



Today's Date: 9/8/21

Position to be filled:  
**Pastor** (Full-time)

# OLDfirst

Reformed Church in America | Park Slope

## 1. Name of church

The Corporation of the Reformed  
Dutch Church of the Town of  
Brooklyn  
(aka **Old First Reformed Church**)

## 2. Web address

[www.oldfirstbrooklyn.org](http://www.oldfirstbrooklyn.org)

## 3. Address

729 Carroll Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Phone: 718-638-8300

E-mail:  
[info@oldfirstbrooklyn.org](mailto:info@oldfirstbrooklyn.org)

## 4. Classis

Rockland-Westchester

## 5. Classis supervisor

**Rev. Dan Ramm**

82 Mackey Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11209

Phone: 917-579-9094

E-mail:  
[danramm82@gmail.com](mailto:danramm82@gmail.com)

## 6. Chair of search committee

**Eric Platt**

427 44th St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11220

Phone: 347-281-0979

E-mail:  
[ericplatt97@gmail.com](mailto:ericplatt97@gmail.com)

## 7. Membership

	5 Years Ago	Today
Active Confessing Members	96	84
Inactive Confessing Members	3	0

*Comment on changes:* Because of our location in Park Slope, the congregation is somewhat transient, with individuals and families moving away due to changes in their work assignments and family situations. There was additional movement out of the area due to the Covid pandemic, but the community now appears to be stabilizing.

Age of all active members (baptized and confessing):

10%	0-20 years old
16%	20-34 years old
35%	35-49 years old
30%	50-64 years old
9%	65 years and older

## 8. Racial/Ethnic composition of congregation

4%	African American
4%	Asian
90%	Caucasian
2%	Hispanic
0%	Other

## 9. Worship schedule

Morning Worship	5 years ago	Today
Average Attendance (includes adults and children)	40	45

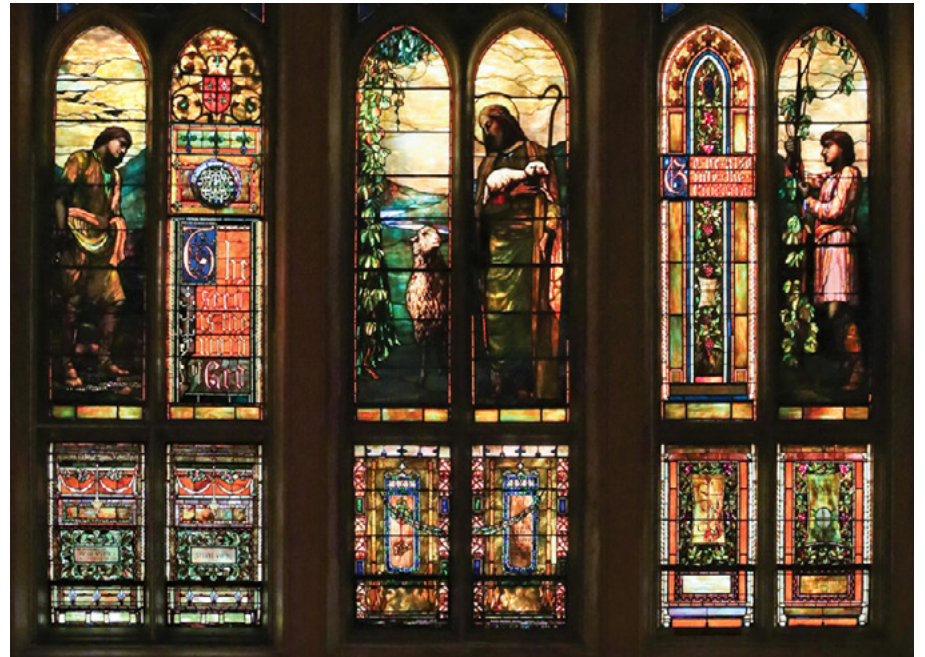
*Comment on change:* During most of 2020, our worship services were remote, via Zoom. Remote services have continued throughout 2021. The attendance has been relatively stable, but a number of our members who had moved away have attended our virtual services, increasing our average attendance for 2020-2021.

## 10. Describe a typical worship service (order of worship, music, etc.)

Prelude	Kyrie
Welcome	Absolution
Votum and Salutation	Passing the Peace
Hymn	Announcements
Collect	Prayers of Intercession
1st Reading	Offering
Psalm	Doxology
2nd Reading	Communion
Gospel Reading	Prayer of Thanksgiving
Sermon	Words of Institution
Ascription of Glory and Silence	Psalm of Thanksgiving
Hymn	Hymn
Apostles Creed	Benediction
Prayer of Confession	Postlude

What is your congregation's preferred style or styles of worship?

The service is relatively traditional, as is the music. We often have guest music following the Gospel Reading, which is less traditional in nature and can be folk music, bluegrass or gospel music.



# OLDfirst

REFORMED CHURCH | Park Slope

Rev. Dr. Jane Ann Groom, Interim Pastor  
Aleeza Meir, Music Director

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## eBulletin | 15th Pentecost Sunday September 5, 2021

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Connections for Sunday Morning Service.

- **To log-on:** Ctrl+click: <https://zoom.us/j/281701997>
- **To join via phone:** Dial 1-929-205-6099 If you are told to enter a webinar id, the id is: 281701997
- **Print Bulletin:** [pdf](#)
- **Print Children's Sheets:** [pdf1](#) [pdf2](#)

Please have ready a cloth, your candle, your bread, and your cup of wine or juice.

Please join us for Virtual Coffee Hour after service.

- **To log-on:** Ctrl+click: <https://zoom.us/j/402156419>

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## Worship Service

Prelude

Sarabande by G. F. Handel

Welcome and Instructions

Votum and Salutation

Hymn #101

*Seeking Water, Seeking Shelter (1, 2, 4)*

**Seeking water, seeking shelter,  
gasps the thirsty, weary deer;  
so my soul in days of trouble  
longs for God's refreshment here.  
In this stressful course of life,  
in its loneliness and strife,  
"When," say I, "will God deliver;  
is his mercy gone forever?"**

**No! he is my soul's true fortress;  
though I hear those voices wild –  
"Where's your God? Why has he left you?"  
– he will not forget his child.  
Come then, be my advocate,  
come, your servant vindicate;  
then no more in fruitless sorrow  
shall I face a barren morrow.**

**So, my soul, why such disquiet?  
Why such mourning, why such fear?  
Day already breaks on darkness,  
God has sought you, God is near.  
Hope in God and you shall live;  
all delight he waits to give;  
Peace and power and ev'ry blessing  
you shall know, this faith confessing.**

Collect of the Day (In Unison)

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

**Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist  
the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those  
who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who  
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
Amen.**

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## Lessons

First Reading

*Isaiah 35:4-7a*

Lector: Michael Bagnulo

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,

with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Psalm*

*146*

*From the Anglican Church of Canada Liturgical Psalter*

Lector: Michael Bagnulo

Hallelujah!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth,  
for there is no help in them.

When they breathe their last, they return to earth,  
and in that day their thoughts perish.

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help!  
For their hope is in the Lord their God,

who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;  
who keeps promises forever;

who gives justice to those who are oppressed,

food to those who hunger  
and sets the prisoners free.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind!  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down  
and loves the righteous.

The Lord cares for the stranger  
and sustains the orphan and widow,  
but frustrates the way of the wicked.

The Lord shall reign forever,  
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.  
Hallelujah!

*Gloria Patri*

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end,  
Amen, Amen.**

*Second Reading*

*James 2:1-10, [11-13], 14-17*

Lector: Michael Bagnulo

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.[ For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.] What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel Reading

*Mark 7:24-37*

Lector: Jessica Stockton Bagnulo

Jesus set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**


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 Reflections

## Reflection from the Elders

Jessica Stockton Bagnulo

## Reflection from the Congregation

## Ascription of Glory and Silence

## Hymn #449

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing (1, 3)*

**Come, thou Fount of every blessing,  
tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious measure,  
Sung by flaming tongues above;  
O the vast, the boundless treasure  
of my Lord's unchanging love.**

**O to grace how great a debtor  
daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
bind my wand'ring heart to thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
prone to leave the God I love;  
take my heart, O take and seal it,  
seal it for thy courts above.**

## Apostles Creed (In unison)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the  
power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of  
saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life  
everlasting. Amen.**

## Prayer of Confession (In unison)

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

## Kyrie (Sung in unison)

**Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

## Absolution

## Passing the Peace

The Peace of Christ be with you all. (*We pass the peace via Zoom.*)

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 Announcements

- Today's service recognitions
- Virtual Coffee Hour
- Archived virtual services
- Worship service update
- Antiracism reading group
- Remembrance and Racial Justice Working Group
- New Brunswick Theological Seminary virtual discussion
- Crisis in Haiti

## Prayers and Giving

### Prayer Requests from the Congregation

#### Prayers of Intercession

Anita Keire

*In need:* Ron, Andrew, Jean, Barbara, Eva, Albert, Nancy, Keileigh, Viola, Michael, Blas, Stephen, Elisabeth, Maryanne, Susanna, Phil, Janet, Eddy, Carmen, Evelyn, Nancy, Bill, Jack, Amanda, Roger, Geraldine, Karin and her fiancé

*In ministry or service:* Dr. Jessica, Dr. Paul, Jabe, Jack, Jeff, Housing Plus, CHIPS

#### Offering

The Deacons

While we worship together online, we can still make our offerings. Our preferred method is the digital platform Tithe.ly, which you can find as a smart-phone app or as a link at [OldFirstBrooklyn.org](http://OldFirstBrooklyn.org). Please consider covering the processing fee to make your gift go farther. If you prefer to mail a check, please note whether your gift is for the general fund, mission, or the capital campaign. And please consider giving for our mission work with CHIPS, HousingPlus and Haiti Relief. We will be collecting for the RCA Haiti fund through September 13. Read more in the Announcements section of the Bulletin.

#### Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise God, all creatures here below,  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

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## Holy Communion

### Set Your Tables

### Light your Candle

The Light of Christ.

**The Light of Christ.**

Thanks be to God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Holy and right it is, O God, and our joyful duty, to give thanks to you at all times and in all places, O Lord, Holy Father, almighty and everlasting God. You created the heaven with its host and the earth with its plenty. You have given us life, and being, and you preserve us by your providence. But you have shown us the fullness of your love by sending into the world your Son, Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, made flesh for us and for our salvation. For the precious gift of this mighty savior, who has reconciled us to you, we praise and bless you, O God. With your whole church on earth, and all the company of heaven, we worship and adore your glorious name.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God of power and might.**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory!**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,**

**hosanna in the highest!**

Holy and righteous Father, we remember in this supper the perfect sacrifice once offered on the cross by our Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of the whole world. In the joy of his resurrection, and in expectation of his coming again, we offer to you ourselves, as holy and living sacrifices, proclaiming the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died,

**Christ has died.**

Christ is risen,

**Christ is risen.**

Christ will come again.

**Christ will come again.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon us, we pray, that the bread which we break and the cup which we bless may be to us the body and blood of Christ. Grant that being joined together in him, we may attain to the unity of the faith and grow up in all things into him who is the head, even Christ our Lord.

And as this grain has been gathered from many fields into these loaves, and these grapes from many hills into these cups, grant Lord, that your whole church may soon be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. Even so come Lord Jesus, Maranatha, Amen.

Through Jesus Christ, who taught us when we pray to say:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**



**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Words of Institution

Psalm of Thanksgiving

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## Sending Forth

Hymn #155

*Great is Thy Faithfulness*

**Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;  
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.**

**Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.**

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.**

**Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness,  
morning by morning new mercies I see;  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided--  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!**

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord's countenance be lifted upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

Postlude

Allegro by G. F. Handel

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**11. Financial Information: Attach a copy most recent Consistorial Report and Annual Budget if available.**

	<b>Five Years Ago</b>	<b>Today</b>
Total RCA-related contributions	\$179,189	\$175,381
Total other operating income	\$204,312	\$183,127

Links: [Consistorial Report](#)  
[Annual Budget](#)

**12. Congregational Giving**

Number of those whose annual contribution is:

Less than \$500	4
\$501-\$1,500	11
\$1,501-\$2,500	6
\$2,501-\$3,500	7
Greater than \$3,500	10

**13. Financial assistance: Do you receive financial assistance beyond the congregation?**

Yes

If yes, amount received last year:

\$183,127

List other fundraising programs that support the church:

Grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places - \$250,000, 2021-2022, to fund electrical and lighting upgrade.

**14. Average attendance at Sunday School**

<b>Five years ago</b>	<b>Today</b>
19	16

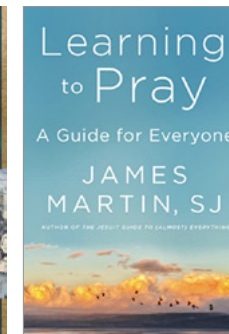
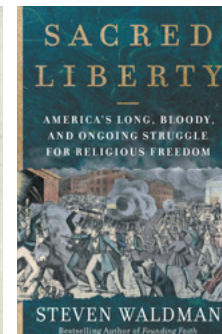
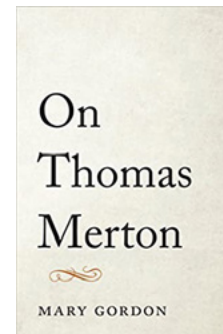
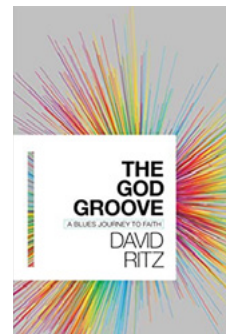
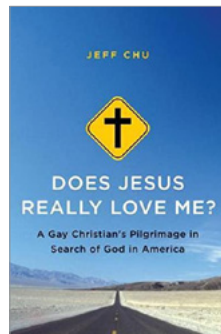
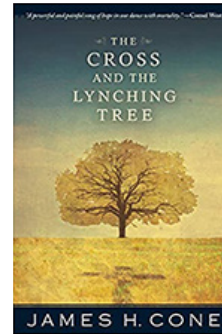
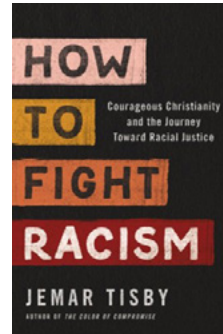
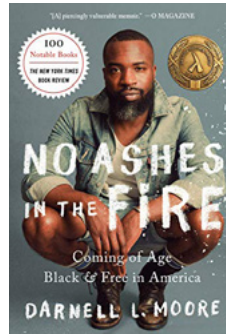
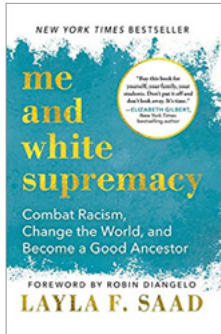
*Comment:* Average Sunday School attendance today represents the 2020 roll, prior to the beginning of COVID-19. Sunday School has not been held, either in person or virtually, during most of 2020 and the first nine months of 2021.

**15. Describe briefly all educational programs (including children, young adult, adult).**

We have a Sunday School program beginning at age four and going through high school, though many years junior high is the highest level of enrollment. We also have periodic adult classes on Sunday morning and/or on certain evenings throughout the week. We hold an anti-racism reading group as well.

**16. Church groups/organizations: Briefly describe ministry purpose of each group. (use separate sheet if necessary)**

<b>Name of group</b>	<b>Frequency of meeting</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Prayer Group	Weekly	7
Antiracism Reading Group	Bi-weekly	5
Remembrance & Racial Justice Working Group	Monthly	6
Cooking for CHIPS	Monthly	7
Small Groups	Monthly	6



## 17. Comment on one event or experience over the last year that has significantly contributed to the spiritual life of the congregation.

The global COVID-19 pandemic was the definitive event/experience in the last year for Old First. It changed everything about our worship, our fellowship, and church administration. As the United States begins to transition to post-COVID life, it may be hard to remember that New York City was ground zero for the proliferation of the virus in the country. For many of our congregants, the physical memories are of vacant and quiet streets but for the never-ending sound of ambulances. Emotional memories are of fear: fear of going outside, of touching anything, of breathing, of not knowing, of being isolated. When an emergency-room physician of our membership, who attended to COVID patients, tested positive and became sick, we worried about her, her spouse and children. When we needed our spiritual support community the most, we had it the least, and, in the middle of this, our pastor took his planned retirement and departed without us being able to say thank you or goodbye in any personal way.

COVID's contribution to the spiritual life of the church can be seen in our immediate transition to an engaging on-line worship experience. This service, which has been directed primarily by the elders, has encouraged each of us to practice communion in our homes, and most congregants have participated in it in some way. Congregants' contributions have included production, scripture readings, prayers of the people, deacons' messaging, special music, choral arrangements and dramatic readings. It also enabled these contributions and involvement in our worship by the Old First "diaspora," those members who for one reason or another have left our physical community but miss our spiritual community.

While we long to be back together physically, to worship together, to meet with each other, and participate in all aspects of church life, our worship response to the pandemic has bound us tighter together. Rather than just maintain our community of Jesus Christ in Brooklyn, it has enhanced it.

## 18. Buildings: Please describe church-owned or rented buildings and purpose.

All are church-owned:

**Sanctuary** - Capacity 506 (including balcony); Roosevelt Pipe Organ, historic stained-glass windows, Steinway grand piano; used for worship services, concerts, community meetings and other arts events.

**Lower Hall, Kitchen and Parlor** - Capacity 100, grand piano; used for worship services, coffee hour, church dinners, book readings, music rehearsals by local groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, yoga classes, wedding receptions and parties.

**Upper Hall** - Capacity 150 (including balcony), grand piano; used for worship services, concerts, community events and music rehearsals by local groups. Also used for Sunday School and by the Old First Nursery School, a major tenant.

**Pastor's office** - Currently above the Narthex in the main sanctuary building. Consideration is being given to locating the pastor's office to a more accessible location on the main floor.

The **church office** is located off the Lower Hall, next to the Carroll Street entrance to the building.

There is a **garden** with play area adjacent to the Lower Hall, and accessible through the kitchen and from the Carroll Street gate.





Spaces: Upper Hall, Lower Hall, Kitchen, Parlor

### 19. Do you plan any capital expenditure during the next five years?

Yes

If yes, please explain briefly:

Electrical/Lighting Upgrade for the building (Fall 2021 - Spring 2022). Full electrical upgrade for all spaces in our building, and restoration of historic light fixtures in the Sanctuary. This is funded by a grant, matching funds from a bequest and other donors. Total estimated budget: \$1.1 million

We are planning a second fundraising effort to raise money for the restoration of our stained glass windows and are in the early stages of forming a 501c3 for this purpose as well as for ongoing preservation and restoration.

### 20. Is there a mortgage indebtedness?

No

### 21. Paid staff

Jane Ann Groom, Interim Pastor	Part time
Aleeza Meir, Musician	Part time
Maureen Doyle, Finance & Operations Director	Full time
Lindsay Gavin, Office Coordinator	Full time
Abraham Barrios, Sexton	Independent Contractor

### 22. Consistory Membership

What method is used in selecting members?

Church Members nominate candidates from a list of eligible members. A Consistory committee compiles the responses, and the candidates with the most nominations are asked to fill the open positions on Consistory.

Please list present Consistory members

Elders:

- Male, Senior Director, Network Administrator
- Female, Independent Bookstore Co-owner
- Male, Research Vice President
- Male, Partner, Environmental Consulting Firm
- Male, Hospital Chaplain

Deacons:

- Male, Arts in Education Director
- Female, Graphic Designer, retired
- Female, Senior Director, Executive Communications
- Female, Account Executive and Broker
- Female, Social Worker, retired

### 23. What leadership roles do women currently fill in your church?

Our church currently has its first woman pastor, our interim pastor Jane Ann Groom. She has imparted a new vision of God as both Father and Mother to us all, and has introduced the use of Anglican Psalms, used in Canada, which have been fitted with gender-neutral pronouns. Our music director is a highly skilled organist and musician who started her own baroque music group of great acclaim four years ago. Additionally, our Financial Operations Director is a woman of many years' experience, who also serves on our Finance and Administration Committee, a vital position on both counts. Our Office Coordinator is also a woman of much experience and ability, and she has added to our well-run church office and programs. However,

it should be noted that although a majority of parishioners are female, and women make up a majority of Sunday School teachers, the Consistory is divided more along traditional lines, with all the Elders being male, except for one, and all the Deacons being female, with one exception. There has been gender diversity in the past, however.

#### 24. In our congregation . . .

- Few have only 12 years of formal education
- Few have only had some education beyond high school
- Most have at least a college degree
- Many have a graduate degree

#### 25. In our congregation . . .

- Many are scientists and engineers
- Few are farmers
- Many are business people
- Many are students and teachers
- Few are industrial workers
- Many are office workers
- Many are artists and musicians

#### 26. Special training/experience desired: (describe briefly)

Old First's congregation prioritizes finding someone who is experienced at leading Sunday worship and has a track record of community involvement and ecumenical work. Another skill that the congregation rates highly is experience with counseling. Given current trends, someone who has experience in leading online ministry is also important.

#### 27. Should your pastor be fluent in any language other than English?

No

#### 28. Type of community served

Metropolitan-Inner City – 50,000+

#### 29. Cooperative ministry: In what ways have you cooperated with other churches in your community during the past year?

Old First has close ties with Greenwood Baptist Church, Congregation Beth Elohim, and the Dawood Mosque in Brooklyn. We have hosted ministers, rabbis, and imams from these institutions, and have often shared Good Friday and Martin Luther King services with them. Our vocal groups have performed for a number of local RCA congregations, including those at Flatlands Reformed Church and Grace Reformed Church. During the pandemic, these collaborations have been severely curtailed.



**OLDfirst**  
proudly supports partners  
who provide food and meals  
for our community




cooking for  
**CHIPS**



**1980s - 2021**  
Over 3 decades Old First has contributed to CHIPS (Community Help in Park Slope)  
• 5,000+ ziti trays cooked  
• 94,500+ people fed  
• groceries collected



**2012 - 2013**  
To those most affected by Hurricane Sandy and its aftermath, HSRK:  
• cooked 200,000+ meals  
• delivered food & supplies






**2020 - 2021**  
During the pandemic BRK, in collaboration with neighborhood partners, provided every week:  
• ca 1,500 fresh cooked meals  
• 100s of relief boxes



30. Community involvement: In what community programs or projects have you participated during the past year? (As an organization, not as individuals.)

- Brooklyn Relief Kitchen** - feeding the hungry in the greater Brooklyn community with fresh-cooked meals and groceries
- CHIPS** - local soup kitchen (through Brooklyn Relief Kitchen and through our own Cooking for CHIPS program)
- HousingPlus** - sheltering and supporting women and single mothers who suffer from the vast effects of poverty
- Park Slope Civic Council** - support of community programs
- Baroquelyn** - support of local musicians

OLDfirst *is proud to support*




Opening doors for women in crisis

Mission: to provide community-based housing and comprehensive services to women, including women with children, to support them in overcoming poverty, homelessness, addiction, trauma, and the effects of incarceration, in order to build lives of stability, and to define and realize goals for themselves and for their families.

**Housing & Supportive Services**  
Based on the "housing first" approach, connecting women and families to housing without preconditions and barriers to entry.

**The Women's Community Justice Program**  
Moves women from Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers Island, into community-based transitional housing with supportive services.

**Veterans** Provides permanent housing for female veterans who often face myriad challenges to life stability, such as unemployment, disability, and post-traumatic stress due to their military service and sexual trauma.

31. What denominations or religions are present within three miles (in rural areas, consider the county) where your church is located?

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 7th Day Adventist   | Presbyterian (Presbyterian Church, USA)       |
| Baptist             | Presbyterian (Presbyterian Church of America) |
| Christian Scientist | Roman Catholic                                |
| Episcopalian        | United Church of Christ                       |
| Islam               |   |
| Jewish              |   |
| Methodist           |   |

### 32. Outreach: What is your strategy to reach unchurched people in your community?

Our outreach activities include music programs, such as the Baroque-lynn music series and the Jingle Bell Jamboree; social welfare programs such as the Brooklyn Relief Kitchen and summer respite shelter; arts events such as author readings and art shows; and Girl Scout Troop 2302, which is hosted by the church but largely comprised of children from the greater community. Most of our neighborhood is unchurched, so any time we open our doors to the public and welcome them into our space or programs, we are reaching into the mission field.

### 33. The income level of the people in our congregation tends to be somewhat higher than the rest of the community.

### 34. Record of the last three pastors:

Daniel J. Meeter	2001-2020
Michael P. Otte	1988-2000
Lawrence E. Veenstra	1985-1988

### 35. Please complete your profile with the following contacts:

Jeff Cribbs, Vice President of Consistory  
Dan Ramm, Classis Supervisor





# Reflections

Please answer the following questions, adding your own experiences where appropriate.

## 1. What is the stated mission, vision or purpose of your congregation?

Old First Reformed Church is a community of Jesus Christ in Brooklyn, offering a space of unconditional welcome, a practice of worship and service and a vision of God's love and justice for all.

We are a diverse, open and supportive church community. Our 200 members and adherents are from all walks of life and reflect a diversity of backgrounds.

Old First is part of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), a main-line Protestant denomination with direct roots in the Reformation of the 16th Century. We are one of the founding congregations of the RCA, the oldest Protestant denomination in America with a continuing ministry, and were established in 1654, making us – with our sister congregations in Flatbush and Flatlands – the oldest in Brooklyn.

We embrace the historic doctrines of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds as well as the unity and reconciliation of the Belhar Confession. We embrace the following five missions:

- To offer God's word, prayer, the sacraments, and discipleship;
- To offer outreach, education, fellowship, and music;
- To offer sanctuary to anyone seeking spirituality and hope;
- To offer hospitality to community groups and the arts; and
- To care for the gifts we have been given through our Reformed Church, including our historic sanctuary and building.

Whoever you are and whatever your story, we have a place for you and are ready to welcome you.

## 2. Describe the strengths of your church, the best of what you are as a community, and what you can offer a new pastor.

We regard the following as significant strengths of Old First:

The congregation shares a well-defined and articulated mission;

There are strong bonds of affection among the members of the congregation, for the congregation as a body and for the church as a local institution;

We have a talented and enthusiastic leadership team, both in the consistory and the various groups and committees;

We have a very good administrative staff; and

We have multiple and varied connections to the Park Slope and wider Brooklyn community through the use of the church building for community events and social outreach. During the tenure of our former pastor these connections were enhanced by his, and our congregation's, friendship and interaction with community leaders and the rabbis and ministers of other congregations.

We believe we can offer our new pastor:

A congregation that cares for and supports each other;

A congregation that is engaged and willing to take on tasks needed to advance the church's mission;

A congregation that, although not large, historically has been generous in providing the funds necessary to continue the church's activities;

An organist of exceptional capability and an administrative staff that is highly qualified, committed to the church and reliable; and

A reservoir of goodwill in the community.

### 3. Explain the strategies or ideas that most excite your church in becoming or remaining missional.

Through a personal, neighborhood relationship developed by our former pastor, a local restaurateur established a mission using our church kitchen. During Superstorm Sandy, he recognized a need to feed people but did not have the facilities to do this at his disposal. He asked and was granted permission to use our facilities, and initiated what became known as the “Sandy Relief Kitchen.” Fast forward to the Covid pandemic and the same person asked to use our kitchen to feed those impacted by Covid. The “Brooklyn Relief Kitchen” opened its doors and began to feed the hungry. Likewise, several years ago our church was approached by CAMBA to utilize our space as a summer “Respite Shelter” for homeless men. Our congregation acted as host, and with assistance of other local congregations shared our space, dinner, and our time with these men.

These examples typify how Old First likes to be “corporately” missional. We exist in a neighborhood once described by Rabbi Bachman as the most “fortunate neighborhood in the history of man,” but we are surrounded by those in need. We feel the burden to help our neighbors and are excited when presented with an opportunity to use our facility and our abilities to be that parish church that lifts our neighbors up.

We also have grass roots mission initiatives that excite our congregation. We currently have an ad hoc Remembrance and Racial Justice Working Group which was borne out of a “White Supremacy and Me” reading group, that is doing exciting work in initiating our path into social justice mission. Additionally we use our building and considerable musical talents to engage our community with events like “Chocolate Chip Chamber Music,” “Baroquelyn,” and the “Brooklyn Bluegrass Bash.”

Lastly, the “Arts at Old First” group hosts a series called Art and Faith and has featured memoirists, essayists, novelists, poets, and historians, including Darnell Moore, Christian Wiman, Steven Waldman, Mary Gordon, Paul Elie, David Ritz, Fr. James Martin, Carey

Wallace, Cara Wall, Darcey Steinke, Rick Moody, and others. These events speak to timely social issues (race, climate, homosexuality) and topics of interest to people of faith (prayer, finding God in unlikely places) which bring in community members and challenge us in our mission to them.

### 4. Name three of your church’s most passionate hopes and why they are significant.

To inspire compassion, humility, and an ardent love of the world through a deep engagement with scripture.

To provide beauty and comfort to our community by becoming a hub for the arts and a shelter for groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, the hungry, and the homeless.

To actively pursue social justice and help our community and city work toward economic, racial, and gender equity.

### 5. How do you hope someone who visits your church would describe what s/he considers to be most important?

Often, in hearing testimonies from new members, or new active participants to the church, they mention that they were drawn in by statements posted on the church bulletin board, or the rainbow flag next to it: we proclaimed Old First to be a welcoming, equality-affirming space where diversity is accepted and more, encouraged. People who in the past had felt they had to sit in the back, not knowing if they could participate or would be accepted, saw that they were invited and made to feel at home. Our church has also undergone an “awakening” in the sense of a felt need for social justice/action and LGBTQ+ affirming policies. We have been blessed with excellent leadership and spiritual guidance/preaching, which has supported increased service and outreach to the community, and we hope that this will continue with a new pastor. Old First is our spiritual “home,” and we hope that any person visiting will feel this way as well.



OFRC in Community: Dancing, Prayers, Music, Food Relief

## 6. Name at least one challenge facing your new pastor.

We are a relatively small congregation with a fairly ambitious agenda. We are especially engaged with various neighborhood activities. There is always a concern that we will overstretch our volunteer base.

Old First has a large, beautiful building that is also very expensive to maintain.

Park Slope is a secular neighborhood with a geographically mobile population

During the pandemic, our congregation has mostly met and operated online. Even after we return to our new normal, some of this online programming will continue. This will require the new pastor to be digitally proficient.

Old First is a congregation of highly skilled individuals, many of whom are at the pinnacle of their fields.

## 7. Describe your vision and hopes for your church and your pastor over the next five years.

In some ways, our vision for the next five years is to continue emphasizing areas in which our church has exhibited strength in the past. Old First's congregation especially prizes its community involvement. This includes collaborating with other Brooklyn churches, synagogues, and mosques. Old First has also recently joined Room for All, and Consistory is considering becoming part of the Reformed Association. Being an inclusive church community that supports and provides ministry to Brooklyn's BIPOC and LGBTQ+ populations is also very important to the congregation.

Community involvement also means allowing various arts groups to use our large building and collaborating with various nonprofits that serve the local population. For instance, in recent years Old First has hosted the Brooklyn Relief Kitchen that seeks to tackle

food insecurity in the wake of disasters such as Superstorm Sandy and the COVID-19 pandemic; provided financial and volunteer support for CHIPS a local soup kitchen and food pantry; hosted a summer homeless shelter through CAMBA; and provided support for various addiction programs. In our recent congregational survey many people expressed a vision to increase Old First's community involvement even more. As one person put it at the end of a long list of ways that Old First could be involved in the community, "Working with these types of support and relief organizations feels central to our congregation's mission." In order to achieve this vision, our new pastor needs to share the congregation's community-mindedness.

ALL  
ARE  
WELCOME

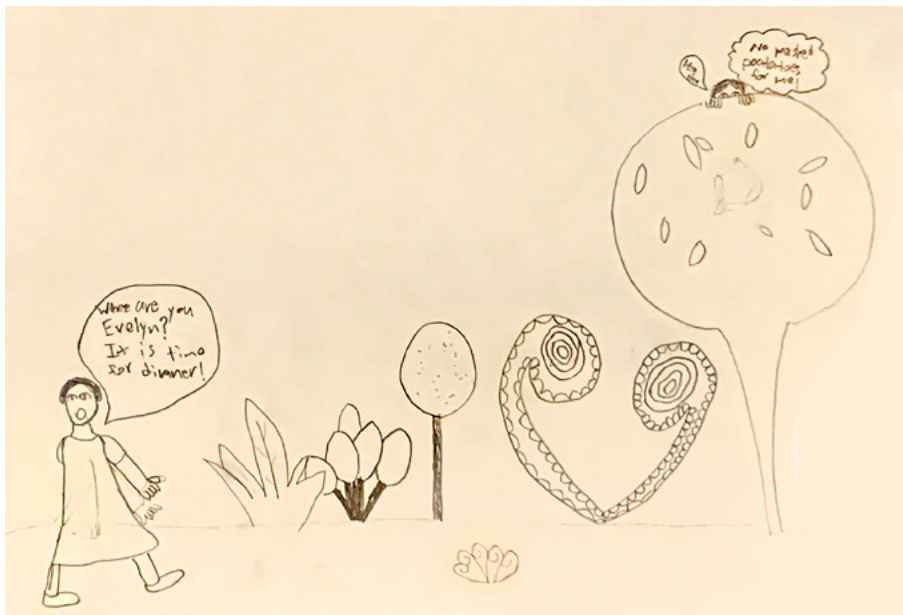
COMPELLED BY THE  
INCLUSIVE LOVE OF  
GOD, Room for All envisions  
the day when people of all sexual  
identities and gender expressions  
are fully affirmed in the life and  
ministry of the Reformed Church  
in America.

roomforall.com 

oldfirst  
Reformed Church in America | Park Slope

The congregation's vision for the next five years also involves having a minister who emphasizes preaching and the continued use of traditional liturgy. Both of these points were expressed repeatedly in the congregational survey. One worship area that the new pastor might emphasize more than has been done in the past is children's ministry. Old First also needs to improve its ministry to teens and young adults.

Ensuring that our new pastor has a clear vision for Old First and can share that vision is also important to the congregation. One hope we have for the next five years is to see our congregation grow. Increasing Old First's congregation will make it easier to achieve other priorities such as continuing our active involvement in the local community. Finding a new minister with strong skills in pastoral care and counseling is also important.



### Artistic reflection for 6 June 2021 sermon

*The Garden of Eden is the setting for our story this week in which God is walking about. God's question to us is, "Where are you?" In this story the humans are hiding in fear of God.*

*Imagine God walking about looking for you, calling to you, calling you by name. Draw where you are right now. And as you do, remember that God created you out of love, that God seeks you out of love. God loves what he has created and you can never lose that love. – Illustration by Evie Cribbs*



