



*First Baptist Church, April 22, 2024,  
sine Concolor Fir*

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*Postcard of FBC, circa early 1900s.*

## Concolor Fir Felled

On Monday morning April 15th, a three-hour drama unfolded in front of First Baptist as the Kodiak Tree Service of Newfield cut down the 90 plus-year-old Concolor Fir. The three-man crew headed by Kodiak's owner Aaron Thomson, tackled the tree with precision, skill and speed that left observers spellbound. Aaron first donned 40 pounds of equipment including a leather belt from which his chain saw and ropes hung, and braces on his legs and feet. Up the tree trunk he scrambled to its top limb where he attached a pulley system which was used to lower each limb. After Aaron lassoed and then cut each limb starting with the bottom limbs and systematically moving upward, his crew guided the felled limbs to the ground where they were immediately put through the chipper. "It's astonishing," uttered Bill Fry as he and a handful of others watched riveted as the branches of the tree were felled one by one. Once all the branches were down, Aaron cut a wedge in the massive trunk and it crashed to its targeted destination on the ground. (See pages 5 and 6 for more photos.)



*Aaron Thomson, owner of Kodiak Tree Service, Newfield, climbs the trunk of the Concolor fir (below), and checks the pulley system (above) before lassoing the top limbs to saw them off and lower them to the ground.*

Photos by Tony Lister



*Sanctuary family Edgar Escarrathe, Jenny Auqui, daughters Fiorela and Gricy accompanied by Steve Farrell and Tony Lister visit Taughannock Falls after going to the Science Center on April 12th.*



# Holy Week Remembered



Easter



Easter brunch



Good Friday

## From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Dear Friends,

Even though this day is chilly, the sun is warm and the days are getting longer. Spring is here! There is so much beauty to notice and enjoy all around us right now. Even as we said goodbye to our grandfather concolor fir, in this Easter season we were reminded of the cycle of life – life, death, and resurrection. I am thankful that we live in this climate where the lengthening hours of sunlight and all the living things stirring and growing around us speak to us of the amazing work of our life-giving God.

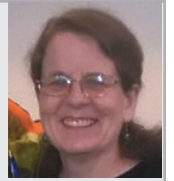
In our church family, I am so grateful for all the ways God is at work among us. There's a lot of new life happening in our midst! Many of you are new to our community in this past year or two and are blessing us with your love and energy. What a gift to have you sharing your lives and enriching our life together!

On May 19, Pentecost Sunday, we will receive as new members some who are ready to make their connection "official". If you haven't talked with me yet, but you are ready to join as a Member, Associate Member (still keeping a membership in some other church too) or as a Friend who just wants to affirm your connection but not be an official member, please talk with me!

For those of you who are newer and would like to learn more about First Baptist, we are planning a Newcomers Gathering on May 5th after Brunch. We will gather in the Library at 12:15 for a chance to share information about who we are and ways to be involved, answer your questions, and get to know each other better. Please plan to join us if you can! There will be more Newcomer Gatherings coming soon if this time doesn't work for you.

God is at work in us this Easter season, always blessing us with life and hope and love. Let's join with all living things in letting the Spirit keep bringing new life in and among us!

Blessings, Debbie



Rev. Debbie Bennett Reynolds



**Inspired:** Elena Adams was so inspired by the Hallelujah Chorus that, in front of the sanctuary, she accompanied the glorious singing with cartwheels. Photos by Barb Fry



## Did You Know?

Jewish law states that life does not begin at conception. Talmud sources note that the fetus is "mere water" before 40 days of gestation. After that, the fetus is considered a physical part of the pregnant individual's body, not yet having life of its own or independent rights. The fetus is not viewed as separate from the parent's body until birth begins and the first breath of oxygen into the lungs allows the soul to enter the body.

Furthermore, Jewish law does not consider a fetus to be alive. The Torah, Exodus 21:22-23, recounts a story of two men who are fighting and injure a pregnant woman, resulting in her subsequent miscarriage. The verse explains that if the only harm done is the miscarriage, then the perpetrator must pay a fine. However, if the pregnant person is gravely injured, the penalty shall be a life for a life as in other homicides. The common rabbinical interpretation of this verse is that the men did not commit murder and that the fetus is not a person. The primary concern is the well-being of the person who was injured.

Jewish sources explicitly state that abortion is not only permitted but is required should the pregnancy endanger the life or health of the pregnant individual. "Health" is commonly interpreted to encompass psychological health as well as physical health. NCJW advocates for abortion access as an essential component of comprehensive, affordable, confidential, and equitable family planning, reproductive, sexual health, and maternal health services.

Judaism values life and affirms that protecting existing life is paramount at all stages of pregnancy. Because a fetus is not considered a person, it does not have the same rights as one who is already alive. As such, the interests of the pregnant individual always come before that of the fetus.

# FBC Women's Retreat — March 14 - 15



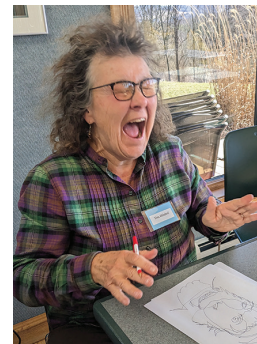
*Alice Grow and Meg Gillard drawing one another*



*Amanda Ufford and Jan Butler share a laugh*



*Peggy Fry Keating & Carrie Stearns*



*Tina Hilsdorf enjoying her artwork.*



*Hope Decker and Carrie Stearns draw each other, one of the fun activities suggested by the retreat committee..*



*Carolyn Young (top pix) and Linda Caughey, Anne Farrell and Alice Grow enjoy craft projects.*



## In Chow Line

*Light on the Hill provided meals at this year's retreat which lightened the burden of attendees and made the retreat more cohesive. There was a unanimous vote to have a one-day retreat again next year at Light on the Hill.*

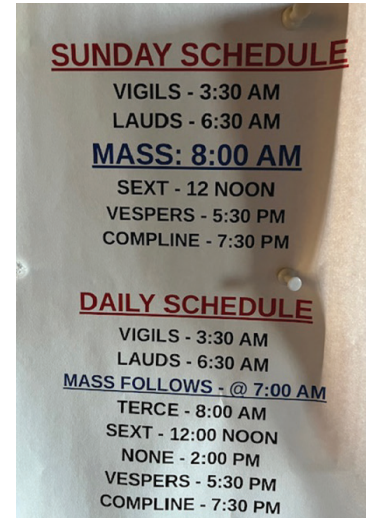
# Genesee Abby Retreat - April 13-14



*Rocks and a stained glass window*



*The chapel at the Abby of the Genesee constructed with stones from the neighboring farmlands which were prepared by an acid wash.*



*List of daily services.*



*Attendees, from left to right: Barb Fry, Tony Lister, Bill Abeles, Bronwyn Evans and Anne Horst. Missing from photo is Tina Hillsdorf.*

Anne Horst, Bronwyn Evans, Barb Fry, Bill Abeles, Tina Hillsdorf and Tony Lister from First Baptist traveled to the to the Abby of the Lady of the Genesee south of Genesee, NY on April 13-14 for a memorable, contemplative two-day retreat. The group attended six of the seven daily services in the stunning chapel, forgoing the one that took place at 3:30 am. They were housed in nearby Bethany Lodge in single rooms, each with a private bathroom. The group experienced community together as they prepared and ate their meals together at Bethany. They also had the opportunity to visit the Abby's store where they purchased books and Monk's bread products.



*Lady of the Genesee*

## *James Finley - Author, Clinical Psychologist & Former Trappist Monk*

James Finley was born in Akron, Ohio on May 30, 1943. He experienced childhood trauma from his alcoholic father's violence. When he was 14 he discovered a Thomas Merton's book *The Sign of Jonas* and felt called to the monastic life. Finley entered the Trappist order at the Abbey of Gethsemane after graduating from high school. Thomas Merton became his novice director. In addition to Christian mysticism, Finley learned from Merton about the Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic mystical traditions. He remained at the monastery until January 1967, when he left abruptly after being sexually abused by one of the monks.

Finley then pursued bachelor's and master's degrees in English education and taught at a number of Catholic schools in the Cleveland, Ohio area. During this time, he wrote *Merton's Palace of Nowhere* and was first invited to lead retreats on Thomas Merton and contemplative spirituality. At one of these retreats, he was persuaded to pursue a Ph.D. in psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He integrated his psychological knowledge into his spiritual teachings and writings, and worked as a therapist in private practice with his wife for thirty years.

Along with founder Richard Rohr, he is a core faculty member at the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. With colleagues Brian McLaren, Cynthia Bourgeault and Dr. Barbara Holmes, he continues to write, lead retreats, teach online courses and hosts a podcast called *Turning to the Mystics*. His memoir, *The Healing Path* was published in 2022.



*James Finley*



Bidding adieu to the concolor fir April 9th were, from left to right, Louise Mudrak, Mark Lawrence, Tina Hilsdorf, Bill Abeles, Barb Fry, Alice Grow, Laura Peters, Christopher Morgan Loy, Josie Zanfordino and Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds. Missing from photo is Susan Eymann. Photos by Tony Lister



Above, Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds prays for the spirit of the tree and the care of the earth while Alice Grow and Josie Zanfordino look on.

## Saying Goodbye to FBC's Concolor Fir

On a balmy April 9th evening, a small group gathered in front of First Baptist to bid adieu to its stately Concolor Fir that had graced the front of the church for almost 100 years. Folks were asked how they felt about the tree. "Humbled" uttered one as he looked upward to the giant biomass that towered over the church, "Sad," said another. A third demonstrated how she felt by hugging the tree trunk. Pastor Debbie prayed that we may continue to hold the spirit of the tree in our hearts.



Concolor fir boughs used to by Andrea Staffeld to decorate the communion table on April 21st. Photo by Bill Phelan



Louise Mudrak shows Susan Eymann the fir's seed pods. Photo by Tony Lister



Voices Multicultural Chorus performed "Cherokee Moring Song" and "Haba ba Haba" during worship April 21st.

# FBC's Concolor Fir Felled on April 15th

Photos by Tony Lister



*Aaron Thomson sawing off lower branches*



*Halfway there*



*The ground crew guides a limb down with a rope and pulley system*



*Into the on-site chipper the branch is fed.*



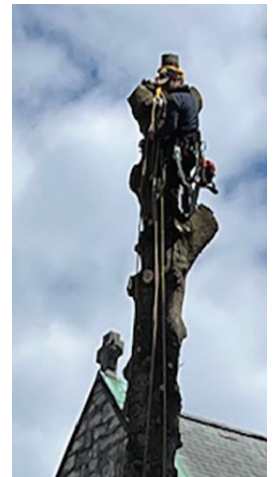
*Aaron straddling limbs to position himself for the next cut.*



*Guiding the next limb down*



*Aaron climbing up the next-to-last branch*



*Securing the final rope*



*Cutting a wedge in the bare trunk*



*Down the trunk topples*



*Trunk on ground and stump remaining behind.*

## Upcoming Events

**Yard Sale to Benefit to Benefit Cross-Cultural Trip to Guatemala**

Sat. May 11th at FBC,  
9 am to 2 pm  
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### Brunch

For Ithaca College members of Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers  
Sunday, May 5th  
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### Pentecost Sunday

Welcome of Newcomers  
Sunday, May 19th  
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### Congregational Meeting

Sunday, June 16th  
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### FBC Picnic

Sunday, June 23th,  
Taughannock State Park  
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## Hostess with the Most-est

Anne Farrell and her Hospitality Committee outdo themselves at every event they put on. Below is a picture of Anne alongside a brunch buffet. At the bottom is an example of one of her fabulous table settings.



## Play Drawn from David Evans' Memoirs Read

On April 21st, following worship, a play *When Some Clergy Went Underground* written by Carol Kammen and drawn from the memoirs of First Baptist's legendary former pastor of 27 years David Evans was read aloud to an audience of about 30 who gathered in the sanctuary. The readers included Tony Lister as David Evans, Debbie Bennett Reynolds and Laura Peters as women, Shella Chace as historian: and Bill Abeles as a man.



David Evans

The play recounted the context of the opening of Planned Parenthood in Tompkins County in 1968 in a space donated first by the First Presbyterian Church and later expanding to the First Baptist Church. At the time, David was Chair of the Clergy Advisory Committee of Planned Parenthood. When a young couple came to Planned Parenthood seeking an abortion Planned Parenthood could not provide help because abortion was illegal in New York State. After considerable soul searching, Pastor Evans contacted his friend Howard Moody at Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village and referred the first and other couples to its Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion. That led to seven religious workers in Ithaca, including Protestant and Roman Catholics, forming the Upstate Clergy Consultation Service on Problem Pregnancies. The group soon grew to 13 and quietly referred women who choose abortion to qualified, licensed physicians. Satellite organizations later formed in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica and Albany.

When the work of the organization became public in 1970, the group appealed to staunch Republican Assemblywoman Constance Cook to work toward legalizing abortion in New York State. She later co-authored New York State's Abortion Bill.

Following the poignant presentation, there was time for comments from the tearful audience. Several noted that David's wife Grace was also instrumental in the mission. David and Grace's three children Bronwyn Bronwyn, in person and Trevor and Janelle on Zoom heard the play.

The play will be read again at the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca on April 29th, 7 pm.

## What Is This Cross All About

*By Leslie Schultz, 2023*

*Read during a recent adult education session*

Jesus was crucified and died on the cross. At the time of his death, crucifixion was a means of execution. Jesus was executed because His embodiment of God's justice and love and who he was and how he was positioned in his society threatened to upend the powers of the Roman Empire and the local ruling authority in Jerusalem. At Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of a criminalized Christ, revealing that love is more powerful than violence and that we are invited to live according to that love.

History demonstrates that, when threatened, Empire protects its own power and wealth and very often does so by violent means of oppression in which the most vulnerable among us suffer first and foremost. Jesus' radical solidarity with the most vulnerable (poor people and outcasts), his non-violent actions, and his criticism of those with wealth and privilege all got him into trouble with the authorities of his day ultimately leading to his crucifixion. When we consider what Empire sees as threatening and, consequently, look at who is on the cross today, we can do better through noncooperation with evil and withdrawal of our support for dominant systems.

By Jesus' example, I think we are called to always ask:

- Who are the least of us today?
- Who is being hung on the cross in our lifetime and why?
- What are the threats to Empire that are met with violent oppression?



Please keep in your prayers:

- Kris and Danny Scott & Zeta Pederson
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Kendrick Kemp
- Ron Drummond
- Adrienne McNair
- Abraham Phelan
- Anthony Halman & family
- James (Nico) Schultz
- Debbie and Bill Reynolds

The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members, a heart of grace, and a soul generated by love.

CORETTA SCOTT KING

Wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

The sacred... is all around us, and small human rituals can connect us to its presence.

ALMA LUZ VILLANUEVA



Weeping cherry in full bloom in Jud' Kilgore's front yard last week

### The Visitor - April 2024

Editor/publisher: Susan Eymann  
Proofers: Tony Lister, Shella Chace, Judy Kennison  
Contributors: Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Leslie Schultz  
Photos: Tony Lister, Bill Phelan, Barbara Fry, Judy Kennison, Barb Fry



Hallelujah! In a rousing finale to the Easter Sunday worship service congregants were invited to join the choir to sing Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. The music swelled throughout the sanctuary as the 30-plus voices rang out.

## FBC Organization (updated December, 2023)

### First Baptist Staff

Pastor: Rev. Debbie Bennett Reynolds  
Office Manager: Janice Nigro  
Organist: Christopher Morgan Loy  
Choir Director: Belinda Adams  
Youth and Children's Ministries Coordinator: Laura Ward  
Nursery Care Coordinator: Carol Fleming  
Nursery Care Assistant: Sarah Zipfel  
Custodian: David Hopkins  
Native Plants Garden Specialist: Sarah Zipfel

### Elected Leadership

#### Council Trustees

Margie Latham: Moderator  
Andrea Mooney: Vice Moderator  
Susan Eymann: Clerk  
Brian Baker: Treasurer

#### Council Committee Trustees

Josie Zanfordino: Ecological Justice  
Leslie Schultz: Education  
Anne Farrell: Hospitality and Nurture  
Bill Fry: Resource  
Bill Abeles: Service and Social Justice  
Steve Farrell: Welcome and Outreach  
Tony Lister: Worship, Music and Spiritual Life

#### Council Member-at-Large

Carolyn Young

#### Non-Council Officers

Bill Fry: Assistant Treasurer  
Marlene Sack: Financial Secretary  
Elizabeth Pia-Miller: Assistant Financial Secretary

#### Nominating Committee

Andrea Mooney (chair), Bill Fry, Susan

Eymann

#### Pastoral Relations

(2024): Mark Lawrence, Amanda Ufford, Barb Fry; (2025): Judy Kennison (chair)  
Bill Abeles, Carolyn Young; (2026): Lil Barron, Barbara Pease.

#### Reps to Affiliate Organizations

Two Delegates each for Rochester Genesee Region & ABC-USA  
Rich and Lil Barron; Anne & Steve Farrell.

ACT (Area Congregations Together): Shella Chace

AWAB: Shella Chace

Baptist Peace Fellowship: Leslie Schultz

Cornell Campus Ministry: Brian Baker  
Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath

Tompkins County Workers Center: Bill Abeles

Sanctuary Alliance: Anne Horst (chair), Bill Abeles; Bill Fry; Leslie Schultz and others

### Council Committees

Ecological Justice  
Josie Zanfordino, Louise Mudrak (Co-chairs); Barbara Pease, Alice Grow, Amanda Ufford

#### Education Children's and Youth:

Leslie Schultz (chair), Debbie Allen.  
Christian Ed Teachers: Baruch Whitehead; Sarah Zipfel; Meg Gillard

#### Hospitality and Nurture:

Anne Farrell (chair); Shella Chace; Meg Gillard; Tina Hilsdorf; Bruce Chandler, Andrea Staffeld; Steve Farrell; Alice Grow, Craig Riecke, Laura Peters

### Resource Committee

Bill Fry (chair); Brian Baker, Rich Barron, Lou Carlucci, Dave Caughey, Steve Hilsdorf, Mark Lawrence, Bill Phelan, Marlene Sack, Kris Scott, Carolyn Young, Josie Zanfordino

### Service & Social Justice

Bill Abeles (chair); Bill Phelan, Amanda Ufford, Marge Hansel, Shella Chase and others

#### Subgroup

Circle of Care: Linda Caughey (chair)  
Amanda Ufford; Sue Hemsath

#### Welcome and Outreach:

Steve Farrell (chair). Anne Farrell, Alicia Dixon-Garrard, Baruch Whitehead, Joe Haines.

#### Subgroup: Communications:

David Caughey; Mark Lawrence; Craig Riecke; Susan Eymann; Amy Bean Stowell; Lisa Kilgore

### Worship, Music & Spiritual Life:

Tony Lister, Biz Pia-Miller (Co-chairs); Barb Fry, Kris Scott; Edie Reagan; Alice Grow; Regi Carpenter; Debbie Allen, Bronwyn Evans

#### Subgroups

Flower Committee: Barbara Fry; Tina Hilsdorf; Andrea Staffeld, Carrie Stearn  
Labyrinth: Kris Scott

Sound/Audio Ministry: David Caughey; Bill Fry; Bill Phelan; Leslie Schultz

To correct listing, contact Susan Eymann (susan.eymann@transonic.com)