we don't participate! Our Sunday School teachers offer great opportunities for adults and children to learn the lessons of Jesus' ministry so we in turn can be equipped to live as Jesus taught us. Remember that God does not wait for us to be mature, talented adults to use us to do Kingdom work. God works through anyone with an open heart and mind, who is willing to be led by the Spirit. And Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14)

Our popular culture encourages us to make resolutions for the New Year. In the same way, when we celebrate Jesus' baptism on January 11, we are reminded of our own baptism and we re-dedicate ourselves to our commitment to follow Jesus. This year, let's resolve to share the light of God's love a little more often. Let's commit to allowing our hearts and minds to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we carry out Jesus' ministry in ever new, and maybe even challenging, ways. Let's put our faith into action!

Raising Spiritually Healthy Children: Helping Children Understand Worship



What does "worship" mean? Even for adults, the concept of worshiping God can be difficult to understand. This is why it is so important that we include children in worship and help them to participate. On the first Sunday of each month at First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, children remain in the sanctuary with the adults for the entire worship service, instead of going to Sunday School. This is so they can learn to understand and participate in worship, including the Lord's Supper.

In Presbyterian churches, the worship service is made up of four basic parts, from beginning to end: Gathering, Sharing the Word, Giving Thanks, and Sending. Gathering includes a call to worship, singing, a prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness, and the sharing of Christ's peace. When we share the Word, passages from the Bible are read, we pray for God's aid in understanding the Bible, a message or sermon is shared by the minister or another speaker, and hymns are sung. When we give thanks, we do things to respond to the message we have received from the Word. This includes such things as prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for other people, offerings, words that help us affirm our faith, hymns, and, at least once a month, the Lord's Supper. Finally, we are sent out into the world to live out our faith with words and prayers to help us on our way.

If children do grow restless during worship, there are activity booklets available for them. These booklets include blank paper and a few colored markers and pencils. Usually there is also a children's "worship bulletin" with pictures and word puzzles that are related to the Scripture theme for that Sunday.

This information is being provided by the Christian Education committee, in hopes that it will be helpful to everyone as we encourage our children to participate in worship. We can help them to follow along in the worship bulletin and the hymn book, and explain what is happening. We can show them how to know when to stand and when to sit. We can talk to them about why we come to church to show our love and gratitude to God. In doing so, we may find that our own appreciation of worship grows, too!

Copies of "Worshiping God Together: A Guide for Children and Their Parents", from the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA), are available in the narthex or by emailing Meg Doerzbacher at meg@firstchurchbuffalo.org.

News in the Family

A new year begins at First Church, and we have much to be thankful for in our lives and within our congregation. We are thrilled to welcome new members Andrew & Samantha Gaerte, and Tim Mordaunt into our church family. Are there others in your life who might love this place as much as you do? All are welcome at First Church!

Are you passionate about inviting others to be share in the connectedness and belonging of our faith community? Consider offering your creative energy and ideas to our Membership Committee! Please contact Stephanie Smith (smithstephanie@gmail.com / [716-531-3450](tel:716-531-3450))



Christmas cards were received from Rev. Jack Smiley, our Pastor Emeritus, and former member Margo Smietana:

“To All Our Friends at First Church:
God go with you in this happy, blessed season.
— Jack and Maryellen Smiley”

“Happy Holidays! Missing Buffalo and First Church. ...Morgan is having a child in May and is a Navy Seabee in Mississippi. Kasey is U.S. Army—Ft. Lewis, Washington. Brandon is game developer in California. Best wishes for a great holiday.
Love, Margo Smietana”

WINTER GLOVE DRIVE

Now that the weather has turned cold, we will be collecting winter gloves for our food pantry patrons. Please donate if you can. We need large sizes of new or gently used gloves. Most of our pantry clients are male. Children's-sized gloves are not needed. Please use the donation basket on the chancel steps; it will remain there all winter long! Thank you!



My Heart is Full of Gratitude

Paul opens his letter to the Philippians with these words: “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:3-6) These words also describe how grateful I am for all of you at First Presbyterian Church. I especially want to thank ALL the people who worked together to make the Christmas Pageant a success. So many people contributed! From narrators and readers to actors and adults who helped with costumes and children. Thank you to all the parents and friends who made sure the kids were all there as well! It was a wonderful celebration of the Christmas story and I am truly grateful to every single person who took part. Thank you! – Meg Doerzbacher



First Church Calendar Highlights

Sunday Morning Schedule

9:30 AM	Adult Christian Education
11:15 AM	Worship
11:30 AM	Sunday School
12:15 PM	Fellowship Time

Communion is served the first Sunday of the month.
There is no Sunday school on Communion Sundays.

Church Programs/Events

Thurs. 1/15	7:00 PM	McLaren Gathering
Thurs. 1/22	6:00 PM	Women's Book Club at JoAnn Doerr's home
Sun. 1/25	12:30 PM	Coffee & Conversations
Sun. 2/1	7:00 PM	Jazz Vespers
Thurs. 1/22		February Newsletter Deadline

Weekly Events

Mondays

6:30 PM	Prayer Shawl Ministry at the Eggersville-Snyder Library
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Tuesdays

10:30 AM	Staff Meeting
12:30 PM	Food Bag Distribution
4:30 PM	Literacy Tutoring

Wednesdays

1:00 PM	Bible Study
4:30 PM	Literacy Tutoring

Building Use

Thursdays	3-7 PM	Native Offerings Crop Share Pickup
Thurs. 1/15	7:00 PM	Explore Buffalo Event
Thurs. 1/29	7:00 PM	Explore Buffalo Event

Sunday Morning Nursery Care

First Church offers nursery services for infants and children up through age four. The nursery is located on the second floor of Allen Hall and is available from 9:30 AM until the end of worship on Sunday mornings. Our paid nursery workers are safe and reliable and love children! Please feel free to use this service on Sunday mornings!

THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION AND CORPORATION of the First Presbyterian Society of the Town of Buffalo will take place on Sunday, February 8, 2015 immediately following worship in the Sanctuary. The purpose of the meetings is to receive reports of the staff, boards, committees and organizations of the Church; to elect a church Nominating Committee, to receive the Session's budget for the year 2015; and to transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

Committee Meetings

Tues. 1/13	5:30 PM	Membership
Tues. 1/13	6:30 PM	Christian Education
Wed. 1/14	5:45 PM	Trustees
Wed. 1/21	6:30 PM	Session



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201-1213
(Across from Kleinhans)

Phone: (716) 884-7250 Fax: (716) 884-7253
www.firstchurchbuffalo.org
email@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Twitter: @1stChurchBflo

"Like" us on Facebook:

"First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, NY"

Additional parking is available in the Gateway-Longview lot on Wadsworth Street Sunday mornings from 9:00 AM to 1:30 PM, courtesy of Carl Paladino.

FIRST CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Dr. Philip S. Gittings, *Interim Pastor*
RevPhil@firstchurchbuffalo.org
Voicemail extension: 13

The Reverend John Long, D.D.
Parish Associate for Community Outreach
JohnRLong17@verizon.net

The Reverend Jack Smiley, *Pastor Emeritus*

Dr. David Bond, *Organist/Choirmaster, Bookkeeper*
DBond@firstchurchbuffalo.org
Voicemail extension: 17

Christina Banas, *Business Manager*
CBanas@firstchurchbuffalo.org
Voicemail extension: 11

Meg Doerzbacher, *Christian Education Director*
Meg@firstchurchbuffalo.org
Voicemail extension: 16

Quinton Meyer, *Volunteer Assoc for Pastoral Visitation*
Meyer405@aol.com

Liz Kamke, *Outreach Assistant*
EKSK476@gmail.com

Tom Hollfelder, *Custodian/Security Guard*

Church Office, extension 10

Weddings, extension 15
weddings@firstchurchbuffalo.org

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OFFICERS

SESSION AND TRUSTEES BY CLASS AND TERM

Clerk of Session

Janet Hill

Class of 2015

Jean Hess (2)
Tim Hess (1)
Janet Hill (T) (2)
Don Houck (T) (2)
Susan Koeppl (1)
Virginia McIntyre (1)

Class of 2016

Ian Bradford (T) (2)
Mike Henry (T) (2)
Stephanie Smith (1)
Ryan Nadbrzuch (T) (1)
Maria Oakley (1)

Class of 2017

Mark Armesto (T) (2)
Lucas Lloyd (1)
Henry Porter (T) (1)
Sue Snyder (1)
Roger Woodard (1)

BOARD OF DEACONS BY CLASS AND TERM

Class of 2015

Liz Kamke (1)
Tina Osei (1)
Judith Paradzai (2)
Phil Sims (2)
Denis Wettlaufer (2)

Class of 2016

Jackie Addo (1)
Cleo Alexander (2)
Mark Juan Armesto (2)
José Gomez (2)
Gifty Koramoah (1)
Ken Madell (2)

Class of 2017

Pat Brown (2)
Rebecca Laubenstein (1)
Madeline Mason (1)
Lovelace Quarshie (1)
Olga Rico-Armesto (2)
Nolan Whipple (1)

(T) indicates that the Elder has also been elected to serve as a Trustee.

**To reach Rev. Dr. Philip S. Gittings,
Interim Pastor,
call 884-7250, ext. 13 (Office)
548-0466 (Cell)**

**To reach Quinton Meyer,
Volunteer Associate for Pastoral
Visitation
909-2259 (Cell)**

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY	Closed
TUESDAY	9 AM to 3 PM
WEDNESDAY	9 AM to 12 PM
THURSDAY	9 AM to 3 PM
FRIDAY	9 AM to 12 PM