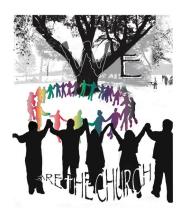
# the Visitor

## Advent 2020 First Baptist Church



#### Contents

- Holiday Gift Packages Deliverd to Seniors
- Turn In to the Noontime Hit "Getting to Know Us Better"
- DCJS Presents Holiday Concert ...
- Pledge Update
- From Your Pastor Debbie

2

3

3

4

5

7

8

8

- Advent: The Season of Awaiting
- A Timbuktu Connection
- Timbuktu A Mythical City
- Flower Committee: Unsung Heroes 3Meesun Hemsath Turns Hobby
- into Business

  Decorating the Church for
- Christmas 4
- Over \$11,000 Raised for Sanctuary
   Movement
   4
- Top High Impact Actions to Save Energy
- Opportunities for Giving
- Keep in Your Prayers
- Time and Talent Ministries

What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, Love mercy and Walk humbly with our God *Micah 6:8* 

#### Pledge Update

Financial Secretary Marlene Sack reports that, as of December 9th, 40 pledges have been turned in. She is optimistic that the remaining 14 pledges will be turned in soon and they will make up the \$22,700 needed to meet this year's pledge goal.

#### 607-273-5800; www.firstbaptistithaca.org; email: fbithaca@gmail.com

## Holiday Gift Packages Delivered to Seniors

Anne Farrell and her elves on the Hospitality team has been busy assembling Advent/Christmas Gift packages for 19 FBC seniors. Each package includes a poinsettia, a battery-operated votive candle that automatically come on each evening, an assortment of homemade cookies and the lovely pop-up card shown on the right. The intent is to let each recipient know how important they are to all of us at FBC.

## Tune into the Noontime Hit "Getting to Know Us Better."

Did you know that Christopher Morgon Loy once played in a rock band, that Andrea Staffeld was inspired to memorize prayers and blessings by her father, that Shella Chace had been an exhange student in northern Germany, that Bruce Chandler once co-pastored, with his wife Jan, a Congregational church in Endicott, and that Tony Lister had sold life insurance for several years? These are just a few of the interesting things one has learned from listening to the Wednesday noontime series "Getting to Know Us Better."

Over the past two months Leslie Schultz, Tony Lister or Rich Barron have interviewed several in our congregation including Heather Sanford, Christopher Morgan Loy, Tony Lister, Andrea Staffeld, Bruce Chandler, Shella Chace and Jim Grant, a friend of FBC, who recently has assumed leadership in Area Congregations Together (ACT).

During the half hour from 12:30 to 1 pm each Wednesday, folks are asked to tell about their youth, where they grew up, their biological families, what drew them to Ithaca and their spiritual experiences and practices. One discovers so much more about the person than just with the familiar greeting in church.

The series is inspired by the popular PBS StoryCore (storycore.org) series. Tune in. You will find it informative and interesting.

First Baptist Church in Ithaca is a nurturing and inclusive community. Guided by Jesus' Teachings, we strive for Social & Ecological Justice; and embrace the Baptist tradition of Bible, Soul, Church and Religious Freedoms.



*This lovely pop-up Christmas card will accompany the gift packages delivered to members of our congregation.* 



Advent/Christmas gift packages assembled by the Hospitality Ministry team for delivery to 19 of our seniors. Photos: Courtesy of Bill Abeles

## Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers (DCJS) Present Holiday Concert From David Caughey

The Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers, led by Artistic Director Dr. Baruch Whitehead, will present a virtual Holiday Concert of Hope and Joy on Sunday afternoon, December 20, starting at 3:00 pm.

The Jubilee Singers will be joined by the Ithaca College Choral Ensembles, directed by Sean Linfors and Hana Cai, other Ithaca College Vocal Music Faculty, Gospel Superstar, Krista McKenzie, other soloists, and FBC's own young dancers who will present an operatic ballet.

Please join the DCJS as they raise their voices to reach for the redemptive power in the music that will bring us together in the Holiday Season. For details on how to support the chorus and a link to the virtual concert please check the Singers' web site, DCJSingers.com.



Angel sounding the bugle. By Andrea Staffeld Photo: David Caughey

## Advent The Season of Expectant Awaiting

Advent is the first season in the Western Christian liturgical year observed as the four weeks before Christmas. It is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Christ at Christmas.

Advent is celebrated with an Advent wreath adorned with candles that are sequentially lit on the four Sundays before Christmas. Three of the candles are traditionally violet or purple ones and one is pink. The pink candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent, called Gaudete Sunday after the opening word, Gaudete, meaning "Rejoice."

The candles for the four Sundays of Advent represent the following: First Sunday: The Candle of

- Hope.
- Second Sunday: The Candle of Peace.
- Third Sunday: The Candle of Joy.
- Fourth Sunday: The Candle of Love.

Most denominations add a fifth white candle, the Christ Candle, in the middle of the wreath, to be lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to remind Christians of the light Jesus brings to the world.

## From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

#### Dear Friends,

It's December. Advent is here. These four weeks leading up to Christmas are a time for preparation and reflection, a time for growth and renewal, as we wait to celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas. But, this year isn't like other years. What a strange and difficult year this continues to be. For all of us, this year is forcing us to re-think how we observe Advent and celebrate



Reverend Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Christmas. This pandemic –and the rising surge of positive COVID numbers right at this time – are requiring all of us to give up plans and forgo traditions we love and cherish. It's already been a hard year, and the coming weeks look like they may get worse. And we know, even if we ourselves have not experienced terrible sickness and losses, so many people are suffering and grieving and afraid this year.

This Advent and Christmas challenge us to go deeper - to seek the meaning beyond the decorations and the events, to look for what is most important within the traditions and the festivities. We are being challenged to be creative and adaptive – to find ways to observe this season outside of the usual ways. This year, in a particularly poignant way, we are being called to look for God who comes to us in unexpected times and places - the God who comes to us when we are hurting and sad, the God who comes when we feel alone and anxious. Christ comes to us in our need. Christ can redeem our suffering and our pain and turn it into joy. "Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning," the psalm-ist sang. So, this Advent, let's feel all that we are feeling. We can be angry and frustrated, sad and grieving, worried and even afraid. In Christ, we know that God understands it all – God has compassion for us, God feels with us. God is with us! In whatever we are feeling, we are not alone. Come, Lord Jesus. Come, be with us in this time!

Blessings to all,

Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Sunday, December 6th in a Decorated Sanctuary: Despite the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic when we are not gathering in the church for worship or other activities, Barb Fry and her helpers have decorated the church for the Advent/ Christmas season (See Barb's note on page 4). Photo: David Caughey



Ancient trade routes to Timbuktu

## Timbuktu — A Mythical City

Timbuktu is a city in Mali, situated 20 km (12 mi) north of the Niger River. The town is the capital of the Timbuktu Region, one of Mali's eight administrative regionsi. At the time of the 2009 census, the city had a population of 54,453.

Timbuktu became a permanent settlement early in the 12th century. After a shift in trading routes, particularly after the visit by Mansa Musa around 1325, Timbuktu flourished from the trade in salt, gold, ivory, and slaves (see map above). It became part of the Mali Empire early in the 14th century when its Golden Age began during which it was a major learning and cultural center of the Mali Empire. In its Golden Age, the town's numerous Islamic scholars and extensive trading network made possible an important book trade. Together with the Sankore Madrasah, an Islamic university, Timbuktu became a scholarly centre in Africa.

During the 15th century Tuareg tribes took control of the city briefly until the expanding Songhai Empire absorbed the city in 1468. When the Moroccan army defeated the Songhai in 1591, they made Timbuktu, rather than Gao, their capital. By the 16th century Timbuktu entered a long period of decline. Different tribes governed until the French took over in 1893, and governed the region until it became part of the current Republic of Mali in 1960.

Now, Timbuktu is impoverished, suffers from desertification and is the target of Islamic extremists, making travel there difficult and dangerous.



Ancient manuscripts from Timbuktu

# A Timbuktu Connection

Many of us grew up understanding "Timbuktu" as a metaphor for far distance. "Did you have to go all the way to Timbuktu to find that?" Many of us were only vaguely aware that Timbuktu is an actual city, and in fact, an ancient center for scholarship and trade in northern Mali. In the 1300's, Timbuktu's Sankore University housed the greatest collection of books in Africa since the Library of Alexandria and was a great center for Islamic scholarship.

In 2018, I traveled with Sue Eymann, Tony Lister and Bill, Maimouna and Abraham Phelan to Bamako, Mali. The purpose of our journey was to visit with Andre Thera and Miriam Keita and their children Jokebed and William. Longtime members of FBC will recall that the family came to Ithaca in 2006 so that Miriam's agressive breast cancer could be treated (and thankfully, cured).

#### Historical Site of Scholarship

While we were in Bamako, we had hoped to visit Timbuktu, but the city has been taken over by extremist Islamists, who are destroying its libraries and treasures. It is no longer safe to travel there. Efforts are being made to save the manuscripts from destruction. (For an interesting book on the topic, see "The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu And Their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts," by Joshua Hammer.) We visited a Baptist pastor who is helping to preserve some of the manuscripts that have been smuggled out of Timbuktu.

Timbuktu captures the imagination and remains an elusive symbol. Recently, while on a visit to Lake Placid, New York,

#### By Andrea Mooney

I made another Timbuktu connection. I came upon an exhibit at the home of John Brown. Yes. the John Brown who was an abolitionist and is known for his raid on Harper's Ferry in West 4 Virginia during the Civil War.



John Brown was, of course, associated with many abolitionists of the day. One, Gerrit Smith, had an idea to help Black New Yorkers.

#### Timbuktu in the NYS Adirondacks

The New York State Assembly had passed a bill in 1821, requiring that only those who could prove that they owned \$250 worth of real property could vote. As part of the abolitionist movement in 1846 and 1847, Gerrit Smith decided to give away 120,000 acres in forty-acre lots in the Adirondacks to 3000 Black men from New York City. He called the area "Timbuktu." The idea was that the men would move to the Adirondacks to become farmers. While many refused the offer, some Black men did move to the area and raised crops and families. The effort was not as successful as Gerrit had hoped, but did provide some land and a new start for some families.

#### Dreaming of Timbuctoo" Exhibit

There is an exhibit called "Dreaming of Timbuctoo" that explains all of this in much more detail. It is located at the John Brown Farm State Historic Site in Lake Placid and is open May through October. If you are traveling to the area, stop and see the exhibit and think of the connection that First Baptist Church has to Timbuktu.

## The Flower Committee: FBC's Unsung Heroes



Barb Fry









Andrea Staffeld

Even during COVID-19 times, the The Flower Committee consisting of, from left to right, Barb Fry, Mariana Morse, Tina Hilsdorf and Andrea Staffeld, have continued to grace our Zoom worship with georgous bouquets gathered from their individual gardens. And now this Christmas season we have a lovely backdrop for Pastor Debbie to lead services.

## **Decorating the Church** for Christmas

From Barb Fry I want you to know that together we accomplished a lot and the church is prepared for the weeks ahead. I especially appreciate Bill Fry and Steve Hilsdorf for getting the big 100 lb tree up from the basement and all set up and looking fine. Credit goes to Anne Farrell for her determination and skill in giving the lights some final adjustments.

Thanks also to Mariana Morse for buying such lovely poinsettias! And to all for putting up banners, decorating the narthex and hanging our new lighted wreaths outdoors to be a welcome to all.

The bows made by Tina made by Andrea Staffeld some night and be sure to look up to the bell tower to see David Caughey's shining stars.

Peace, Joy & Good Health!



First Baptist Church in 2020 Photo by Tony Lister



# Meesun Hemsath Turns Hobby into Business

#### By Susan Eymann

Many of us know Tae Hemsath – her ready smile, her delicious deviled eggs, her willingness to set up at dish-to-pass breakfasts, and to help her mom Sue Hemsath and Linda Caughey with the annual Enfield School Christmas Gift Tree. However, fewer of us know her older sister Meesun Hemsath Brill who has been living and working in Las Vegas for some time.

#### Out of Work in Las Vegas

Recently, her mom Sue sent an email to some of us alerting us to Meesun's mask making business featured on esty.com. Since Meesun and her husband, both COVID-19 survivors, found themselves jobless when the casinos closed, they turned their energies to other ways to stay afloat.

#### Mask Making Business

Resourceful Meesun resurrected a skill that she had previously developed, sewing, and Hildorf and the brass horns turned it into a unique and special-interest mask making business. She named her look great! Have a drive by business SunnyLuvCrafts which is now featured on esty.com. There one finds a choice of hundreds of mask patterns including math, chemistry, music, cosmos, snowflake, cat, puppy, kitty, paw print, dragonfly, butterfly, Hawaiian, batik, holiday motifs, just to name a few. Each mask offers the choice of black or white ties, or ear loops that are or are not adjustable.

#### Happiness Is Sewing

Meesun notes, "Nothing makes me more happy than sewing! I love making masks that people are proud to wear. I add new styles almost daily. Please let me know if you have any special requests (ex: different

**Over \$11,000 Raised for Sanctuary Movement** For the Dec. 5th Sanctuary Movement fundraiser. Haitian Jn Joseph pictured on the right is cooking 30 gallons of Haitian joumou soup in the FBC kitchen to feed 250 people. The meal included two empanandas, two cups of soup, salsa, rice, and refried beans. Bill Abeles, Mariana Morse, Lou Carlucci, and Carrie Stearns from Furst Baptist organzied the soup portion of the dinner with Jn, while First Congregational members organized the making of 500 empanadas by Drucila who, with her daughter, are refugees from Guatemala. The money will support the ongoing needs of the two families seeking asylum: *In and his wife Nikese and their 3 children, and Drucila and* her daughter. For this third annual fundraiser folks picked up their meals at the First Congregational Church.



Meesum Hemsath Brill and her sister Tae Hemsath

number of layers) and I will be happy to oblige." Meesun's mom adds, "She is a perfectionist when it comes to sewing."

I can only agree. After ordering a few of Meesun's masks, I was literally blown away by their quality and professionalism. I received them in record time along with a personal note from Meesun. Andrea Mooney agreed, saying that she particularly liked the adjustable ear pieces. I ditto the review shown on the esty.com site,"Buyers are raving! This shop got multiple 5-star reviews in the past seven days."

#### Perfect Stocking Stuffer Gift

If you would like to add a mask to your family's Christmas stockings, what would be better than to add one of Meesun's masks. Check them out at SunnyLuv-Crafts@esty.com and be delighted with your decision.



## Opportunities for Giving Enfield School Giving Tree

From Linda Caughey During the pandemic our usual Giving Tree program at Enfield School meant no shopping for individual gifts by our wonderful First Baptist elves. Sonja (our compassionate school contact) collected information from families about children's most immediate needs. She ordered items from several stores using our contributions and some from a couple of Cornell groups, to be shipped directly to the families.

Since October 30th a total of \$975 has come into the Giving Tree account, and on November 2 we sent \$800 to Enfield. There is a box in the Sanctuary for serviceable, winter items such as mittens, snow pants, hats, socks and jackets for delivery to the school in January. These items are always appreciated by the children and teachers! We are as grateful to be able to contribute to Enfield Elementary School.

#### 

Enfield Food Pantry collects and distributes food to area families all year round. Food needs at the pantry have doubled with the pandemic. Pastor Jean Owens and her church handle the finances of the Enfield Food Pantry. If you wish to make a financial donation to the Enfield Food Pantry, make checks payable to, and send directly to, First Baptist Church of Enfield Center, 800 Enfield Falls Rd., Newfield NY 14867

#### Catholic Charities Clothing Donations

Catholic Charities of Tompkins County Clothes Closet is accepting one bag of donations per family per week. They need gently used, in-season clothing and sheets, blankets and towels. For more information: Phone: 607-272-5062 324 W. Buffalo Street Tues-Fri. 1:00pm to 3:30 pm

# From Your Green Team: Top High Impact Actions to Save Energy

- 1. Shorter showers, lower water temperature: Save 1.5 kWh for every min you shorten a hot shower and lower water temperature. By lowering your water temperature and reducing the overall amount of time you're running water, you're reducing the amount of energy needed to heat up all that water.
- 2. Full loads, cold water: Save 1.5 kWh by washing full loads of laundry using cold water only

Fun Fact: Washing your hands in cold water is as effective against germs as washing them in warm/hot water; however, "warmer water may cause more skin irritation and is more environmentally costly." Go cold!

3. Plug it in, turn it off: Save 3 kWh / day by plugging items into a power strip and turning it off before leaving / sleeping. No power strip? Simply unplug your electronics instead.

Even when "turned off" most devices like TVs, DVD/Blu-Ray players, video game consoles, and cell phone chargers are drawing energy. By grouping those items together, plugging them into a power strip, and turning off the power strip before you leave your

#### room or go to sleep --- you could save around 15-20 kWh per week, which over the course of the year is the equivalent of carbon sequestered by 1.5 acres of forest.

- 3. Set Room Temperature 1-2 Degrees Lower: Save 1% of your energy use for every 1 degree you lower your thermostat in the winter
- 3. Keep windows closed: If air leaks cause 1/2 of home heat loss in the winter, how much heat is lost from open windows? A lot.

During cold weather months, taking care of your windows is key. You want to keep cold air out and warm air in. Remove window A/C units to help seal up your space. Keep windows closed to avoid ramping up the building's heating system to accommodate the heat escaping from the open windows. Close shades and curtains at night to keep warm air in, and reopen them during the day to maximize natural lighting and promote well-being in your space. Consider installing shrink wrap for older windows, which improves comfort and greatly improves energy efficiency.

(source: https://sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/programs-guides/sustainability-events/energy-smackdown)

## Prayer Shawl Mission By Bill Abeles

Several years ago Michael Clark and Amy Chaffee had the idea of starting a prayer shawl knitting group. They taught me how to knit. We met regularly for about half a year, and then started working only at home. In the beginning I worked in acrylic yarn and only knew the knit stitch. Most shawls were similar, and I varied them by playing with color. But each time I knit a shawl I tried something new. Eventually I abandoned acrylic yarn and have worked only in cotton the past two years. Most shawls I currently knit use a lace pattern



I typically knit while watching television in the evening, and most shawls take about a month to complete. The activity suits me because I like activities where I use my hands but don't have to think; all of the thinking in knitting goes at the beginning of a project in deciding patterns and colors. It feels good to provide something handmade for people in the church at a time when they are wanting and needing comfort. The shawls enable Pastor Debbie to respond to a person's current experience with a gift that can be used in a spiritual manner. I would guess she has given out about 15 so far.



A sampling of prayer shawls knit by Bill Abeles Photo by Bill Abeles



#### Please keep in your prayers:

- Nancy Sokol
- John Gross
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Naomi Hollister
- Laurel Lawshae
- Shella Chace
- Jan Butler
- Joan Yarborough
- Judy Kennison/Marlene Sack
- Pastor André Thera & family
- Ron Drummond
- Barbie Lister
- Cristian Pia-Miller
- Abraham Phelan



Angel sounding the brass horn. By Andrea Staffeld; Photo, David Caughey **The Visitor - December 2020** 

Editor, publisher: Susan Eymann

Proofers: Judy Kennison, Tony Lister Contributors: Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Bill Abeles, Linda Caughey, Anne Farrell Louise Mudrak, Lisa Kilgore, Andrea Mooney Photos: David Caughey, Barb Fry Tony Lister, Bill Abeles

#### Contribute to the Visitor

In the Baptist tradition each of us are called to be ministers. Therefore, each of you is invited and urged to contribute to our *Visitor*. Please send announcements, articles, features, pictures to: susan.eymann@transonic. com



**FIRST BAPTIST WELCOMES ALL:** Even during the dark days of this 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the wreaths on First Baptist's doors welcome all. Our three wreaths will be lit each evening from 4:45-9:45 pm. Photo from Barb Fry

## Time and Talent Ministries

#### First Baptist Staff

Pastor: Rev. Debbie Bennett-Reynolds Secretary: Shella Chace Organist: Christopher Morgan Loy Choir Director: Belinda Adams Youth and Children's Ministries Coordinator: Laura Ward Nursery Caregiver: Carol Fleming Sunday School Aide: Sarah Zipfel Custodian: David Hopkins

#### **Elected Leaders**

Moderator: Judy Kennison Vice Moderator: Mark Lawrence Membership Clerk: Tina Hilsdorf Recording Clerks: Rich Barron/Susan Eymann

Treasurer: David Caughey Assistant Treasurer: Bill Fry Financial Secretary: Marlene Sack

#### **Board of Trustees**

Josie Zanfordino, Baruch Whitehead Bill Phelan (2023); Anne Farrell, Kris Scott, Rich Barron (2022); Hans Bump, Elizabeth Pia-Miller (2021), Bill Fry (2021); David Caughey (ex offico)

#### Trustees' Subgroups Finance & Endowment

David Caughey, chair, Marlene Sack, Janet Cotraccia, Andrea Mooney, Curt Ufford

Interior Decoration: Barbara Fry, Julie Dean, Tina Hilsdorf, Bill Abeles, Anne Farrell, Andrea Staffeld, Susan Eymann

Church Archivist: Linda Caughey

#### Lay Delegates:

Affiliate Organizations Two Delegates each for Rochester Genesee Region & ABC-USA Rich and Lil Barron, Co-chairs; Anne & Steve Farrell, Bill Reynolds

AWAB: Josie Zanfordino, Shella Chace Baptist Peace Fellowship: Meg Gillard, Cornell Campus Ministry: Julia Dean, Linda Nicholson, Anne Farrell Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford,

Sue Hemsath

Tompkins County Workers Center: Bill Abeles

#### Sanctuary Alliance:

Leslie Schultz, Bill Abeles, Bill Fry

#### Pastoral Relations

Tony Lister, Regi Carpenter (2023); Barbara Fry, Bronwyn Evans (2022); Bill Abeles, Lou Carlucci 2021)

#### Nominating Committee

Josie Zanfordino, Adrienne McNair, Linda Caughey, Marge Hansel

#### Personnel Committee Beth Wolfer, chair, Julia Dean

Constitution/By-Law Committee Bill Fry, Alice Grow, Linda Nicholson,

## Susan Eymann, Anne Farrell

#### Ministry Teams

Worship& Spiritual Life: Barbara Fry, Amy Chaffee, Co-chairs; Bill Abeles, Tony Lister, Kris Scott, Edie Reagan, Alice Grow

#### Worship/Spiritual Life Subgroups

Flower Committee: Barbara Fry, Mariana Morse, Tina Hilsdorf, Andrea Staffeld Myra's Ministry: Tina Hilsdorf, Lou Carlucci, Bill Reynolds

Labyrinth: Kris Scott, Liz Wilkinson

Sound/Audio Ministry: David Caughey, Curt Ufford, Bill Fry, Bill Phelan

#### Education

Children's and Youth: Carol Fleming, Tim Dean, Leslie Schultz Christian Ed Teachers: Baruch Whitehead, Lou Carlucci, Sarah Zipfel, Lil Barron

Christian Concern Steve Farrell, Bill Phelan, Co-chairs;

#### Christian Concern Subgroups

Circle of Care: Coordinators: Amanda Ufford, Sue Hemsath, Linda Caughey

#### **Hospitality Ministry:**

Anne Farrell: chair; Shella Chace, Meg Gillard, Tina Hilsdorf, Adrienne McNair, Andrea Staffeld, Greta Cotraccia, Ella Dean, Bay Ward/Aittama, Alice Grow

#### **Communications Ministry**

Shella Chace (convener), David Caughey, Mark Lawrence, Craig Riecke, Susan Eymann, Amy Bean, Lisa Kilgore

#### Green Team

Louise Mudrak, Lisa Kilgore (Co-conveners), Lynn Glase, Tony Lister, and others

Ad Hoc Reopening Committee Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds, David Caughey, Craig Reike, Amy Chaffee, Ann Farrell, Judy Kennison, Josie Zanfordino.