



# The First Presbyterian Newsletter

Volume 71, Number 6

February 2016



“Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”  
Matt. 11:28, Chapel window

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**February 10 - Ash Wednesday, 6 PM**  
**Wednesdays - February 17, 24, March 2, 9, 16 at 6 PM**  
**Light Supper, 6:45 PM**

## Taizé Services for Lent

The Taizé community is an ecumenical, intentional community with a twofold purpose: to seek communion with God through personal prayer and the beauty of community prayer; and to be a leaven of peace and trust in the midst of humanity.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 10, and continuing for other Wednesdays in Lent (February 17, 24 and March 2, 9, 16), join us for Taizé worship at 6:00 p.m. in the sanctuary, followed by a light supper at 6:45 p.m. in the Rose Room.

Our traditional Taizé services will include simple, meditative songs, scripture, prayer and silence. The liturgy for these services originated with the Taizé community founded in France in 1940. Come, and spend time listening to God, and be renewed for a continuing journey through Lent and beyond.

## Reflections on Taizé Experience

*Editor's note -- In the summer of 2014 a group of 5 young people and their chaperones attended an international convention in Taize, France. Here are some excerpts from their reflections.*

Mackenzie Robinson - Throughout my week in Taizé my mind would wander back to the scripture in Genesis describing the construction of the Tower of Babel. I was amazed by the seemingly nonexistent language barrier between 3,000 youth from across the world.

Margaret Leupold - At Taizé, everyone gets a job. My job was to sing in the choir. We met for two hours every afternoon in the church... There were some nights that the singing would continue until 2:00 in the morning. ... We sang songs in German, Polish, Lithuanian, French, English, Spanish, Latin, and even the Lakota language.

Ofu Takor -- Everything was open, from the service to the people. It was impossible to ever feel lonely because everyone was so friendly.



For more on **Taizé** see p. 2.

Our five Taizé youth at First Pres.

# The First Presbyterian



**First Presbyterian Church**  
Albany, NY  
Founded in 1763

**Dr. Miriam Lawrence Leupold**  
**Dr. Glenn D. Leupold**  
Co-Pastors

**Dr. Michael Lister**  
Director of Music

**Trevor Kahlbaugh**  
Organist

**Christy D'Ambrosio**  
Youth Director

**Robert C. Lamar**  
Pastor Emeritus

**Elders**  
**Gladys Crowder**  
Clerk

Keith Barber  
Carol Bullard  
Richard Gascoyne  
Annette Johnson  
Stephanie Kite  
Harry (Skip) Meislahn  
John Myers  
Phillip Riddle  
Mary Rogers  
Roseline Takor

**Deacons**  
**Prudence Iyok**  
Moderator

Diane Cornell  
Lee Helsby  
Ellen Kemp  
Peter Kimuli  
Judith Mark  
Yousaf Mathias  
Jerry Nathan  
Ron Pettis  
Leslie Roccario  
Peg Schalit  
Gail Scott  
Deb Shoup  
Grace White  
Robert Willower  
Barbara Woodruff  
Margaret Zettle

## What is Taizé?

The Taizé Community is an ecumenical monastic order in Taizé, Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy, France. It is composed of more than eighty brothers, from Catholic and Protestant traditions, who originate from about thirty countries across the world. It was founded in 1940 by Brother Roger Schütz, a Reformed Protestant. Guidelines for the community's life are contained in *The Rule of Taizé* written by Brother Roger and first published in French in 1954.

The community has become one of the world's most important sites of Christian pilgrimage. Over 100,000 young people from around the world make pilgrimages to Taizé each year for prayer, Bible study, sharing, and communal work. Through the community's ecumenical outlook, they are encouraged to live in the spirit of kindness, simplicity and reconciliation. The Youth of Albany Presbytery have taken several trips to visit the Taizé community. Pastor Miriam traveled there in July 2014.

## Pause Here a Moment ...

## Busyness, the Enemy of Spirituality

Upon coming across a short quote from author Eugene Peterson, I was struck by how harsh it seemed. We are all called to do the work of the church, to do acts of love and care, and this can cumulatively put us in a state of busyness. To do much of it will often make us busy. Yet, here's what Peterson said in *The Contemplative Pastor*: "Busyness is the enemy of spirituality. It is essentially laziness. It is doing the easy thing instead of the hard thing. It's filling our time with our own actions instead of paying attention to God's action. It's taking charge. ... The word busy is the symptom not of commitment, but of betrayal. It is not devotion but defection. The adjective busy set as a modifier to a pastor should sound to our ears like 'adulterous' to characterize a wife or husband, or 'embezzling' to describe a banker. It is an outrageous scandal, a blasphemous affront. Hilary of Tours diagnosed our pastoral busyness as 'irreligiosa sollicitudo pro Deo,' – 'a blasphemous anxiety to do God's work for him.'"

Peterson would never say that we should do nothing but go out and "consider the lilies" all day. So I think it's the anxious striving that is the problem here. God calls us to do all sorts of things. Yet if we think the ministries given to each of us are ultimately up to us, well, then we are doing an act of idolatry, since we are putting ourselves at the top; the place where God should be. All the actions we take for the church – acts of love, acts of planning, and so on – need to have an element of trust in them. God calls us to prayerfully trust God as we go about our work. To do so will make all we do as Christians feel like a very light yoke indeed. It will make sure that what we do is not "busy" work but instead is rather just *love*.

***First Presbyterian Church - Called by God to reduce the widening gap between rich and poor.***

# The First Presbyterian



Dr. Oscar Williams



Jacqui Williams



Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo



Pastor David Traynham



## Black History Month

# Celebrating our American Heritage

By Roger Green

This year marks the 90th anniversary of what was to become Black History Month, an annual celebration of achievements of African-Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history.

The event grew out of Negro History Week, the brainchild of noted historian, Harvard-educated Dr. Carter G. Woodson, and other prominent African Americans, first celebrated in February 1926. Since 1976, 40 years ago, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

To that end, Dr. Oscar Williams, a professor of Africana studies at UAlbany, will lead a discussion during the February 14 Adult Education class on the historic rationale for the celebration.

The following week, Jacqui Williams of *Filling in the Gaps in American History (FIGAH), Inc.* will return to discuss the Black Lives Matter phenomenon and what it REALLY means. Ms. Williams spoke last year during BHM and was very well received.

Then for Adult Education on February 28 and March 6, Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, the transitional presbyter for the Albany Presbytery will lead the discussion on the acclaimed book **Between the World and Me** by Ta-Nehishi Coates. The book was highlighted in the January FPC newsletter, with the directive "Read this book!"

February 28 will feature guest preacher, Pastor David Traynham of the New Horizons Christian Church. Pastor Traynham is a graduate of Philip Schuyler High School and the National Outreach Bible Institute. Sunday worship will see the presentation of the honorary kente cloth, and highly anticipated annual Black History Month luncheon.

Prior to Black History Month, Adult Christian Education viewed and discussed the film, *Selma*, with Prof. Paul T. Murray of Siena College leading the discussion.



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## The Elevator Saga and Epic Building Maintenance

By John Myers

It seems as though we have had bucket lifts in our parking lot and construction activity ongoing for quite some time now, so Property Committee thought it would be a good idea to provide a quick rundown of the accomplishments. This has probably been the most active period in recent memory at First Pres for building projects and major improvements to our historic facilities. Not since its original construction and the sanctuary restoration of the early 1990s have we touched so many areas and building features simultaneously.

### The Elevator Project

This phase of project activity kicked off in October 2014 with the groundbreaking for the centerpiece building project of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign, the elevator project. Throughout last winter's bone-chilling weather, within plastic wrapped scaffolding, the elevator tower inched higher and higher finally revealing itself this past spring. The installation of the elevator itself was completed in time for the October 25, 2015, dedication ceremony, with the result of making our home fully accessible for



Art Hengerer, Sue Sneeringer and Pastors Glenn and Miriam take a long anticipated ride.

people of all ages and abilities, allowing all to participate fully in the life of the church and enjoy all of its resources.

Through the same winter weather, we saw the formation of epic icicles at the top of the downspouts on the Christian Education building and various ice-related damage to the roofs of the sanctuary, choir room, Assembly Hall and CE Building and the backing up of water on the roofs. This damage led to the emergence of leaks in multiple areas and the pressing need for a holistic approach to address the condition of our building envelope.

### Wall and Roof Repair

At the end of the winter, a thorough building envelope investigation was conducted and a report was produced which outlined a series of roof and wall repair recommendations to be pursued with varying levels of priority. The immediate concerns centered on addressing the areas of active leakage and long-term deferred maintenance, with particular attention focused on the education building.

The project to correct the building's issues has



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Continued from p. 4, The Elevator Saga.



Masonry Wall rebuilding at downspout



New copper caps on the clerestory roof



Ceiling damage over the the stage area of Assembly Hall

involved the following: reconstruction and re-pointing large areas of the building's north and south walls, particularly in the areas of the leaking downspouts; resealing the roof's copper flashings and gutters; replacing damaged and missing slate; and, installing electric heating cables in the gutters and downspouts to prevent the recurrence of blockage and formation of massive icicles. This work was begun in September with the masonry work completed in October allowing the roof work to proceed. The photo at left illustrates the extent of wall rebuilding work required at 4 of the 8 downspout locations. The steel column, which supports the roof trusses, was exposed during this work and luckily found to be in good condition. Had this condition been allowed to persist, the column would likely have suffered severe deterioration and become a much more costly repair in the future. The roof work is just wrapping up now and should be completed by mid-February 2016 – thank goodness for a much milder winter this year than last, which has permitted this work to continue unabated.

Other roof repair work undertaken this year has included the main sanctuary roof including: selective slate repair and replacement; adding copper caps to the unsealed hips of the clerestory roof as shown at left; and, repair to leaking flashing. Additionally, the scaffolding illustrates the section of wooden cornice at the head of the clerestory windows which was totally rotted and required replacement.

The last roof area to be addressed will be the flat roof over the stage area of the Assembly Hall, which saw a small section of the ceiling damaged recently as the result of melting snow and leakage.

## **Drip, Drip, Drip ...**

Extensive interior plaster repair/restoration and painting from the leakage in the education building roof were pursued during the summer to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor offices and classrooms and in the main stairwell.

Continued on p. 6.

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Continued from p. 6, **The Elevator Saga**.

The interior repair work from the ice damage was largely paid through a claim to the church's hazard insurance carrier.

**Additional projects** undertaken this past year include the following:

- **Restoration of brownstone entry steps** on Willet and State Street sides – reset loose railings – repair Willet Street ramp entry and selective sidewalk replacement at the foot of the ramp
- **Repaving of basement entry** from Willet Street to the old “Eighth Step”
- **Bell tower structural re-inspection** (to be conducted every 5 years) and bell rope replacement
- **Painting** of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor corridors and back stair of the education building
- **Replacement of the Assembly Hall Carpet**

It has indeed been an ambitious and very busy year in the pursuit of enhancing and preserving our home for the continued use and enjoyment of the congregation and the larger community of faith. Thank yourselves and your fellow parishioners for your continued support of the mission of First Pres.

## And ... What's up, up there?

### The Upper Rooms Palm Sunday

A new rotation in The Upper Rooms (our Christian education program for children in kindergarten through 5th grade) begins Sunday, February 14 and runs through March 20. This rotation's theme is “Palm Sunday,” and the children will explore Matthew 21:1-11 through movie, computers, art, games, puzzles, and drama. Students in grades 6 through 8 continue with their middle school curriculum, *Journey to Adulthood*.

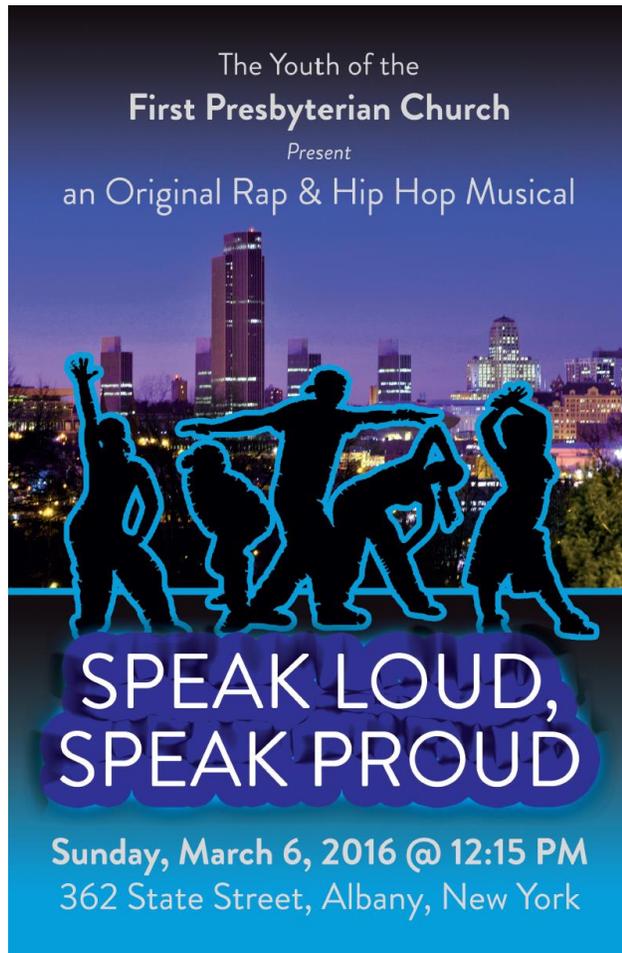
If you are interested in teaching for two Sundays in one of the upcoming rotations, contact Pastor Miriam or sign up in Assembly Hall.



Sinai Stage was the set for a younger group in The Upper Rooms. Take the elevator up to observe the classes in session, and volunteer your teaching skills, if you are so inclined.



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## Sunday, March 6 **Speak Loud, Speak Proud, an Original Rap and Hip Hop Musical**

By Christy D'Ambrosio, Youth Director

This year's musical production was conceived during the bus ride home from last year's UN Leadership Conference. During the conference, one of the guest presenters was a group called "The Peace Poets." Two of the five members of this group led a seminar that involved writing and performing poetry. It was at that point in time that I became aware that Katie Lamar was not only a fine writer, but a poet as well. I asked Katie if she would be interested in helping me create an original musical based on poetry, written and performed by the cast and she said, "Yes."

In keeping with this year's High School Christian Education curriculum, *Race and Discrimination*, we have mounted a rap/hip hop production with spoken word performances focusing on those things that matter in the lives of our youth. What we have discovered is that there are some very talented poets in our group. The topics range from friends, family, church, and discrimination to happiness and aspirations.

*Speak Loud, Speak Proud* is a potpourri of all these topics presented in the form of raps and spoken word performances. The dance production numbers are contemporary and, we hope, enjoyable, but definitely, "Something Completely Different."

Mark your calendars for the performance, Sunday, March 6, after the second worship service. We hope to see you there!



The Secret Santa party was "old home week" for many of the First Pres youth pictured here.



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## Installation of Officers The “Laying on of Hands”



The practice of “laying on of hands” is both a symbolic and formal method of invoking the Holy Spirit primarily during baptisms and confirmations, healing services, blessings, and ordination of priests, ministers, elders, and deacons.

It has roots in the Jewish tradition: Isaac blessed his son Jacob by laying on of hands (Genesis 27:27); Moses ordained Joshua by the laying on of hands (Num 27:15-23, Deut 34:9); Moses also ordained the 70 elders (Num 11:16-25). The elders later ordained their successors in this way. Their successors in turn ordained others.



Initially the Apostles laid hands on new believers as well as believers. (See Acts 6:5-6). In the early church, the practice continued and is still used in a wide variety of church ceremonies, such as during confirmation.

The New Testament also associates the laying on of hands with the conferral of authority or designation of a person to a position of responsibility. The use of the laying on of hands for the ordination of church officers continues in our most recent ordination of officers (Deacons and Elders).



“He laid his hands on him and commissioned him – as the Lord had directed through Moses.”  
–Numbers 27:23



“They had these people stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.”  
– Acts 6:6.



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## FOCUS Ministries

## Jim Ketcham Follows Deb Jameson

The FOCUS Churches ministry welcomes the Rev. Jim Ketcham as its new Executive Director! Jim began his work in our midst at the start of the year. Originally from Rochester, New York, Jim is an American Baptist pastor who has served churches in Minnesota and New York, most recently at the First Baptist Church of Painted Post, New York. He brings a passion for ecumenical relationships, advocacy and organization from his experiences with Common Cause, Church World Service and the Minnesota Campaign to Ban Landmines. He says that he lives in “the space between charity and justice” and believes that the work of FOCUS will allow him to inhabit that space more fully. Your first chance to meet Jim will be at the FOCUS Winter Worship and Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 7, 10 am, at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany.

Jim takes over for the Rev. Deb Jameson who served for 16 years. Deb’s ministry among us was celebrated on December 9 with a reception at The Albany Pump Station. Deb was gifted with several hugs and handshakes, a New York State resolution of thanks, a U.S. Congressional resolution of thanks, a video collection of well wishes, and new iPad (with lots of bells and whistles) as well as several cards and written remembrances. Deb will be helping Jim as he needs it in these first months. If you intended to get a card to her, you can still send it to 119 Birchwood Ave, Schenectady, NY 12303.



The Rev. Debra Jameson was honored with resolutions of thanks from the New York State Senate and U.S. Congress.



## The FOCUS Covenant

We celebrate, as the FOCUS Churches, our common calling to be God’s servant people in a broken and hurting world.

We honor the uniqueness of our member congregations with their diversity of gifts, separate histories, and God-given resources.

We acknowledge that we need to learn from one another, to be enriched by one another’s vision of Christian faithfulness, and to join in those areas of Christian mission where we can work more effectively together than by ourselves.

We recognize that our urban location, close to the raw edges of human need, as well as the center of political power, defines the primary thrust of our common mission.

We believe that we are called by God to discern amid the many shapes of need and pain around us, the design of Christ’s mandate for our shared ministry.

We covenant, therefore, with God and with one another:

- to engage in a search for faithful and effective forms of ministry;
- to provide a ministry of presence, support, and advocacy for the victims of society’s injustice and neglect;
- to speak the truth in places of power on behalf of the powerless;
- to offer new possibilities of wholeness to the lonely and alienated;
- to equip ourselves for the service of Christ through joint educational and community-building ventures; and
- to celebrate in worship the meaning of our shared mission.

We commit to these purposes our prayers, our time, our talent, and our material resources with the hope that our life and work together in this time and place will demonstrate the liberating and reconciling power of the gospel.

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## Sign Up for Flowers Deacons' Doings

By Leslie Roccario

The new year is here and the new Flower Calendar is up in the back entry hall next to the office. Many people have a recurring annual date to sponsor flowers on the calendar but there are lots of Sundays that could use a donor. Would you consider enhancing our Sunday worship with flowers?

To sign up, find a blank date on the calendar and sign your name. Then take a green envelope to insert your donation and return it to the office or even in the offering plate at any time. The office will be in

touch with you to find out how you would like your donation worded in the Sunday bulletin. The flower donation is \$50.00. After the service, the deacons divide up the flower arrangements and distribute them to both the homebound and worshipers who could use a lift. Please consider adding to this special part of our church life.



## Ushers and Greeters

Feb 7 10:00 am FOCUS, Westminster

### Ash Wednesday

Feb 10 6:00 pm Taizé, no ushers

Feb 14 8:30 am Jackie & Lynn Ellsworth  
10:45 am Team 1 – Ben & Maddy Eisenbraun, Lydia Green, Arthur & Daniel Iyok, Lauren Kuo, Sophia Pruzek, Mia & Maggie Robinson, Akap Takor

Feb 21 8:30 am Bruce Brynolfson  
10:45 am Team 2 – J. Coley, Joanne and Richard Gascoyne, David and Margaret Hannay

Feb 28 8:30 am John Myers  
10:45 am Team 3 – Keith Barber, David Haase, Bob and Linda Stevens

## Deacons' Flower Ministry

Feb 7 FOCUS at Westminster

Feb 14 Albany West – Judy Mark, Lee Helsby, Bob Willower

Feb 21 Delmar – Barbara Woodruff, Margaret Zettle, Gail Scott

Feb 28 Albany East – Joe Mathias, Jerry Nathan

The Albany East Neighborhood Flock hosts  
February Coffee Hours.

Fair Trade Market is Sunday, February 14.

# February 2016

## 1 Monday

6:00 pm Musical Rehearsal  
6:00 pm *Music Together*

## 2 Tuesday

9:00 am Men's Bible Study  
1:00 pm Staff Meeting  
5:30 pm **Committee Night**  
• Membership  
• Outreach & Mission  
• Property  
• Worship  
7:00 pm Dinner  
7:30 pm • More Light

## 3 Wednesday

12:00 pm JI/JO  
7:15 pm Small Group B<sup>3</sup>  
7:30 pm *Zephyr Winds*

## 4 Thursday

7:00 am Men's Bible Study  
9:30 am *Music Together*  
6:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal  
7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

## 5 Friday

Youth Ski Weekend  
5:30 pm First Friday Art Display  
6:00 pm First Friday Concert

## **7 Sunday FOCUS at Westminster**

10:00 am Worship

## 8 Monday

6:00 pm Musical Rehearsal  
6:00 pm *Music Together*

## 9 Tuesday

9:00 am Men's Bible Study  
6:45 pm Deacons

## 10 Ash Wednesday

6:00 pm Taizé Worship  
6:45 pm Supper  
7:30 pm Dads' Small Group  
7:30 pm *Zephyr Winds*

## 11 Thursday

7:00 am Men's Bible Study  
9:30 am *Music Together*  
6:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal  
7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

## 12 Friday

12:00 pm Newsletter deadline

## **14 Sunday**

8:30 am Worship (Communion)  
9:30 am Education for all ages  
9:45 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal  
10:45 am Worship  
11:45 am Fellowship & Fair Trade Market

## 15 Monday **Office Closed for Presidents Day**

Youth UN trip to NYC  
6:00 pm Musical Rehearsal  
6:00 pm *Music Together*

## 16 Tuesday

9:00 am Men's Bible Study  
10:00 am Clergy Gathering  
7:00 pm Session

## 17 Wednesday

12:00 pm JI/JO  
6:00 pm Taizé Worship  
6:45 pm Supper  
7:15 pm Small Group B<sup>3</sup>

## 18 Thursday

7:00 am Men's Bible Study  
9:30 am *Music Together*  
6:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal  
7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

## 19 Friday

6:00 pm Potluck Dinner

## **21 Sunday**

8:30 am Worship (Communion)  
9:30 am Education for all ages  
9:45 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal  
10:45 am Worship (Communion)  
11:45 am Fellowship  
1:00 pm *Vintage Pride*  
1:00 pm–5:00 pm Musical Rehearsal

## 22 Monday

6:00 pm Musical Rehearsal  
6:00 pm *Music Together*

## 23 Tuesday

9:00 am Men's Bible Study

## 24 Wednesday

6:00 pm Taizé Worship  
6:45 pm Supper  
7:30 pm Dads' Small Group

## 25 Thursday

7:00 am Men's Bible Study  
9:30 am *Music Together*  
12:00 pm Newsletter folders  
6:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal  
7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

## **28 Sunday**

8:30 am Worship (Communion)  
9:30 am Education for all ages  
9:45 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal  
10:45 am Worship  
11:45 am Black History Month Lunch

## 29 Monday

6:00 pm Musical Rehearsal  
6:00 pm *Music Together*  
7:30 pm *Zephyr Winds*

*Note: Italics indicate outside groups.*

### **AA Meeting Schedule**

Daily 5:30 pm  
Wed 10:00 pm  
Thurs 7:30 pm AA Youth

### **Get Well Group**

Wed & Fri 7:30 pm

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
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## The First Presbyterian

### Lectionary

<b>Feb 7</b>	<b>Transfiguration of the Lord</b> Exodus 34:29–35 2 Corinthians 3:12–4:2	Psalm 99 Luke 9:28–36 [37–43]
<b>Feb 14</b>	<b>First Sunday in Lent</b> Deuteronomy 26:1–11 Romans 10:8b–13	Psalm 91:1–2, 9–16 Luke 4:1–13
<b>Feb 21</b>	<b>Second Sunday in Lent</b> Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18 Philippians 3:17–4:1	Psalm 27 Luke 13:31–35 or Luke 9:28–36
<b>Feb 28</b>	<b>Third Sunday in Lent</b> Isaiah 55:1–9 1 Corinthians 10:1–13	Psalm 63:1–8 Luke 13:1–9

See the Newsletter on line and in color at  
[www.firstpresalbany.org](http://www.firstpresalbany.org)  
Also see us on [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)



**Office Hours**  
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**Editor** Rev. Glenn D. Leupold  
**Layout** Richard C. Gascoyne

Please notify the church office of any change in address.

Recordings of the worship service are available from the church office.