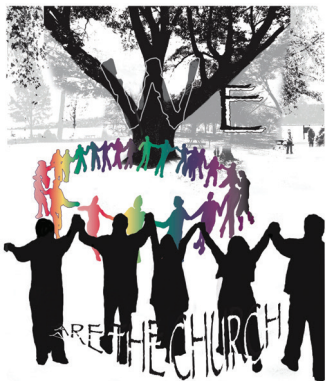


607-273-5800; www.firstbaptistithaca.org; email: fbithaca@gmail.com



Contents

- Pentecost 1
- Trustees' Work Day a Success 1
- From Your Pastor Debbie 2
- Arrangements from Barb Fry 2
- Custodian David Hopkins 2
- The Green Team 3
- Pollinator Blooms 3
- Jud Kilgore - "Getting to Know One Another" 3
- Work Bee Tackles Tasks 4
- Downspouts Water Gardens 5
- First Baptist's Foundations 6
- Cornell Gardens 6
- Si'ahl and the Council of Animals 7
- The Death and Rebirth of the American Chestnut 7
- Keep in Your Prayers 8
- Time and Talent Ministries 8

~~~~~  
What does the Lord require of you?

To do justice,  
Love mercy and  
Walk humbly with our God

*Micah 6:8*  
~~~~~

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.



Pentecost, celebrated 50 days after Easter, is considered the Church's birthday. As recorded in the 2nd chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the early followers or disciples of Jesus gathered and, after being transformed through the promised coming of the Spirit, were empowered to go forth into the community bearing witness to the Risen Christ professing that, indeed, new life would be found as Followers of the Way.

Photos by Barb Fry



Trustees "Spring Work Day" on May 15th Deemed Great Success

Submitted by Anne Farrell, Convener of the Trustees

The "Spring Work Day" organized by FBC's Trustees was a great success. In collaboration with our custodian, David Hopkins, several key tasks were targeted that we wanted to accomplish. Outdoor activities included clearing the gutters; weeding and pruning; and cleaning out the window wells. Inside jobs focused on moving everything out of the nursery so it can be cleaned and painted; temporarily dismantling the cairn in the sanctuary to allow for repairs; and sorting of tools and janitorial supplies, toys, and other items.

With the help of staff and many volunteers, we

did everything we set out to do and more. At the end of the day, the grounds were looking manicured, and we made two deliveries to the Reuse Center of useful items we no longer need. Some wonderful toys were also donated to the Racker Center. Many thanks to Bill Abeles, Rich Barron, Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Dave Caughey, Bruce Chandler, Steve and Anne Farrell, Myra Fincher, Carol Fleming, Bill and Barb Fry, Meg Gillard, Alice Grow, Steve Hilsdorf, David Hopkins, Craig Riecke, Marlene Sack, Curt and Amanda Ufford, and Josie Zanfordino. And thanks to Judy Kennison for taking pictures of the work bee (see page 4).

From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Dear Friends,

We are working on plans to start in-person worship services again both outdoors and indoors! After more than a year, I confess it feels a little strange! We want to approach the coming months as a time to experiment with what works best given our new realities, and I am confident everyone will continue to be as open-minded and flexible as you have been this past year. We have made a commitment to continue offering Zoom worship and other programs for everyone who wants to use that format. We are going to be a “hybrid” church going forward, and we all will need to work together and give input to make that work in the best ways for everyone!



Reverend Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Our congregational conversation on May 23 revealed a very high level of readiness to move back to in-person worship services. Over 90% of us that day were ready to return to in-person, outdoor worship in some way. Almost 80% were ready to come back to in-person, indoor worship. We had a variety of opinions about masks, social distancing, and singing. There was a solid consensus that we are willing to be more cautious in order to include the most people. Since we voted on Reopening Guidelines last summer that don't reflect current realities and increased knowledge, we need to revise our Guidelines and approve them as a congregation.

An Ad Hoc Committee is working and plans to bring a proposal to the congregational meeting on June 13 (when we also will be voting on nominations for church leadership for the coming year). If all goes to plan, we hope to have in-person, indoor worship on June 20th. We already have a reservation at the North Pavilion at Taughannock State Park for in-person, outdoor worship on June 27th at 11:00 a.m. We will also be planning more outdoor worship opportunities this summer. Our Communication Team is working on the technology aspects of making all this work in the best possible ways. This is where we will need to do some experimenting and get input as we go forward. These challenges and opportunities invite us to re-examine together what it means to be church. What does belonging and membership mean when we are not all in the same geographical place but we are still joining together in spirit in shared worship and learning spaces? 200 years ago our church was founded in Danby, but when the majority of members were living in Ithaca a few years later they moved the church to Ithaca. Just 6 miles was too far in the 1820's! Now in 2021, we have people participating in our church's life from other cities, states, and even from another country! What an interesting time to be a church!

In the face of uncertainty and the unknown, we can choose whether we will let ourselves be led by anxiety and fear – or whether we will summon our curiosity and courage. What is the Spirit of God calling us to be and to do in this time? How can our church's life adapt to these realities? How are we being called to be “nurturing and inclusive” under these conditions? And what people are out there – maybe far from our geographical place – who are longing for the loving and faithful community we offer? Let's be praying and imagining and experimenting together in the weeks and months ahead!

Bless you all,

Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Elegance: Vase with yellow tulip and white narcissus on communion table May 2nd. Courtesy of Barb Fry

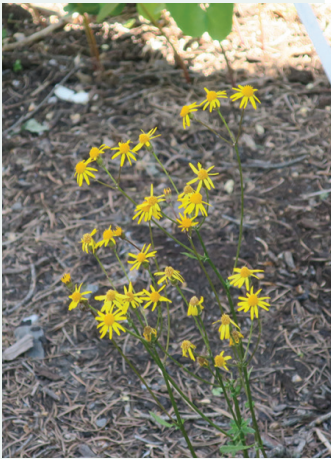


FBC's Custodian David Hopkins joins in the Trustees' Work Bee on May 15th. Trustees Convener Anne Farrell recently sang David's praises, noting that he is always more than willing to help with a smile and has been a great asset for First Baptist through the years.



Tulips on the Communion Table May 2nd courtesy of Barb Fry

Pollinator Garden Blooms



Louise Mudrak



Lisa Kilgore



Alice Grow



Sarah Zipfel



Marge Hansel



Tony Lister



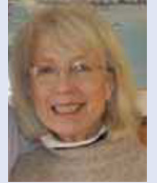
Hans Bump

The Green (Earth Care) Ministry Team

Louise Mudrak, Lisa Kilgore Co-conveners



Tina Hilsdorf



Lynn Glase

As Christians the Green (Earth Care) Ministry Team is called to be stewards and gardeners of the earth, and to discern our ever-evolving roles as members of God's creation. This includes living in humility and gratitude, finding and sharing responsibilities and joy as individuals within our church community, the broader community and beyond. We work with the Pastor and Worship and Spiritual Life Team to explicitly express and discern (through prayer, song, worship) our gratitude, joy and responsibilities as members of the web of life, God's creation. This is currently taking place on Earth Sunday each month. We also offer ways for people to process their climate grief and subsequent paths to health and wholeness in kinship with all of life.

We also work with the Christian Concerns Team to develop and support local action, particularly food and water supplies, and to provide programming on the intersectionality of race and environmental inequality. We are implementing a Pollinator/Habitat Garden Project to safeguard our native species and encourage pollination. Review the current Drawdown materials and choose one or two Drawdown actions to develop and undertake by FBC Ithaca. {e.g., Cutting Food Waste is a big item and is related to Social Justice.}

We also coordinate with FBC Trustees to provide information about resources, and people in the greater Ithaca area, financial incentives, highly recommended contractors and any other background info. toward planning for more earth- friendly furnace replacement options and costs for our church building through at least the next decade and beyond.

We invite anyone to join in any of our projects.



Steve Hilsdorf and crew repairing the sidewalk by the side entrance to FBC. Photo from Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Dr. Jud Kilgore. being interviewed May 17 on Zoom for the weekly noontime program, "Getting to Know One Another Better." Photo by Lisa Kilgore



Bill Abeles trimming bushes



Curt and Amanda Ufford sorting toys from nursery

Work Bee Tackles Tasks from Roof to Grounds

Photo essay by Judy Kennison



Rich Barron fixing the stoop



Steve Hillsdorf's and Bill Fry's tasks reach new heights



Craig Riecke tackling the windows



Marlene Sack sorting

Two New Downspouts Water FBC Gardens

Submitted by Louise Mudrak

Careful Planning & Execution



Louise, Lisa and Sarah discussing shape of the downspout gravel area



Alice Grow finishing the downspout rain garden under the fir tree



Lisa Kilgore & Sarah Zipfel discussing strategy

Planting a pollinator garden isn't just about trying to demonstrate how we can use our land to support many forms of life, but it is also about doing our best to be good stewards of the water that falls onto and runs over and through our land. Our beautiful, historic First Baptist Church building is covered by large roof surfaces. When it rains, the waters flow across the many roof areas into large gutters and on into downspouts. Several of our Church downspouts then empty into black plastic run-out pipes onto the soil or the parking lot areas.

The garden area under the Christ window is being developed as a demonstration pollinator garden. There are two downspouts that empty onto the garden site. We have dug simple depressions ranging about 6 to 15 inches deep at the pipe outflows, filled them with gravel and lined the sides with small, natural shale stones. The idea is that water draining off the roof will be retained on the site in the gravel areas and be allowed to percolate into the garden and nurture the native plants there. When the water percolates through the garden, it will also be cleaned by natural processes before it makes its way into Cayuga Lake. The gravel basins also help prevent garden soil from being washed from our site onto the surrounding parking lots and where the water will run across the blacktop picking up oil drippings and other street pollutants as it makes its way into street gutters and on into our beloved Cayuga Lake.

The Garden Committee has built these simple structures to help convey the idea that you can make this type of water feature on your property with simple materials and minimal effort. We are now planning to install some native plants that like wetter conditions around the new downspout water gardens. This is a learning process for all of us. Help us watch to see how our downspout water gardens work!



Sarah, Thomas and Amanda digging and hauling



Soil washing off of the site when there is a hard rain



Sarah Zipfel adjusting the slope of the drain pipe



-Completed downspout water area

Cornell's Gardens

May 25th by Judy Kennison



First Baptist's Foundation

Submitted by Bill Abeles

Founded after the harvest season of 1821 by 23 people in Danby, New York, the church moved a few miles north to Ithaca in 1826. The first home for the First Baptist Church in Ithaca was built in 1831, with a young Ezra Cornell serving as one of the carpenters. Upon the building's destruction by fire in 1854, a second structure was built and used until the growing community required a larger building. The present structure was completed in 1890, with financial assistance from John D. Rockefeller. Its architect was William Henry Miller, who designed a number of major buildings on the Cornell campus and in downtown Ithaca. Now widely recognized as an example of Romanesque architecture, the building has been called the "Jewel of DeWitt park." In 1971 it was designated a historic landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Ithaca. It is also listed on the NYS and National Registers of Historic Landmarks. During the early 1970s the congregation explored ways to create a better, more workable church space, included selling the building and moving, demolishing and rebuilding on site, or renovating the interior. The congregation voted to renovate the interior of the building February 1, 1976. St. John's Episcopal Church shared their chapel and office space with First Baptist for 9 months, until basic work was completed, which included an open and inclusive remodel of the Sanctuary. Worship resumed in the First Baptist Church building for Easter, 1978.

From its beginnings, First Baptist has been involved in strategic ministries. In the late nineteenth century, our church became a center for the women's suffrage movement in upstate New York: in 1902 a meeting of the Tompkins County Suffrage Association took place in the church parlor, and in 1914 a mass meeting of suffragettes from nine counties met at the church. First Baptist was willing to take real risks because it saw the marginalizing of women as a biblical justice issue.

The church was willing to stand up and be counted during the civil rights turmoil of the 1950's and 1960's, and First Baptist met with Calvary Baptist of Ithaca to affirm the message of Martin Luther King. The church protested the Vietnam War in the late 1960's and 1970's. The first Planned Parenthood office and clinic in Ithaca were housed in First Baptist during the 1970's. The pastor was a board member, and a congregation member supervised the clinic and helped start the education program. Before Roe vs. Wade, the pastor was part of a clergy service to assist women in locating a safe abortion. In the 1980's, the church joined with the Quakers as leaders of the "sanctuary"

movement in the Ithaca area, calling "upon the U.S. government to acknowledge the right of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees to political asylum." First Baptist declared its opposition to the deportation of "refugees as long as persecution, torture, and murder of civilians continued." The church has continued its active support of refugees to the present. It has helped refugees to resettle in Ithaca from Vietnam, Haiti, Romania, Cambodia, Kosovo, Belarus, and other countries.

For decades First Baptist has been a champion of inclusiveness. It has long been a home to people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. In 1997, as a result of the current move by some within the American Baptist Churches of the USA to disfellowship welcoming and affirming churches, First Baptist became a member of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. The immediate past executive director of AWAB sought out First Baptist as the sponsoring congregation for her ordination. In 2007 the church joined the Tompkins County Workers' Center to assist in the campaign for a living wage for all workers. The pastor worked with Ithaca College students to get a living wage for food service employees at the college; he also addressed the needs of migrant farm workers. First Baptist is a living wage employer, and in Ithaca there are 106 certified living wage businesses with over 3119 workers (2016). In 2105 the church sponsored a trip where 12 of us, 7 adults and 5 youth, went to Guatemala to assist and learn about people's lives there.

Our congregation identifies all members of the church as ministers, and some young people upon leaving Ithaca have decided to attend seminary and pursue ministerial careers. (The church has ordained five ministers in the past 25 years.) Our membership includes an unusually large number of retired ministers, and ordained ministers doing non-pastoral work, from both the ABC and other denominations. Over the years the church has had links to the international community through the presence of foreign students, members who have lived abroad during sabbatical and/or study leaves, and missionaries taking courses at local colleges while on furlough. Students and others here for a few years keep in touch; a few return to Ithaca to rejoin us. A significant number of members after leaving Ithaca maintain contact, sending appreciative notes for receiving our newsletter, *The Visitor*, some continuing to provide financial support, visiting us when in the area, and expressing the wish that "they could find another church like First Baptist!"

The Death & Rebirth of the American Chestnut, the Perfect Tree

From *The Week*, May 21, 2021, adapted from a Sierra Club story, and posted on the church bulletin board:

"Between 1904 and 1940 some 3.5 billion American chestnut trees, the giants of the Appalachian hardwood forest, succumbed to a fungal blight called *Cryphonectria parasitica*. ... In a range stretching from southern Maine to the Florida Panhandle and west to the Mississippi River, the chestnut dominated the landscape, accounting for a quarter of all trees in the eastern hardwood forest. ... By almost any metric, the American chestnut was a perfect tree. Massive, fast growing, and rot-resistant, it was easy to mill into cabin logs, furniture, fence posts and railroad ties. After being harvested, it resprouted; in 20 years, it was ready for the saw again. ... When the profitable nuts and timber disappeared, the Appalachian landscape was reshaped twice over: first by the death of the chestnuts, then by a century of coal mining that stripped and scarred the earth, leaving piles of rubble in its wake."

Now the American Chestnut Foundation who is working to restore blight resistant trees.

Submitted by Linda Caughey



Si'ahl & the Council of Animals: A Story of Our Changing Climate for Children & Their Parents Read by Regi Carpenter Was Featured on Cornell's Bring Your Child to Work Day

By Lisa Kilgore

Bring Your Child to Work day (BYCWD) occurs on the fourth Thursday in April every year. Cornell 2021 BYCWD was rebranded this year to the Kids@Home program and ran for the whole month of April.

I recalled that Tony Lister had spoken about the book *Si'ahl and the Council of Animals: A Story of Our Changing Climate for Children and Their Parents* which his sisters Margie Lister Muenzer and Jane Lister Reis had written and their cousin Andrea Hioti had illustrated. The small volume was recorded by none other than storyteller, author, performance artist, coach AND First Baptist beloved member Regi Carpenter.

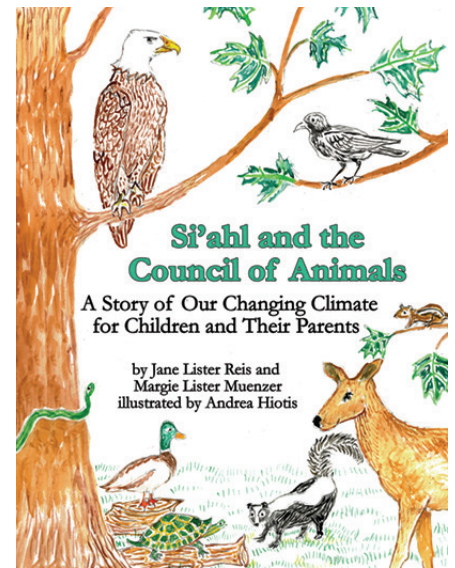
After a few phone calls and many emails, I was able to get the audio recording and I submitted it for kids@home program. The recording was spotlighted for Earth Day and remained available for the rest of the month.

The book is a story about animals discussing how humans have affected their lives and habitats. Among the animals is Si'ahl, a bald eagle, who is the head of the Council of Animals, and the animals figure out an ingenious way to let the humans know they need their help.

Tony's sisters hope that parents / caretakers can use their book to discuss climate change with children. There is a separate coloring book that compliments the book.

My thanks to all that made it possible to share this wonderful story with the Cornell Community.

Lisa Kilgore



The Back Story

As some of you may know Tony Lister comes from a family of five siblings. His younger sisters, Margie and Jane are twins. Margie, a retired physical therapist, lives in Chapel Hill, NC with her husband Joe. For many years she has worked with a therapeutic riding program. Jane, a college professor and farmer, lives in Seattle with her husband Don. On an annual visit to visit Jane to celebrate their joint birthdays, the two sisters were reminiscing about how their mother had read to them animal stories such as *The Wind in the Willows*. That gave them the idea to write a children's book themselves. On the plane ride home Margie sketched out the plot for *Si'ahl and the Council of Animals*. The sisters took it from there. Jane suggested Si'ahl in the title for it was the name of Chief Seattle. They had intended for the main character to be an owl, but a local Indian advisor informed them that owls are not considered wise animals in their culture. So an eagle became the head of the council. At a memorial service for an uncle a month or so later, they met a cousin who said that she was an illustrator. She was quickly conscripted to illustrate the book and its accompanying coloring book. Similarly, Tony arranged for his sisters to meet Regi Carpenter to record the book. Now available on Amazon, Jane and Margie hope that parents will read the book to their children, as their mother had read to them, and children will grow up cherishing and caring for their planet earth.



Please keep in your prayers:

- John Gross
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Naomi Hollister
- Laurel Lawshae
- Joan Yarborough
- Pastor André Thera & family
- Ron Drummond
- Barbie Lister
- Cristian Pia-Miller
- The Phelan family
- Anthony Halman & family

Living as prayer. I think that is when I am at my best. Because seeing through prayer provides a remarkable clarity. Not in the doctrinal sense, but because it is, at best, the lens of a love for every tattered inch of this earth.

IMANI PERRY

Nothing is worth more than laughter. It is strength to laugh and to abandon oneself, to be light.

FRIDA KAHLO

Surrender isn't a sacrifice of the known, but rather a celebration of the infinite.

NIPUN MEHTA



The Visitor - May, 2021

Editor, publisher: Susan Eymann
Proofers: Judy Kennison, Tony Lister
Contributors: Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Anne Farrell, Linda Caughey, Louise Mudrak, Bill Abeles, Lisa Kilgore, Tony Lister
Photos: Bill Phelan, Tony Lister, Judy Kennison, Alice Grow, Louise Mudrak, Barb Fry, Susan Eymann



The Sanctuary on Pentecost May 23rd.

Zoom photo from Tony Lister

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 officio)

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, Linda Nicholson, Susan Eymann, Anne Farrell, Judy Kennison, Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

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 Stowell, Lisa Kilgore

Green Team

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

Ad Hoc Reopening Committee

Pastor DBR, David Caughey, Judy Kennison, Amy Bean Stowell, Barbara Pease, Tina Hilsdorf.

200th Anniversary Committee

Mark Lawrence, Rich Barron, Susan Eymann, Linda Caughey, Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds.