

607-273-5800; [www.firstbaptistithaca.org](http://www.firstbaptistithaca.org); email: [fbithaca@gmail.com](mailto:fbithaca@gmail.com)



## Core Values Defined

After months of meetings and discussions that included the full congregation, the Cabinet, several Sunday School classes and the Visioning Team under the guidance of consultant Arlen Vernava, the core values of First Baptist of Ithaca have been defined as follows:

**First Baptist Church in Ithaca is:**  
*A Nurturing and Inclusive Community whose members:*  
*Are guided by the Jesus' Teachings;*  
*Strive for Social & Ecological Justice;*  
*and Embrace the Baptist Tradition of Bible, Soul, Church and Religious Freedoms.*



On December 15th, James Schultz relates the Christmas story to three "seekers" with a video he wrote, directed and produced. The star (Larisa Wolfer) led the seekers from the Ithaca Commons to First Baptist to hear the good news.

### Contents

- Core Values Defined 1
- January 26th: Annual Congregational Meeting 1
- Filling the Manger 1
- Walking the Labyrinth ... 1
- From Your Pastor Debbie 2
- Decorating for the Season 2
- Christmas Wonder: Photo Collage 3
- Bill Fry: Vietnam Diary 4
- Shepherd's Dance 4
- Community Dinner 4
- Giving Overflows 5
- 2019 End with Small Surplus 5
- *The Risk of Birth* 5
- *Magnificat* 6
- Walking the Labyrinth 6
- Keep in Your Prayers 6
- Time and Talent Ministries 6

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

### Save the Dates

**FBC Women's Retreat**  
 March 24-26, 2020

**Mini-Retreat:**  
**Celtic Spirituality**  
 Led by Rev. Debbie Allen  
 Saturday, March 21st, 2020

Our new website [www.firstbaptistithaca.org](http://www.firstbaptistithaca.org) is now live! Check it out.

## January 26th: Annual Congregational Meeting

The annual meeting of First Baptist is set for January 26th, following worship.

- Treasurer David Caughey will present the end-of-the 2019 year financial report (see summary on page 5).
- The proposed 2020 annual budget will be presented to the congregation for confirmation.
- An update on Visioning Process and its next steps will be presented.
- The final version of First Baptist's Core Values (in box above), developed through the Visioning Process, will be presented for affirmation by the congregation.



Christmas Eve - Filling the Manger: Children participated in the Christmas Eve service by populating the manger with an array of animals, shepherds, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus.

## From Your Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds

Dear Friends,

*I write this the day before we head off on a family vacation of eight days in Belgium and Scotland. It's fun having a daughter who lives in Saudi Arabia when that makes a great reason to meet up in Europe! It's the first time just the four of us have spent a week together in a long time. I will miss you – but not too much!*



Reverend Debbie Bennett Reynolds

*I want to express my gratitude for a very full and blessed Advent- Christmas- Epiphany season of worship and celebration. From our first Advent Sunday of ice and snow, we nurtured our spiritual journeys and our community life with worship and music, contemplative prayer, beauty in our sanctuary and at our breakfast together, caring outreach to others, and shared food and fellowship. A major highlight was the Sunday our young people led us in worship! Everything was wonderful – from the children's time singing of our kindergartners to the Nativity video and interview of the Star and the singing and dancing! We are blessed with such wonderful children and youth and volunteer and staff leaders who work with them .*

*Once again, the Tim Hembrooke Community Dinner brought children and families for a time of fun and food together, and the Giving Tree met needs of families in Enfield. Christmas Eve worship saw a full sanctuary as we gathered with many family and friends to celebrate Christ's birth. Our Labyrinth tradition was expanded to include a deeply meaningful time to walk the labyrinth in solidarity with migrants and refugees.*

*As we begin this new year, there is energy and hopefulness in our congregation. There is much deep concern in our larger world from climate change to the threats of conflict and political challenges to freedom and democracy. But, as a church family, we are doing well. There is life and love here in our midst. We are here to support one another, nurture our hope and faith in these challenging times, and encourage one another as we offer our gifts and abilities and share God's love in so many ways.*

*Our Visioning process has finally led us to identify our Core Values, and we can move forward using these to help us evaluate what we do currently do – both in our structures and practices and in our programs and outreach ministries. Things like revising our by-laws can be challenging work, but the purpose is to align how we do things with our values so that we can move forward more effectively and efficiently. The fun part is that we are now freed to think "aspirationally" - leaning into the energy we feel and the possibilities we see for our future together.*

*Here in Ithaca we have emerging opportunities to consider - such as, whether to commit more full support as a congregation to the Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance, how to be more engaged with college students seeking love and support, and whether to volunteer or be a site for the developing program for Parent Child Visitation for Family Treatment Court.*

*Who knows what else may arise? Let's try to be open minded and open hearted, willing to let go of old things that may no longer have enough energy and life to continue and ready to embrace wherever the Spirit is leading us. We can't know what new challenges and opportunities 2020 will bring. We can know we're moving forward together led by God's love – and that's really good news!*

Love and blessings to all,

Your Pastor, Debbie Bennett Reynolds



Mariana Morse and Tony Lister



Amanda Ufford and Louise Mudrak



Steve Farrell

*"This year brought a wonderful spirit of giving in the form of all of you who showed up to make our sanctuary a space filled with light, expectation and the Divine presence. Indeed each year Christ's birth is real and fills our hearts with hope."*

Barbara Fry

# Christmas Wonder!



*Wolf family lighting the Advent's wreath on Christmas.*



*Kai Ward Aittima singing "O Come, or Come Emmanuel"*



*Nursery children singing with teacher Leslie Schultz*



*Baruch Whitehead singing carols with the angels.*



*Elena and mom Belinda*



*Ward-Aittama family lighting the Advent's wreath.*



*The Ward-Aittama triplets and Arabella Sanford waiting to take center stage during the Christmas pageant.*

## Shepherd's Dance!



*Addy Ward-Aittama mesmerized all with her performance of the Shepherd's Dance from "Amahl and the Night Visitors" which she had choreographed.*



*The Tim Hembrooke Community Dinner Saturday, December 14th was again a huge success with over fifty attending. Entertainment was provided by a community dance group shown in the picture above.*

*Picture by Amanda Ufford*

## Bill Fry: Vietnam Diary

*Bill Fry, Cornell Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology was invited to be a Fulbright scholar in Vietnam in late November/December 2019. Below are excerpts from his letters home.*

The second week in December was "typical." I made two presentations (one on Tuesday and the other on Thursday). Interacting with students has been a lot of fun. Xuan, head of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and Selina, a new faculty member, are my interpreters.

I've had to make the power-point presentations as easy as possible and I cannot convey any complicated ideas. I'd never thought about how some ideas are complicated, and that requires expert knowledge of English to be able to convey or receive those ideas. I'm really working on Simplicity. However, I was able to engage and interact with the students – even through interpreters. I presented some of my favorite ideas in plant pathology and the students did understand them. I presented pictures and asked them to describe what they saw. From their observations we (they) could come to some conclusions. I think they enjoyed it. I've used examples of late blight and also Fusarium wilt.

Tuesday night was fun. I had heard that the Vietnamese women had won gold medals at the Southeast Asia games in the Philippines on Saturday night and that the men were in the soccer finals on Tuesday night. I told Thang that I'd like to go someplace and watch the game. He said okay, and he took me to the home of one of his friends where his entire group came to eat and watch the game. It was a privilege to be included. They all sat on the floor, but were nice to the old American and let me sit on a chair. The food was delicious and the participants were all happy and very nice to me. Vietnam won the game, and then there erupted pandemonium on the streets. People were really excited and happy. This game was Vietnam's first championship ever in men's soccer in these games.

Lunch on the day of the rose planting was super. It was a party for Xuan and his students (who are now teachers and administrators) at area schools. The Vietnamese have a tradition of "inviting" people. There is a bowl of some type of alcohol (nearly tasteless). They call it "wine", but it is a distilled beverage. Someone at the table can invite someone or some persons or the whole table. That means that you toast everyone, drink the "wine" and then shake hands with everyone. There is a lot of "inviting." It was great to see Xuan's former students come to our table and "invite" him. By the end of "lunch" everyone was very happy



*We saw Fusarium wilt of tomato both in the greenhouse and in the field, and I used photos from both sites when talking about Fusarium wilt. In the upper picture the plant in front of the boy in the blue shirt was wilting badly. Below we are in a tomato field. The farmer has the blue hat. The plants in the row between the students and me are dead or dying from a severe wilt (maybe Fusarium wilt). Xuan is the guy in the blue jacket on the right side of the photo. It was fun to use these photos to talk about Fusarium wilt in the class. The same students in the field are also in the class*



*Friday was quite a nice day. I was invited to go with Xuan and several others to Sa Pa. The university has a project to interact with many area high schools and Xuan was working on a garden at a school in Sa Pa. He had prepared the area, with good soil in raised beds in a nice design. He had loaded a truck full of roses in the morning and then we drove up to Sa Pa. The town may be the most famous of tourist towns in Vietnam. It is at the foot of a mountain (>10,000 ft) which is the highest mountain in Southeast Asia. I even saw a couple Americans (or Europeans) there. The students were happily engaged in removing the roses from the truck preparing to plant them after lunch.*

## The Risk of Birth

by Madeleine L'Engle  
This is no time for a child  
to be born,  
With the earth betrayed  
by war & hate  
And a comet slashing the sky  
to warn  
That time runs out and  
the sun burns late.  
That was no time for a child  
to be born,  
In a land in the crushing grip  
of Rome;  
Honor & truth were trampled  
to scorn—  
Yet here did the Savior  
make His home.  
When is the time  
for love to be born?  
The inn is full  
on the planet earth,  
And by a comet  
the sky is torn—  
Yet Love still takes the risk  
of birth.

## The Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55  
My soul magnifies the Lord  
And my spirit rejoices in  
God my Savior;  
Because He has regarded  
the lowliness of His  
handmaid;  
For behold, henceforth all  
generations shall call me  
blessed;  
Because He who is mighty  
has done great things for  
me, and holy is His name;  
And His mercy is from  
generation to generation  
on those who fear Him.  
He has shown might with  
His arm,  
He has scattered the proud  
in the conceit of their  
heart.  
He has put down the mighty  
from their thrones, and has  
exalted the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry  
with good things, and  
the rich He has sent away  
empty.  
He has given help to Israel,  
his servant, mindful of His  
mercy  
Even as he spoke to our  
fathers, to Abraham and to  
his posterity forever.

## Giving Overflows

The Giving Tree for Enfield Elementary School this year included: two huge black bags filled with gifts, more items in front with the largest boxed gift we have ever had (pictured on right)! Thanks to Hans, Jan, Meg, Bill A, Tina, Sara, Regi, Amy/Belinda, Helen, both Sue's, Barbara, Judy, Leslie, James, Tae, Amanda, Linda, Anne, Laura/girls, Jud, Lisa, and all those who donated money for the Mom/Dad bags!

In addition to the children's gifts above, there were 16 baskets for women and two for men this year. Each basket contained items for an adult who would most likely receive very little or nothing for Christmas. The red bagged baskets contained the following gifts: a scarf, gloves and two pair of warm socks, holiday dish towels and hand soap, a set of kitchen storage containers and two spatulas, a bag full of hygiene products, notepads and pens, two key chains made by Tae, a roll of duct tape, a card with a decorative ornament inside, and a surprise item.

A really big thank you to Sue Hemsath for her year-long, monumental shopping for the Mom/Dad bags and all the work and care she puts into making the beautiful baskets for all those single parents! Sue collects items all year and then put together the gifts....thanks to many people's contributions and "super good sales." She definitely holds the church title for "Amazing Shopper of the Year!!"



*Gifts for Enfield school children*



*Sue & Tae Hemsath with "Mom /Dad" baskets.*

## Church Year Ends 2019 with Small Surplus

Due to an unexpected (and significant) December donation in the Anticipated Regular Giving category, income in 2019 exceeded the budgeted value by \$2,124.59, while disbursements exceeded budgeted values by only \$1,267.45, resulting in a year-end surplus of \$857.14. Hallelujah!

In the Property and Maintenance budget we were able to pay the Presbyterian Church this year's installment on the parking lot paving costs, as well as put into escrow more than \$2,900 to pay the equipment cost for the burglar alarm system the Trustees expect to install in January. Expenditures from the Service Supply & Equipment line included \$625 for the cleaning of the carpet in the sanctuary.

Personnel expenditures for the year were more than \$1,300.00 less than budgeted, due to lower than expected expenditures in the Conference and Professional Expenses lines and Employment Insurance.

The aggregate of the Education expenditures fell below estimates by approximately \$800.

While several lines in the Worship budget were over-subscribed, the aggregate expenditures were nearly \$600 less than budgeted, largely due to the fact that the Visiting Musicians line of \$500 was not spent.

The Ithaca College Protestant Community no longer exists in that form, so that \$250 was not spent, and the Congregational Projects/Local Needs line spent about \$1,100.00 less than budgeted, leaving a surplus of just over \$1,300. in the Mission and Outreach budget.

A total of \$1,233.00 was collected for the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Fund of the ABC this year. And the final payment was made to Arlen Vernava for his leadership of the Visioning process.



Please keep in your prayers:

- Nancy Sokol
- John Gross
- Suzanne Kilgore
- Naomi Hollister
- Laurel Lawshae
- Joan Yarborough/John Laney
- Betty Brown
- The Evans family
- Pastor André Thera
- Marge Hansel
- Ron Drummond
- Barbie Lister
- Dick Fielding



*Epiphany :the three kings.*

**The Visitor — January 2020**

Editor, publisher: Susan Eymann

Proofers: Judy Kennison Tony Lister

Contributors: Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Sue Hemseth, Linda Caughey, Bill Fry, Marlene Sack, David Caughey, Barb Fry

Photos: Bill Fry, Lou Carlucci, Amana Ufford, Bill Phelan, Judy Kennison, Bill Abeles



**Please 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



**Walking the Labyrinth:** *On Saturday evening, December 28th, those attending the final Advent evening meditation offered by Bill Reynolds had an opportunity to walk the labyrinth in the sanctuary. The labyrinth was opened to the public the next day through the beginning of January.*

## 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: Andrea Mooney  
Financial Secretary: Marlene Sack

### Board of Trustees

Anne Farrell (2022), Kris Scott (2022), Rich Barron (2022), Hans Bump (2021), Elizabeth Pia-Miller (2021), Amy Chaffee (2021), Bill Phelan (2020), Josie Zanfordino (2020), Baruch Whitehead (2020), David Caughey (ex officio)

### Trustees' Subgroups

**Finance & Endowment**  
David Caughey, Marlene Sack, Janet Cotraccia, Andrea Mooney, Curt Ufford

**Stewardship Committee:** Janet Cotraccia, Bill Staffeld, Judy Kennison, Alice Grow, Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds, Andrea Staffeld (graphic), Bill Fry (letter), Susan Eymann (*Visitor*)

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

**Church Archivist:** Linda Caughey

### Lay Delegates:

#### Affiliate Organizations

Rochester Genesee Region (2 delegates), ABC-USA (2 delegates): Rich and Lil Barron, Co-chairs Ossie Heath-Crump, Anne Farrell, Bill Reynolds  
AWAB: Shella Chace, Josie Zanfordino, Baptist Peace Fellowship: Meg Gillard, Cornell Protestant Cooperative Ministry: Julia Dean, Linda Nicholson, Anne Farrell  
Kitchen Cupboard: Amanda Ufford, Sue Hemsath  
Tompkins County Workers Center: Bill Abeles

### Pastoral Relations

Barbara Fry (2022), Bronwyn Evans (2022), Bill Abeles (2021), Lou Carlucci (2021), Tim Dean (2020), Steve Farrell (2020)

### Nominating Committee

Josie Zanfordino, Adrienne McNair, Linda Caughey, Louise Mudrak, Marge Hansel

### Personnel Committee

Tony Lister, Julia Dean, Beth Wolfer

### 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

### 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, Ella Dean, Greta Cotraccia, Bay Ward/Aittama

### 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, Hans Bump, and many others

### Ad Hoc Visioning Team

Bill Abeles, Julie Dean, Bronwyn Evans, Anne Farrell, Bill Fry, Judy Kennison, Mark Lawrence, Barb Fry, Pastor Debbie Bennett Reynolds