



Sunday, January 28, 2024 — Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

**The First Church in Albany
(Reformed Church in America)**

Founded in 1642; Continuing in Ministry Today.

In response to God's unconditional love for all people made known to us in Jesus Christ, we are called to be a welcoming and affirming community. The First Church in Albany includes young and old, families, couples and singles, rich and poor, persons of various races, ethnicities, backgrounds, sexual orientation and gender identities, differing physical and mental abilities, believers and seekers. We welcome into the full life of the church all those whom God sends us. Centered in Christ, we commit ourselves to breaking down dividing walls and building a community where we are loved.

Prelude Reflection *a haiku for today's worship*

Knowledge puffs us up,
But love considers others,
Love others, be free.

Prelude

Voluntary on "Slane"

arr. E. Butler

Tolling of Bell: *Bell tolled by children of First Church*

Welcome, Announcements, & Blessing *Based on 2 John 1:3*

Grace, mercy, and peace to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen!**

Call to Worship *Adapted from the Church of Scotland, based on Psalm 111*

Votum: Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Amen.

Leader: Praise the Lord!

**People: I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright of all generations.**

Leader: Great are the works of the Lord, and ought to be studied by all who
delight in them.

People: For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Leader: All those who practice the law of the Lord have a good understanding
of it.

People: And practicing God's ways, sets us free.

Leader: Let us praise God, our liberator!

***Opening Hymn**

"Be Thou My Vision"

(see insert)

Prayer of Confession

Good God, forgive us for our selfish actions. We confess to the times we intentionally and unintentionally put up stumbling blocks for one another, prioritizing self-interest over communal well-being. Transform our hearts to reflect Christ's love which considers others above ourselves. Amen.

Time of silence

Assurance of Pardon & Fulfillment of the Law

Friends of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul reminded the churches of Galatia, "For freedom Christ has set us free!" God in Christ has not set us free so that we can do whatever we want, but we have been set free so that we might make freedom abound for others. First Church, know that in Christ you have been set free, and go out to set others free. Amen.

***Passing the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us greet one another with a hand-sign of peace.



Touch your thumb to the tip of your ring finger, and wave to one another. This hand-sign makes Christ's gesture of blessing in a lot of iconography in the Orthodox Tradition.

Children's Message & Blessing

Prayer for Illumination *Words based on St. Anselm of Canterbury*

O God, in faith we come to your Word seeking understanding. Illuminate what you would have us receive today. Amen.

First Reading Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon Text 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge, but anyone who loves God is known by him.

Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists" and that "there is no God but one." Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. "Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to

idols? So by your knowledge the weak brother or sister for whom Christ died is destroyed. But when you thus sin against brothers and sisters and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never again eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Not Just Freedom From, but Freedom For

A Prayer of Blessing on the Word

***Hymn of Response** “*When God Restored Our Common Life*” (see insert)

Profession of Faith *The Confession of Belhar, selections*

We believe that unity is both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit unity is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain...

[And we believe] that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God

Tithes & Offerings: *If you would like to connect more with the life and mission of First Church, please fill out a Welcome Card found in your pew and place it in the offering as it goes by.*

Offertory “*Break Thou the Bread of Life*” arr. C. Callahan

***Doxology**

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

The Lord's Prayer

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.

***Sending Hymn** “*With Grateful Hearts Our Faith Professing*” (see insert)

***Charge & Blessing**

Postlude

Preacher: Rev. Trey Tirpak

Liturgist: Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston

Organist: Iteke Prins

Audio/Visual: Joshua Bliss, Stephen Reohr

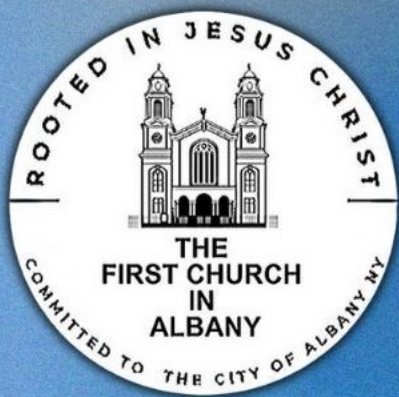
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Note: Please proceed to Zimmerman Hall (a.k.a. the ice rink) for our Congregational Meeting.



There are no flowers on the chancel this week due to a death in the family of our florist Louis Bannister. Please keep Louis and his family in your prayers.



Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 28, after worship
Focus: General Information and the
Presentation of the 2024 Budget



The First Church in Albany is committed
to the city and people of Albany NY.
This feeding ministry is
part of our commitment.

Pantry Hours

**Monday and
Wednesday
9am - 11:30am**

The pantry entrance is on Orange St.

518-463-4449

www.firstchurchinalbany.org

The First Church in Albany
110 North Pearl St.
Albany NY 12207

Prayers, Concerns & Joys

- Louis Bannister and family as they mourn a passing.
- Friends & family of Colleen Lais, our office manager, for the passing of her mother Marian
- Friends & family of Norma McClement as they reflect on her passing. We give thanks for the joyous celebration of Norma's life, held this week at First Church
- Rose Hunsberger, for her dad in hospice care
- Mia Westman
- Kathleen Claydon, for continued healing from surgery
- Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, for healthy transition back to work
- Requests for the Tirpak Family
 - Trey's uncle, with cancer, family friend, with cancer, and a family friend who is caring for a terminally ill child
- Ginny Giguere
- Donna Schultz
- Jeff Curry
- Family of Gillian Persons and for her sister Sylvia
- Becky Gardner
- Sam, son of Barb and Dave Andrews, recovering
- Carol LaBatte
- Sam, son of Barb and Dave Andrews, recovering
- Charnelle Jones
- Sam, cousin of Barb Andrews
- For Barb and Dave Andrews as they take on the role of caretakers
- Family of Norma Jean Ballou
- Ken Lucas, friend of Philip Labatte
- Kokese Ballou
- For Jennifer Recene Gallagher
- Alexis Parry, niece of Cheryl Gowie
- Gail Santimaw, friend of Judith Utley-Suess
- John Utley, brother of Judith Utley- Suess
- Judith Utley-Suess, for strength
- Harold Bushnel
- Alex Bliss
- Mary Weijola
- Cheryl Gowie
- Ralph McNeil, brother of Norma Jean Ballou
- Anthony, of the Brown Family
- Olivia Gaydushek
- Clergy, staff and leaders of the First Church in Albany as they begin a new year of planning and programming.
- Prayers for Ukraine, Israel and Palestine and all areas of conflict across the globe. May we all remember to lead with love.
- For an end to gun violence here in Albany, in the U.S., and around the world.

If you have a concern or joy you would like to share with our church family,
email office@firstchurchinalbany.org or call the office at 518-463-4449

February 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 Potluck & First Thursday Night of Worship		Albany Classis Meeting 9am Bethany Ref.
4 <i>G</i> Communion Sunday Focus Worship Delmar	5 Prayer Shawl Meeting	6 Consistory Meeting	7 AA	8 	9	10
11 Communion Sunday	12 	13 	14 AA 	15 	16	17
18 Communion Sunday	19 PRESIDENTS DAY Pantry & Office Closed	20 	21 AA	22 	23	24
25 <i>T</i> Communion Sunday	26 	27 Focus Board Mtg.	28 AA WMA Mtg.	29 		

Key:

Indoor Worship 10am

Communion Sunday

Coffee Hour

Pantry 9am

Centering Prayer 12pm

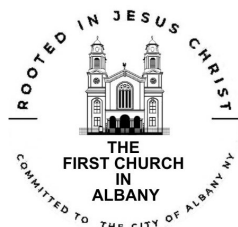
Book Study

Soup & PB&J 11:30am

Choir Rehearsal

Weather vanes

Preacher: *M* Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston *T* Rev. Trey Tirpak *G* Guest



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Be Thou My Vision

Capo 1: (D) Eb (G) Ab (D/F#) Eb/G (A7) Bb7 (D) Eb



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true Word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise;
 4 High King of Heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,

(A) Bb (D) Eb (G) Ab (A) Bb



naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord;
 thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways;
 may I reach heav - en's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!

(G) Ab (D) Eb (F#m7) Gm7 (G) Ab (A) Bb



thou my best thought, by day or by night,
 thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tower;
 thou and thou on - ly, first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

(Bm) Cm (D/F#) Eb/G (G) Ab (D) Eb



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 raise thou me heaven - ward, O Power of my power.
 High King of Heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

These stanzas are selected from a 20th-century English poetic version of an Irish monastic prayer dating to the 10th century or before. They are set to an Irish folk melody that has proved popular and easily sung despite its lack of repetition and its wide range.

When God Restored Our Common Life

(Psalm 126)



1 When God re - stored our com - mon life, our hope, our lib - er -
2 We went forth weep - ing, sow - ing seeds in hard, un - yield - ing
3 Great lib - er - at - ing God, we pray for all who are op -



ty, at first it seemed a pass - ing dream, a
soil; with laugh - ing hearts we car - ry home the
pressed. May those who long for what is right with



wak - ing fan - ta - sy; a shock of joy swept
fruit of all our toil. We praise the One who
jus - tice now be blest. We pray for those who



o - ver us, for we had wept so long; the
gave the growth, with voic - es full and strong. The
mourn this day, and all who suf - fer wrong; may



seeds we wa - tered once with tears sprang up in - to a song.
seeds we wa - tered once with tears sprang up in - to a song.
seeds they wa - ter now with tears spring up in - to a song.

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

This paraphrase brings Psalm 126 to life in two ways: by turning the "they" of the final verses of the psalm to "we," and by adding a prayer for all who still wait for release from oppression. The shape note tune provides just the right balance of gratitude and urgency.

TEXT: Ruth Duck, 1981

MUSIC: U.S.A. folk melody, Lewis's *Beauties of Harmony*, 1828; harm. Erik Routley, 1976

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Music Harm. © 1976 Hinshaw Music, Inc.

RESIGNATION

CMD

(alternate harmonization, 803)

(alternate tune: NOEL)

With Grateful Hearts Our Faith Professing

Fred Kaan, c. 1963; alt.

ST. CLEMENT 9.8.9.8

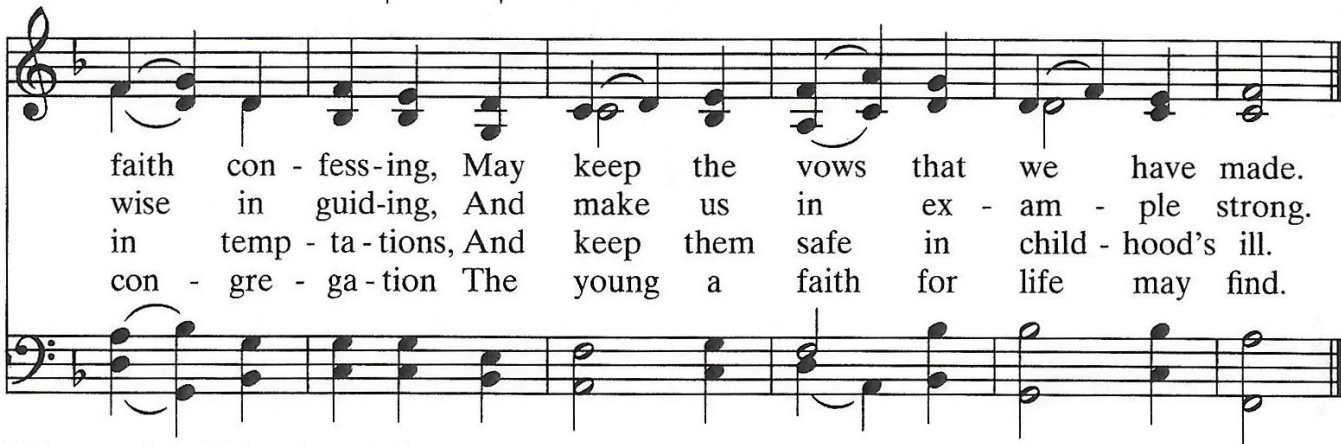
Clement Cotterill Scholefield, 1874



1. With grate - ful hearts our faith pro - fess-ing, We ask You,
 2. We know that in Your true pro - vid-ing The young and
 3. Give to the par - ents love and pa-tience, Each home with
 4. Ac - cept, O Lord, our ded - i - ca-tion To fill with



Lord, come to our aid, That we, our com - mon
 old to Christ be - long; Lord, help us to be
 Chris - tian grac - es fill. Pro - tect our chil - dren
 love the grow - ing mind, That in this church and



faith con - fess-ing, May keep the vows that we have made.
 wise in guid-ing, And make us in ex - am - ple strong.
 in temp - ta-tions, And keep them safe in child - hood's ill.
 con - gre - ga-tion The young a faith for life may find.

This tune in a higher key, 546

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