



Pastor: Rev. Matthew J. vanMaastricht

February 2023

Dear Friends,

Something that has been increasingly impressed upon me is the importance of Christian formation.

The irony is that when the greater society was seen as generally Christian-ish, we had more people who were involved in faith formation activities: Bible studies, educational classes, and the like. And now that Christian formation is more important than ever, because the greater society is no longer Christian-ish, it tends to have less focus because we are all so busy.

Busy-ness is a reality that we all experience. In eras gone by, people had more leisure time, whereas today, we are expected to have a full-time job or two, plus a couple of side hustles in order to make everything work. Add to that the proliferation of school activities in which kids are involved in order to complete for ever-competitive spots in higher education, and it is a formula for madness. We all feel it.

And at the same time, we need to be intentional about living our faith in the this world. The Way of Jesus is not just something that we think, but it's something that we live. It's one of the reasons I love the old term for the Christian faith, The Way, which implies a path, a road, a journey, a way of life, a framework for existence. This Way touches all aspects of our lives: how we show up in relationships, how we understand our responsibilities to one another, how we use our time and resources, the way in which we order or priorities, and others.

There is a deep, deep well of spiritual formation within Christian history, and a large part of that is simply drawing up water from that well that we have forgotten about over the generations.

And so how do we do Christian formation in a way that is meaningful, is intentional, and requires commitment, but also doesn't expect one to withdraw from the world entirely? This is a question with no easy answers, but it is something that we must think about.

I know so many people in our community who are not a part of a faith community because either a faith community has harmed them or someone they love, or because a faith community seems rather indifferent to their lives. For so many, participation in a faith community looks like an extra obligation (and not an especially fun one) on Sunday morning when we want to sleep in or do other things. So how can we begin to help form ourselves and one another into the richness of the Way of Jesus—which truly brings life and light to the world—in such a way that we have something important, even essential, to offer and people want to be a part of it?

To find an answer to this question, we need to intentionally work together and commit to this path.

With deep and abiding love,

Pastor Matthew



- Carole deForest . . . . . February 1
- Chris Stewart . . . . . February 1
- Kevin McKee . . . . . February 2
- Chris Conover . . . . . February 4
- Kelli Moore . . . . . February 4
- Michael Mayer . . . . . February 5
- John Drahzal . . . . . February 7
- Nellie Goutos . . . . . February 9
- Dan Capuano . . . . . February 10

- Diane Kingsland . . . . . February 11
- Linda Warnken . . . . . February 14
- Alexa Johnson . . . . . February 19
- Lois Ginsburg . . . . . February 19
- Marie vanMaastricht . . . February 23
- Cecile Simmons . . . . . February 25
- Michelle Tomasik . . . . . February 26
- Anna Capuano . . . . . February 28
- Christian Viola . . . . . February 28

In case of severe weather on any Sunday morning....

In case weather circumstances necessitate the canceling of worship:



- \* A message will be placed on the church's answering machine (518-861-8711) announcing the cancellation, and will appear on our ARC Facebook Page.
- \* Members of Consistory will make the effort to call the homes of individuals and families who typically worship on Sunday mornings.
- \* An email will go out to individuals and families who typically worship on Sunday mornings.
- \* A sign about the cancellation will be posted on the parking lot door to the church building.

### Community Dinner

Our next "First Monday Spaghetti Dinner" for the community will be on February 6. Food will be served from 5:00 to 6:30 and includes spaghetti with sauce (meatballs and sausage), bread, salad and dessert.

We can not 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!



### Blankets and Tools Campaign starts Feb. 12

Our annual campaign to raise funds for the relief and development work of Church World Service will begin on Sunday, Feb. 12, with our traditional Blanket Sunday breakfast. After having missed the breakfast the past two years, we will gather in fellowship hall at 9am to share a meal, learn about the work of Church World Service, and assemble hygiene kits that will later be sent wherever needed. Please sign up on the chart in the back of the sanctuary to bring something to share and tell us how many people are coming. All are welcome, even if you forget to sign up. Don't forget to bring one or more items for the hygiene kits (washcloth, hand towel, wrapped toothbrush, wrapped bar soap, nail clipper, sturdy wide-toothed comb).

Then, for the next month, you can help us "Blanket the World with Love" by purchasing red paper hearts for \$10 each, dedicating them in memory of or in honor of someone who has brought love to your life, and attaching them to the large heart on the Jay St. wall of the sanctuary. Checks may be made out to "ARC Benevolence" with "blankets" on the memo line. Our gifts purchase blankets, tents and bedding for refugees and disaster victims; help rebuild homes, schools, and businesses after an earthquake or flood; provide seeds, animals and training to families and farmers; improve access to clean water; and support other projects to help people rebuild or improve their lives. Visit [www.cwsglobal.org](http://www.cwsglobal.org) for more information about the work of CWS. ARC has participated in the blanket program for more than 30 years, raising a cumulative total of well over \$43,000! Our goal this year is \$1,500, or 150 hearts.





♡ Pastor Brad and Robin Kautz write from the Jicarilla Apache Church in Dulce, NM: "We are grateful for your increased support. Our jail ministry and Student Residence Bible study are both going well. The emergency shelter room is being used by a young couple who are working to maintain their sobriety and regain custody of their children. We have had excellent attendance at church and Sunday school. All praise to God!"

♡ The Capital Area Council of Churches will be holding their Annual Meeting and Winter Assembly on Thursday Feb. 9, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 10 No. Main Ave. in Albany (same block as the College of St. Rose.) Street parking is available. Agenda items include the election of new officers and Board members, the adoption of a budget for 2023, and reports of CACC activities. There will be a Social Time with light refreshments at 6:00 pm. The Business Meeting will begin at 6:30, followed by a presentation by a local food pantry on food security. Visit the CACC website to register: [www.capareacc.org](http://www.capareacc.org).

♡ Cornerstone Protestant Campus Ministry has begun a new semester of programs including a Bible study on Spiritual Practices, weekly Food & Faith gatherings hosted by partner congregations, Sunday afternoon worship, and a Winter Retreat at Camp Dippikill the first weekend in February. The new Campus Minister will begin her work in February, since she and her husband adopted a new baby, Theo, at the beginning of the year.

♡ Denny and Sue Barger of Dreams Alive send their thanks for our "friendship and concern for persecuted Arab Christians and war victims in the Middle East." Denny will be traveling to Jordan Feb. 17-27 with a medical mission team. Please pray for safe travel and a productive time there, as well as for the peace and well-being of their families in the US during their absence.

♡ Felipe and Janelle deWaard-Silva have sent their 2022 Year in Review Newsletter, In it they share some stories of activities at their church Ancora (Anchor), including the way they have been able to support a young woman battling cancer who was recently baptized. They also had a successful Christmas Bazaar that showcased items made by the 70 children in their education program. They hope to be in the US this summer visiting supporting churches. They write: "Our

greatest challenge has been the war in Ukraine. It brought much sadness and fear to our community. We saw many refugees coming into Romania and some of our personnel went to help at the border. The financial effect of the war meant that the price of gas, electricity, natural gas, food, and other items began to rise. This new financial reality burdened the community we work with and some of our ministries as well. This continues into the new year and we pray for God's provision in all things, but most of all for the end of this war and the suffering of the people involved."

♡ Camp Fowler weeks are filling fast. The camp, owned and operated by Albany Synod, is located near Speculator, on beautiful Sacandaga Lake (not the reservoir). It's a special place where electronics are left behind and campers get in touch with God and each other through creation and the loving guidance of the staff and volunteers. Registration forms for campers and adult volunteers (cabin counselors, kitchen and maintenance helpers, and drivers) can be found at the Fowler web site: [www.campfowler.org](http://www.campfowler.org). Remember, ARC will cover the registration fee for campers connected to our church. In-camp and out-camp (hiking, canoeing, etc.) weeks are available for campers who have finished grades 3-12. The mountains are calling!

Here is an excerpt from a thank you note from one of last year's campers:

" Dear ARC, Thank you for your generous donation that allowed me to go to camp this year. I learned about forgiveness, working together, and having fun..[by] ...hanging out in Mud Lake and hiking Pillsbury Mountain. Without you guys I wouldn't have had my questions about God answered and I would not have...met new people."





# CONSISTORY CONSIDERATIONS

Notes from the January 18, 2023 Consistory Meeting:



## 2023 Constitutional Inquiry

The Reformed Church in America requires a response annually to a series of questions relative to ARC's conformity to scripture, the Heidelberg Catechism, and how our church activities serve as witness to the gospel. Matthew read the questions and Consistory provided input on the response. The response to these questions will be submitted to Classis.

The questions elicited discussion on how to develop Christian education for children.

## Committee reports:

**Benevolence:** Consistory approved sending \$200 of unassigned money from 2022 to the Capital Area Council of Churches Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Fund.

**Congregational Life Committee:** 134 people were in attendance at the January community dinner, down slightly from the previous month. The committee is going to put together a list of possible activities and get congregational input to determine where the interest is.

**Finance:** The Benevolence Committee recommended that half go to the Deacon's Fund and half go to the Capital Area Emergency Shelter. The motion was made and approved to allocate the Christmas per Benevolence recommendations.

**Worship:** Stephanie Brewer will resume as choir director on 1/22. The Ash Wednesday service will be at St. John's Lutheran this year.

**Book Study:** The study group is coming to the end of the current series with consistent attendance. The next book study will be held at Helderberg Reformed Church. Matthew will poll the participants to see if the time slot is still acceptable.



ALTAMONT REFORMED  
CHURCH  
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The due date for the next edition of the ARC Lite is February 24

# Altamont Reformed Church

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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](mailto:lasselle@aol.com)  
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