

Pastor: Rev. Matthew J. vanMaastricht

April 2023

Dear Friends,

Periodically I have this realization, and I experienced it again not long ago. I was sitting in my study and it hit me like an anvil: I cannot read everything.

This may seem to be somewhat silly. After all, of course we can't read everything! And I know that with my mind, but there are times that it drops on me in a deep way. And because of this every time I finish a book, I take time to think about where to go: what is the most important thing to read next? I have to be selective and I can be intentionally selective or unintentionally selective. I'd rather be intentionally selective. But it's not just about reading. I want to do all the things. But I can't. I have to be selective. I have to choose what I think is most important and make time for that.

There are more than enough things in this world to keep us busy. And many of these things are very good. And I think that many of us want to do them all. And we can be intentionally selective or unintentionally selective. I think that intentionality is better.

We can't do everything. And I wonder what is most important to us? These last few weeks, we have heard Jesus' teaching gain urgency, a sense of importance to which attention must be given. I wonder if we share this sense of urgency? Do we have a sense of urgency when it comes to following Jesus? Do we have a sense of urgency when it comes to living our lives in such a way that it reflects the values of the kingdom of heaven?

My goal here is not to make us feel guilty, but it is an invitation. It is an invitation to be intentional about those things which are most important. It is an invitation to live deeply into the life that God has called us to and for which God has created us. We make time for things which are important, and we give energy to those things which are important. And the difficult part for us is deciding what is important enough for which to make time.

So in these waning days of Lent, I would like to invite you to take a bit of time, and reflect on this matter. What is important? What is a priority? Do these match? Are we being intentional about how we are selective, or are we unintentionally so? Life is both brief and fragile, what do we want to do with that brief and fragile life? In the modern world, we can have relative stability about the future of which the ancient people could never have dreamed. Are we relying on this to put off things which we think are important but not a priority?

Again, this is not a matter of judgment, and I'm not going to inquire of you all into what is important for you. But it is an important task for us all to engage with. What are our values? What are our principles? What is important? How do we live this out?

And, I'm going to plug this again. I'm always willing and ready to journey with you in this. This is why I am here. My role here is not to run the church, it is not to manage the organization. Rather, my role here is to help you in your lives, to help connect the spiritual and the tangible, the things of God and this life, and how you might grow closer to Jesus and the life that Jesus desires for us.

With deep and abiding love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pastor Matthew J. vanMaastricht'.

Pastor Matthew

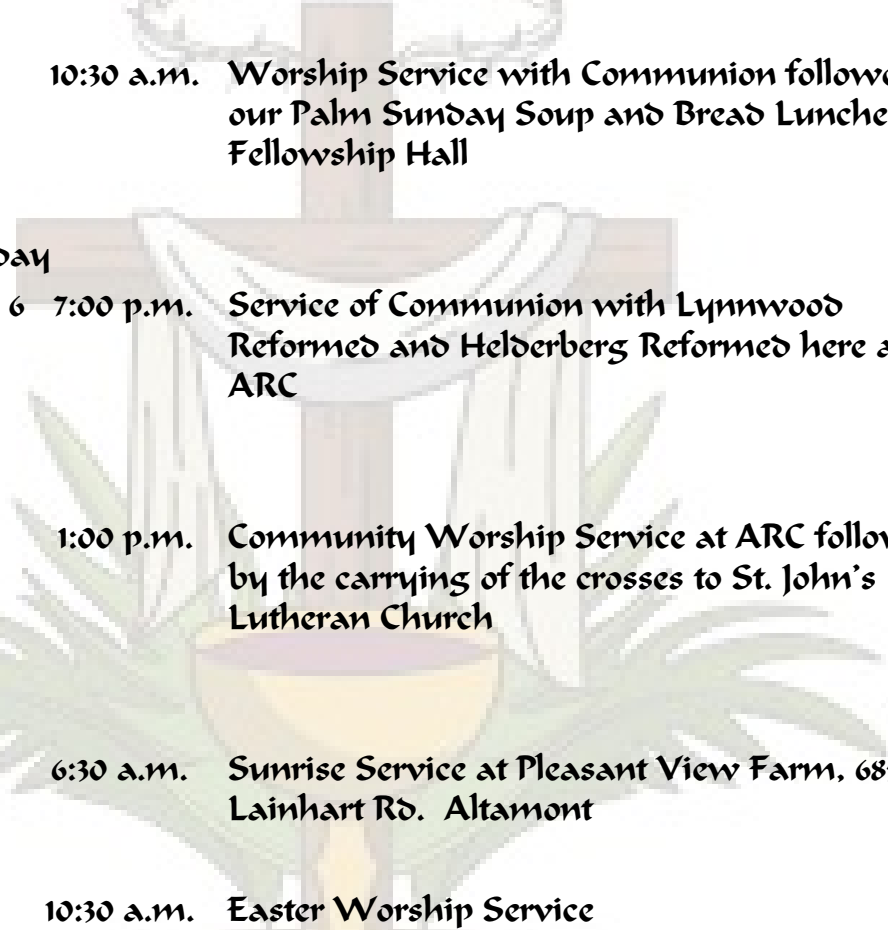


You are invited to share in our annual Palm Sunday Soup and Bread Luncheon on Sunday, April 2, immediately after the morning worship service. We will gather in Fellowship Hall to enjoy this special meal together. Come and enjoy a time of good food and fellowship. Please sign up in Fellowship Hall if you plan on attending.

Volunteers are needed to help with the Palm Sunday Luncheon

To provide soups, breads, and cookies, as well as help set up the Fellowship Hall, work in the kitchen, and clean up after the luncheon. Sign-up sheets are in the Fellowship Hall.

Holy Week Worship Schedule



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| Palm Sunday Sunday, April 2 | 10:30 a.m. | Worship Service with Communion followed by our Palm Sunday Soup and Bread Luncheon in Fellowship Hall |
| Maundy Thursday Thursday, April 6 | 7:00 p.m. | Service of Communion with Lynnwood Reformed and Helderberg Reformed here at ARC |
| Good Friday Friday, April 7 | 1:00 p.m. | Community Worship Service at ARC followed by the carrying of the crosses to St. John's Lutheran Church |
| Easter Sunday, April 9 | 6:30 a.m. | Sunrise Service at Pleasant View Farm, 6856 Lainhart Rd. Altamont |
| | 10:30 a.m. | Easter Worship Service |

Easter Offering Envelopes

The contents of this year's special offering envelopes marked "Easter" (an extra one in your box, since there is already one for April 9), will be divided between ARC's Deacons' Fund and the Protestant Campus Ministry at the University at Albany.

Community Dinner

Our next "First Monday Spaghetti Dinner" for the community will be on April 3. Food will be served from 5 to 6:30 and includes spaghetti with sauce (meatballs and sausage), bread, salad and dessert.

We cannot do this without the wonderful 30-35 volunteers. Please consider helping out by signing up on the sheets in Fellowship Hall or by calling (518) 861-8711. Thank you!



ARC Women's Retreat has been scheduled for Saturday, September 16. We expect to gather at ARC from 9am-3pm with the theme "For the Beauty of the Earth".



- Lindsey Johnson April 4
- Michael Wilford April 4
- Joey Audi. April 8
- Gabriella Baratier April 15
- Mary Hughes April 15
- Danielle Baratier. April 19
- Natalie Drahzal. April 23
- Jim Kerkes. April 30



National Volunteers Week is April 16-22. We appreciate all of the volunteers who contribute in so many ways to the life of our congregation and outreach to the community.



Thank you to all who contributed to our annual Joel Edwards Memorial Pet Food drive. Many pets will benefit from your gifts.

Blankets and Tools Campaign Report

Many thanks to all who contributed to our annual campaign to raise funds for the Church World Serviced Blankets and Tools program. The final total was \$2,005, which will buy a lot of blankets and tools! We're still working on assembling Hygiene Kits and will have a final total on those later this month.



CROP HUNGER WALK COMING IN MAY

The 43rd Albany CROP Hunger Walk, now known as the John U. Miller Memorial CROP Hunger Walk, will take place on Sunday May 7, beginning and ending at First Lutheran Church, located at 181 Western Ave. in Albany. However, individuals and/or teams who prefer not to gather with a crowd are welcome to walk any place they choose any time during the month of May. The funds raised support local and global hunger relief efforts, including the Altamont and Guelderland Food Pantries and assistance to Ukrainian refugees. The Altamont Reformed Church team has already been registered on-line with Kitt Jackson as team captain. If you would like to join the team or make a donation, visit the CROP Walk web page at <http://www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny>. Click on "browse the full list of teams", then on "Altamont Reformed Church". You can get a walker envelope and other info from Kitt Jackson. Indian Ladder Farms has created a team, too, and some of their Spring events will benefit the CROP Walk. They have agreed to open their trails on May 7 for teams or individuals who would like to walk there.



From the



✠ The Capital Area Council of Churches invites you to attend their ecumenical Good Friday Service if you happen to be in Albany on April 7. It will start at Noon at the First Lutheran Church, 181 Western Ave., Albany 12203, and feature meditations on the Seven Last Words of Christ from clergy and lay leaders of different traditions. For more information, visit the CACC website: <http://www.capareacc.org>

✠ Project Hospitality in Staten Island hosted a mission team from Central College during their Spring Break. The students worked at the Food Pantry and other outreach programs.

✠ Pastor Brad Kautz at the Jicarilla Apache Reformed Church in Dulce, NM, reports that he has presided at an unusual number of funerals during the past few months. The entire community considers JARC "their" church, and Pastor Brad will conduct a Christian funeral service for anyone who asks. He views this as an opportunity to share the Gospel with unbelievers. He and his wife Robin treasure our prayers for this ministry.

✠ Schenectady Community Ministries' Urban Farms program is readying the soil for Spring planting, as is the Patroon Land Farm of the Regional Food Bank. Volunteers are always needed at the Farm and/or Food Bank. Visit <http://www.regionalfoodbank.net> for a description of volunteer opportunities and sign up for whatever appeals to you.

✠ Community Caregivers is always looking for volunteers to provide transportation, grocery shopping, respite care, and light housekeeping services to their clients. Call the office at 518) 456-2898 or visit <http://www.communitycaregivers.org> for more information, dates of the next Volunteer Orientation sessions, or to request services. If you like to golf, plan to participate in their annual Golf Tournament on June 5 at the Pinehaven Golf and Country Club.

✠ Josh Perkins reports from the Middle East that some of the college students who went to Bahrain with him during their Spring Break expressed interest in returning there to work. Josh has started conducting workshops with the mission hospital in Bahrain and was able to travel to Egypt to meet with seminary leaders. He and Alison ask for prayers for: opportunities to make connections with their Muslim neighbors, especially during this month of Ramadan and for guidance as Josh and his partner Jerehmy develop curriculum about culture and Islam with connections to evangelism and discipleship.

✠ Project Hospitality in Staten Island is offering free income tax preparation from trained volunteers to their clients and neighbors with limited income.

✠ The Reformed Church in America Restructure Team will be completing a series of roundtable discussions around the denomination this month. They met in person in March to begin to draft a preliminary report to be presented at General Synod in June. You can read more about their work at www.rca.org.



Caregiver Support from LifePath

(formerly Senior Services of Albany)

A new Zoom-based way for those caring for a loved one to receive some support and assistance.

LifePath's "Caregiver Tune-Up" helps individuals access tools and strategies to help them manage their responsibilities and feel less alone. This evidence-based program has demonstrated benefits for participants, including reducing stress, strain, and depression. Participants gain improved problem-solving skills and confidence in identifying local resources.

Those interested in joining the series will come together for the first session on Wednesday April 5 at 7 pm via Zoom, where participants will choose the most mutually convenient time and days for the remaining sessions.

For more information or to enroll in the program, Contact Felicia Segelken, LMSW, fsegelken@lifepathny.org. (518-817-5262)

Albany Firewolves indoor lacrosse game April 23 at 3:00 p.m.

Helderberg Reformed Church invites Altamont and Lynnwood Reformed Churches to join them for an afternoon of fun at an Albany Firewolves indoor lacrosse game. They have a block of tickets for the Albany vs. Philadelphia game at the MVP arena in Albany. If you are interested in going, email Nancy and she will send you the link. Tickets cost \$22.40.



Property Committee

Please mark your calendar to join us for our Annual Spring Clean-up Day, to be held on **Saturday, April 29, from 9am until noon**. Bring a pair of gloves and a rake, and we will provide coffee and bagels. The event will be held rain or shine, as we can always find some indoor projects to do should the weather be inclement.

In March, three paving contractors came to ARC to submit bids for the upcoming repaving of the entire parking pot and driveway. The Property Committee will review the estimates in April and will then make a recommendation to Consistory for their approval. The project is expected to be completed in either July or August, and funds have already been allocated for the majority of the cost.

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of Jason Brennan of Altamont, who recently repainted the upstairs restroom at no cost to the church. The room needed to be updated with a fresh look, and it came out great. We would also like to thank Judi Dineen for facilitating this project. We offer our appreciation to Bill Johnson for installing new covers on the outdoor light fixtures on the back of the building that illuminate the parking lot.

The Congregational Life Committee is interested in your thoughts!

We are working to plan several activities for the church family and our friends. Your input would be very helpful in determining what kinds of trips in which you would be most likely to participate. Please see our bulletin board in the fellowship hall or back of the sanctuary and share your thoughts with us. We need to know what you want to do.



Altamont Reformed Church Consistory Considerations



Committee Reports

Benevolence: The goal was exceeded in the Church World Service Blanket Campaign. A Food and Faith dinner is planned at UAlbany on April 25.

Congregational Life Committee: 125 people were in attendance at the March community dinner. Parking was not an issue at this dinner. Plans are underway for the Palm Sunday luncheon and the Memorial Day Parade. A church wide picnic has been scheduled for September 23. The Joel Edwards Pet Food Drive was a huge success, with donations going to the Altamont Food Pantry and the local animal shelter. A survey is about to go out soliciting congregational input on preferred activities.

Finance: Laurie is still working to get a meeting scheduled. One member has had to resign from the committee and a new member will be joining in June. The goal is to review and update the policies and procedures manual.

Property: There is a need to get bids for the parking lot and schedule the work for July 2023, after the preschool is out.

Worship: The red hymnals will be offered to anyone in the congregation who wants one. This committee is working on a checklist of Altar Guild tasks in order to ensure that volunteers are in place to do this work (polishing silver, banners, communion supplies).

Book Study: The study group is starting a new book: "Be the Brave One" this week. The book study will be held at Helderberg Reformed Church. Attendance averages 15-20 people per week.

HRC Partnership: This is going smoothly. We still need to work out the details of the July and August worship schedule. We anticipate it will be a 9:00 service at ARC and a 10:30 service at HRC. Matthew may have a few members from each Consistory meet to reach a final agreement on this.

Classis: There was a meeting at Niskayuna Reformed Church to discuss the restructuring of the Reformed Church of America (RCA). Of the 886 churches in RCA, 208 have left. The intent of this meeting was to gather information on what brings people together. The Albany Classis and Synod remain strongly united.

New Business

Matthew asked for Consistory input on a question that he was asked: Is Altamont Reformed Church an inclusive church, especially of LGBTQ people? He stressed that General Synod gives guidance on these issues, but each individual church sets its own policy and philosophy. The feedback given to Matthew was clear and strong: Everyone is welcome at Altamont Reformed Church.



ALTAMONT REFORMED
CHURCH
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Altamont Reformed Church

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Office administrator: Nancy McNiven

To be placed on the mailing list, please contact the church office

To contribute articles for the ARC Lite, send to the editor c/o ARC

or email the editor, Theresa Lasselle, at lasselle@aol.com

ARC's website: <http://altamontreformed.org/>

The due date for the next edition of the ARC Lite is April 21